APRIL 2023 CONCERT SERIES

A place of quiet

AYO Auckland Youth Orchestra

AYO Auckland Youth Orchestra

Celebration 75

Labour Weekend 2023

2023 marks AYO's 75th anniversary. This is a significant milestone for any organisation, and we are preparing for a year of celebration:

- Two NZ compositions programmed
- Three concert series + Blockbuster Movie Music Night
- Anniversary celebrations over Labour Weekend

Diary Dates :

Auckland Town Hall 2023 concert series
Sun. 30 April, 6.30pm
Sat. 24 June, 7.30pm
Fri. 20 October, 8pm

Auckland Town Hall – Blockbuster Movie Music Night
Sat. 22 July , 7.30pm (see back cover for details)

Labour Weekend - Celebration 75
Begins with the Friday night concert – more details re weekend social events to come. **Register on our website** for further information.

AYO Auckland Youth Orchestra

Whangarei Anglican
Saturday 1 April, 4pm

Turner Centre, Kerikeri
Sunday 2 April, 2pm
These Northland concerts were presented in conjunction with Sistema Whangarei, and did not include Cowdell's "A Place of Quiet"

All Saints Church, Howick
Saturday 29 April, 7.30pm

Auckland Town Hall
Sunday 30 April, 6.30pm

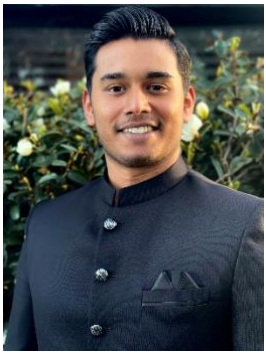
PROGRAMME

Cowdell: A Place of Quiet
Tenor Soloist: Shiddharth Chand

Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No.2
Soloist: Shangrong Feng

INTERVAL

Dvorak: Symphony No.7



SOLOIST Shiddharth (Sid) Chand (tenor) is a New Zealand-born, Fijian-Indian tenor. Having recently completed his Bachelor of Music in Classical Performance with First Class honours at University of Auckland, he is now pursuing a Masters of Music. Shiddharth was a semi-finalist in the 2022 Lexus Song Quest. In 2018 and 2019 he was the runner-up in the U21 section of the New Zealand Aria competition in Rotorua and awarded third place in the Graham Allen Music Theatre competition at the University of Auckland. An alumnus of the New Zealand Opera School, Shiddharth is also in high demand as a soloist. Notable performances include Handel's *Messiah* with Pakuranga Choral Society and Harbour Voices in 2021, and tenor soloist in *Bach by Candlelight* for the Aotearoa NZ Festival of the Arts in 2022.

SOLOIST Shangrong Feng (piano) studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music where a she is pursuing her Masters degree under the tutelage of celebrated Australian pianist Prof. Stephanie McCallum. She has also had masterclasses and lessons with Diedre Irons, David Barnard, Emma Sayers, Jian Liu, Michael Endres, Richard Mapp.

Shangrong has won international prizes and awards and last year was joint winner of the AYO Piano Competition. She received Expressions Piano Trust Award 2021 and Rere Beckway Pianoforte Performance Award 2022. In 2021, Shangrong was invited to the "Hama-Con-Plex" World Premiere Showcase of the Commissioned Work by Japanese composer Motoharu Kawashima.

Shangrong established Asilence + Co Music Media Ltd. She is also the Artistic Director of the Aegio International Piano Competition New Zealand region. Shangrong has performed in venues such as the Aotea Centre, Auckland Town Hall, Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music Opera & Concert Hall, and Liaoning Grand Theatre in Shenyang.

MUSIC DIRECTOR Antun Poljanich was born in Croatia, and studied piano and theory at Dubrovnik School for Musical Education and conducting at the University of Ljubljana. Following post-graduate studies in Austria, he won a scholarship which took him to Leningrad for a three-year Master Course in Conducting at the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory. He has since worked with the Leningrad State Symphony Orchestra, the Veneto Philharmonia, the Slovene and Croatian National Orchestras and other prominent orchestras in Russia and Europe.

