

# The Oxford Sinfonia

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Friday 6th June, 8.00 pm

Saturday 7th June, 8.00 pm

1985

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ST. PAUL'S

WALTON ST., OXFORD

P R O G R A M M E

**W E B E R**  
B I C E N T E N A R Y  
C O N C E R T

## Overture to Peter Schmoll

## March for the Royal Society of Musicians\*

## Du Hoher Rautenzweig (Wedding Ode)\*

## Duet for Two Guitars

## Adagio and Rondo for Harmonie\*

**Trauermusik (world premiere)\***

# INTERVAL

## Abu Hassan - Opera in one act

Conductors . . . Roderick Sharpe  
                              . . . Benedict Driver\*

Producer. . . Jenny Bostock

Soprano . . . **Kate Eckersley**

Tenor . . . Armistead Wilkinson

Bass . . . Powell Harrison

**Baritone soloist . . . Timothy Rowe**

Guitar soloists . . . Steve Jones

... Ian Kelleher

The Oxford Sinfonia wish to acknowledge the support of  
SOUTHERN ARTS



## Carl Maria von Weber 1786-1826

### Overture to Peter Schmoll (1801-2)

The overture is taken from a rarely performed opera in two acts entitled 'Peter Schmoll und seine Nachbarn' - written when the composer was fifteen. It is a Singspiel and was Weber's third opera. The overture, being the only part ever published, displays a marked Italianate character, such as one would associate with Rossini.

### March for the Royal Society of Musicians for wind band (1826) and chorus

Written by Weber during his visit to London, just before he died.

#### Precis

Rejoicing, the soldiers return to their friends and to the beautiful country of their birth; they are welcomed by the maidens for their manly deeds, but urged to abandon the military life for one of peace and love.

J.B.

### Du Hoher Rautenzweig (Wedding Ode) for wind and SATB (1819)

#### Translation of the text:

You noble sprig of rue\*, blossom as your ancestors have done in purest happiness. Fate has granted you bliss embodied in equal virtue and in equal joy.

(\* rue was the emblem of the house of Saxony)

J.B.

The music, written for a German Royal Wedding, is based on a very well known tune.

### Duet for Two Guitars (1817)

from Moreto's comedy 'Donna Diana'.

### Adagio and Rondo

for 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, and 2 horns

**Trauermusik** 'Horst du der Klage' (1811)

for choir, baritone soloist, and 10 wind instruments

Baritone soloist . . . **Timothy Rowe**

Written on the death of the actor Max Heigel, for whose funeral Winter's 'Requiem' was chosen instead.

The score of **Trauermusik** has been prepared for performance by Mark Goddard from sources in the Prussian State Library, East Berlin, and the British Library, collected by Marshall Stoneham.

Translation of the text:

Choir: Even if you, in your grave, no longer hear the heavy sounds of lamentation, perhaps your spirit hovers around this quiet valley of death in the evening light, and looks down on our songs of mourning.

Recit: Arise, my suffering heart, bowed down by fate's heavy blow, and at this tomb pour out your great and proper grief.

Aria: Death has snatched from our midst the friend whose art and life both delighted us; the hearts of his friends are filled with such fear and sorrow. Alas, the faithful lament, he is no more.

Choir: O gaze at the gentle rays of the stars, and filled with faith, lift up your hearts from the vale of tears that is this life. Wherever, however far away, the spirit of our friend lives, he is happy. Softly, as a soul's breath we walk to you quiet grave. We walk to it in starshine and bring you the funeral wreath of rosemary and evergreen. Farewell, our friend, in those heights where we shall sometime meet again.

J.B.

I N T E R V A L

Abu Hassan

Details overleaf. . .

**Abu Hassan** an opera in one act (semi staged)

## Cast

**Abu Hassan favourite of the Caliph . . . Armistead Wilkinson**

**Sugarcane (Fatima)**, his wife, favourite of the Sultana

. . . Kate Eckersley

## Omar a money lender, infatuated with Sugarcane

... Powell Harrison

## Spoken parts

### The Caliph (Harun al-Rashid)

... John Wells

**Zubaidah his wife, the Sultana**

. . . Sally Lampert

## Masrur the Caliph's Treasurer

. . . Richard Russell

**Zemrud Zubaidah's confidante**

. . . Vanessa Powell

## Synopsis

Abu Hassan, favourite slave of the Caliph of Bagdad, and his young wife Fatima, have come to the end of their resources, and are reduced to living on bread and water. Abu is embarrassed at the idea of asking for money from his Master, who has probably only forgotten his needs out of pure absent-mindedness. Abu Hassan and Fatima concoct a plan to get their own funeral expenses by announcing each others death respectively, to the Caliph and his Queen. They do not really imagine that they will get away with this hair-brained device, but at least it proves successful in calling attention to their plight - with very satisfactory results...

## Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) - an overview

"I am waiting in agony for a good libretto. I don't feel right when I haven't got an opera in hand".

So wrote Carl Maria von Weber in 1811, the year of the first performance of **Abu Hassan** for such was his confidence in his calling as an opera composer , he was essentially a child of the theatre. His father, Franz Anton Weber, had formed a theatrical troupe - with the family as backbone - at the turn of the 19th century. They were typical of hundreds of groups that toured Germany at the time, and from the earliest days Carl was involved in all kinds of stage service. However, Franz Anton was quick to exploit his son's musical talent, perhaps believing that another Mozart 'wunderkind' could help his fluctuating fortunes.

As a result of their travels throughout Europe Weber was brought under the influence of Michael Haydn in Salzburg. His third opera '**Peter Schmoll und seine Nachbarn**' (Peter Schmoll and his neighbours) (1801-02), was produced under the latter's guidance, prompting him to comment that " it was composed according to the rules of counterpoint with much fine delicacy and appropriately to the text". Although performances of the complete opera are now rare, the overture survives as a lively and effective concert piece. It follows Weber's life-long practice of drawing material from opera.

Shortly afterwards he came under the influence of the Abbe Vogler, a teacher who fired his students with much enthusiasm. Weber reacted to the long hours of hard work by taking his pleasant singing voice on the rounds of Viennese taverns and accompanying himself on the guitar. This was the instrument that he sometimes included in his compositions, as in the obbligate passage in **Abu Hassan** and the **Duet for Two Guitars** (1817) that he wrote for a performance of Moreto's comedy 'Donna Diana'. Writing incidental music was a profitable sideline for Weber and he also used to transfer passages from one composition to another. Parts of the **Adagio and Rondo for Wind Band** later turn up in 'Henry IV' (1818) and 'Euryanthe' (1823).

His operatic enterprises continued with the composition of **Abu Hassan** (1818) which with Vogler's canny advice was dedicated to the Grand Duke Ludwig at Darmstadt. Taking the hint of regal generosity towards a poor yet witty debtor the Grand Duke accepted the dedication, offering him a concert, and the sum of 40 gold pieces, as well as ordering 120 tickets for the performance.

The tales of Scheherazade were immensely popular throughout the 18th century. To the Romantics the exotic settings had of course a particular charm. Using a text by Franz Carl Heimer he began work on this composition in August 1810, beginning, appropriately, with the 'Debtors Chorus' (Geld, Geld, Geld).

Shortly after the premiere of **Abu Hassan** Weber composed **Trauermusik** (1811), a solemn valediction for baritone solo,

chorus, and wind band. Called **Horst du der Klage?** (Do you hear the wailing?) it was intended for the funeral of the actor Max Heigel, but due to an alleged intrigue, centred around Heigel's son, a Requiem by Winter was played instead. It is therefore unlikely that **Trauermusik** was ever performed, and rather than waste his ideas, Weber later used parts of it in a Mass in Eb. He obviously liked the idea of wind instruments accompanying a chorus as in a later work **Do Hoher Rautenzweig** (1819), which uses a well known melody, much in vogue at the time. This piece was used for a prologue by Theodor Hell on the marriage of Prince Friedrich August and the Grand Duchess Caroline.

In 1826, Weber, who was already very ill with tuberculosis came to London in response to a commission from Covent Garden to conduct performances of his 'Oberon'. For the annual festival of the Royal Society of Musicians on the 13th May he was invited to contribute a piece (as before him had Haydn, Winter, and Spohr). He chose to arrange a March (written much earlier in 1801, for piano) , for wind band and added chorus, but was by then so weak that he had to dictate the instrumentation. He was too ill to attend the concert and died soon afterwards on the 5th June 1826.

