



DAME ANN MURRAY
with **sinfonia ViVA: octet**

Benedict Holland, leader

7.30pm St Peter's Parish Church

Till Eulenspiegel - einmal anders! **Richard Strauss** (1864-1949)
arr. Franz Hasenörl

The legend of Till Eulenspiegel was a gift to a natural story-teller like Strauss. Till seems to have been an actual historical character, a subversive 14th-century folk-hero whose practical jokes strained the Establishment's sense of humour to breaking point. After a gentle once-upon-a-time opening, we are given a quick thumb-nail sketch of a character who lives off his wits, in one of the most celebrated (and taxing) horn solos in the orchestral repertoire; and again, a little later, in a brief phrase (the 'once upon a time' idea speeded up), originally for the high D clarinet, which captures Till's laddish impudence to perfection. The music then depicts some of Till's adventures.

The historical Till appears to have outwitted the authorities, escaping the gallows on more than one occasion, but in Strauss's version of the story they catch up with him (a stern march, heavy with Official Displeasure) and have him executed. Even then, Strauss suggests in the final bars, Till's anarchic spirit will outlive humourless pomposity.

Franz Hasenörl was a leader of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and transcribed Strauss's score for himself and four colleagues 'as a frolic'. His title is not easy to translate; perhaps 'Till Eulenspiegel in new clothes' gets close to the spirit of it.

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen **Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911)

1 Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht

2 Ging heut'Morgens übers Feld

3 Ich hab' ein glühend Messer

4 Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz

In 1883 Mahler was appointed second conductor at the Royal Prussian Court Theatre at Cassel. He soon found himself in love with one of the company's sopranos, Johanna Richter. It was an unhappy affair, ending two years later, after which Mahler moved to a similar post in Prague.

Out of it came this group of songs, for which Mahler wrote his own texts. Together they describe a scenario strikingly similar to that of Schubert's great song cycle 'Winterreise', with a rejected lover setting off on a journey to some unknown destination. The difference is the setting, which is not the winter of Schubert's songs. When Mahler's protagonist sets out, spring is at its loveliest, an early example of that vein of sharp irony that would run through so much of Mahler's work.

The first song 'When my sweetheart gets married', establishes the song cycle's two emotional poles in the contrast between the man's brooding on his misery and the fresh nature music of the central section. In 'Ging heut'Morgens übers Feld' ('I went this morning across the field') he sets off, at first responding to the joys of the natural world around him, but by the end he can think only of his lost happiness. This boils over in the third song 'I have a burning knife in my heart', a powerful expression of rage and grief. Finally in 'My beloved's two blue eyes', like Schubert's protagonist he finds rest under a lime tree as it showers him with its blossom.

The music of 'Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen' is intimately bound up with that of Mahler's First Symphony, on which he began work at about the same time as he was composing the songs. The symphony projects the concerns of the song cycle on a much bigger canvas. To put it another way, 'Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen' gives us an overview of Mahler's emotional world in miniature, before the epic journey of the symphonies that were to explore that world in more detail.

Mahler scored this group of songs for what is basically a normal late 19th century orchestra with double woodwind, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, glockenspiel, timpani, harp and strings. This version by German composer Andreas Tarkmann (b.1956) is for a chamber ensemble comprising clarinet, bassoon, horn and solo strings, and was first performed in Northeim during the Lower Saxony Music Days, 1998.

Interval



Octet in F major, D803

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

1 Adagio – Allegro

2 Adagio

3 Allegro vivace

4 Andante

5 Menuetto – Allegro

6 Andante molto – Allegro

The Octet is one of a group of works written in the early months of 1824, with which Schubert intended to prepare himself for composing a large-scale symphony in the Beethovenian manner. The slow introduction to the first movement is dominated by the dotted rhythms which are to persist throughout the movement. The main allegro is a sonata-form piece with a second subject which features prominent solos for the clarinet and horn. There is a quick coda which slows just before the end for a last musing by the horn. The adagio opens with a serene melody for the clarinet, and unfolds in a single unbroken span. The mood is one of tranquillity, at least until the final paragraph, when the pulsating string accompaniment lends a hint of anxiety to the clarinet's final solo.

The scherzo is a complete contrast: vigorous and outgoing, it is one of Schubert's most extrovert movements; the trio section brings a relaxation of mood if not of tempo. The variations which comprise the fourth movement are based on an aria from Schubert's opera 'Die Freunde von Salamanca' (1815). Schubert is content, for the most part, simply to decorate the tune, with some delightful interplay between the instruments.

Although the fifth movement is ostensibly a dance, Schubert's characteristic wistfulness is not far below the surface, a hint of what is to come in the introduction to the finale. This anxious passage is the most dramatic in the whole work, giving way to a carefree allegro which contains some of Schubert's most virtuoso instrumental writing. Schubert has one further surprise up his sleeve: the slow introduction returns, with redoubled dramatic force, before the headlong coda.

© **Mike Wheeler, 2005**

Ann Murray was born in Dublin and studied with Frederick Cox at the Royal Manchester College of Music. She has close links with English National Opera, for whom she has sung Handel's Xerxes and Ariodante and Donizetti's Maria Stuarda, and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, where her roles have included Cherubino,

Dorabella, Despina, Octavian, Rosina, Amaltea, Ruggiero and Giulio Cesare. She has appeared with the world's great orchestras and conductors and in the major concert halls and has been a regular guest at the BBC Promenade Concerts. Her discography reflects both her broad concert and recital repertoire and also her great operatic roles. Ann Murray's operatic engagements have taken her throughout Europe and to the United States. In the 2002 Golden Jubilee Queen's Birthday Honours she was appointed an honorary Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

sinfonia ViVA is the only professional orchestra native to the East Midlands. Its 2007 schedule is more ambitious and diverse than ever before, further strengthening its national reputation for an integrated approach to concert-giving, outreach and audience development. ViVA's strength lies in its ability to identify and cater for the needs of different groups, bringing music to audiences of up to 30,000 people in a variety of contexts and locations. Alongside sinfonia ViVA, performing music from over four hundred years as well as newly commissioned works, chamber ViVA, small groups from within the Orchestra, provides access to classical music for many communities in more rural areas. ViVA runs a lively education programme for schools and the wider community, and also caters for the workplace, using music as a tool to address management and training issues.

The orchestra appears tonight with support from Rolls Royce.



Benedict Holland has been the Leader of ViVA since April 2001 and became Artistic Adviser in May 2006. As a chamber musician, he has worked with various ensembles both in the UK and abroad, and was a founder member of the Matisse Piano Quartet. As an

orchestral player, he has guest-led many of the country's major orchestras, including the Hallé and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. In addition to directing and leading, in 2002 Benedict began an association with Opera North as Assistant Conductor. He currently plays on a violin by J Rocca of 1837.

Bar open before the concert and during the interval.

Sponsor **John Lewis**