

**GORTON
PHILHARMONIC
SOCIETY**

129 th YEAR



CONCERT

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL

FRIDAY 14TH OCTOBER 1983

7.30 p.m.

Conductor

Colin Touchin

Soloist

Edwin Thomson
(Piano)

PROGRAMME

The NATIONAL ANTHEM

Overture 'Rosamunde' Op 26

Franz Schubert
(1797 - 1828)

This work has a most curious history: Schubert's last operatic work 'Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus' received only two performances, both utterly disastrous. Having written no overture specifically for the work, the D major overture to 'Alfonso and Estrella' was played. Later Schubert submitted to his publisher a piano duet version of the Introduction to 'The Magic Harp' but entitled it explicitly 'Overture to the play "Rosamunde"'. Now, 'The Magic Harp' was one of the many early operatic failures of Schubert's teens and early twenties - not musically, but because of a weak libretto and poor production; in fact, the public recognised the supreme melodic gifts of the composer, and these alone accounted for the eleven performances it received, by which time the overture had become renowned. So it is today - the Overture is known as belonging to 'Rosamunde' but is, in fact, an earlier work. Whatever, it is surely one of the most memorable and attractive concert works, and one can be very thankful that Schubert's compositions away from the operatic stage received much more acclaim.

Concerto No 5 in E flat minor, Op 73

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770 - 1827)

for piano and orchestra
'Dedicated to Emperor Rudolph'

Allegro : Adagio un poco mosso : Rondo Allegro

There were varying stages in the development of the virtuoso piano concerto, the first being the breaking down of the rigid formal divisions in the structures of each movement, and as early as Mozart's E flat concerto K 271 the solo instrument is brought in after two bars of orchestral tutti, briefly but clearly. Beethoven's Fourth Concerto goes further - the piano opens and states the main theme, answered very quietly by the strings. And here in the Fifth, the grandiose opening is a natural extension of the process - three cadential figurations for the soloist in the very first few bars! This grandiose character is maintained throughout this enormous masterpiece or original musical conception - new cross-references to and from melodic and harmonic material are created all the way through, and the result is a great work of majestic statement and proportion; particularly important are the daring dynamic markings - daring because they often are the exact opposite of what musical history seemed to demand: new subjects announced pianissimo and 'echoed' more forcefully, and a sudden, authoritative first subject from the pianist in the last movement, sharply breaking the delicate, noble mood of the slow movement, with its extremes of piano register. In all, it is a work of empirical, and imperial composition.

INTERVAL (15 minutes)

Vltava, from 'Ma Vlast'

Bedrich Smetana
(1824 - 1884)

Smetana was the pioneer of Bohemian music, and became the founder of Czech national music, after he drew away from the symphonic models of Beethoven and Liszt to the field of opera, where he employed much folk material and discovered an established his own style, most particularly in evidence in 'The Bartered Bride' premiered in 1866. Towards the end of his life, Smetana returned to symphonic composition, and two poems were performed in 1875 with extraordinary success: he then wrote four more to complete the set known as 'Ma Vlast' (My Fatherland).

Intermezzo from 'Cavalleria Rusticana'

Pietro Mascagni
(1863 - 1945)

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a natural reaction to romanticism was firmly established in all the arts and this opera ('Rustic Chivalry') marks the birth of this musical naturalism (1890) against the romantic ideals of Verdi and Wagner. To denote this new trend, which emanated from Italy, the word 'verismo' was adopted. This Intermezzo, the most famous piece from the opera, is unashamed in its expression.

War March of the Priests,
from 'Athalie', Op 74

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809 - 1847)

Mendelssohn wrote several sets of pieces for use as incidental music to plays - most memorably to Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' - and this famous march was part of the score he produced for the 1845 production in Berlin (known then as Charlottenburg) of Racine's 'Athalie'. This, and the music for Sophocles' plays about Oedipus, was written to commission from the King of Prussia.

Suite No 2 from 'L'Arlesienne'

1 Pastorale 2 Intermezzo
3 Menuet 4 Farandole

Georges Bizet
(1838 - 1875)

This second suite arranged from the incidental music to Daudet's play, produced in Paris in 1872, was not done by Bizet, but by his friend Ernest Guiraud in 1879, four years after the composer's death. In doing so, he had to make many additions and alterations in the structure and orchestration of the originals, partly because Bizet had already used the fullest and finest orchestral pieces in his own first suite, and partly to imitate the plan adopted by Bizet, where he adapted and extended for the concert hall movements which had originally served different functions for the stage play. This suite contains some unaccompanied choral sections transposed for the orchestra, developments and extensions of shorter pieces, and even a scene from Bizet's opera 'La Jolie Fille de Perth' (1866), that is, the Minuet. The second piece is the only pure Bizet of the suite; while the Farandole is almost completely Guiraud's, since the original is but a quarter the length of the present piece - indeed, this contains the 'Marche des Rois' as a counterpoint to the dance theme, and makes a fitting tribute to both Bizet's melodic inventiveness, and Guiraud's arranging skills.