AYO Auckland Youth Orchestra

Harlequin

Sept/Oct 2022
Concert Series

A word from the

Principal Sponsor

of the

Auckland Youth Orchestra

Since the 18th century it has been a traditional Masonic practice to support the fine arts. This has been carried forward by the Lodge and is reflected in its affection for the AYO with its focus on youth, fine music and excellence.

In day-to-day matters, as well as with Scholarships for players, the Lodge welcomes the opportunities to help talented young musicians make careers in their art and to bring pleasure to all who hear them.

We are proud to have been a player
in this symphony for more than fifteen years.

AYO Auckland Youth Orchestra

Orewa Arts & Events Centre
Saturday 24 September, 7.30pm

Hawkins Theatre, Papakura
Sunday 25 September, 2.30pm

All Saints Church, Howick
Saturday 1 October, 7.30pm

Auckland Town Hall
Sunday 2 October, 2.30pm

PROGRAMME

Farquhar: Harlequin Overture
Ravel: Piano Concerto in G – *Soloist: Madeleine Xiao*

INTERVAL

Shostakovich: Symphony No.9

SOLOIST Madeleine Xiao (piano) Seventeen-year-old Madeleine Xiao is a first-year student at the University of Auckland. She is currently under the tutelage of Rae de Lisle, Bryan Sayer and Katherine Austin. Madeleine has achieved numerous top awards and scholarships regionally and nationally. This year, she was a joint winner of the AYO Piano Competition and is one of three finalists in the University of Auckland Concerto Competition, where she will be playing Chopin's Piano Concerto in E Minor in September.

Apart from being a soloist, Madeleine is a passionate chamber musician and collaborative pianist. Her current chamber group, Kaha Trio, has been selected as an APO Aspiring Musicians Ensemble and performs regularly across Auckland and its wider regions. Madeleine also plays for several choirs and accompanies for events, such as the Big Sing and the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the Auckland Museum this year.

MUSIC DIRECTOR Antun Poljanich was born in Croatia, studying 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

Harlequin Overture **David Farquhar (1928-2007)**

David Farquhar was born in the Waikato town of Cambridge in 1928 and though his early years were spent in Fiji he returned to Cambridge to attend St. Peter's School. There, he said, he was surrounded with songs and hymns in school class and chapel and it seemed natural for him to compose songs of his own; his first was written when he was only eleven years old. He went on to study at Wanganui Collegiate before attending University in Christchurch. He then moved to Victoria University in Wellington to study with Douglas Lilburn, whom he greatly admired. He completed his Masters at the University of Cambridge in England, and then went on to study with Benjamin Frankel at London's Guildhall School of Music. Returning to New Zealand in 1953, he joined the staff of the Department of Music at Victoria University, becoming professor of Music in 1976, and retiring in 1992.

His contribution to the development of music in New Zealand during that period was immense. He was the founder President of the Composers Association of New Zealand and a long-serving member of the board of the New Zealand Composers Foundation. Along with Douglas Lilburn he helped make Victoria University's School of Music a centre for New Zealand composers in the 1960s and 70s, producing many of that generation's finest and internationally recognised composers. He also campaigned for the setting up of a New Zealand Music Centre for the active promotion of New Zealand music. In the 2004 New Year's Honours his work was officially recognised when he was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

David Farquhar composed over 100 works ranging from songs, piano pieces, and chamber music, to symphonies and opera. Perhaps the highlight of his career was when his opera, *A Unicorn for Christmas,* with libretto by Ngaio Marsh, was given a royal performance during the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to New Zealand in 1963. His most popular work remains the dance-suite *Ring Round the Moon,* originally composed as incidental music to the play of the same name.

Harlequin Overture was composed in 1959. It is typical of the music he wrote at the time, full of movement and colour, meticulously crafted. He used to tell his students that music should be entertaining, and the overture is a good example of his intention to try to do just that. It was recorded by the NZSO but this is the first time it has been performed in public.

Piano Concerto in G major **Joseph Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

1. Allegramente 2. Adagio assai 3. Presto

Ravel's first love was the piano. He entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of fourteen as a piano student, before turning to composition as his principal study. It is all the more surprising therefore that he did not consider writing a concerto for the piano until he was over fifty years of age. His affinity with the instrument, and his deep knowledge of what was technically possible, had already been demonstrated by his suite of piano pieces, *Gaspard de la Nuit*, which contains some of the most difficult music ever written for the instrument.

