

Stonnington Symphony presents

SHOSTAKOVICH STRAUSS



Sunday 25 August 2024 | 2:30pm | Malvern Town Hall

Program

SHOSTAKOVICH Violin Concerto No.1 in A Minor, Op.99

STRAUSS *Tod und Verklarung*, Op.24

STRAUSS *Till Eulenspiegls Lustige Streiche*, Op.28

Conductor

Roy Theaker *Artistic Director*

Soloist

Brigid Coleridge *Violin*



Stonnington
Symphony

Roy Theaker *Artistic Director*

Support Stonnington Symphony

The Stonnington Symphony *Artistic Development Fund* is a registered charitable trust dedicated to furthering the artistic resources of instrumentalists, conductors, composers, members and audiences. Its financial structure is designed to maximise our ability to fund specific projects, support emerging performers and commission new works.

All donations to the Artistic Development Fund of \$2 or more are fully tax deductible.

We also accept general donations. These contributions specifically support orchestral operations and are therefore NOT tax deductible.

For further information on either form of donation, please visit our website.



Arranging my piece *Hope* for Stonnington Symphony was confidence boosting and in many ways, career-defining: introducing myself as an orchestral composer as well as pianist/chamber musician. The commission is now being performed by other orchestras in Australia and was just recorded in Budapest.

Nat Bartsch - Composer

The Emerging Artist Program was a really important opportunity in refining my skills with an experienced orchestra on challenging repertoire. It opened the door an ongoing relationship with Stonnington Symphony, resulting in multiple engagements as a guest conductor. The value of this program is not only in nurturing musical skills, but also in building sustainable work for emerging artists in Melbourne.

Ingrid Martin - Conductor



The Stonnington Symphony's *Artistic Development Fund* was integral to my continued journey as a composer. I found the experience to be a perfect opportunity to explore new musical ideas in a supported and generous environment. Creating music for community music organisations is crucial for composers, and the space this opportunity carved out for me was of the highest calibre.

Evan Lawson - Composer and Conductor



The Orchestra

Violin I

Ash Wood*
Nimrod Kuti
Pam Scott
Heather Thompson
Thomas Garnett
Sally Banks
Alice Barke
Justine Siedle
Li Sheng Yeoh
Igor Zakopaylo

Violin II

Alistair Legge*
Lisette Bush
Alicia White
Meghan Young
Charlotte Young
Moya Cummings
Florence Thomson
Mark Pokryshevsky

Viola

Tiffany Duncan*
David Keuneman
Peter Neustupny
David Choate
Hugh McMaster
David Woods

Cello

Julia Cianci*
Phillipa Clements
Katelyn Woodyatt
Dennis Vaughan
Julia Choate
Sue Duke
Paddy Collins
Rosemary Ingram

