



Teatru Manoel

presents

The Voice
of the Horn

featuring works by

Franz Strauss, Francis Poulenc, Eugène Bozza,
Paul Dukas, Richard Strauss, Charles Camilleri

played by

· Etienne Cutajar *Horn*
Caroline Calleja *Piano*
and sung by
Rosabelle Bianchi *Soprano*

Sala Isouard, Manoel Theatre
Friday, 23 January 2004

2147

THE PERFORMERS



Horn player **Etienne Cutajar** started his musical studies aged ten on Rayond Cremona's suggestion that he should take up the French horn. Later he studied under Emanuel Spagnol, as also harmony under Dominic Darmanin and Ray Sciberras. In 2001 he obtained his DipABRSM, and has since attended masterclasses where under top horn and brass players Ian Davies and Stephen Roberts he has learned to improve his technique. Last year he underwent studies under renowned horn player Richard Watkins at the Royal Academy of Music in London where he received intense tuition and ensemble experience. His solo recital at Sala Isouard last January won critical acclaim. He has been third horn player with the National Orchestra of Malta since December 2000, and also works as a freelance player and chamber musician.



Pianist **Caroline Calleja** started studying the piano at the age of four and took up harp lessons at eleven. Her studies led her to obtain the LRSM, LTCL, ATCL, and ALCM diplomas and, at sixteen, to represent Malta in the European Music Competition for Youths in Dublin. A first-prize winner of various competitions, she has worked closely with internationally known musicians and attended masterclasses at the Accademia Musicale Chigiani in Siena, and at the Moscow State Conservatory. In 2002 she graduated B.A. (Hons) First Class in Music Studies from the University of Malta, where she majored in Piano Performance, and is now reading for her Masters under Michael Laus. Highly active in chamber music ensembles both as pianist and harpist, her recent performances include a recital with acclaimed clarinetist Philippe Cuper. She currently teaches harp and piano at the Johann Strauss School of Music, and is also the principal harpist of the National Orchestra of Malta.



Soprano **Rosabelle Bianchi** started her voice studies under Alice Horne, and for the last four years has been studying voice with mezzo-soprano Claire Massa, as well as piano with Paul Borg and music theory with Raymond Sciberras. She has participated in masterclasses organised by the British Kodaly Association in Cheltenham, U.K., where she studied with Hungarian soprano Paula Somoraj and sang in the final concerts. She also had the opportunity to sing as a soloist in Edinburgh during the St. Monica choir tour. She is a regular performer in recitals held at Mdina Cathedral, St. John's Co-Cathedral, and St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, as well as at Sala Isouard. Last summer she participated in a month-long tour, singing with the Mediterranean Youth Choir in Italy and France.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Franz Strauss

Nocturno for Horn & Piano, op 7

Franz Strauss (1822-1905), father of Richard, was the principal horn player with the Munich Court Opera. Despite their differences in taste, he was a friend of Richard Wagner who even went to consult him about Siegfried's horn call. Although a very respected horn player Franz was not so popular as a composer, because he only wrote solo pieces for accompanied horn. His *Nocturno* is probably his best piece; it is often performed in recitals and is also transcribed for violoncello. It is a very romantic and emotional piece in four sections in which the horn is given the opportunity to sing above the subtle piano accompaniment.

Francis Poulenc

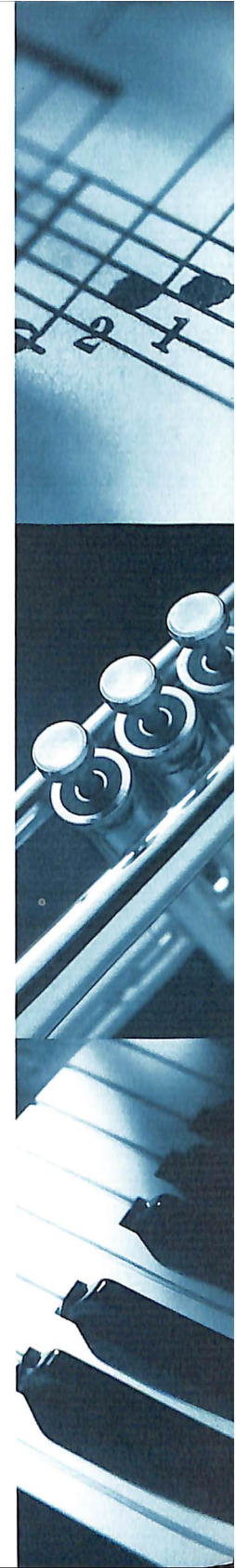
Elegie for Horn & Piano (1967)

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) had among his many contacts the legendary British horn player Dennis Brain who died in a car crash in Hatfield in 1957. Poulenc composed this piece in memory to him. The *Elegie* reflects some of Brain's highly accomplished technique and recounts his fatal accident; it is emotional and aggressive and has moments of mystique. After playing introductory notes from a chromatic scale very softly, the horn suddenly plunges into a harsh passage played with anger. The whole thing repeats itself; it concludes with a very quiet long tone from the horn and transparency from the other side.

Eugène Bozza

En Forêt for Horn & Piano, op 40

French-born Eugène Bozza (1905-1991) studied at the Paris Conservatoire and won prizes in violin, conducting, composition, and the Grand Prix de Rome in 1934. He later wrote operas, symphonic and choral works, and chamber music with a preference for wind instruments. *En Forêt* is one of his competition pieces. It resembles the hunting horn calls by 18th century forest hunters. It is a dramatic piece and contains many tone colours, moods, hand stoppings for the purpose of echoes, and muting effects; it is in fact quite challenging to the player because of the variety of technical stuff that Bozza puts into it.



Paul Dukas
Villanelle for Horn & Piano (1903)

Paulo Dukas (1865-1935) was the man commissioned to write a suitable piece for the purpose when the board of the Paris Conservatoire wanted the students to learn the new model of horn, called 'valve horn', invented at the beginning of the 20th century to facilitate the old system of playing. The *Villanelle* that Dukas came up with was a splendid solution, a piece that bridged the contrast in the old and new fashions of horn playing. As Dukas was commissioned to do, the biggest part of it is played without valves. It has soft and loud passages, scales and arpeggios, rapid staccato and legato passages, hand stopping and muting effects, low register work, and a top C on which the piece ends.

Richard Strauss
Alphorn, for Soprano, Horn & Piano, op15 no 3

The horn writing of Richard Strauss (1864-1949) is similar to the exercises of an accomplished horn player – which actually shows the effect of watching his father Franz while practising at home. Under the influence of his father, the young Strauss started music lessons at a very early age, and some of his early compositions are still performed nowadays. The song *Alphorn* is a very good example. Set to a poem by Justinus Kerner, it is about the sound of a Swiss alphorn which can be heard but whose direction cannot be determined. This and his father's playing led him to write this song, noted for its solo horn part, for two instruments and a soprano voice.

Charles Camilleri
Fantasia Sonata for Horn & Piano (2003)

A few years ago Camilleri embarked on a series of compositions for wind instruments. The first was a duo sonata for bass clarinet and vibraphone (or piano), while the second was for trumpet and piano. The latest of these, the *Fantasia Sonata* for French horn and piano, is being premiered in this evening's recital. It is a work in two movements, *Andante* and *Moderato*. In the *andante* the horn and piano hardly play at the same time, with the piano more like a companion than an accompanist. In the second movement both instruments are engaged in dialogue, contradictory counterpoint, lyrical sections, and an unusual fadeout finale. The horn is used in a variety of ways as the sonata encompasses its entire range.