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April 2022
Concert Series

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INTRODUCING OUR NEW PATRON

In response to the sad loss of our Patron, Dame Catherine Tizard, the Executive Committee is delighted to announce that **Hon. Christopher Finlayson QC** has agreed to take on the role.

Christopher is a lawyer and former Member of Parliament. He has previously been Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Attorney-General and Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations. He retired from Parliament in 2019 and currently practises law in arbitration, the Treaty of Waitangi and Māori trusts.

He is currently a member of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Board, a trustee of the Archibald Baxter Trust and a member of the Adam Foundation. He was Chair of the Arts Council of New Zealand's Arts Board from 1998 to 2001. We look forward to Christopher's involvement with AYO, which we trust will be an enjoyable and rewarding experience for him.

AYO Auckland Youth Orchestra

Auckland Town Hall
Sunday 3 April, 2.30pm

Note: Regrettably the three other concerts in this series had to be cancelled: Howick and Helensville due to Covid restrictions and Orewa due to flooding at the concert venue.

PROGRAMME

Wagner
The Mastersingers Overture

Kabalevsky
Cello Concerto No.1 in G minor
Soloist: Damon Herlihy-O'Brien, Cello

INTERVAL

Dvorak
Symphony No.8

MUSIC DIRECTOR Antun Poljanich

Born in Croatia, Antun studied piano and theory at Dubrovnik School for Musical Education then studied 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.

SOLOIST Damon Herlihy-O'Brien, Cello

Born and raised in Auckland, Damon began playing the cello shortly before his 4th birthday. From his formative start through the Suzuki Method with Sally-Anne and Anna-Marie Alloway, Damon went on to intensive studies with baroque specialist and cello pedagogue James Bush.

In 2020 his chamber group Trio Achilles was runner-up at the NZCT National Chamber Music Competition, winning the inaugural Helen Young Diamond award. Damon was the recipient of a generous scholarship through the Chiron Group for three consecutive years and, in 2021, achieved the NZQA Top Scholar award for the highest NCEA Scholarship Music score in the country. Also an avid jazz, rock, and big band drummer, Damon's rock group won the Auckland Central Finals and reached the Rockquest National Finals in 2020.

Damon is in his first year of a conjoint Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Science, under James Tennant, and has been the Principal Cello of the AYO since 2021. Damon plays a fine Carboni Cello on generous loan to him through the Sir Michael Hill Foundation Instrument Bank.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Overture to the Mastersingers of Nuremberg **Richard Wagner 1813-1883**

A curious feature of Richard Wagner's creative process was his ability to focus on a project for an extraordinary length of time – something he also demands of his listeners, as the length of his operas attest. It took him over a quarter of a century to complete his great cycle of operas, or music dramas as he termed them, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. Clearly, he could only have embarked on such an undertaking from a deep inner need and incredible self-belief.

Another aspect of his continual development as a composer was the trust he put in his musical instincts, waiting until the time was right for him to move forward to achieve his objectives. He began the composition of the Ring cycle in 1853, working steadily through the librettos which he had already written, until he had completed, in 1857, the first two acts of *Siegfried*, the third opera in the cycle. He then abruptly ceased work on this project and completed two of his greatest works, *Tristan and Isolde*, and *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. It is astonishing that while working on the Ring cycle these two works had been emerging from his sub-consciousness. In Tristan he stretched the harmonic language of his time to its limits to express a range of extreme emotional states previously unknown in music, and in doing so changed the course of European musical history. By contrast, The Mastersingers is a summation of all that had gone before. Largely diatonic in character, it conveys a life enhancing sense of the soundness and goodness of normal human life.

He first thought of writing an opera on the subject of the Mastersingers as long ago as 1845, but put it aside until 1862, by which time his musical language had developed to what he felt was the required level to do it justice, and the patronage of the young King Ludwig of Bavaria enabled performances of both Tristan and Mastersingers to take place. The poem/text for the opera was completed on 25th January 1862, and the overture by the third week of April that year. The rest of the opera however was not completed until October 1867 and the first performance was given in Munich on 21st June 1868. It took another eight years before the first performance of the complete Ring cycle took place, in 1876, at the theatre in Bayreuth, designed by Wagner and built for that very purpose.

