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Malaysian
Philharmonic
Orchestra



THE HUNGARIAN DANCES

2022 season

PERFORMANCE AT
DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS



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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The Hungarian Dances

Sat 4 Jun 2022 8:30 pm

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Naohisa Furusawa, conductor
Alexandar Lenkov, bassoon

PROGRAMME

WEBER

09 **Overture to *Oberon*** 9 mins

WEBER

10 **Bassoon Concerto in F major, Op. 75** 20 mins

BRAHMS

12 ***Hungarian Dances: Selections*** 20 mins

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conductor



Naohisa
Furusawa

Naohisa Furusawa has been a member of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) double bass section since 2003. Born in Tokyo in 1973, he started to play the violin when he was 4 and joined his junior high school orchestra as a double bass player at 12. His first conducting experience was with this orchestra. Later, he studied double bass with Prof. Nobuo Shiga and conducting with Prof. Kazue Kamiya at Toho Gakuen School of Music (Tokyo Japan), and with Prof. Frank Reinecke at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg.

Furusawa has performed as a double bass player with the NHK Symphony, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and other orchestras, under the direction of conductors such as Seiji Ozawa, Kazuyoshi Akiyama, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Horst Stein, Lorin Maazel, Herbert Blomstedt, Charles Dutoit, Fabio Luisi, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Mstislav Rostropovich, Paavo Järvi, Pierre Boulez and Valery Gergiev.

He conducted many youth ensembles including the MPO's Encounter Training Ensemble and the Miri Tutti Project in East Malaysia as part of the MPO's Education and Outreach Programme and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony nine times with the MAX Philharmonic Orchestra (Tokyo Japan). In 2015, he conducted Mahler's Second Symphony with the MAX Philharmonic to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of Second World War.

Furusawa was Resident Conductor of the MPO from 2016 – 2019 and Principal Conductor of the Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (MPYO) from 2020 – 2021. He also serves as cover conductor for Mark Wigglesworth, Roberto Abbado, Stéphane Denève, Jun Märkl and Vladimir Ashkenazy.

The MPO, under his baton, kicked-off its 18th season in September 2016 with four sold-out concerts themed *A Musical Journey in Anime* featuring the works of acclaimed Japanese composer Joe Hisaishi at Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (DFP).

He conducted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in DFP as well in August 2017 for the 60th Anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Japan with a combined choir consisting of choirs from The Dithyrambic Singers (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia), The Choir of Gonville and Caius College (Cambridge, the United Kingdom), and The MAX Philharmonic Choir (Tokyo, Japan).

His first conducting tour with the MPO and Malaysian Pianist Tengku Irfan was in Japan at the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall for the Asia Orchestra Week (AOW) in October 2017, a festival under Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs. He also conducted the "Side by Side" Orchestra with the MPO and Kansai Philharmonic Orchestra (Osaka Japan) as part of AOW at the Iwaki Performing Arts Center.

He made his debut with the MPYO in the International Youth Orchestra Festivals at the Esplanade (Singapore) in December 2017, Hong Kong Cultural Centre (Hong Kong) in December 2018, and Taman Ismail Marzuki (Jakarta) in September 2019.

Furusawa and the MPO toured to Kota Kinabalu and Kuching in June 2018, Johor Bahru and Melaka in September 2018, and Dalian (China) in November 2019.

bassoon

Alexandar Lenkov was born in Sofia, Bulgaria to a musical family. He started playing the piano at the age of 5 and bassoon at 14, studying at the Lubomir Pipkov National Music School in Sofia under Yordan Metodiev. During his school years, he won first prize at the Young Musical Talents competition in 1996.

Lenkov later went to Germany to complete his studies at the University of Music Franz Liszt in Weimar and with Georg Klutsch at the University for Music and Dance in Cologne. During his time in Germany, Lenkov performed with many orchestras including the Bamberg Symphony, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Cologne Chamber Orchestra, Gürzenich Opera Cologne, and Philharmonie der Nationen, among others.

Lenkov joined the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra in 2004, and since 2007 has been the Section Principal Bassoon. He has performed under conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Kees Bakels, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Eiji Oue. He has also performed with soloists such as Joshua Bell, Sumi Jo, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Janine Jensen and many others. He currently lives in Kuala Lumpur with his son. In addition to playing classical music, he enjoys nature and cooking.



