

Concerts of the Month

By Dr Chang Tou Liang



Singapore Symphony Orchestra
Claus Peter Flor, Conductor

Eroica

Beethoven Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3 *Eroica*
Thursday, 29 September 2011

Te Deum

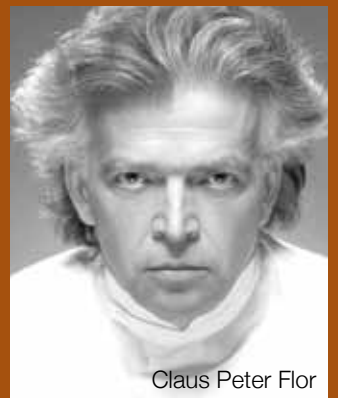
Berlioz *Te Deum*
Ravel *Daphnis et Chloe* Suite No. 2
with Singapore Symphony Chorus
Friday, 7 October 2011

Esplanade Concert Hall
7.30 pm (both evenings)
Tickets available from SISTIC



The SSO accompanied by the Singapore Symphony Chorus in the background

Only guest conductors of a rare distinction get to conduct the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) over two consecutive weeks. The honour this month falls on Claus Peter Flor, presently the Music Director of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), a post he has held since 2008. Flor, whom in his younger days was considered a protege of Herbert von Karajan, hails from a rich tradition of East German conductors, which include the likes of Kurt Masur, Klaus Tennstedt and Gunther Herbig. Dr Chang Tou Liang has a few words with Dr Marc Rochester, a British music critic residing in Singapore, who has been the musical annotator of the MPO since its inauguration in 1998.



Claus Peter Flor



The SSO in performance

Dr Chang Tou Liang – CTL: You have been following MPO all these years. What qualities has Claus Peter Flor brought to this very fine orchestra and its music making?

Dr Marc Rochester – MR: Claus Peter Flor has helped the orchestra consolidate its mastery of the classics in the orchestral repertoire. His forte has been in the German and Central European works, such as the Beethoven and Dvorak symphonies. In the last three years, he really got the orchestra to focus on interpretation rather than merely playing the music.

CTL: How has Flor been different from his predecessors, the Dutch Kees Bakels and Swiss Matthias Bamert?

MR: Bakels gave the orchestra a completely unique sound, while Bamert encouraged the players to stand on both feet and shine. Flor has honed some incredibly intense interpretations along his own lines. Like an organist who has it all at his command, he forces his will on the orchestra, inspiring great and often volatile performances. In a nutshell, Flor is probably the most musically insightful of the three conductors.

CTL: Flor will conduct the SSO in two concerts. The first (29 September) is an all-Beethoven affair, surely one that plays to his strengths.

MR: Most definitely. The German in Flor claims his heritage all the way back to Beethoven himself! Do expect him to dissect and take the music apart with surgical precision, bringing fresh and new insights into the interpretations of these popular works. Being thoroughly schooled

in the Central European ethic, these promise to be really absorbing performances.

CTL: The second concert (7 October) will be of French music, something outside of his usual repertoire. How do you think this will sound?

MR: True, this programme is untypical of him, but every concert is an educational experience that is worth exploring. Looking through different eyes, this is going to be an unusual and intriguing journey not to be missed.

A summary of the works to be performed:

- Beethoven Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3
These are cornerstones of the classical canon. The Third Symphony or *Eroica* (*Heroic* in Italian) was originally dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte, but this was withdrawn after Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor.
- Berlioz *Te Deum*
This is based on a large scale religious choral work (sung in Latin) dedicated to the glory of God, last performed in Singapore in the 80s.
- Ravel *Daphnis et Chloé*
This is a sumptuous, even erotic ballet, commissioned by Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes, inspired by scenes from Greek mythology. [SMA](#)