PROGRAMME NOTES

A Place of Quiet **Alexander Cowdell**

This composition combines a setting for tenor of a poem by the Australian philosopher, poet and musician Melvyn Cann, with a purely instrumental second section which is a musical depiction of that state of consciousness where both thought and time cease and only feeling remains, as described in a poem by the seventeenth century poet, John Donne. The two sections are approximately equal in length – an 'equal' music - exploring the essentially Christian concept of the transcendence of pain and suffering through acceptance, and the relationship between thought and feeling. To what extent do thoughts influence feelings, and feelings thoughts?

The Poems

I came to a place of quiet, and sat and listened to the noise of my mind. I thought "When will the veil of shredded screams part and shine forth the light?" And as I spoke a stranger touched my shoulder and, standing up, I followed where he led, gently stepping on shining moonstones, shedding my trail of fears in tiny, explosive sparklets of light. We passed through a doorway into a pulsing blueness, and breathless, gasping, I cried out as in the moment of death, "I can go no further! Let me sink into the pure, impersonal vapours of misty blue, let go my grip and choke on reality." But he held me firm - a touch weightless as my tears focussed in a sharp point of pain.
Ignite the point! Enflame my soul! Scream my tongue! Spike me with the nail!
A blank space, an awakening, a bed of grass and the knowledge of being born again.
Melvyn Cann

And into that gate they shall enter, and in that house they shall dwell, where there shall be no cloud nor sun, no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light,
no noise nor silence, but one equal music,
no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession,
no foes nor friends, but one equal communion and identity,
no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity.
John Donne

The Composer

Alexander Cowdell was born in Scotland in 1945, but educated in New Zealand. He won a scholarship to study music at the Elder Conservatorium of music in Adelaide where the composer in residence, Peter Maxwell Davies, encouraged his interest in composition. While there he composed a string quartet, which in a revised version for string orchestra was recorded and broadcast by the NZSO. After beginning his career as a violinist with the NZSO and South Australian Symphony Orchestra, he joined the English National Opera (ENO) orchestra in London as a first violinist, as well as freelancing with the London Symphony Orchestra, amongst others.
He has promoted and conducted New Zealand and Australian music in London, and his own compositions have been performed and broadcast in Britain, Holland, Slovenia, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, where he has lived since 2005. He is currently Chairman of the Auckland Youth Orchestra which has previously performed three of his

compositions: *Canzona* for String Orchestra in 2014, *Persephone*, written for the tour of Europe in 2018, and *Cressida*, with soloists Kiara Kong, clarinet and Kent Isomura, piano, recorded during the Covid lockdown in 2020.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major Op. 102 **Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)**

A curious feature of the personalities of both Hitler and Stalin is that they would both have regarded themselves as cultured men. Hitler's failed attempt to become an artist as a young man in Vienna is well known, as is his passionate, if misguided, devotion to the music of Wagner. Stalin had a wide knowledge of Russian literature and had written poetry himself when young. It is not surprising therefore, that when they achieved total political power, their paranoid, controlling personalities would have had an unprecedented impact on the culture of their respective nations. With Hitler, a fear of anything which conflicted with his vision of an Aryan art purged of any alien influences, especially Jewish, resulted in the persecution of nearly all the major artists, musicians, and writers living in Germany while he was in power. Many fled into exile while others were incarcerated and died in concentration camps.

In The Soviet Union, the Communist Party, led and controlled of course by Josef Stalin, also attempted to impose a vision of a so-called proletarian culture upon the Russian people. Stalin's method of controlling his artists was much more subtle than Hitler's. He would employ a sadistic 'cat and mouse' process of reward and denunciation which kept his victims in a continual state of fear. Privileges could be swept away at a moment's notice and execution or the Gulag was a constant possibility. In his biography, *Testimony*, as related to Solomon Volkov, which has recently been verified by the Shostakovich family, Shostakovich recounts how there were times when he would sit on the landing outside his apartment with his bags packed, waiting for the footsteps on the stairs.

