E-CONCERT PROGRAMME

DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra

SEÑORITA, CARMEN

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MALAYSIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) gave its inaugural performance at Dewan Filharmonik PETRONAS (DFP) on 17 August 1998. With the initial search for outstanding musicians involving a worldwide audition tour, the MPO today is made up of many talented Malaysian musicians and musicians from other nations, a beautiful example of harmony among different cultures and nationalities.

With each new season, the MPO continues to present an exciting programme of orchestral music drawn from over three centuries, as well as the crowd-pleasing concert series. Its versatility transcends genres, from classical masterpieces to film music, pop, jazz, traditional, contemporary and commissioned works.

Among renowned Malaysian artists who have mesmerized audiences with the MPO include SM Salim, Sheila Majid, M Nasir, Siti Nurhaliza, Jamal Abdillah, Khadijah Ibrahim, Ramli Sarip, Ella, Faizal Tahir, Dayang Nurfaizah, Aishah, Jaclyn Victor, Aubrey Suwito, Akim and Sean Ghazi.

A host of internationally acclaimed musicians have performed with the MPO including Lorin Maazel, Sir Neville Marriner, Yehudi Menuhin, Joshua Bell, Harry Connick Jr., José Carreras, Andrea Bocelli, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Chris Botti, Branford Marsalis and Judika, many of whom have praised the MPO for its fine musical qualities and vitality.

The MPO regularly performs in major cities of Malaysia such as in Alor Setar, George Town, Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Kuantan, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching and many more. Internationally, it has toured Singapore (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2018), Japan (2001, 2009 and 2017), Korea (2001), Australia (2004), China (2006 and 2019), Taiwan (2007) and Vietnam (2013). The MPO has also released 21 CDs.

The MPO remains steadfast in its mission to be the premier Malaysian orchestra, providing the ultimate music experience through the power of live music that educates, entertains and inspires. Its main benefactor is PETRONAS, and its patron is YABhg. Tun Dr. Siti Hasmah Haji Mohd Ali.

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Señorita, Carmen

Sat 19 Mar 2022 8:30 pm

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Gerard Salonga, conductor

PROGRAMME

07 **ROSSINI**
Overture to *La gazza ladra* *10 mins*

08 **RAVEL**
Suite from *Ma mère l'Oye* *16 mins*

09 **BIZET**
***Carmen* Suite No. 1** *12 mins*

09 **BIZET**
***Carmen* Suite No. 2** *19 mins*

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conductor

Gerard Salonga

Gerard Salonga is currently the Resident Conductor of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra in Kuala Lumpur, a position he has held since January 2019. For two seasons, he served as Assistant Conductor of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra from 2016 to 2018 and was Music Director of the ABS-CBN Philharmonic Orchestra in Manila from 2012 to 2020. In January of 2021, Salonga began his term as the Music Director of the Orchestra Of The Filipino Youth (OFY).

He has assisted and covered distinguished conductors such as Jaap van Zweden, Jun Märkl, Hans Graf, Yu Long, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Mark Wigglesworth and Leonard Slatkin. He has also conducted the Philippine Philharmonic, Shanghai Opera House Orchestra and Chorus, Kunming Nie-Er Symphony, Evergreen Symphony of Taiwan, South Denmark Philharmonic, Queensland Camerata, Orchestra Victoria, and the Bangkok, Singapore and Sydney Symphony Orchestras.

His orchestral arrangements have been performed by orchestras such as the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, Singapore Symphony, RTE Concert Orchestra, New York Pops, Guangzhou Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony, Cincinnati Pops, BBC Symphony and Royal Philharmonic. He has also collaborated as arranger/conductor with artists like Lea Salonga, Regine Velasquez, Wang Leehom, Wu Tong, Tengku Irfan, Michael Ball, Blake, Il Divo, Danielle de Niese, Ksenija Sidorova, Shen Yang, Llŷr Williams James Ehnes, Jing Wang, Jan Lisiecki, and The Beach Boys.

In 2018, Salonga conducted the Sydney Symphony and TaikOz in the world premiere of Australian composer Lachlan Skipworth's *Breath Of Thunder* (concerto for Taiko and orchestra) at the Sydney Opera House, which earned an APRA AMCOS (Australian art music) nomination for Performance of The Year.

In 2019, he collaborated with pianist Cecile Licad and the Sønderjyllands Symfoniorkester (South Denmark Philharmonic) on a new recording of the works of George Gershwin for piano and orchestra released on the Danacord label. In 2020 and 2021 he served as music producer for the MPO's recordings of classical and new works for its YouTube channel MPOTV and was also the artistic adviser for MPO's recent collaboration with the Malaysian Composers' Collective, premiering new compositions by Malaysian composers. On stage with the MPO at the DFP, Gerard has conducted symphonic programmes, family, and film concerts including Raiders of the Lost Ark and Ratatouille.

