

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868): Overture to The Barber of Seville

The Barber of Seville is based on a popular French play by Beaumarchais, as was 'The Marriage of Figaro' by Mozart, whom Rossini greatly admired. Its first performance was a total fiasco, with actors unintentionally tripping over props and falling down trap doors, and even, during one of the most dramatic scenes, a stray cat prancing across the stage. Rossini couldn't bear it and left before the curtain calls. He stayed at home for the second performance, which fortunately, went off without a hitch and the audience loved it.

Rossini wrote his first successful opera at the age of 16 and continued to turn out operas at astounding speed for the next 20 years. He completed The Barber of Seville in only three weeks and, by the time he wrote his final opera, 'William Tell', he was just 37, had 40 successful operas behind him and had amassed significant wealth. For the remaining 36 years of his life, Rossini wrote little and lived in relative seclusion, possibly because of a painful illness that may have affected his concentration.

Because of the speed at which he wrote, Rossini often left the overture until the last minute. Indeed, when asked for advice on writing an overture, he replied, *"Wait until the eve of the performance. Nothing stimulates the inspiration more than sheer necessity, the presence of a copyist who is waiting for your work, and the insistence of a frantic Impresario who is tearing out his hair by the handful. In my time, all the Impresarios of Italy were bald by the age of thirty."*

For 'The Barber of Seville', Rossini initially intended to write a Spanish-inspired overture but ran out of time and so did what other overworked composers such as Bach and Handel had done before him, he recycled an overture which he'd already used twice in earlier operas that had not been successful. So, although none of the themes in this overture are from the actual opera, it remains one of Rossini's most popular works. In it, he used his tried-and-true overture formula – slow introduction, fast main section with two themes repeated, then concluding cadences. Following each statement of the lyrical second theme he employs his famous 'Rossini crescendo' or 'Rossini Rocket' where the melody starts repeating itself while more instruments are gradually added, with upward movement of pitch, increased articulation, and progressively rapid rhythmic patterns, all resulting in a feeling of unstoppable acceleration.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934): Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 85

(Adagio – Moderato, Lento – Allegro molto, Adagio, Allegro)

The cello concerto was the last important work that Elgar wrote but its first performance in 1919, with Elgar conducting, did not go well because it was insufficiently rehearsed. Most of the rehearsal time had been taken by the other works in the programme, which were conducted by Albert Coates, and as a result Elgar's concerto suffered. A newspaper critic wrote: *"The orchestra was often virtually inaudible, and when just audible was merely a muddle. No-one seemed to have any idea of what it was the composer wanted."*

Elgar composed the concerto at the end of World War I when the 'Edwardian' England with which much of Elgar's music is identified, had effectively ceased to exist. Throughout the war, Elgar suffered from depression and subsequently developed a throat problem that required surgery. While convalescing, he asked for pencil and paper and wrote down the opening theme of the concerto. Elgar's wife, Alice, was also unwell at the time and, when she died 6 months after the first performance of the concerto, part of Elgar's creative spark died with her and in the remaining 14 years of Elgar's life, he wrote little music of any consequence.

Elgar's cello concerto is a rich and noble work. Designed as two pairs of movements, it opens boldly, with a dramatic cello recitative that fades out as the violas introduce the long and flowing first main theme. This theme has several repetitions by soloist and orchestra, and is followed by a warmer and more hopeful central section with a swaying melody. The first theme then returns, and the movement ends bleakly. An extraordinary transition leads into the second movement as Elgar introduces another recitative, this time based on low plucked notes. The movement soon becomes a rapid, skittering dance, with a delicate accompaniment and occasional darker harmonic colours. The third movement, a passionate, expansive Adagio, is the heart of the piece. The orchestra is pared down so that the solo cello can sing freely and emotionally above it. The Finale is the longest of the four movements and, once again a recitative-like cadenza for the cello serves as a transition from the Adagio. Although the Finale tries hard to be a positive conclusion to the concerto, there is still an underlying tone of sadness, and, near the end, the cello eloquently recalls a single heart-breaking phrase from the Adagio that casts a shadow over the remaining music. Eventually we hear the opening flourish of the concerto again, but this time punctuated by two savage chords from the orchestra. The tempo then quickens for an impassioned ending.

Jacqueline Du Pré established the Elgar concerto as a staple of the international repertoire. Her interpretation of the work proved so moving that, according to music writer Norman Lebrecht, Du Pré 's teacher, Mstislav Rostropovich, upon hearing her legendary 1965 recording, *"erased the concerto from his own repertoire"*.

