

Orchestra dell'Arte

Wirral Arts Festival 2023

The Lighthouse 4th November at 7.30pm

We are very much looking forward to bringing this event to the Lighthouse Church, Heswall's splendid new centrepiece. This will be the inaugural symphony concert in the Lighthouse – it is aptly named, being light, warm and very welcoming.

Initial estimates have shown that the acoustics in the church are very favourable. Something that concert-goers might not be familiar with is that the way orchestral musicians play is affected by the acoustic of the venue.

When performing in a very resonant acoustic, such as Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, the players must produce slightly shorter notes. In a rather drier setting, such as an outdoor concert, there is little assistance from the natural acoustic, and players will need to use longer, more sustained notes in order to replace some of the bloom usually provided by the acoustics of the venue.

Experienced musicians will automatically adjust note lengths for different concert settings, along with suggestions from the conductor.

For our concert on 4th November, we have chosen a lively and buoyant programme of music which will complement the surroundings and will be a perfect opening event in this wonderful new setting.

MOZART: Overture - The Marriage of Figaro

From the opera of 1786 by Mozart, we will start our concert in grand style with this effervescent overture. The opera is taken from the comic stage play by Beaumarchais and has the usual operatic plot of mistaken identity and intrigue, but always with a resolution just in time for the finale.

Mozart has very cannily decided not to give us a preview of musical themes from the coming opera, a practice that became very common with other composers. Instead, he gives us an idea of the drive and pace of the opera with an overture which combines an opening of rushing notes, suggesting the complex plot, with loud outbursts, illustrating the coming comedy and emotions.

MOZART: Violin Concerto No 5 in A major

Along with other of his compositions, it is unclear exactly when Mozart wrote this work. By analysing the paper and ink of the original manuscripts, it has sometimes been possible to define a narrow band of years when various pieces were composed. One thing that is known is that this concerto was first performed in Salzburg in 1775 during the Christmas season of that year.

The concerto is in the usual three-movement form. The first movement starts with a bold statement of the theme from the orchestra. Strangely, when the solo violin enters, instead of the usual repetition and embellishment of the opening theme, Mozart gives us a stately *Adagio* section, completely changing the mood. Soon, we are back into familiar territory with a return to the opening tempo and a warm and expansive *Allegro*.

The second movement is an expressive *Adagio*, in which the soloist plays a continual series of short notes, always against a stately and rather reserved accompaniment from the orchestra.

The finale is a *Rondo*, in which Mozart has written a series of variations on the first theme. This movement features a section in which the cellos and basses are asked to play in a very robust way in order to imitate Turkish percussion instruments. Mozart also used this device in his popular *Rondo alla Turca*.

The violin soloist for this performance is *Pip Clarke*. (Biography below)

ROSSINI: Overture - Italian Girl in Algiers

Bringing us back from the interval is the sparkling overture from this opera by Rossini from 1813. Rossini was a one-man music machine, turning out music by the mile. He wrote 39 operas as well as many songs and chamber pieces.

Written when he was just 21, Rossini stated that he wrote the entire opera in 18 days, though some sources claim that it took him all of 27 days – a remarkable feat whatever the actual figure. It wasn't common in those days to mix together both the serious and comic in one work, but Rossini did so in this opera, which was a major success from its first performance. The composer continued to make amendments and adjustments to the music for the next few years.

The overture starts with almost inaudible pizzicato notes from the strings, with sudden loud outbursts from the wind instruments. Over this a solo oboe tries valiantly to play a serene and calm melody, interrupted by ominous low notes. Soon, we hear the start of what has become known as the *Rossini crescendo*, in which the music gets faster and louder all the way to a boisterous ending. This device was used in many works by Rossini, something which earned him praise and criticism in equal measure.

GLAZUNOV: Concert Waltz No 1 in D major

Outside the famous Viennese Strauss family, the main contender for the title of Waltz King was held by Tchaikovsky, being particularly prominent in his three ballet scores. However, in subsequent years, Alexander Glazunov showed that rather than inventing a new, modern style, he was very happy to write in a similar style to the masters who he had always admired, such as Rimsky-Korsakov. In this way, Glazunov showed that he, too, was worthy of being the next in the line of masters of the waltz.

The Concert Waltz No 1 dates from 1893. The first bell-like notes form an introduction suggesting the dancers quietly taking their place before the orchestra sweeps us off into a glorious waltz. Colourful orchestration throughout shows that Glazunov was already a master of the form.

SCHUBERT: Symphony No 3 in D major

If Rossini was a prolific composer, Schubert was a complete phenomenon, producing over 1500 separate works, including over 600 songs for voice and piano, nearly as many piano pieces, 40 liturgical works, 20 stage works, many chamber pieces and nine symphonies.

The third symphony was written in three months, just after his eighteenth birthday. Like the other early symphonies, it was not published during his lifetime, appearing only in a collected edition in 1884.

It is in the usual four movement format. The first movement starts with a bold and dramatic opening. This soon leads into an airy *Allegro con brio*, notable for the interplay between the clarinet and the strings.

Rather than the expected slow second movement, Schubert treats us to a graceful *Allegretto*, full of humour with hints of a peasant dance.

A lively *Minuet* follows, with bold flourishes suggesting a *Scherzo* (jokey) approach. The centre *Trio* section is calmer, with a distinct feel of a *ländler* dance.

The final *Presto* movement is a romping *Tarantella*, in itself a nod towards the humour and style of Rossini.

PIP CLARKE violin

Pip Clarke is a unique musician. Loved by audiences wherever she goes, critics have described her playing as “dazzling”, demonstrating “incredible emotion” and often noting an “audience spellbound”. Pip gave her ‘sold out’ debut in the Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall in 2007, performing the Korngold violin concerto with the New York Pops Orchestra.

Concert performances in the United States have included performances with the Florida Orchestra, the Colorado Symphony, the Syracuse Symphony; the Utah Symphony; the Buffalo Philharmonic; and the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. Pip made a guest appearance at the Hollywood Bowl opening Gala Concert and was the featured violin soloist in the major motion picture '15 Minutes' (with Robert De Niro). She also appeared in recital as one of the “Rising Stars” at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago. Performances in Canada included repeat appearances with the Calgary Philharmonic and the Regina Symphony. In the UK Pip has performed with the London Sinfonia and toured with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

CD recordings include 'After a Dream', and ‘Amidst a Fantasy’ - both discs featuring a collection of short romantic concert pieces and a debut recording on Albany Records of a violin concerto by the American composer, Lee Actor. Written for Pip, it is an outstanding composition with lush contemporary romantic melodies and dazzling virtuosity.

Since returning home to live in the UK in 2018, Pip has continued to perform. She has collaborated with the pianist Martin Jones in concert, has performed with her sister Nikki Clarke, and is now a partner in a piano and violin duo with the pianist Havilland Willshire.

Along with violin performances, Pip conducts a ladies’ choir, and teaches privately.