As a conductor of musical theatre, he has led the orchestras for the Manila stagings of *Carousel* (1996), *They're Playing Our Song* (2000), *Dreamgirls* (2003), *Baby* (2004), *West Side Story* (2008), *Sweeney Todd* (2009) and *Little Women* (2010). In 2019, he conducted *Sweeney Todd* for Atlantis Theatrical in Manila and in Singapore for Singapore Repertory Theatre. For his work in concerts and theatre, he is a four-time recipient of the Aliw Award for best musical director and twice winner of the Gawad Buhay Philstage Award.

In 2012, Salonga was honoured as one of The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM), the Philippines' highest civilian award to achievers under the age of 40. In 2021, he was named one of the recipients of the SUDI National Music Awards by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

2022 engagements include concerts in Manila, the UK and Singapore, along with continuing his work with the MPO and OFY.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Tonight's concert focuses on the orchestral wizardry of three famous composers. In the overture to his opera *La gazza ladra*, Rossini incorporated such devices as virtuosic writing for trombones, horn quartets and stereophonically placed snare drums. Refinement is the keynote to Ravel's orchestration in his *Mother Goose* Suite. Examples include the single flute, single horn and muted violas in the opening bars; and the forlorn oboe solo played over "wandering" violins in the second number. Bizet never visited Spain, yet in his opera *Carmen* he conjured up all the colours, rhythms and vivacity of this land to perfection through the orchestra.

GIOACHINO ROSSINI (1792-1868)
Overture to *La gazza ladra* (1817)

The Background

Rossini's rich legacy of music is found today equally on the operatic stage and in the concert hall. Although only a handful of his operas are performed with any regularity (but what regularity!), at least a dozen overtures are staples of the orchestral repertory, including *La gazza ladra*, premiered on 31 May 1817 at La Scala in Milan.

The Music

So renowned is Rossini for his vocal pyrotechnics and memorable melodies that it is all too easy to overlook his skill at orchestration. The brilliant overture that opens tonight's concert provides an excellent example of this. *La gazza ladra* (The Thieving Magpie) incorporates most of the hallmarks of his orchestral style – lightly tripping themes for violins, virtuosic passages for unison trombones, a theme for the woodwinds including the piccolo in its highest register, and horn quartet writing all wrapped into a sonata-allegro form without development section. Of course, there are also several of those famous Rossini crescendos – the long, slow build-up of volume, number of instruments and tension, the equivalent of a musical juggernaut. Unique to this overture however, is the *Maestoso marziale* introduction, which opens with the unprecedented use of two snare drums stereophonically placed on opposite sides of the stage.

Gioachino Rossini

wikipedia.org

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)
Suite from *Ma mère l'Oye* (1910/1911)

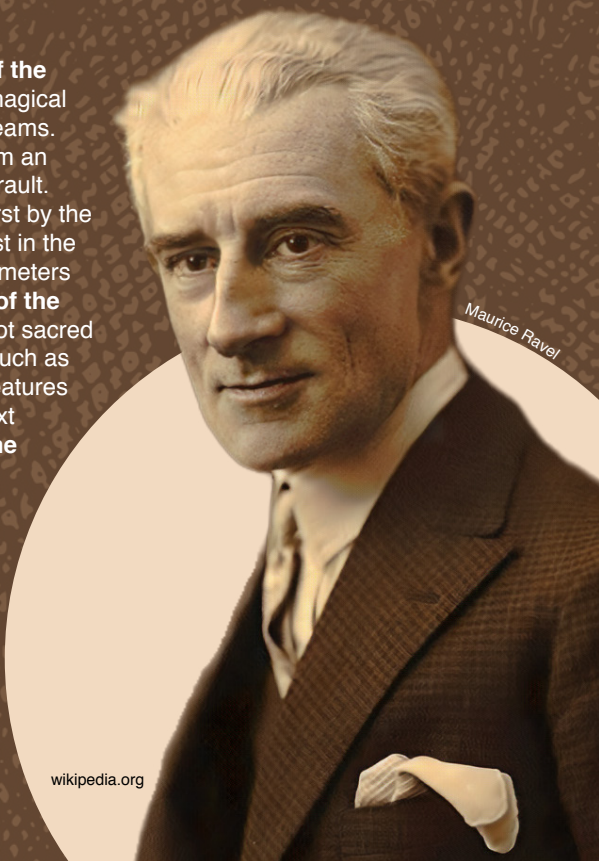
I. Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty
II. Tom Thumb
III. Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas
IV. Conversations of Beauty and the Beast
V. The Fairy Garden

The Background

Two of Ravel's closest friends were the Godebski children, Jean and Mimie. When they were still in the early stages of their piano studies, he wrote for them a four-hand piano suite tailored to their small hands and limited technical abilities. Each of the five movements was based on one of the children's favourite fairy tales. The following year, Ravel transcribed these five crystalline miniatures for orchestra. Such skill of colouristic nuance and texture went into the orchestral transcription that the listener inevitably feels the music was originally conceived for the medium of the orchestra.

