



10AM & 11.30AM SUNDAY 7 APRIL
AUCKLAND TOWN HALL

10AM & 11.30AM SATURDAY 13 APRIL
BRUCE MASON CENTRE



AUCKLAND
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BAYLEYS

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Philharmonia

Beethoven 7

🕒 7.30PM, THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY



CONDUCTOR Giordano Bellincampi

PIANO Yeol Eum Son

ROSSINI *The Barber of Seville: Overture*

MOZART Piano Concerto No.24

BEETHOVEN Symphony No.7



For artist biographies,
please visit our website

Programme Notes

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

The Barber of Seville: Overture (1816)

DURATION: c.7'

Rossini's 17th opera, *The Barber of Seville*, was a fast-paced, witty comedy of intrigue. Although now one of Rossini's most staged works, the opening night on 20 February 1816 was its own comedy of errors – anecdotally, a singer tripped and continued singing with blood streaming down their face, another fell through a trap door left open on stage, and a crowd of agitators made disturbances. Rossini fled the hall and stayed home for the second performance... only to hear resounding applause from his apartment window.

There is one further intrigue relating to the overture – although it is now one of the most well-known parts of the opera, the original overture from the premiere was lost and Rossini published the work with a re-working of the overture from his unsuccessful opera *Aureliano* – and before that the same movement had also opened his historical opera *Elisabetta*!

Despite this convoluted road to fame, the overture to *The Barber of Seville* as we

know it today is exactly the sort of music one would expect for a comic opera full of whispering in corners, outlandish disguises, and daring escapes foiled because the singers spent too long singing about them.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No.24 (1786)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Larghetto*
- III. *Allegretto*

DURATION: c.30'

"Pupils consume my entire mornings, almost every evening I perform... of necessity I must play new things," Mozart wrote in 1784. Mozart was received first as a performer and second as a composer in Vienna; his concertos became his pathway to a career as a composer.

The Concerto No.24 in C minor was one of six composed between 1785-1876. It was rare for Mozart to write in a minor key, though the runaway success of his D minor concerto the previous year may have influenced his choice.

Following a tempestuous orchestral introduction, the piano enters as a soothing

voice, the leaping melodic gestures broadening into swoops and running passagework. The second movement opens with a piano solo, while woodwind offer solos that comment on and dance around the solo piano line as the movement progresses. The finale is the last variation movement to appear in Mozart's concertos.

The cadenzas in the first and third movements would have been improvised by the composer at the keyboard – in fact much of the solo part was also improvised!

The original manuscript from the first performance contains only an outline of the piano part in some places: Mozart, busy putting the finishing touches on his opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, needed only this small aid to create his brilliant performance at the keyboard.

INTERVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Symphony No.7 (1812)

- I. *Poco sostenuto. Vivace*
- II. *Allegretto*
- III. *Presto. Trio I & II. Assai meno presto*
- IV. *Allegro con brio*

DURATION: c.40'

"Although I had heard a good deal about [Beethoven's conducting], the actuality still came as a shock," wrote the celebrated violinist Louis Spohr after participating in the premiere of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. "Beethoven had adopted the habit of communicating his expressive desires to the orchestra by all sorts of odd movements of the body. For a sforzando he would throw apart his arms... For a piano he would bend down... Then at a crescendo he would rise up gradually and at the onset of the forte, literally spring into the air. He often shouted,

too, in order to contribute to the forte, although probably unconsciously."

Beethoven's deafness was becoming increasingly apparent in 1812; he was struggling with constant noise in his ears as well as difficulty with conversation. Not only did Beethoven respond to his disability by exploring ways of music-making that drew more on overall physicality of gesture – as reported by Spohr – but the music of the Seventh Symphony itself is inherently gestural, dominated by infectious and exuberant rhythm.

A combination of chords and rising scales gives impetus to the opening sostenuto section of the first movement. The flute then leads us into the vivace, a turn-of-the-century dance party for full orchestra – one can easily imagine the colours of satin and beaded embellishments catching the light of a ransom's worth of candles as dancers moved in a ballroom.

The enchanting Allegretto is the symphony's only moment of repose – but even here an undercurrent of rhythmic ostinato carries us through the movement. At the premiere this movement was encored immediately and it remains a highlight with audiences today.

The third movement sets a blistering pace, with the central trios paying homage to the stately minuets that had just a few decades earlier been de rigueur for a triple-time symphonic movement. The finale reprises the same relentless drive of the opening movement, but this time with a manic, overly caffeinated energy that makes the movement a marathon for the string players who must move their bows incessantly in rhythmic repetitions. The timpani, arguably the most gestural of all the instruments in Beethoven's orchestra, also play a pivotal role, driving the orchestra ever onwards with explosions of raw energy.

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