In 1929, the pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who had lost his right arm in the First World War, commissioned Ravel to write a concerto for the left hand, and that seemed to trigger the impetus for him to also write a work for two hands; he worked on both concertos concurrently. His early struggles for recognition, and his battles with the conservatoire establishment were long gone, though they had undoubtedly left their mark on his personality. He was now acknowledged as the foremost French composer of his generation, with a world- wide reputation.

The concerto was composed between 1929 and 1931. He intended to perform the work himself, and while writing it spent hours practising the etudes of Chopin, and studies by Czerny. Perhaps, in the end realising that he would be unable to raise his technique to the required level, he wisely decided to conduct it instead, with Marguerite Long engaged as the soloist. The first performance was given in 1932 in Paris with the Orchestre Lamoureux and was an immediate success. A European tour followed, with performances in 16 cities, the concerto meeting with acclaim everywhere. A proposed tour of America

was however cancelled because of Ravel's ill health. During the First World War Ravel had served as a volunteer lorry driver, delivering munitions at night under heavy German bombardment. He suffered amoebic dysentery, which required a bowel operation, and frostbite in his feet. This wartime experience severely compromised his health, and by 1927 friends began to notice that he was becoming increasingly absent minded. In the words of Stravinsky "his final years were cruel, for he was gradually losing his memory and some of his co-ordinating powers, and he was, of course, quite aware of it." In the end he lost all ability to work and even the power of speech.

The piano concerto however shows no sign of deterioration in his creative abilities. His stated intention was to entertain " in the manner of Mozart." Touring America in 1928 he had become fascinated by jazz, visiting Harlem jazz clubs with his friend George Gershwin and remarking that "the most captivating part of jazz is its rich and diverting rhythm." The concerto is infused with jazz idioms and uses a colourful array of percussion instruments, famously opening with the crack of a whip. Another element is that of Basque folk melody. Ravel's mother, whom he adored, was born in the Basque region of Spain. He recalled listening to her singing folk songs to him as a little child and claimed that it was she who instilled in him his love of music. The first movement has the highly unusual feature of having three cadenzas, for harp, and woodwind, as well as piano. The second movement provides a welcome contrast to the other two, opening with the piano alone playing a long and beautiful melody which over 34 bars does not repeat a single bar. Ravel remarked that writing this nearly killed him. In the third movement there is a carnival atmosphere, an unstoppable cascade of notes.

The concerto was his penultimate composition, his last being the even more famous and popular *Bolero*. Its life affirming and joyful nature has made it a favourite with audiences throughout the world, right up to the present day. Let us hope that the enormous success and popularity of these two final works were a consolation to him during his last few lonely years.

Symphony No. 9 in E flat major, Opus 70 **Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)**

1. Allegro 2. Moderato 3. Presto 4. Largo 5. Allegretto-Allegro

It is hard for us, living in a society where those who make the laws under which we live are accountable to us, and can be removed at the ballot box, to imagine just how difficult it must be to live under a totalitarian government which is accountable only to the dictator who controls it. It is a natural thing to love one's country and be proud of its cultural achievements, but how can this be reconciled with the reality of living under a system, or an ideology, where one's very thoughts and opinions are subject to the control of the state? For the ordinary person, it is possible to survive by keeping one's head down and trying to live on good terms with one's neighbours and fellow workers. The dilemma is more acute for creative artists, writers and intellectuals. They must either compromise, and follow the party line, or escape into exile.

In Germany, under Hitler, artists who did not conform would see their work ridiculed, deemed degenerate, and their books burnt, and if you were a Jew, extermination in a concentration camp would be your inevitable fate. In the Soviet Union there was a constant risk of being declared an Enemy of the People and ending up dead, or in the Gulag

- or if you were lucky, having your work banned, which happened in the end even to the politically naïve Prokofiev; his international fame did not protect him.

Shostakovich spent his entire life in this environment, walking a tightrope between official approval and fear of condemnation. At the end of the Second World War, or "The Great Patriotic War" as it is called in Russia, Shostakovich's reputation was at its height. His seventh and eighth symphonies, which he wrote during the conflict had done much to raise morale during those terrible years. Stalin, at the same time, was basking in a victory, which was portrayed as a result of his great leadership, despite the fact that his bungling at the onset of the German invasion had cost millions of lives. Two million Russian soldiers died in the first 12 days of the invasion, largely because he at first refused to believe it was taking place, and then having his generals shot when they attempted to retreat and conserve their resources and men.