Alexandar
Lenkov

CARL MARIA VON WEBER



PROGRAMME NOTES

Bassoon concertos do not turn up on symphony programmes often; when they do, it is usually Mozart concert that is played. Tonight we get to hear a different one - Weber's - similarly infused with catchy tunes, rhythmic verve and lyrical impulses. One of the same composer's best overtures opens the concert. We mostly think of Brahms as a "serious" composer, but the man definitely had his lighter side as well, nowhere more visible than in the *Hungarian Dances*. Biographer Jan Swafford writes that they were "a way to let go of his usual sobriety and escape into a music perfervid, exotically coloured, elastic in rhythm, improvisational in style".

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)

Overture to Oberon (1826)

The Background

Weber wrote much for the stage, and opera was his most successful medium. *Oberon*, his last opera, was commissioned by an actor and joint proprietor of the Covent Garden Theatre in London, Charles Kemble. Weber was already highly respected by London operaphiles for *Der Freischütz*, which had gone through six different productions there in 1824 alone. Although his health was already precarious, he accepted the assignment anyway, pouring his greatest effort into the venture. He even took over 150 English lessons so as to understand the language he was setting and to be prepared for his London visit to conduct the premiere. This took place on 12 April 1826 and was a resounding success. The English libretto, based on Wieland's epic poem *Oberon*, was written by James Robinson Planché (1796-1880) and involves quite a potpourri of characters and locales: Oberon, Titania and Puck (from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*), Charlemagne, Haroun al Rashid, the Calif of Baghdad, mermaids and fairies, who appear variously in settings from France to Baghdad to fairyland. Like many German romantic operas, *Oberon* incorporates elements of the supernatural, pageantry, exotic locations and maidens in distress rescued by knights in shining armor.

The Music

The opera's overture begins with the vision of just such a knight, Oberon, whose soft, beguiling call from his magic horn bids us enter the world of romantic adventure. Flutes and clarinets answer with a touch of fairy dust, followed shortly by a suggestion of the pageantry of Charlemagne's court. The main body of the overture (*Allegro*) follows a sonata-form movement, employing themes from the opera.

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)**Bassoon Concerto in F major, Op. 75 (1812)**

I. Allegro ma non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Rondo: Allegro

The Background

The world's best-known concertos for all four woodwind instruments - flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon - are all by Mozart. But the *second* best-known for both clarinet and bassoon are by Weber. Weber, like Mozart, had a special fondness for the woodwind sonorities, both in ensembles and in solo roles. Of Weber's fifteen works for solo instrument and orchestra, six are for woodwinds (one for flute, three for clarinet, two for bassoon). The period of greatest activity in this respect occurred in 1811, when Weber was in Munich. There, he became friends with the Court Orchestra's principal clarinetist, the renowned Heinrich Bärmann. For Bärmann he wrote a Clarinet Concertino that so impressed everyone in the orchestra that Weber suddenly found himself besieged on all sides with requests for solo works for other instruments as well. The first documented performance of the Bassoon Concerto took place in Prague on February 19, 1813 with Georg Friedrich Brandt as soloist, but he most likely played it earlier in Munich as well. For Brandt, Weber also made a transcription of the *Andante and Rondo Ungarese*, written originally for viola in 1809.

The Music

The Bassoon Concerto is cast in classical style and form. It reveals both the lyrical and humorous sides of the solo instrument, including its almost unique ability to make enormous jumps in range with ease. Weber's love for the horn also finds an outlet in this concerto in the lovely trio of the slow movement where a pair of horns joins the soloist. The opening movement is full of Weber's typical march-like rhythms, while the second movement has an almost operatic cast to it. The final Rondo features the soloist in music of buoyant wit and virtuosic brilliance.

JOHANNES BRAHMS



JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Hungarian Dances (1869)

- No. 1 in G minor (Allegro molto)
- No. 3 in F major (Allegretto)
- No. 10 in F major (Presto)
- No. 4 in F-sharp minor (Poco sostenuto – Vivace)
- No. 7 in F major (Allegretto – Vivo)
- No. 6 in D major (Vivace)
- No. 5 in G minor (Allegro – Vivace)

The Background

The Hungarian uprising against Austrian rule caused numerous political refugees to leave the country. Among them was the Magyar violinist Eduard Reményi (born Hoffmann), who eventually appeared in Hamburg, Brahms's native city. It was from Reményi that the sixteen-year-old Brahms made the acquaintance of Hungarian gypsy music- its improvisatory nature, fiery performance style, abrupt alternation between slow and fast sections, its "gypsy" scale with its two augmented seconds (D - E - F - G# - A - Bb - C# - D), idiomatic cadences and other features.