The Mastersingers is a departure from Wagner's usual mythical world of gods, giants and heroes. It depicts provincial town life with all its petty rivalries, competitiveness and humour. Set in 16th century Nuremberg, the knight Walther von Stolzing, who has fallen in love with the daughter of the goldsmith Pogner, learns that she is to be betrothed next day to the winner of a singing contest held by the Guild of Mastersingers. Walther seeks to join the Guild and is invited to sing a trial song. The pedantic and pompous town clerk, Beckmesser, the judge of the performance, marks it harshly and Walter's application is rejected. Hans Sachs, the cobbler, also a Mastersinger, recognising the originality and value of the song, resolves to help Eva and Walther, who having met and declared their love, are set on eloping together. Sachs persuades the couple to reject this plan, and takes Walther into his house, where in the morning of the day of the contest, he writes down the words of two stanzas of a song which Walther has dreamt during the night. A visit from Eva inspires Walther to complete the final stanza which, with Sachs' help, now conforms to the rules of the contest. [It is interesting to note that the prize song in the opera, as written by Wagner, does in fact conform to the

Mastersingers' rules]. Beckmesser, who wants Eva for himself, visits Sachs, finds the words of the song, and is permitted by Sachs to make use of them. At the contest Beckmesser sings Walther's song disastrously, and Walther is summoned by Sachs to show how it should be sung. He wins the prize and Eva's hand, and the opera ends in general rejoicing and festivity.

The first performance proved to be the composer's most unqualified success since his early work *Rienzi,* but it did not escape critical attack. Hanslick, the critic who Wagner satirised in the part of Beckmesser, unsurprisingly, found fault with the opera, describing the monologues and dialogues of Sachs as boring his listeners to distraction. After the adoption by the Nazis of the opera as a symbol of German nationalism, it has often been portrayed as an expression of chauvinistic bombast. This is to ignore not only its democratic essence, but also its humanity, its mischievous charm, and its musical subtlety and beauty. The irony too, which the Nazis did not seem to see, is that the insignia of the Mastersingers was that of King David and his harp. David - the king of the Jews.

Concerto No. 1 for Cello and Orchestra **Dmitri Kabalevsky 1904-1987**

1 Allegro. 2 Largo, molto espressivo. 3 Allegretto

The professional success that creative artists enjoy during their lifetime often depends more on their ability to impress and manipulate the cultural and political power structures in which they find themselves than the intrinsic value of their work. This is particularly the case in authoritarian and hierarchical societies, where any individual who does not fit into the perceived mould will find little chance of recognition, and may even be regarded as subversive, and a threat to the established order. With totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union under Stalin, a false move could easily result is the artist being shot, or sent to the Gulag.

Of course, this was not the case with all artists. Some composers did very well under the system, receiving a good income, guaranteed publication, and performances of their work by the best performers, also prestige and status and many other privileges. Amongst this select group was Kabalevsky, who emerged as one of the most personally successful of all Soviet composers.

Born in Saint Petersburg in 1904, -the son of a mathematician from a noble family, he studied at the Academic Music College and the Moscow Conservatory, and in 1932 was appointed to the position of senior lecturer there, joining the Union of Soviet Composers at the same time. By 1939 he was a full-time professor. He was also a music critic and editor of the influential *Soviet Music Magazine*. He joined the communist party in 1940 and was particularly admired for his nationalistic anthems composed during the Great Patriotic War, as World War 2 is known in Russia. The Soviet government awarded him the Medal of Honour for his efforts. After a brief period after the war, when he found himself mysteriously on a list of 'anti-Soviet' composers, his political connections soon brought him back into favour and in 1952 he was appointed Secretary of the Soviet Composers Union, responsible for the continued suppression of alleged subversive compositions, including Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District.*

He received many honours and prizes during his lifetime including the Stalin Prize (twice) and the Order of Lenin. He was also made a 'Peoples Artist of the USSR.'

