

ROMANTIC CLASSICS

CARMINE LAURI Violin
MAXIMILIAN HORNUNG Cello
MICHAEL LAUS Conductor

Malta Philharmonic Orchestra

Saturday, 16 December 2023, 8pm
Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta



PROGRAMME

Ludwig van Beethoven
Coriolan Overture

Johannes Brahms
Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra,
“Double Concerto” in A Minor, Op. 102

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Vivace non troppo

Intermission

Franz Schubert
Symphony No. 9 in C Major, “The Great” D. 944

- I. Andante – Allegro ma non troppo – Più moto
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace; Trio
- IV. Finale: Allegro vivace



PROGRAMME NOTES

by Dr Joseph Camilleri

Ludwig van Beethoven
(Germany 1770 – Austria 1827)

Coriolan Overture (1807)

This relatively brief orchestral work by Beethoven was inspired by the play *Coriolan*, by Heinrich von Collin, which was in turn based on Shakespeare’s tragedy *Coriolanus*. Collin’s play, which had enjoyed a brief-lived success in Vienna a few years before, was restaged in 1807 at the palace of Beethoven’s patron Prince Lobkowitz, accompanied by a performance of the composer’s new overture.

Coriolan was a Roman general, whose driving ambition eventually led to his downfall. Beethoven distils the essence of this tragedy into two contrasting themes – a first subject in C Minor representing the general, which gives way to a gentler, more lyrical second subject, representing *Coriolan*’s mother *Volumnia*. The overture is structured in an arch form, with *Coriolan*’s theme returning before fading away.

Johannes Brahms
(Germany 1833 – Austria 1897)

Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra, “Double Concerto” in A Minor, Op. 102 (1887)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Vivace non troppo

With the demise of the Baroque concerto grosso, concertos for multiple solo instruments were the exception. Indeed, Brahms’s *Double Concerto* has few precedents apart from Beethoven’s *Triple Concerto* and Louis Spohr’s *Concertante in C Major for Violin, Cello and Orchestra*. Brahms’s choice of two soloists allows him to use the violin and cello, with their overlapping registers, as a sort of “super string instrument”. The soloists’ lines often intertwine as if they were two voices in one.

Brahms’ choice of instrumentation might also be due to extra-musical reasons. A few years before he wrote the work, Brahms had become estranged from his close friend, violinist Joseph Joachim, after the composer sided with Joachim’s wife Amalie when the Joachim couple were divorcing. Brahms had been unsuccessfully attempting to restore this friendship and intended this work as a peace offering. It happened that, during this same period, cellist Robert Hausmann, a one-time student of Joachim and member of his string quartet, was nagging Brahms to write a major new composition for cello. So here was an opportunity for Brahms to appease both musicians. Joachim and Hausmann premiered the work in 1887. It would turn out to be Brahms’s final orchestral composition.

The concerto follows the traditional tripartite structure although, rather unconventionally, the first movement presents us almost immediately with quasi-recitative passages for the soloists. The ensuing *Andante* shows the composer at his most lyrical, with a sentimental lullaby only briefly interrupted by a hymn-like passage on the winds. In the finale of the *Violin Concerto* he had written for Joachim a decade earlier, Brahms had coloured the music with hints of gypsy melodies. The concluding movement of the *Double Concerto* marks a return to this zingarese style – the wild folk dances of the Hungarian plains making their way into the concert hall.

Franz Schubert
(Austria 1797 – Austria 1828)

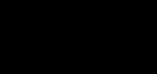
Symphony No. 9 in C Major, “The Great” D. 944 (1825 - 1826)

- I. Andante – Allegro ma non troppo – Più moto
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace; Trio
- IV. Finale: Allegro vivace

In 1824, Schubert wrote in a letter that he was preparing himself to compose a “grand symphony”. It is likely that he was referring precisely to the symphony which was eventually nicknamed “*The Great C Major*”, to distinguish it from the composer’s earlier, smaller-scale, *Symphony No. 6 “The Little C Major*”. Written between 1825 and 1826, the work – which would turn out to be Schubert’s final completed symphony – was first performed in its entirety a decade after the composer’s death.