*Programme notes by Roger Booth from several sources including
Tabitha McFadyen, Lori Newman, James R. C. Adams, Elizabeth and Joseph Kahn,
Phillip Huscher, Adrian Jack, James M. Keller, Peter Brien*

Catherine Kwak: Cello Soloist

Catherine completed her Bachelor of Music (Soloist Specialisation Cello) at the University of Waikato under James Tennant when she was 18 years old. She started learning cello at the age of 7, and gained ABRSM Grade 8 (High Achiever's Cup) at age 9. Catherine has performed as a soloist and chamber musician nationally and internationally, including performances at the Euro Arts Festival and Academy (Germany), International Summer Academy Biel (Switzerland), Edinburgh Fringe Festival (Scotland), St-Martin-In-The-Fields (England), prizewinner 18th International Brahms Cello Competition (Austria), 2013 Gisborne International Music Competition (2nd Prize), 2013 ILT National Young Performer of the Year (2nd Prize), winner of 2014 Pettman/ROSL Scholarship, semifinalist 2015 Johansen International Competition (Washington DC). She has been invited to many other festivals by professors in Germany, Curtis Institute, and the USA.

Currently, Catherine is a 3rd year medical student and works as a casual with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. She is the organiser of an annual charity concert called "Semblemande" which features her musician friends from all over the world including performers such as Amalia Hall and Maria Mo. If you are interested in hearing about this concert, please email: semblemande@gmail.com

Canwei Li: Conductor

Canwei was born in China, and moved to New Zealand in 2006. He is now based in Auckland. As a conductor, Canwei has worked with several orchestras and opera houses internationally, either as a guest conductor or during masterclass, including: Manawatu Sinfonia, Manawatu

Youth Orchestra in New Zealand, London Classical Soloist in the U.K, Kammerphilharmonie Graz in Austria, Gwinnett Symphony Chamber Orchestra in the U.S, Sudwestdeutsche Philharmonie in Switzerland, Spazio Musica Opera, The Chamber Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Toscana Classica Orchestra in Italy, State Opera Rouse in Bulgaria. Canwei has also been serving as resident conductor of Auckland Chao Shan Ensemble since 2016, and has led the ensemble in several performances each year. In the past few years, Canwei has received instruction from and worked closely with many celebrated conductors such as Rita Paczian, Achim Holub, Robert Gutter, Edo de Waart, Hamish McKeich, Johannes Schlaefli, and Günter Neuhold.

Canwei started learning the piano at the age of 4. He graduated from The University of Auckland with Bachelor of Music (Honours) where he majored in piano performance. He has since dedicated his career to conducting, teaching piano, and performing chamber music. Canwei is also a member of TriOnique, which is a professional chamber group based in Auckland.

ORCHESTRA

Violins I	Joseph Chen, Brecon Carter, Mary O'Brien, Cameron Stanley, Michael Hunter, Helen Lewis, Sonya Albolins, Edward Liu
Violins II	Heidi Bowmast, Tsui-Wen Chen, Averil Griffin, David Kayrouz, Charlotte van Asch, Arthur Ranford, Roger Booth
Violas	Robin Strange, Judith Gust, Neil Shepherd, Matthew Gough, Henrietta Reid, Logan Wu
Cellos	Maxine Cunliffe, Rachael Clark, Claire Postlethwaite, Graham Falla, John Early, Mary Greig-Clayton
Basses	Barbara Symes, Thomas Chang
Flutes	Pene Brawn-Douglas, Mary-Kate Thomson
Oboes	Eugénie Middleton, Matthew O'Ryan
Clarinets	Julia Cornfield, Claire Turner
Bassoons	David Nation, Charlotte Naden
Horns	Miriam Robinson, Rebekah Gray, Henry Close, Jill Ferrabee
Trumpets	Robert Bisquera, Michael Plunkett
Trombones	Amber Kearney, Allan Grant, Bob Latimer
Timpani	Patrick Cornfield

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Next Concert: 2pm Sunday, 2nd September, Holy Trinity Church. For further information or to be on our mailing list, visit our website: <http://dco.net.nz/>

Devonport Chamber Orchestra

Catherine Kwak
Cello

Canwei Li
Conductor



Rossini: Barber of Seville Overture
Elgar: Cello Concerto in E minor

Sunday 15th July, 2pm

Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport
Admission \$10, Children under 12 free