The inspiration behind Brahms's Hungarian Dances

In 1853, Reményi took Brahms as his accompanist on a tour through northern Germany, a tour that included the playing of much gypsy music and folk songs. Sixteen years later, Brahms offered the publisher Simrock ten *Hungarian Dances* in two books for piano four hands. To show he had merely arranged them, the composer indicated that they were “set for the piano” and assigned them no opus number. A further eleven *Hungarian Dances* were published in 1880, again in two books. These 21 dances, plus the 18 *Liebeslieder Waltzes* Op. 52, were responsible, more than any other compositions, for Brahms’s popularity and financial security (from sales of sheet music) in his own lifetime. Brahms’s “Hungarian” music is not limited to the 21 Dances; he also incorporated Hungarian flavour into a number of his “serious” works, including the fiery finales of the Double Concerto, the Violin Concerto, and the G-minor Piano Quartet (No. 1), as well as the finale of his second string quintet (Op. 111) and two sets of variations on Hungarian themes for piano (Op. 21).

The Music

Brahms himself orchestrated only three of the dances - Nos. 1, 3 and 10, all in 1874, but he also arranged Nos. 1-10 for solo piano. Other dances have been orchestrated by men famous and obscure. Dvořák orchestrated Nos. 17 through 21. Paul Juon, Albert Parlow, Martin Schmeling, Robert Schollum and Hans Gál have all had a hand in this industry. In recent times, the Hungarian conductor Iván Fischer has orchestrated the complete set. Brahms’s close friend Joseph Joachim arranged all 21 for violin and piano (a recording of Joachim playing No. 2, made in 1903, can be heard on YouTube).

The two most popular of the Dances are Nos. 1 and 5, both in G minor. In Hungary No. 1 is called the *Isteni Csárdás* (divine csárdás). The outer passages consist of a darkly romantic, swaying theme in the strings decorated with brilliant flecks of colour from the woodwinds. Brahms recorded this dance on the piano in 1890. No. 5 is based on the csárdás *Bartfai emlék* (Memories of Bátfai) by the Hungarian composer Béla Kéler, which Brahms mistakenly thought was a traditional folksong. Biographer Malcolm MacDonald singles out No. 4, “with its cimbalom imitations and improvisatory feeling” as one of the two finest of the Dances (No. 9 is his other favourite).

ABOUT THE WRITER

Formerly 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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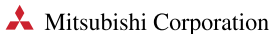
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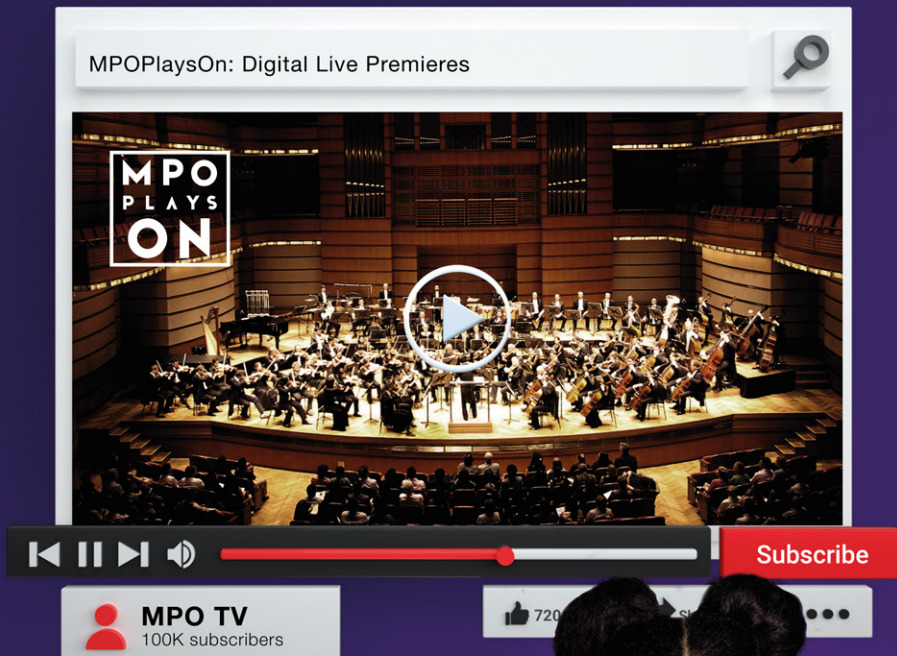
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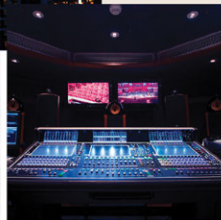
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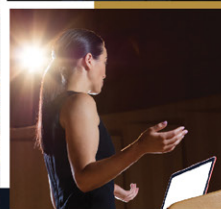
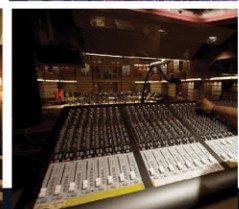
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