The title “Great” is particularly appropriate for this symphony, whose grandeur and length (around an hour if all the repeats indicated in the score are included) was quite unprecedented at the time of its composition. It follows the typical four-movement structure of the Romantic symphony, and is particularly notable for its effective and original use of brass instruments.

A solo on the horn introduces the monumental first movement, rich in contrasting musical themes. The *Andante con moto* which follows creates a contrast between a march-like melody on the oboe, and a chorale passage on the strings. A solo horn leads a mysterious transition back to the oboe’s melody. There is a change of mood in the rustic *Scherzo* and *Trio* which seem to foreshadow the unruly dance movements found in the symphonies of Mahler and Bruckner. The *Finale* has the same breadth and grand structure of the opening movement. Schubert includes motifs which have already appeared in earlier parts of the symphony, creating a sense of unity. He also quotes a theme from the *Ninth Symphony* of Ludwig van Beethoven, a tribute to a composer whom Schubert considered a friend and an inspiration.





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CARMINE LAURI

Violin

Carmine Lauri started playing the violin at the age of four and further his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Maurice Hasson.

Lauri has performed extensively worldwide including performances in the presence of various Heads of State. He is the Co-Leader of the London Symphony Orchestra and the Concertmaster of the Oxford Philharmonic and guest leads various orchestras both in the UK and abroad, including the London Philharmonic, the Armenian State Symphony, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Malta Philharmonic, the Manchester Camerata and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra under distinguished conductors that included Lorin Maazel, Bernard Haitink, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Antonio Pappano, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yuri Temirkanov, Valery Gergiev and many others.

Carmine has performed concertos with many international orchestras including the LSO, LPO, the Czech Philharmonic and Czech State Phil of Brno, the Oxford Philharmonic, the Orquesta Municipal de Caracas, the MPO, The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO), the Guanajuato Symphony in Mexico and others. He has also premiered two violin concertos with the LSO. Carmine was made an Associate and Fellow of the Royal Academy (ARAM, FRAM) for his achievements in his career and his talents were acknowledged by his country which bestowed upon him the National Order of Merit – M.O.M. (F'Ġieħ ir-Repubblika) and is also recipient of the 2015 Gold medal for the Arts. He is a visiting professor of the Royal Academy of Music and gives masterclasses and coaches young students in orchestral sectional rehearsals and solo performances and repertoire on a regular basis.

In 2015 Carmine performed with and directed the Baltic Neopolis Orchestra as part of their Great Concertmaster series in Poland and give a recital at the Frankfurt Oper as part of the Malta Culture celebrations in Germany. In April 2018 he made his debut as soloist with the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra performing Wieniawski's *1st Violin Concerto* and in October 2018 he was the soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra performing Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen* in an open air concert in Hanoi, Vietnam and was also the soloist in John Williams's *Schindler's List* in a concert with the LSO, celebrating the life of the composer himself in a special unique performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

Other recent solo performances have included the Korngold *Violin Concerto* with both the Oxford Philharmonic and the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO) in Yerevan, Armenia, the Glazunov *Violin Concerto* with both the Guanajuato Symphony Orchestra in Mexico and the Oxford Philharmonic in 2019, conducted by Roberto Beltran Zavala and Sir Antonio Pappano respectively, Schnittke *Concerto Grosso No.1* with the LSO, the Dvorak Concerto with the ASSO and various solo performances in collaboration with artists that include Victoria Mullova, Simon Trypceski, Nikolai Znaider, Cedric Tiberghian, Patricia Kopachinskaja, and the world top gypsy violinist Roby Lakatos.

To pay tribute to Her Majesty's Queen Elizabeth II, Carmine gave a special performance of the Bach *Double Concerto* with violinist Maxim Vengerov in Oxford and the Barbican Centre in London.

Carmine plays a Golden Period Stradivarius violin generously loaned to him by Anna Goldman F.V..



MAXIMILIAN HORNUNG

Cello

Maximilian Hornung has established himself as one of the leading cellists of his generation in recent years. Today, he regularly performs as a soloist with such renowned orchestras as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under conductors such as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Manfred Honeck. His chamber music partners include Hélène Grimaud, Christian Tetzlaff, Lisa Batiashvili, Yefim Bronfman, Lars Vogt, Jörg Widmann and Tabea Zimmermann. He has been invited to perform at festivals including Salzburg, Rheingau, Lucerne, Verbier, Ravinia, and Hong Kong. He has appeared in concert halls such as the philharmonic halls of Berlin, Cologne, and Essen as well as the Vienna Musikverein, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and London's Wigmore Hall.

