

***LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER***  
**September 20, 2000 8-10 PM on PBS**  
**New York Philharmonic Opening Night Gala**

To inaugurate the new LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER television season, our cameras and microphones will be in Avery Fisher Hall once again for the gala opening of the New York Philharmonic's 2000/2001 season. The orchestra's Music Director, Kurt Masur, will be on the podium, and the guest artist will be the celebrated soprano, Kiri Te Kanawa, who will be heard in music by Mozart and Richard Strauss. In addition, Maestro Masur will conduct the Overture to Mozart's opera, "The Magic Flute", the "Italian" Symphony by Mendelssohn, and Strauss's Symphonic Poem, "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks."

"The Magic Flute" was given its premiere in Vienna on September 30, 1791. It was an immediate hit, but Mozart had scant time to enjoy that success: thirty seven days later he was dead. The libretto was by a polymath named Emanuel Schikaneder, an actor, singer, dramatist, composer and theater director. Both Mozart and Schikaneder were Masons, and the trials by fire and water which figure in "The Magic Flute" may be seen as reflections of some of the ideals of the Masonic order. The Overture begins with three stately chords (which are heard again later in the Overture and in the opera proper in connection with the temple rites). The main body of the Overture is peppy and bright, reflecting the upbeat nature of the opera to follow.

What follows in our telecast is one of the great soprano arias in the entire operatic literature--to be sung, of course, by guest artist Kiri Te Kanawa. In the second act of "The Magic Flute" our heroine, Pamina, unaware that Tamino her beloved has taken an oath of silence, misinterprets his indifference to her as a sign of lost interest. "Ach, ich fühl's," she sings, "Ah, I feel it has all vanished." Some of the rhythmic pulsation resembles the beating of a human heart, a broken heart in this case.

"Ach ich fühl's" is but one in a whole string of memorable soprano arias that dot every one of Mozart's operas. But in addition to these, Mozart also composed a considerable body of concert arias, self-contained works meant to be performed on the concert stage. Dame Kiri continues the Mozart portion of the program with one of these, "Vado, ma dove?" ("I go, but where?"), a late work composed at virtually the same time as the composer's great Quintet for Clarinet and Strings. Here again we encounter an outpouring of sorrow and passion.

Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony which follows is one of the sunniest works in the repertory. The opening of the first movement is quite stunning: a loud string pizzicato followed by a throbbing rhythm in the woodwinds before the joyous first theme erupts out of the violins. The slow movement has a nostalgic air about it, with the principal material given to the strings and winds; underneath,

however, is a constant "walking bass" that prevails throughout the movement giving it the character of a slow march. The third movement is in everything but name a Minuet, with a particularly enchanting Trio section that calls to mind "the horns of elfland faintly blowing." The Finale is a rollicking Italian dance, the saltarello, with later suggestions of another dance, the tarantella. The prevailing mood is one of exuberant good spirits.

The second half of the program is the Richard Strauss portion, beginning with the Final Scene from his 1932 opera, "Arabella." In this opera, Strauss returned to some of the aesthetic impulses that twenty-one years earlier had produced what is arguably his greatest operatic success, "Der Rosenkavalier." Again the setting is Vienna (though about 100 years later), there are waltzes in both scores, and both story lines are concerned with what I can only label bittersweet love intrigue. In the Final Scene, all misunderstandings are cleared up: Arabella offers the wealthy Mandryka a drink. If he smashes the glass, that is an indication that the two of them are engaged. He smashes the glass, of course, the two of them embrace, and presumably they live happily ever after. For the Final Scene from "Arabella" we welcome the return of our radiant guest artist, soprano Kiri Te Kanawa.

A happy life of a different sort is portrayed in the final work on the program, "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, After the Old-Fashioned Roguish Manner--in Rondo Form," to give it its full title. Strauss originally let that description stand unadorned. Pressed for a program for the music, he wrote in a letter: "....it seems sufficient to point out the two Eulenspiegel motives, which, in the most manifold disguises, moods, and situations, pervade the whole up to the catastrophe, when, after he has been condemned to death, Till is strung up to the gibbet. For the rest....guess at the musical joke which a Rogue has offered ....." It remains to be added that there really was an historic Till Eulenspiegel who lived in Germany in the first half of the 14th century. His exploits-- unprincipled practical jokes and generally riotous behavior--became legendary in the half-century after his death, the time of the flowering of German folk poetry and folk song. That Strauss should have found inspiration in the Till Eulenspiegel life and legend has about it a sense of historic inevitability.

This, then, is the musical menu for our next LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER telecast on Wednesday evening, September 20. As always, check your local listings for the exact date and time in your area. See you then!