

Friday 11th April 2008 at 16:00 GMT
Sibelius Hall, Lahti, Finland

NIGHT AND DAY – A Fred Astaire concert

Lahti Symphony Orchestra

Benjamin Pope, conductor
Rachel Weston, vocals
Gary Williams, vocals

Selection from the film Top Hat (1935)
(Berlin / Langford)

Putting All My Eggs in One Basket from the film Follow the Fleet (1936)
(Berlin / Innes)

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes from the film Roberta (1935)
(Kern / Pope)

I Won't Dance from the film Roberta (1935)
(Kern / Fields & McHugh / Smith)

A Fine Romance from the film Swing Time (1936)
(Kern / Fields / Braden)

The Continental from the film Gay Divorce (1934)
(Conrad & Magidson / Ebbinghouse)

They Can't Take That Away From Me from the film Shall We Dance (1937)
(Gershwin)

Night & Day from the film Gay Divorce (1934)
(Porter / Moore)

By Myself Alone from the film The Bandwagon (1953)
(Schwarz / Dietz / Pope)

We're A Couple of Swells from the film Easter Parade (1948)
(Berlin / Cordelle)

Let's Face the Music & Dance from the film Follow the Fleet (1936)
(Berlin / Ebbinghouse)

INTERVAL 20 MINUTES

Overture to the musical *Girl Crazy* (1930)
(Gershwin / Rose)

S'Wonderful from the film *Funny Face* (1957)
(Gershwin / Shaw)

Be Careful It's My Heart from the film *Holiday Inn* (1942)
(Berlin / Hunter)

Puttin' On the Ritz from the film *Blue Skies* (1946)
(Berlin / Lindup)

I'm Building up To an Awful Let Down
(Astaire / Mercer / Pope)

The Way You Look Tonight from the film *Swing Time* (1936)
(Kern / Byfield)

Dancing In the Dark from the film *The Bandwagon* (1953)
(Schwarz)

Cheek to Cheek from the film *Top Hat* (1935)
(Berlin / Pope)

Let's Call the Whole Thing Off from the film *Shall We Dance* (1937)
(Gershwin / Shaw)

That's Entertainment from the film *The Bandwagon* (1953)
(Dietz & Schwartz / Knight)

That's Entertainment Reprise
(Dietz & Schwartz / Pope)



The Gods and Goddesses of music, dance, fashion and art must have had a plan to introduce Fred Astaire to world culture when they did. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, USA on May 10, 1899 as “Frederick Austerlitz,” his arrival heralded the 20th century. He made his entertainment debut in vaudeville at the age of 6, appearing with his sister, Adele and for the next 12 years, their exceptional talent and charisma would lead them to success on Broadway in New York and to the West End in London, where they became idols of theatregoers and personal friends of royalty. As America emerged into the “Jazz Age,” Fred and Adele were the facilitators for many of the composers and lyricists who would change the face of theatrical and popular music such as Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Vincent Youmans, Arthur Swartz and Howard Dietz. When Adele retired to marry Charles Cavendish, the Duke of Devonshire in 1932, Fred made his final musical theater appearances in *The Gay Divorcee* in both New York and London.

When Astaire was signed to appear in films, the movie musical genre was making its transition from the revue format to screenplays which incorporated music and dance. First sharing the screen with Ginger Rogers in *Flying Down to Rio* in 1933, the team instantly burst into film stardom and, in the subsequent “Astaire and Rogers” film series, helped create a new film genre: “the dance musical.” Collaborating with longtime co-choreographer and lifetime friend, Hermes Pan, Astaire changed how dance would be photographed and made possible a seamless film fabric of story and character told through music and dance. America’s greatest composers offered their talents just for the opportunity to work with Astaire including Irving Berlin who stated: “I’d rather have Fred Astaire introduce one of my songs than any singer I know.” The list of timeless musical classics that Astaire introduced either on stage, on film or in the recording studio is monumental and his discography contains 77 single recordings and [to date] over 300 albums. As an accomplished pianist, drummer and accordionist, he also was the composer of 27 published songs.

Tonight, you will be hearing a sampling of some of these evergreens.