Highlights of the 2023/24 season include debuts with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester, the Estonian Festival Orchestra and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. He will perform in the dual role of soloist and conductor with the Orchestra della Svizzera italiana for the first time. In addition, he will return to the Tonhalle Zurich, the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, and go on tour with the Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest performing Brahms' *Double Concerto* with Lisa Batiashvili. After the successful European tour in trio with Anne-Sophie Mutter and Lambert Orkis in the 2022/23 season, he will appear with Anne-Sophie Mutter at the Mozartwoche Salzburg in the current season.

His versatile discography is impressive and includes solo concertos as well as recordings with prominent chamber musicians. He received the ECHO Klassik Prize for his first album (Sony 2011) as well as for his recording of Dvořák's *Cello Concerto* with the Bamberg Symphony (Sony 2012). Further recordings have included Richard Strauss' major cello works with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Bernard Haitink (Sony 2014) and Joseph Haydn's cello concertos with the Kammerakademie Potsdam under Antonello Manacorda (Sony 2015). In 2017, Deutsche Grammophon released a recording of Schubert's *Trout Quintet* with Anne-Sophie Mutter and Daniil Trifonov amongst others. Further recordings were released on Genuin, Linn Records, NEOS, Bridge Records, and CPO. In 2018, myrios classics released his recording of Dmitri Shostakovich's *Cello Concerto No. 2* and Sulkhan Tsintsadze's *Cello Concerto No. 2* with the Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under Andris Poga. On the same label, his CD of Schumann's *Cello Concerto* with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Daniel Harding will be released in 2023.

Maximilian Hornung, born 1986 in Augsburg, began taking cello lessons at the age of eight. The teachers with whom he has studied most intensely are Eldar Issakadze, Thomas Grossenbacher and David Geringas. At the age of only 23, he became first principal cellist of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and held this position until 2013. Since the spring of 2022, he has been Artistic Director of the Traunsteiner Sommerkonzerte.



MICHAEL LAUS

Conductor

Michael Laus graduated in piano, harpsichord, composition, and conducting at the *Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi* of Milan in 1982. He later participated in master classes in conducting given by George Manahan in the United States and Vladimir Delman in Bologna.

Principal Conductor of Malta's national orchestra for twenty-five years and now its Resident Conductor, he has conducted the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra in symphonic concerts both in Malta's main concert venues and on tour in Belgium and Italy. He has conducted several opera productions which include the Mozart/Da Ponte trilogy, *Die Zauberflöte*, *L'Elisir d'amore*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Otello*, *Falstaff*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Werther*, *Pagliacci* and *L'amico Fritz*, as well as lesser-known titles such as Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* and Nino Rota's *La note di un nevrastenico*. His performed repertoire includes the major symphonies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Handel's *Messiah*, the Mozart and Verdi Requiems, Jenkins' *Mass for Peace* and other works from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with several first performances of works by contemporary composers. In July, 2016, he conducted the first European performance of Arvo Pärt's *Greater Antiphons*, in the composer's presence, and in November 2016 he conducted a highly acclaimed performance of Verdi's Requiem. He opened the first edition of the Valletta International Baroque Festival in 2013 with Vivaldi's *Quattro stagioni* together with Carmine Lauri, and the second edition with Handel's *Messiah*. Other soloists with whom he has collaborated include Katia Ricciarelli, Cecilia Gasdia, Joseph Calleja, Brigitte Engerer and Andrea Griminelli, while he also works regularly with his wife, the soprano Miriam Gauci.

Michael Laus has guest-conducted prestigious orchestras such as the Bournemouth Symphony, the Slovak Philharmonic, the New Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Belgrade Philharmonic, the Orquesta Sinfonica de Asturias, the Berne Symphony Orchestra, L'Orchestra Sinfonica di Pesaro, the Sibiu Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moldavian Symphony Orchestra and the Croatian Chamber Orchestra. He has appeared as music director in operatic productions at the Berne State Theatre and in Oviedo. He regularly appears in the double role of pianist/harpsichordist and conductor in a concerto repertoire ranging from baroque to twentieth-century works. In this double role, he has won international critical acclaim for his recording of Cyril Scott's Harpsichord Concerto. His restoration of the score of Ignaz Brüll's Violin Concerto and his subsequent recording of this work has also been received with acclaim.