The Music

In the Suite's opening number **"Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty"**, Ravel conjures up a magical world of childlike simplicity and idle daydreams. **"Tom Thumb"** depicts with graphic realism an episode from the eponymous Charles Perrault. Tom, his plaintive whimpering portrayed first by the solo oboe, then by other woodwinds, is lost in the forest (slowly meandering lines in shifting meters for violins). In **"Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas"**, the pagodas in question are not sacred buildings with tall towers found in places such as China or Myanmar, but rather fairy-like creatures that attend to the empress in her bath. Next comes **"Conversations of Beauty and the Beast"**, the conversations taking place musically between a graceful waltz tune in the clarinet and the growling of the contrabassoon. **"The Fairy Garden"** brings the suite to a close. As Prince Charming awakens the Sleeping Beauty with a kiss, the orchestra traces a long, slow crescendo that grows to a dazzling, radiant evocation of a child's world of enchantment.


Maurice Ravel

wikipedia.org

GEORGES BIZET (1836-1875)
***Carmen* Suite No. 1 (1875/1882)**

I. Prélude
II. Aragonaise
III. Intermezzo
IV. Seguidilla
V. Les Dragons d'Alcala
VI. Les Toréadors

***Carmen* Suite No. 2 (1875/1887)**

I. Marche des contrebandiers
II. Habanera
III. Nocturne
IV. Chanson du toréador
V. La Garde montante
VI. Danse bohème

wikipedia.org

Poster from Carmen's première

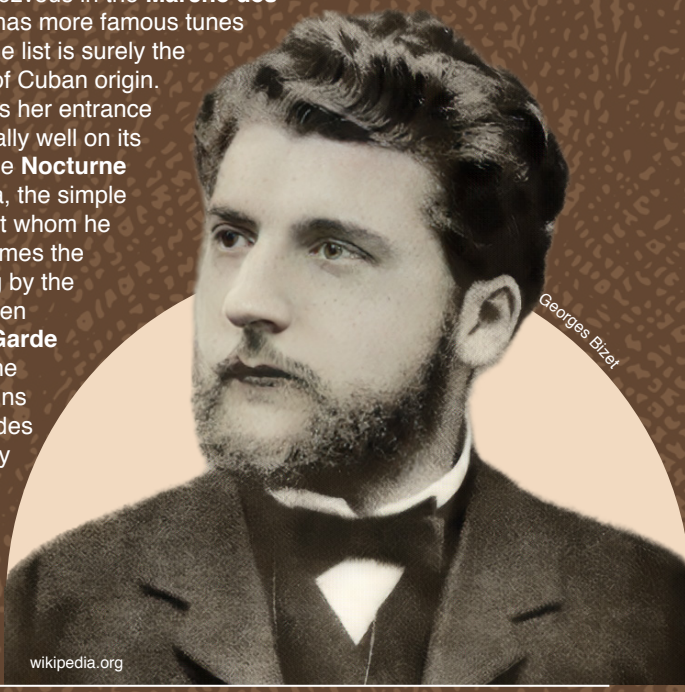
The Background

Spanish temperament, local colour, brilliant orchestration, vivid sensuality, a taut story, clearly motivated action, memorable tunes and believable characters all contribute to making *Carmen* perhaps the most popular and universally beloved opera ever written. Premiered in Paris on 3 March 1875, *Carmen* drew initial hostile response due to its realistic portrayal of unbridled human passions, its steamy title character and a tragic ending for what was supposed to be an *opéra-comique*. Bizet's music was criticized for being undramatic, too Wagnerian, lacking in melody(!), dull, and full of strange sonorities. Yet at least one member of the audience sensed its greatness- Tchaikovsky, who predicted that it would become the world's most popular opera. The two suites were arranged by Bizet's colleague Ernest Guirard, who also wrote the spoken texts for the opera. Where relevant, the vocal lines have been assigned to instruments and the sequence of numbers has been altered for balanced effect. The First Suite was published in 1882, the Second in 1887.