This clearly had a marked effect on his work. The anguish and defensive irony in so many of his compositions are a direct result of the constant insecurity under which he lived. The death of Stalin in 1953, therefore, must have had a major liberating effect on his psyche. This is apparent in the Piano Concerto No. 2 which he wrote for the 19th birthday of his son Maxim in 1957. It shows a side of Shostakovich which is unfamiliar to many people, full of warmth and happiness, but also moments in the slow movement of deep feeling, which perhaps show his love for his son and his family. Maxim gave the premiere performance of the concerto at his graduation concert at the Moscow Conservatory; he went on later to have a distinguished career as a conductor.

Symphony No. 7 in D minor Opus 70 **Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)**

1 Allegro maestoso 2 Poco Adagio 3 Scherzo Vivace 4 Finale. Allegro

Dvorak's career is an inspiring story of 'rags to riches', from obscurity to world-wide fame. His early years were spent in great poverty as he tried to achieve recognition as a composer. Although he had composed large quantities of music, in a variety of genres, he did not have a work (a piano quintet) performed at a concert until he was 31.
The symphonic form, one of the greatest achievements of western musical culture, requires an incredible intellectual ability to produce a work, up to 40 minutes or more in

length, in four movements, which can retain an overall sense of unity despite the diversity of its individual parts. Dvorak was determined to succeed as a symphonic composer, as well as a composer of opera, (he wrote 10 of those) but it was a difficult journey, from his first attempts at recognition to his eventual success in composing three undisputed masterpieces, numbers 7,8 and 9.

Dvorak composed his first symphony in 1865 when he was 24. He submitted it for a competition in Germany and never saw it again. It turned up in a second-hand bookshop in 1882, but was not returned to the composer who believed it lost. It was premiered in 1936.

The second symphony was also composed in 1865. He sent it to bookbinder to be bound but could not find the money to pay for this, and the score was retained by the bookbinder until Dvorak borrowed the money required from a friend. As he was unable to pay his friend either, the score was kept as security. It received one performance in 1888.

The third and fourth symphonies were both composed in 1872, the same year as the public performance of his piano quintet. At this time, he was working as a viola player in the orchestra of the Bohemian Provisional Theatre, and it was there that he first became acquainted with the music of Richard Wagner whose influence, along with that of Brahms, is clearly apparent in these works, particularly the 4th. He submitted both these symphonies, along with several overtures, a song cycle and other compositions, totalling 15 works in all, when applying for an Austrian State Scholarship. These captured the attention of Brahms, who was one of the judges, leading to the performance of the 4th Symphony by the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Smetana. It was the first of his symphonies that Dvorak heard performed, but it was not published until 1912.

Dvorak again won the State Scholarship in 1877, and this time Brahms introduced him to the publisher Simrock, who purchased his first set of Slavonic Dances outright. These were a sensational success, with customers queuing outside music shops in order to purchase them. Their success led not only to Simrock commissioning another set of dances - for which Dvorak this time kept the copyright - but, as his fame continued to grow, to the publication of what was actually his sixth symphony as Symphony No. 1. His seventh symphony published as No. 2, and then his fifth as No. 3.

The Seventh Symphony (originally published as No. 2), was written when Dvorak was 44. It was commissioned by the London Philharmonic Society and first performed at St James's Hall, London, conducted by the composer himself. It was an immediate success, receiving an overwhelming reception as well as critical acclaim. Dvorak's intention was to create a work which would be recognised as unmistakably Czech, with its Slavonic melodies and brooding darkness at times, but this seemed to arouse some hostility on the part of the publisher, who refused to print Dvorak's Czech name Antonin on the cover, insisting on the German form, Anton. He also demanded that the dedication to the London Philharmonic Society be removed, and adding insult to injury, started haggling over the fee he would pay, and insisting that a piano version for two hands must be arranged before the symphony was printed.

The Seventh Symphony, though not enjoying the same popularity with the general public today as that of numbers 8 and 9, is regarded by many musicians and critics as Dvorak's greatest symphony, showing an original mastery of the symphonic form which can hold its own with any work in the repertoire.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We gratefully acknowledge a generous bequest received from the estate of the late Barrie Ross, AYO's Treasurer for over 25 years, until 2011.