Michael Laus has recorded works for the piano and orchestra as well as orchestral music on CD, which have been released on *Discover International*, *Unicorn-Khanchana* and *Cameo Classics* labels. These include a series of recording of works by British composers, and another series on Jewish composers. He has appeared on *Rai 3*, *France 3* and *Mezzo* television channels. He is Associate Professor in Music Studies at the University of Malta. He was the founder and first music director of the Malta Youth Orchestra, and also the founder and director of the Goldberg Ensemble, a choral and instrumental group specializing in the performance of baroque music.



MALTA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Malta's foremost musical institution

The orchestra was founded in April 1968, when musicians from the recently disbanded "Commander-in-Chief" (C-in-C) orchestra of the Malta-based British Mediterranean Fleet regrouped as the Manoel Theatre Orchestra. It continued to serve as the theatre's resident orchestra until September 1997, when it became an independent orchestra, taking up the name National Orchestra of Malta. The orchestra became the MPO in 2008 when it expanded into a full-size symphony orchestra, bringing together musicians from Malta, Europe and beyond.

Joseph Sammut, who was the C-in-C's last conductor and the Manoel Theatre Orchestra's first, was succeeded by Joseph Vella, John Galea, Michael Laus, Brian Schembri and Sergey Smbatyan. The MPO's current resident conductor is Michael Laus. The orchestra also works with local artists including Joseph Calleja, Simon Schembri, Carmine Lauri and Miriam Gauci, as well as international guest artists including Ray Chen, Diana Damrau, José Cura, Mikhail Pletnev, Camille Thomas, Gautier Capuçon, Daniel Lozakovich and Enrico Dindo.

As Malta's leading musical institution, the MPO averages more than one performance a week including symphonic concerts, opera productions in Malta and Gozo, community outreach and educational initiatives, as well as various concerts of a lighter nature. During the past seasons, the MPO embarked on a Digital Transformation reaching audiences worldwide through its Online Programme.

The orchestra has performed in leading venues across the globe, including in the United States, Russia, Dubai, Germany, Austria, China, Italy, Spain and Belgium. The MPO is a keen exponent of Maltese composers, regularly performing their works in Malta and overseas, as well as frequently premiering and commissioning new compositions. It is also responsible for the training and professional development of the next generation of Maltese musicians.

MPO MUSICIANS

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Vincenzo Picone
Agnieszka Kuźma
Klara Nazaj
Emilia Wiśniewska
Elena Imperato
Roberta Attard
Fiona Giambra
Riccardo Rossano
Eduardo Garcia Salas
Stephen Scerri

Violin 2

Matteo Colombo *
Inmaculada Muñoz Salguero
Stefan Calleja
Valhvor Montfort
Francesca Moldovan
Rosanne Dimech
Mario Micallef
Stephen Debattista
Stephen Zammit
Bernard Curmi

Viola

Alexandre Razera *
Ester Garcia Salas
Marco Gallina
Mateusz Kuźma
Matthew Fenech
Savio Debono
Orietta Zammit Beaumer
Joseph Mallia
Mikaela Baluyot

Cello

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Yaroslav Miklukho
Lucie Kuchařová
Frank Camilleri
Desirée Calleja
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Marco Agnetti
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Flute

Rebecca Hall *
Fiorella Camilleri

Oboe

John McDonough *
Chiara Telleri

Clarinet

Giuseppe Recchia *
Daniele Galletto

Bassoon

Giacomo Cella *
Lampros-Ioannis Lapinas

Horn

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Christos Maltezos
Marco Cola
Bernardette Vella

Trumpet

Kevin Abela *
Brendan Ball

Trombone

Roderick Bugeja *
Emanuel Giordimaina
Jesmond Azzopardi

Timpani

Marios Mouzakitīs *

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** Guest Co-Leader

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Kuncert Ghas-Sena l-Gdida

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