K.B.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jennifer Barnes . . . Translations of texts  
Karen Brock . . . Overview of Weber notes  
Judith Ackrill &  
Jill Bailey . . . Publicity  
Diane Wyatt &  
Mary Worthington . . Administration

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **ARMISTEAD WILKINSON**

Studied at the Guildhall School of Music and with Campogalliani in Mantova. In 1975 he joined Kent Opera and later that year, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Opera, where he sang chorus, understudies, and small parts. He rejoined Kent Opera from 1980-1983, and in 1984 he also worked in their 'Insight into Opera' programmes in schools. Earlier this year Kent commissioned an opera for schools, 'The Black Spider', by Judith Weir, which was performed in Canterbury Cathedral, and in which Armistead performed two roles and also helped to train the children taking part. As well as an extensive oratorio and recital repertoire, some of his operatic roles include Nemorino ('L'Elisir d'Amore'), Lensky ('Eugene Onegin'), Don Jose ('Carmen'), Tamino ('The Magic Flute'), Cavaradossi ('Tosca'), Alfredo ('La Traviata'), and Rodolfo ('La Boheme').

### **POWELL HARRISON**

Powell was born in Perth, Western Australia. He studied at Adelaide Conservatoire, singing principle roles with major Australian opera companies. In 1971 he came to Great Britain, and studied at the London Opera Centre. Since then he has sung with 'Opera for All', Glyndebourne Opera Company, and Festival Opera Companies throughout Great Britain. Roles include Mephistopheles ('Faust'), Dapertutto and Miracle in 'Tales of Hoffman', Walter ('William Tell'), and Sharpless in 'Madame Butterfly'. He has also done a great deal of concert and oratorio work.

### **KATE ECKERSLEY**

Kate left Kenya and came to England to study music at Reading, and later, Oxford University. Since then she has pursued an active career as singer, teacher, and scholar. Her operatic roles have included the Sorceress in 'Dido and Aeneas', the Wise Woman in Robert Sherlaw Johnson's 'The Lambton Worm', Mrs Noah in 'Noye's Fludde', and varied parts in Handel operas. During 1985 she combined her dual roles as executant and scholar with research into, and performances of, cantatas by Domenico Scarlatti as part of the tercentenary celebrations. Later this year she will take part in the performance of the 'Florentine Intermedi' at a BBC Promenade Concert.



# THE OXFORD SINFONIA

Conductor: Roderick Sharpe

## **1st Violins**

Mariette Richter  
(leader)  
Roland Adenay  
Jane Dimmick  
Diane Wyatt  
Steve Pringle  
Richard Getting  
Janis Olsen  
Lee Gronner

## **2nd Violins**

Michael Riley  
Noreen Petrie  
Jacquelynn Jones  
Gill Hoyle  
Liz Julier  
Peter Jones

## **Violas**

Ann Southwell  
Rosalind Bleach  
Judith Ackrill  
Jill Bailey

## **Cellos**

David Johnstone  
David Julier  
Eleanor Matthews  
Martin Morris

## **Bass**

Alison Lowdon

## **Flutes**

Marion Ackrill  
Christopher Britton

## **Oboes**

Mary Worthington  
Karen Brock

## **Clarinets**

Malcolm Sadler  
Clare Powell

## **Bassoons**

Simon Payne  
Pat Goddard

## **Horns**

John Bleach  
Marshall Stoneham

## **Trumpets**

David Andrews  
Elaine Wycliffe-Jones

## **Trombone**

Robert Stevens

## **Guitars**

Steve Jones  
Ian Kelleher

## **Timpani**

Hugh Cameron

## **Percussion**

Carl Gombrich  
Peter Clarke

# THE CHERWELL SINGERS

Conductor: Benedict Driver

## **Sopranos**

Michelle Daly  
Anne Fenwick  
Theresa Gray  
Margaret Johnston  
Mary Timms  
Penny Tyack

## **Altos**



Judith Ackrill  
Jennifer Barnes  
Janet Jeffs  
Clair Murphy  
Greta Rye  
Hildred Younie

## **Tenors**

Derek Fowler  
Bill Johnston  
David Sutton

## **Basses**

Robert de Newtown  
Chris Emlyn-Jones  
Christopher Franks  
Julian Roberts  
Geoff Tyack



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