

College of Fine Arts Presents

Program copy has been provided, unedited, by the touring production.

Jimmy CHIANG

Conductor

The Hong Kong born conductor and pianist has started his musical career already at the age of 13 with his first public appearance as concert pianist. Born to a musical family, Chiang began piano lessons when he was four. He also studied violoncello and composition. He received the Fellows Diploma from the Trinity College of Music in London at the age of 16, graduated with the Bachelor of Music Degree at Baylor University (USA), finished his education with "Magister Artium" at the University ed -

Josef Schnitt, who became Dean of the Imperial Chapel in 1921, turned the Vienna Boys' Choir into a private institution. The former court choir boys became the Wiener Sängerknaben (Vienna Boys' Choir); the imperial uniform was replaced by the sailor suit, then the height of boys' fashion. There was not enough money to pay for the boys' upkeep, and the choir started to give concerts outside of the chapel in 1926, performing motets, secular works, and - at the boys' request - children's operas. The impact was amazing. Within a year, the choir performed in Berlin (where Erich Kleiber conducted them), Prague and Zurich. Athens and Riga (1928) followed, then Spain, France, Denmark, Norway and Sweden

(1929), the United States (1932), Australia (1934) and South America (1936). Since 1926, the choir has clocked close to 1000 tours in 100 different countries.

Present

Today there are 100 choristers from 30 different nations between the ages of ten and fourteen, divided into four touring choirs. Between them, the four choirs give around 300 concerts and performances each year in front of almost half a million people. Each group spends nine to eleven weeks of the school year on tour. They visit virtually all European countries, and they are frequent guests in Asia, Australia and the Americas.

Together with members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the men of the Vienna State Opera Chorus, the Vienna Boys' Choir maintains the tradition of the imperial musicians: as Hofmusikkapelle (Chapel Imperial) they provide the music for the Sunday Mass in Vienna's Imperial Chapel, as they have done since 1498. In 2012, the choir participated for the fifth time in the New Year's Concert of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Mariss Jansons.

Repertoire

The choir's repertoire includes everything from medieval to contemporary and experimental music. Motets and lieder for boys' choir form the core of the touring repertoire, as do the choir's own arrangements of quintessentially Viennese music, waltzes and polkas by Lanner and Strauss.

Both the choir and the Chapel Imperial have a long tradition of commissioning new works, going back to Imperial times, when composers like Mozart, Haydn, or Bruckner wrote for the ensemble. Austrian composers Heinz Kratochwil, Balduin Sulzer, Wolfram Wagner, and Gerald Wirth have written works for today's boys. Benjamin Britten composed a vaudeville which could be performed on tours, and Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin wrote her 'Land of Sweeping Plains' for them. The Vienna Boys' Choir performs major choral and symphonic works, sometimes as part of the Hofmusikkapelle, sometimes with other orchestras and men's choirs. They are regularly asked to supply soloists for large choral and orchestral works, such as Bernstein's Chichester Psalms. In recent years, they have performed with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, Staats-

kapelle Berlin, the Oslo Philharmonic and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Over the last decade, the choir has worked with, among others, Pierre Boulez, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Mariss Jansons, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Kent Nagano, Seiji Ozawa, Christian Thielemann, Franz Welser-Möst, and Simone Young. The choir also takes part in opera performances at the Vienna State Opera, the Vienna Volksoper, and the Salzburg Festival. Choristers appear as three boys in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Recently, a soloist sang the part of Oberto in Handel's opera *Alcina* at the Vienna State Opera, conducted by Marc Minkowski.

Children's Operas

The boys love to act, and children's operas are an important part of the repertoire. The choir started performing operas in the 1920s, beginning with classics such as Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*, Weber's *Abu Hassan* or Haydn's *Lo Speciale*, later branching out to contemporary works. Benjamin Britten rehearsed his *The Golden Vanity* with the boys, and conducted the premiere at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1967.