The Music

The opera opens with the bright colours, cheerful exuberance and vigourous rhythms of festive Spain, followed by the proud theme of the toreador (bull fighter) Escamillo. In tonight's suite, however, this music is heard later as **Les Toréadors**. The first music we hear is that of the darkly menacing Fate motif (**Prélude**), which symbolizes the tragedy about to unfold. Next comes the **Aragonaise**, which opens with spectacular brilliance. This is the Prelude to Act IV. The **Intermezzo** is one of the few moments of peace and tranquility amidst the seething emotions of *Carmen.* This soothing, meditative number, featuring solo flute against harp accompaniment, serves as an entr'acte played before Act III, the midpoint of the drama. The **Seguidilla**, sung by Carmen in its original form near the end of Act I, is set to an alluring melody accompanied by plucked strings suggestive of a guitar. Here Carmen invites Don José to become her next lover. **Les Dragons d'Alcala** is the Prelude to Act II (*dragons* are troops in a combat unit). Its tune is a military ditty, played initially by bassoons, and later sung by Don José en route to see Carmen. The First Suite concludes with Les Toréadors, the aforementioned opening music of the opera with the proud theme of the toreadors briefly interpolated as a central episode.

The Second Suite begins with the opening scene of Act III, set in a smugglers' hideout in the mountains. The music graphically describes their slow, cautious but purposeful tread through the mountain pass towards the rendezvous in the **Marche des contrebandiers**. *Carmen* probably has more famous tunes than any other opera, and leading the list is surely the **Habanera**, a song and dance form of Cuban origin. Though sung by the title character as her entrance aria in Act I, the number stands equally well on its own as a purely orchestral piece. The **Nocturne** is the song sung in Act III by Micaëla, the simple peasant girl devoted to Don José but whom he rejects in favour of Carmen. Next comes the stirring **Chanson du toréador**, sung by the bullfighter Escamillo, the lover Carmen has taken to replace Don José. **La Garde montante** depicts the changing of the guard early in Act I while street urchins tag along. The Second Suite concludes with the fiery **Danse bohème** (Gypsy Dance). Amidst the company of smugglers and gypsies at a tavern, Carmen sings while dancers whirl about ever more energetically and the orchestra works itself into a frenzy.


Georges Bizet

wikipedia.org

ABOUT THE WRITER

Formely a horn player in the Montreal Symphony, Robert Markow now writes programme notes for that orchestra and for many other musical organizations in North America and Asia. He taught at Montreal's McGill University for many years, has led music tours abroad, and writes for many leading classical music journals, including American Record Guide, Fanfare, Opera, Opera News, The Strad, and Symphony. He travels regularly to Europe, Asia and Australia in search of musical stimulation.

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Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra

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Note: Sectional string players are rotated within their sections.

music that moves you

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Naohisa Furusawa, Conductor
Gerard Salonga, Narrator

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Gerard Salonga, Conductor

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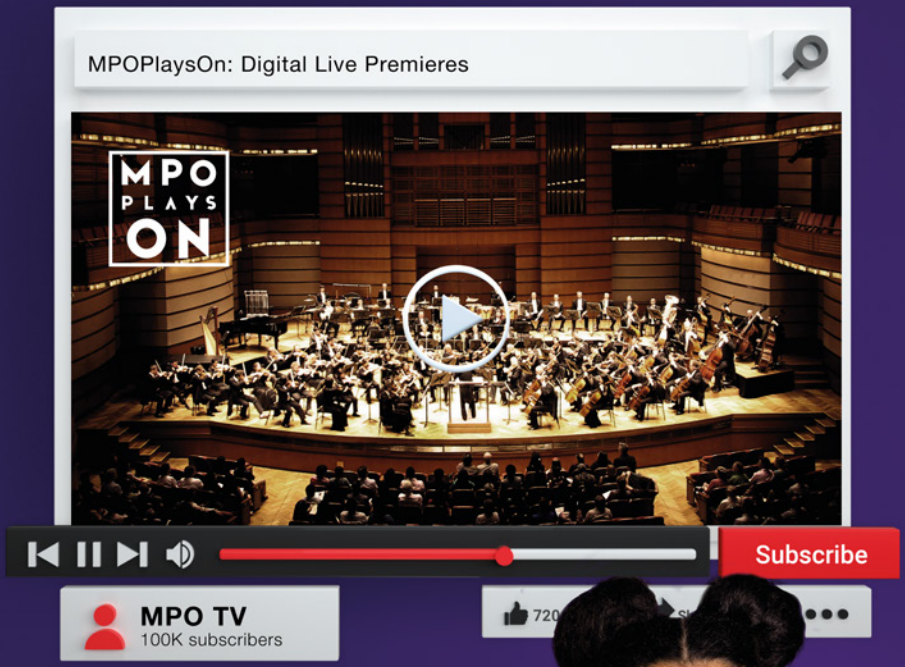

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