

MPO CHAMBER SERIES #5

Miriam Cauchi Soprano
Simon Abdilla Joslin Violoncello
Maria-Elena Farrugia Piano

Sunday, 04 February 2024, 11am

Robert Samut Hall, Floriana

PROGRAMME

Antonín Dvořák

Gypsy songs Op. 55

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

The clouds begin to scatter Op. 46 no. 2

The Nightingale & the Rose Op. 2 no. 2

Sergei Rachmaninoff

A Dream Op. 8 no. 5

How fair the spot Op. 21 no. 7

Oh never sing to me again Op. 4 no. 4

Spring Waters Op. 14 no. 11

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Cello Sonata in G minor Op. 19

I Lento - Allegro moderato

II Allegro scherzando

III Andante

IV Allegro mosso

PROGRAMME NOTES

by Dr Joseph Camilleri

Antonín Dvořák

(Bohemia 1841 – Czechia 1904)

Gypsy Songs, Op. 55 (1880)

Gypsy Songs, sometimes also referred to as *Gypsy Melodies*, is a cycle of seven songs set to texts by Czech poet Adolf Heyduk (1835 – 1923). The songs were written for Gustav Walter, a leading tenor at the Vienna Court Opera, and originally made use of a German translation prepared by the poet himself. However, following the songs' successful premiere, the publisher Simrock also brought out an edition using the Czech text with an English translation.

In Romantic literature, the Roma and their perceived wild life at the periphery of society, were often invoked as a symbol of freedom from bourgeois constraints. In these songs, the symbolism is extended to also evoke the Czech bid for independence from Austro-Hungarian rule. Dvořák does not explicitly quote folksongs or the *zigeuner* style. Rather, one can feel the influence of the rhythms and tunes of Bohemian and Moravian folk music and a suggestion of the sound of the cimbalom. The best known of the songs is likely the fourth – “Songs My Mother Taught Me” – which is widely performed and also exists in several instrumental arrangements.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

(Russia 1844 – Russia 1908)

The clouds begin to scatter Op. 46 no. 2 (1897)

The Nightingale & the Rose Op. 2 no. 2 (1866)

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's oeuvre comprises major works in various genres, from opera to orchestral works to chamber and instrumental music. Throughout his career, however, he kept returning to the writing of songs - one of his earliest pieces was a duet written at the age of 11. He also published two extensive collections of folksong transcriptions.

The clouds begin to scatter is the third of a set of four songs from later in Rimsky-Korsakov's life. It is subtitled “Elegy”, and sets a melancholic text by Pushkin describing the evening star appearing from behind the thinning clouds.

The Nightingale and the Rose is a setting of a poem by Aleksey Koltsov which compares the song of a nightingale to that of a young man serenading a maiden.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

(Russia 1873 - USA 1943)

A Dream Op. 8 no. 5 (1893)

How fair the spot Op. 21 no. 7 (1902)

Oh never sing to me again Op. 4 no. 4 (1894)

Spring Waters Op. 14 no. 11 (1896)

These songs show a different facet to Rachmaninoff's talent, although they share with his instrumental and orchestral music a penchant for expressive lyricism.

A Dream is an early work setting a text by Aleksey Nikolayevich Pleschcheyev after Heinrich Heine. The text evokes a sense of nostalgia for a lost homeland and family.

How fair the spot is taken from a cycle of twelve songs which form part of a larger group of around thirty songs written by Rachmaninoff at the summer estate of Ivanovna. The text by Glafira Galina is inspired by the beauty of nature.

Oh, never sing to me again is an early Pushkin setting. It is one of a set of songs (Opus 4) which, together with Opus 8, was written soon after the premiere of Rachmaninoff's graduation opera *Aleko* which, as it happens, is also based on a work by the great Russian poet, playwright and novelist.

Spring Waters is one of Rachmaninoff's most popular songs. Feodor Tyutchyev's poem describes the arrival of Spring, and the piano accompaniment mimics the sound of falling water with its cascading arpeggios.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

(Russia 1873 - USA 1943)

Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 19 (1901)

I Lento - Allegro moderato

II Allegro scherzando

III Andante

IV Allegro mosso

Rachmaninoff wrote this sonata for Anatoliy Brandukov, a cello virtuoso who throughout his career premiered several works by fellow Russian composers. Brandukov, in fact, gave the first performance of the cello sonata in Moscow in December 1901, accompanied at the piano by Rachmaninoff himself.

The work followed hot on the heels of the *Second Piano Concerto*, a resounding success which brought Rachmaninoff out of the depression caused by the disastrous failure of his *First Symphony*. Perhaps it is for this reason that, rather than simply accompanying the solo cello, the piano is consistently given a central role, introducing key themes which are then developed and embellished by the cello.

The work is symphonic in scope. It follows the typical structure of a Romantic sonata, with two relatively lengthy outer movements, flanking a playful scherzo and trio and a soulful slow movement.