In addition to the ten films he made with Ginger, from 1933 – 1977, he also appeared in 45 musicals, comedies and dramas. Among his other memorable song-and-dance partners were the film actresses Joan Crawford, Rita Hayworth, Eleanor Powell, Lucille Bremer, Judy Garland, Vera-Ellen, Jane Powell, Cyd Charisse, Leslie Caron and Audrey Hepburn – as well as two highly anticipated appearances with the “other” male movie musical innovator, Gene Kelly. At the same time, Astaire’s career in another popular medium of the time, radio, was prolific with multiple guest appearances and a 39-week series of his own radio show.

In the late 1940’s, television arrived, and sent the movie industry into a tail-spin. Rather than “fight” the new gaining-in-popularity medium, Astaire decided to “join” it, making nearly 80 appearances in dramas, comedies, talk shows, award ceremonies, documentaries and four “Specials” which would revolutionize the quality of the medium and earned Astaire multiple accolades and awards, including the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences’ highest recognition.

Over six decades, Astaire’s film work was acknowledged with a Special Academy Award and “Best Supporting Actor” nomination, being included on the Top Ten Box-Office Stars list, Golden Globe nominations and awards and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Film Institute. For his other contributions to world culture, he was named “Musical Comedy Star of the Century,” “Entertainer of the Century,” “The King of Dance,” included in the “Best Dressed List,” the Entertainment Hall of Fame, honored at the Kennedy Center for Lifetime Achievement and, for his contributions to the world of music, was awarded the ASCAP “Pied Piper Award” and a Lifetime Achievement honor by the Grammys.

Fred Astaire’s name alone is used as a noun, an adjective and a verb by writers, critics and lyricists to



describe elegance, grace and the romantic results of dancing “cheek to cheek.” Despite being a tireless perfectionist, he was a seemingly effortless actor, a singer praised by the greatest composers; a choreographer and dancer who took tap and his personal “rhythm dance” style and melded them with ballet and ballroom dance and made them narratives. A businessman whose skill and success with the raising and racing of thoroughbred horses and creation of the Fred Astaire Dance Studio chain heralded the business ventures of today’s celebrities. An author of an autobiography, he was also

a highly educated and noble human being, loving husband and devoted father to beloved daughter (Ava), son, (Fred Jr.) and stepson, (Peter) and is an on-going inspiration to such contemporary dance-and-movement makers as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Matthew Bourne and Jackie Chan. As an iconic style-and-trend setter, he had a life and career unmatched in the 20th century.

Fred Astaire IS music. Please enjoy the pleasure of his company. ■

Larry Billman

Benjamin Pope

A graduate of Oxford University and the Royal College of Music in London, Benjamin Pope is a British composer and conductor. He has guest conducted the Royal Philharmonic, the BBC Concert, the Seoul Philharmonic, the Tokyo City Philharmonic and other orchestras and made his Covent Garden debut in 2004 conducting John Crankon’s Onegin for the Royal Ballet. He is a regular guest conductor with the English National Ballet.

Pope is much in demand as a composer, writing scores for films and television as well as undertaking commissions for live performances. He is highly experienced in the recording studio and conducted and orchestrated the Emmy award-

winning music for BBC television’s flagship series Walking with Dinosaurs and its sequel Walking with Beasts. As an arranger and Music Director he has worked with an array of leading pop artists from So Solid Crew to Errol Brown, Sir Cliff Richard and Boyzone.

Recent engagements have included several productions at Covent Garden and his debut with New York City Ballet. His plans for the near future include debuts with the Berlin State Ballet, the Royal Stockholm Ballet, the Royal Flanders Ballet, the Hallé Orchestra and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and concerts with the Royal Philharmonic and BB Concert Orchestras. ■

Rachel Weston

New Zealand-born Rachel Weston has starred as a singer/pianist and as a presenter of arts and music television programmes. She also acted in several television series when she was young. Having graduated with a degree in music, she was selected to represent New Zealand in the World Chorus at the Calgary Winter Olympics in 1988 and sang the solo in David Foster's theme song at the Opening Ceremony to a live audience of 40,000 and a TV audience of 2 billion. Invitations to record programmes of pop songs for Radio New Zealand followed, one of the programmes earning her a prestigious Mobil Radio Award.

After moving to London, Rachel sang in *The Phantom of the Opera* before joining the Swingle Singers. For four years she toured with the group, giving concerts in 25 countries and working

as its Musical Director for two years. Since then she has returned to her parallel careers in music and broadcasting. She has presented Proms concerts for BBC TV and sung on the soundtracks of dozens of films (including *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Shrek* and *Moulin Rouge*) and on the albums of such artists as Bjork, Missy Elliott and Michael Jackson.