It was expected, of course, that Shostakovich's next symphony would be a large triumphant work extolling the victory of the Russian people and its great leader. A symphony with soloists and a large chorus, like Beethoven's ninth, would surely be an appropriate response, creating a great trilogy of war symphonies. What Shostakovich wrote could not have been more different. When the symphony was premiered on November 3rd 1945 by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, a city which had undergone such terrible suffering during the war, the audience heard what must have seemed to them something like circus music. It could so easily have been perceived as an insult. What on earth was Shostakovich thinking?

Clearly Shostakovich had taken a great risk with his Ninth Symphony. He had probably calculated that Stalin was so distracted by the adulation being bestowed upon him as to be greatly interested in a new composition. He had also taken care to cultivate the good will of the composer Dmitri Kabalevsky, who was the secretary of the Composers Union, by playing piano four hand arrangements of Haydn, Mozart and early Beethoven with him every evening, at the same time working on his symphony each morning; they were both staying at a composers' rest home northeast of Moscow at the time. Perhaps he had given Kabalevsky an advance indication of the nature of the work and had received assurance that all would be well.

It is interesting to keep this historical context in mind while listening to the symphony. It is in five movements, with the last three played without a pause. From the start there is clearly an ironic feel to the first movement and this is reinforced, after the lyricism of the second movement, by the scherzo. The finale features a parody of Stalin's favourite song; also, what is the meaning of the intermezzo preceding it featuring the solo bassoon? Is Shostakovich trying to symbolise the enduring resilience of the individual, despite the overwhelming force of the state? Or is he perhaps portraying himself, and his relationship with Stalin? We can never know of course, but the intriguing questions remain.

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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.

PLAY YOUR PART

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 manager@ayo.org.nz – see website for details
Subscribe, support or sponsor us: ayo.org.nz/support-us

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- Supporters' names are usually listed in the printed programmes and some of the best seats are cordoned off exclusively for them at the free Auckland Town Hall concerts.
- Donations gratefully received by direct credit to our bank a/c: 12-3030-0505986-00 or via our Givealittle page.

General Supporter: $60+
Special Supporter: $500+
Golden Supporter: $5,000+

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

AYO PLAYERS

Violin I
‡ Jim Wu
Martin Qiang
Wenjia Li
Justin Chan
Bethany Yates
Santiago Romano
Maggie Yang
Eason Ye
Alan Qin
Sheena Lin

Violin II
Matilda Hol
Ailis Su
Michael Tran
Joey Lee
Theo McIntosh
Sebastian Romano
Samuel Cheung
Louis Gasté
Caragh Puttick
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Nicholas Newman
Evelyn Zhang
Edward Zhang
Hazel Watson-Smith
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Cello
Damon Herlihy-O'Brien
Eva Wu
Claire Xu
Jifei Shao
Phoebe Qiu
Vincent Chen
Masha Pavlenko
Wooyoung Wang
Season Kan
Eric Liang

Double Bass
Oliver Spalter
Zazi Ndebele
Jessie Wu
Harry Doyle

Flute
Claire Huang
Alina Chen (& Piccolo)
Joy Jeung

Oboe
Akari Ouchi
Emily Grant (& Cor Anglais)

Clarinet
Kiara Kong
Alex Martin

Bassoon
Sue Lynn Leong
Hannah Twomey

French Horn
Evan Metcalfe
Mereem Dewerse
Fergus Dunlop
Ella Riley

Trumpet
Jake Krishnamurti
James Brady

Trombone
Athena Shiu
Amy Laithwaite
Tavite Tonga

Tuba
Lachlan Grant

Harp
Harrison Chau

Timpani
Camryn Nel

Percussion
Michael Cai
James Tang
Naomi Kelly
Jeffrey Garus
Keegan Fong

Legend
‡ Concertmaster
 # Principal

COMING UP

Soloist Competition Finals

The Finals of the 2022 competition, which is open to AYO players only, will be held on Monday **24 October (Labour Weekend) at 5pm at St Luke's Church, Remuera**. All are welcome to come and hear the talent of our players as soloists. We thank the Perpetual Guardian Margaret Neutze Legacy Fund for generously donating the cash prizes for this competition. The overall winner will perform as soloist with AYO next year.

Auditions for AYO 2023

Annual auditions are coming up shortly - find out more about becoming a member of AYO 2023 on our website. We are always interested to hear from young musicians who wish to develop their skills in orchestral playing.

AYO's 75th Anniversary – Labour Weekend 2023

We are looking forward to celebrating this significant milestone for the orchestra next year and we hope many of our past players will be keen to participate. To be sure you hear more details, register your interest via our website and please do share this with all past players you know.

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