Sun, 25 Feb 2024

Robert Samut Hall, Floriana | 11:00am

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MIRIAM CAUCHI

Soprano

Soprano Miriam Cauchi has performed extensively in opera productions, orchestral works and chamber music both locally and abroad. She has collaborated with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, the European Union Chamber Orchestra and the Berlin Symphonic Orchestra while sharing the stage with singers like Maria Guleghina, Francesca Patane, Joseph Calleja and Badri Maisuradze and at international venues and festivals which include Berlin Konzerthaus, Festival-Mitte-Europa (Germany) and at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center (USA).

Works performed include L'Elisir d'Amore (Adina), Un Ballo in Maschera (Oscar), Pagliacci (Nedda), Le Villi (Anna), Suor Angelica (Suor Angelica), Turandot (Liù), La Bohème (Mimi), Rigoletto (Gilda), La Traviata (Violetta) Otello (Desdemona), Handel's Messiah, Rossini's & Abos's, Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, Mozart's Mass in C, Lodd Webber's & Vassallo's Requiem, Caviller's Pawlu ta' Malta, Strauss' Vier Letzte Lieder, Brentano Songs Op 68, Berg's Sieben Frühe Lieder, Villa-Lobos' Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5, Vella's Dust on the Path, Kant ta' Mara and Vella Gregory's song cycle Mill-Qamar sal-Qabar

A graduate with full honours from Bulgaria's Sofia State Music Academy "Panchio Vladigerov", she is the recipient of the Gheorghi Slatev Cherkin Competition and the Bulgarian XIV National Competition Svetoslav Obretenov.

Cauchi is an ambassador of Maltese vocal music, singing and recording important compositions by Abos, Camilleri, Diacono, Isouard, Vassallo, Vella and Zerafa. She currently holds the post of voice tutor at the Malta School of Music.

On the 13th of December 2009, Miriam Cauchi was appointed to the National Order of Merit – M.O.M.



SIMON ABDILLA JOSLIN

Cello

Simon Abdilla Joslin is a leading Maltese cellist. He started his studies with Monica Attard Miggiani placing first in the Young Musician of the Year Competition (Malta) three years later. He furthered his studies abroad after winning scholarships to Trinity College of London and soon after the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia of Rome. He has since performed as soloist and chamber musician mostly in Europe but has performed in North Africa, the Middle East and the USA.

As a soloist he has premiered and recorded works by Maltese composers and has performed with various orchestras like the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestra del Mediterraneo, the Accademia Musicale Siciliana, the Upper Austria Youth Orchestra and I Filarmonici di Bologna at prestigious venues like the UN HQ in New York, the Sala Mozart (Bologna), Teatro Politeama Garibaldi, Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Manoel Theatre and the Mediterranean Conference Centre. Simon is vice-President of ESTA(Malta) and is responsible for cello tuition at the Malta School of Music where he is also director of the Junior and Senior String Orchestras. He plays a fine French cello, an Honoré Derazay, c.1860.



MARIA-ELENA FARRUGIA

Piano

Maria-Elena Farrugia is an established and highly sought-after Maltese pianist. She has recently been engaged by Joseph Calleja to accompany him in Andorra la Vella “L’Elixir de l’Òpera”, Arte’s Europe@Home, and the Met Opera At-Home Gala. She has participated in and won many local and international competitions. In 2003, she won the EPTA (Malta) Competition which enabled her to attend lessons at the Liszt Academy in Budapest with one of the jury, Profs. Balazs Szokolay. She has also won 1st prize in the 12th Gianluca Campochiaro Competition (Pedara, Sicily), 6th Young Musicians Contest of the Malta Society of Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce, and in the Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition, resulting in a week of Masterclasses at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester tutored by acclaimed pianist, Norma Fisher.

In Manchester she performed as a soloist and with several duo and chamber ensembles, including Philetas Piano Trio. She is highly sought after for engagements in Gozo, Malta and the UK, where she works with multiple professional artists including Joseph Calleja, at the Presidential Palace, the Manoel Theatre, and in the Malta International Arts Festival Masterclasses, tutored by internationally acclaimed pianists Y. Didenko, V. Scherbakov, A. Zenziper, C. Traxler and A. Zolotarev. Maria-Elena holds a Masters of Music in Piano Performance from RNCM, where she studied with Prof. Sally Ann MacLeod, a PGCE and First Class Honours in her Bachelor of Music from University of Malta, where she studied with Prof. Michael Laus. Maria-Elena also dabbles in contemporary music genres with various local ensembles, and is currently a full-time music teacher and staff pianist at the Malta school of Music.



PERFORMERS

Miriam Cauchi
Simon Abdilla Joslin
Maria-Elena Farrugia

Soprano
Violoncello
Piano



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ANU TALI Director
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