Because of her remarkable vocal range and stylistic versatility, as a soloist Rachel is able to cover repertoire from Kurt Weill to Sting, and Joyce Grenfell to Sinead O'Connor, and her cabaret appearances in London have been critically acclaimed. She also tours internationally as a soloist and with the ensemble Synergy Vocals. During 2008 she will appear with Synergy Vocals at Lincoln Center singing Berio with the New York Philharmonic. ■

Gary Williams

The prestigious British newspaper *The Times* called Gary Williams one of the best swing singers Britain has ever produced. No wonder, therefore, that he is a favourite with the leading UK big bands and orchestras.

Together with conductor John Wilson Gary has appeared with such leading British orchestras as the Hallé, the City of Birmingham Symphony and the Royal Scottish National. One of the highlights of their partnership was *That's Entertainment*, a concert at the Royal Festival Hall of items from top MGM musicals with the Crouch End Festival Chorus.

Gary Williams has recorded alongside Petula Clark and Barbara Dickson for the Reader's Digest's *Timeless Classics* series and has so far released eight albums of his own. He is a familiar figure on British television and was a regular guest on Channel 5's *Open House*, working alongside such celebrities as Donny Osmond and Burt Bacharach. He first came to public attention in the London West End famous for its theatres recreating the role of Frank Sinatra in the Theatre Royal's production of *The Rat Pack Live from Las Vegas*. ■

Lahti Symphony Orchestra

Over the past two decades the Lahti Symphony Orchestra – under the direction of its chief conductor Osmo Vänskä – has emerged as one of the most highly regarded orchestras in the world. Vänskä will continue his work as chief conductor until the spring of 2008; with effect from that autumn the orchestra's artistic adviser – and artistic director of the Sibelius Festival – will be Jukka-Pekka Saraste.

As the most highly commended Nordic orchestra for its recordings (including a Grand Prix du Disque in 1993, Gramophone Awards in 1991 and 1996, the Cannes Classical Award in 1997 and 2001 and the Midem Classical Award 2006), the Lahti Symphony Orchestra has been a welcome guest at major international venues. It made its first major tour of Japan in 1999, prompting Japanese critics to name it as the best foreign orchestra to perform in Japan that year. Also in 1999, the orchestra made a successful début in the Avery Fisher Hall in New York. In the wake of these successes, the Lahti Symphony Orchestra was invited to return to Japan in 2003 and 2006, and to the United States in January 2005 (e.g. Ann Arbor and the Avery Fisher Hall in New York). Sibelius's *Kullervo*, which the orchestra performed in Tokyo, was voted by Japanese critics as the best classical performance of 2003 in Japan. In addition, the same Japanese critics ranked the best orchestras in the world and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra – ranked sixteenth – was the only Nordic orchestra in the top twenty.

The orchestra made its début at the BBC Proms in London and in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in 2003, and at the Vienna Musikverein in the autumn of 2005. The orchestra was reinvited to the Musikverein and had three residency concerts there in the February–March 2007 as well as

at the Berlin Philharmonie with Osmo Vänskä. The orchestra has also performed in several other European countries to great critical acclaim. In addition the orchestra made a successful tour in China in 2005 and performed at the White Nights Festival in St Petersburg.

Encouraged by the success of its recording of original version of Sibelius's Violin Concerto, which won a Gramophone Award in 1991, the orchestra has made imaginative Sibelius performances its hallmark. It has also engaged in a close and fruitful cooperation with its composer-in-residence Kalevi Aho, who has composed five symphonies and several other works for the orchestra. Nearly all of Aho's extensive orchestral oeuvre has been recorded by the Lahti Symphony Orchestra. Almost without exception, the orchestra's recordings have garnered praise from the international press, as have nearly all of the more than 60 recordings which the orchestra has made for BIS Records.

As a tangible result of its business partnerships, a new concert hall – the Sibelius Hall – was inaugurated in 2000. Designed by Artec Consultants of New York, the acoustics of the main hall have drawn admirers from all over the world. The opening of the Sibelius Hall gave the orchestra and its chief conductor Osmo Vänskä the opportunity to launch the world's first annual Sibelius Festival dedicated to the music of the great Finnish master. The Festival has quickly established itself as a major musical event and today attracts audiences from all five continents. ■

**Further information about
the Lahti Symphony Orchestra:
www.sinfonia-lahti.fi**