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Special thanks to **Franco Viganoni** who generously gives his time and professional expertise in digitally recording our concerts using state-of-the-art electronics and a unique system of microphones. www.viganoni.com

We thank the above organisations for their generous support.

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AYO is a registered charity CC45382
PO Box 99830, Newmarket, Auckland.

ABOUT AYO

Founded in 1948, the Auckland Youth Orchestra (AYO) is the premier regional youth orchestra in New Zealand and was the first youth orchestra established in the Southern Hemisphere, designed to bridge the gap between school orchestras and adult professional groups. AYO inspires young people to excel through their love of musical performance and provides them with a wide range of cultural experiences, thus shaping our leaders of tomorrow. AYO makes an important contribution to the cultural life of Auckland and NZ.

AYO performs up to twelve concerts a year throughout the upper North Island region and has attracted full houses at their concerts in many locations. This endeavour requires large operating costs and AYO relies upon the generosity of our Sponsors, Subscribers, and Supporters. All grants and donations are helpful and greatly appreciated.

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Our Supporters are vital to our ongoing work. Tax receipts are issued for all donations. Supporters' names are listed in the printed programmes (unless anonymity is requested) and some of the best seats are cordoned off exclusively for them at the free Auckland Town Hall concerts.

ROLL OF HONOUR

We appreciate those who have generously left bequests to AYO in the past:

2023 Edward Barrie Ross
2019 Beverley Alison Simmons
2013 Janetta McStay
2005 Moya Rea
1999 Norman W (Chip) Stevens
1995 Alicia Griffin
1988 Patricia Emma Sara Cole
1987 Alwyn Olive Hutchinson

AYO PLAYERS

Violin 1
‡ Zosia Herlihy-O'Brien
‡ Jim Wu
Wenjia Li
Ray Ong
Esther Oh
Martin Qiang
Eleanor Christiansen
Archie Lamont-Bowden
Eason Ye
Santiago Romano
Isabel Lu
Bryan Lin

Violin 2
Justin Chan
Matilda Hol
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Cello
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Eva Wu
Jifei Shao
Phoebe Qiu
Claire Xu
Eric Liang
Nataliya Brand
Anny Wang
Brendon Tsoi
Jaydon Ma
Josh Bamfield

Double Bass
Oliver Spalter
Harry Doyle
Jessie Wu
Michelle Kim
Kahnyell Talamaivao

Piccolo
Alina Chen

Flute
Alina Chen
Catherine Zhou
Joy Jeung

Oboe
Akari Ouchi
Emily Grant
Alex Wu

Clarinet
Alex Martin
Kevin Park

Bass Clarinet
Kevin Park

Bassoon
Sue Lynn Leong
Hannah Twomey

French Horn
Evan Metcalfe
Mereem Dewerse
Fergus Dunlop
Sean O'Loughlin
Raymond Wang

Trumpet
Talia Thomson
Dimitrios Koulianos

Trombone
Athena Shiu
Amy Laithwaite

Bass Trombone
Jack Erskine-Shaw

Timpani
Camryn Nel

Percussion
Michael Cai

Legend:
‡ Concertmaster
# Principal

COMING UP

Auckland Town Hall 2023 Concerts

Sat. 24 June, 7.30pm Bernstein – Candide
Marquez – Danzon No.2
Ravel – Mother Goose Suite
Gershwin – An American in Paris
Hoadley – Double Bass Concerto (*soloist Oliver Spalter*)

Sat. 22 July , 7.30pm Blockbuster Movies Music Night (tickets on sale soon)

John Williams:	Star Wars, Schindler's List
Ennio Morricone:	The Mission, Cinema Paradiso
Hans Zimmer:	Pirates of the Caribbean
Joe Hisaishi:	My Neighbour Totoro

Fri. 20 October, 8pm Beethoven Symphony No. 9 *(with the Auckland Youth Choir)*
Guilmant – Symphony No.1 for Organ & Orchestra
(soloist Nicholas Forbes)

Celebration 75

Labour Weekend
75th anniversary celebrations begin with the Friday night concert, 7.30pm on 20 October 2023 – more details to come for weekend social events.
Register on our website to receive further information. Spread the word!

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