His greatest contribution was in the field of music education. He was responsible for overseeing the creation of what was perhaps the finest musical education system in the world. The establishment of thousands of music schools, not only for musically gifted children but also for the general population, created a huge audience with a love and understanding of classical music. The specialist music schools which provided the opportunity for the most gifted to develop their talents from an early age, produced not only internationally recognised soloists and conductors, but first rate superbly trained orchestral players, guaranteed employment in the many orchestras, opera houses, and theatres throughout the Soviet Union.

Kabalevsky died in 1987 just before the collapse of the USSR. In 1991 the musical education system he set up began to be dismantled, but over 3,000 music schools remain to this day.

His music is on the whole lyrical and often light-hearted. Harmonically unadventurous, it conforms to the Soviet ideal of providing a suitably positive and uplifting experience for the listener. His most famous work is the *Comedians Suite* which has enjoyed continuing popularity, and the violin concerto which, together with his two cello concertos and three piano concertos, display his talent at its best.

Symphony No. 8 in G major Opus 88 **Antonin Dvorak 1841-1904**

1 Allegro con brio 2 Adagio 3 Allegretto grazioso-molto vivace 4 Allegro ma non troppo

During the course of the nineteenth century an increased awareness grew amongst the nations of Europe of their unique cultural and ethnic heritage. This led to a huge flowering of creativity in the arts as artists, musicians and writers discovered the richness of their folk heritage and history.

Dvorak came from humble stock, his father being a butcher and inn keeper in a village near Prague who also played the zither in local bands. He learnt the violin from the schoolmaster of his primary school and was soon joining his father, playing at the dances and celebrations in the locality. The rhythms and melodies of Bohemia became as natural to him as breathing; he had no need to research the folk music of his country, as other composers have done.

Dvorak's great breakthrough as a composer came about when Brahms recommended him to his publisher Simrock, who commissioned a series of Slavonic Dances from him. The rights to these were purchased outright by the publisher for a small sum, and they turned out to be an enormous success, the first edition being sold out within days. When Simrock commissioned another set of Slavonic Dances, Dvorak did not make the same mistake, insisting on maintaining his copyright and receiving the forthcoming royalties.

Dvorak's Eighth Symphony was written in 1889, on the occasion of his election to the Bohemian Academy of Science, Literature and Art; by then he was a world-famous composer. Enormously prolific, his music ranged over every category and genre, appealing to every kind of listener, from operas, symphonies and chamber music, to popular pieces which could be played at home by amateurs. The Eighth Symphony is one of his greatest achievements. In contrast to his stormy Seventh Symphony, it is full of warmth and joy, and filled with glorious melodies inspired by the Bohemian folk music he so loved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

The ongoing support of the following organisations is acknowledged with thanks:

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Our Supporters Scheme provides invaluable financial support in assisting us to balance our books. A donation of $60 or more will confer General Supporter status and, in appreciation of such support, we reserve seats for our General Supporters at the Auckland Town Hall concerts. Many of our Supporters appreciate being able to relax before the concert, knowing that seats are held for them. The names of our Supporters are also listed in our printed programmes as an acknowledgement (unless anonymity is requested).

General Supporter	>$ 60
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Legend
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2023 – AYO's 75th ANNIVERSARY

Next year marks a significant milestone for our organisation as we celebrate 75 years since the orchestra first began. To be sure you hear more details, sign up for our newsletter or email alumni@ago.org.nz to register your interest. Please share this with all past players you know!

ROLL OF HONOUR

We are grateful to those who leave a bequest to AYO in their will and acknowledge again the gracious bequests received in the past from the estates of:

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
1976	Joan Rattray

PLAY YOUR PART

Our Executive Committee would welcome some new members. Please contact our Secretary, Anne-Marie Forsyth ayo@ayo.org.nz if you would like to investigate or discuss ways you could become involved in this enjoyable and rewarding work.

Attend our concerts!
Check our website regularly for concert information: ayo.org.nz
Sign up to receive the Chairman's *e*-newsletter on our website homepage
Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/AYOrchestra
Join us by emailing auditions@ayo.org.nz – auditions held in December

2022 CONCERTS

For your diaries: Future 2022 concerts by AYO in the Auckland Town Hall:

Sunday 26 June, 2.30pm and **Sunday 2 October, 2.30pm**

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