Over the last decade, the choir has produced a number of new operas. Gerald Wirth's *The Journey of the Little Prince* and *The Tablet of Destinies*, an opera based on the Babylonian myth of Anzu, and Raoul Gehringer's *Moby-Dick*, based on the novel by Herman Melville, were all shown at Vienna's Musikverein. Gerald Wirth's *1398 – Der Bettelknabe* (1398 - *The begging boy*), a story set in medieval Palestine and Europe, premiered in 2010, with a new production planned for May 2015. A new opera set in the 4th century AD and featuring Goths, Romans, and Anglo-Saxons is currently being developed.

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World Music and Cross Over Projects

One of the choir's goals is to introduce the boys to as many different styles of music as possible: since the 1920s, the choir has collected music from around the world. In the past years, the choir has commissioned and produced a number of world music projects, "Silk Road", "Between Worlds", "Inspiration", and "Pirates!". As Gerald Wirth explains, 'We do not claim to play 'authentic' world music; instead, we create something from the original sources that is our own. We want to be faithful to the source in the sense that we treat it with respect.'

Films: Silk Road and Bridging the Gap

The choir's Silk Road project inspired film director Curt Faudon to make a film about the globetrotting choristers. For over a year, Faudon followed the boys' life in Vienna and on the road, filming the boys at work and at

play, on and off stage, meeting and working with artists from Central Asia, China and India. The resulting 90-minute film is a clever blend of fly-on-the wall documentary, road movie, costume drama and music, with stunning footage from all across the world and through time, with an unusual, off-beat soundtrack which has the boys singing in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Japanese, Latin, Marathi, Maori, Savo Finnish, Tajik, Uyghur, Urdu, Uzbek and German.

Faudon's second film on the choir will be released in 2014; Bridging the Gap focuses on the enormous power of singing. In it, the boys sing with an Apache medicine man, perform with an entire Indian village, ham it up in an Peruvian train. And in New Zealand they are adopted into a Maori tribe, via song.

The Choir School

The choir maintains its own schools. Almost 400 children and teenagers between the ag-



es of 3 and 18 study and rehearse in the Augartenpalais, a baroque palace and former imperial hunting lodge in Vienna. Beginning with kindergarten, run in cooperation with the city of Vienna, boys and girls are provided with an all-round education. At age ten, the most talented boys are selected to join the choir and enter the choir's grammar school. All boys are assigned to one of the touring choirs. Academic lessons are taught in small groups. The school offers extracurricular activities ranging from all kinds of sports to attending a wide range of concerts, operas, plays, musicals and movies. The choristers are also encouraged to create their own projects; some form their own bands, others create short skits or films. All choir boys live in the choir's well-appointed boarding school, with two to three boys sharing a room.

In 2010, the choir launched its new senior high school for boys and girls. The unique curriculum for years 8 to 12 was developed in conjunction with the Universities of Music in Vienna and in Salzburg; it is designed to help young singers find their voice and discover and develop their talents, and to prepare young singers for university and for a career in music.

Most students retain a lifelong commitment to the Arts. Roughly a quarter of the school's alumni go on to become professional musicians, conductors, singers or instrumental-

ists. Almost all continue to sing. There are two male voice ensembles made up entirely of former choristers, the Chorus Viennensis and the Imperial Chapel's Schola Cantorum, who specialises in Gregorian chant.

Development and Funding

The Vienna Boys' Choir is a private, non-for-profit organisation, which finances itself largely through concerts, recordings and royalties. The Ministry of Education and the State's Art Department help fund special projects, such as the production of new children's operas. Further development and projects depend on additional support.

The POK Pühringer Privatstiftung, based in Vienna's Palais Coburg is the choir's general sponsor. With its backing, the choir was able to build its own on-campus concert hall to facilitate opera productions in particular. The hall, which was built to include the baroque gatehouse and the old park wall, opened in December of 2012, with a joint gala concert by the Vienna Boys' Choir and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Its name, MuTh, stands for "Music and Theatre". MuTh serves the entire community of Vienna with a wide range of acts, and there is special focus on giving a platform to young performers.

Program Notes

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