

SERENATA NOTTURNA

Friday 30 April, 5.30pm and 8.30pm
Federation Concert Hall, Hobart

Eivind Aadland conductor
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

BARTÓK (arr. Jones) Hungarian Pictures
I. An Evening in the Village
II. A Bit Drunk
III. Bear Dance

MOZART Serenade in D, 'Serenata Notturna,' K 239
Marcia: Maestoso
Menuetto
Rondeau: Allegretto

HAYDN Symphony No 102 in B-flat
Largo – Vivace
Adagio
Menuet e Trio (Allegro)
Finale (Presto)

The Hungarian Pictures (also known as Hungarian Sketches) by Bela Bartók (1881-1945) began life as short works for solo piano composed in 1908-11. In 1931 Bartók selected five pieces, orchestrated them, and appended the title Hungarian Pictures. In this concert, we hear three works from that collection in an arrangement for brass and percussion by Tim Jones, Principal Tuba with the TSO. An Evening in the Village presents two contrasting melodies in Eastern European folk style; A Bit Drunk, as you would expect, has a wayward gait; and the forceful Bear Dance brings the mini suite to a brilliant conclusion.

The Serenade in D (also known as the Serenata Notturna) was composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) in January 1776, the month in which he turned 20. Although serenades were less rigorous than symphonies, consisting of 'lighter' movements such as marches and dances, they nevertheless could be quite long with perhaps as many as 8 or 9 movements. That said, the Serenata Notturna is surprisingly short, having only three. The orchestra is likewise modest, consisting of strings and timpani only. The Serenata Notturna opens with a March in the military style. The middle movement is a Menuetto with a strong three-in-a-bar tread and the finale is a sprightly Rondeau. An interesting feature of the Serenata Notturna is that it features a small group of soloists – two violins, viola and double bass – who come to the fore from time to time. In this respect, it bears a resemblance to the concerto grosso of the Baroque.

Joseph Haydn (1731-1809) composed 12 symphonies for London including this one, the Symphony No 102, which was premièred at the King's Theatre in 1795. Almost all of Haydn's London symphonies open with a slow introduction and No 102 is no exception, commencing with a spacious Largo. We're in the key of B-flat and the Largo gives way to a joyous Vivace. The second movement, Adagio, takes us to a far more serene place although shadows intrude from time to time. The third movement, a Menuet, has the character of a robust peasant dance. Haydn has a lot of fun with contrasting dynamics – the softs are very soft, and the louds are very loud. The double reeds – oboes and bassoons – come to the fore in the more soothing Trio. The Finale brings the symphony to a playful conclusion with a few Sturm und Drang outbursts and a marvellous coda where Haydn keeps delaying the inevitable closing phrase. Haydn certainly knew a thing or two about bringing drama, and comedy, to instrumental music.

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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