Double Bass

Nic Synot*
Ben Bates

Flute

Sam Cooke*
Catherine Buxton
Matthew Barker*
Kelly Williams*

Oboe

Emma Ridout*
Felicity Hardiman*
Bridee Mee
Renee Badcock*

Clarinet

David Laity*
Tessa Rowe
Brendan Toohey*
Tom D'Ath*

Bassoon

Linda Pearson*
Sara Rafferton
Doug Lewis
Stef Ghiocas*

Horn

Bruce Ikin*
Scott Penderleith
Lyndelle Newey
Peter Marks

Trumpet

Trent Hopkinson*
Louise Martin*
Jim McMillan
William McMaster

Trombone

Ken Tang*
Suzanne Gibson
Jurie Swart*

Tuba

Philip Kaev*

Timpani

Allison Summers*

Percussion

Fintan Hocking
David Tay
John Wise

Celeste

Cameron Thomas*

Harp

Laura Tanata*

** denotes principal player*

Committee of Management

Emma Ridout	<i>President</i>
David Woods	<i>Vice-President</i>
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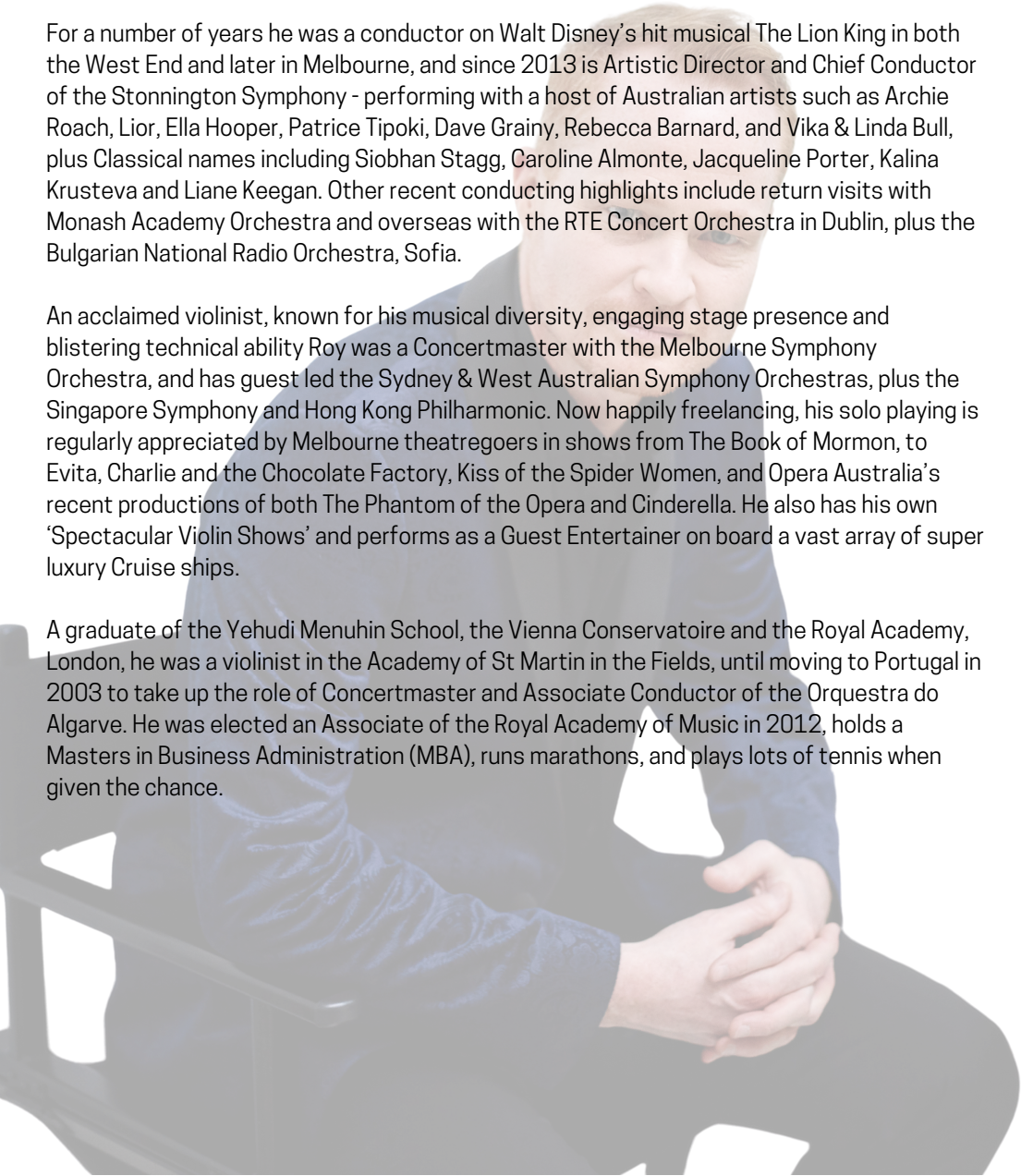
Roy Theaker

Roy Theaker has a diverse and well-travelled career as Conductor, Music Director, Concertmaster and Violin soloist. He has lit up the stage from the Sydney Opera House to Carnegie Hall New York, and London's West End to Santory Hall Japan, in both the highbrow classical world and the commercial theatre, rock and pop industry where he has shared the stage with the likes of Robbie Williams, Hugh Jackman and even the Three Tenors.

For a number of years he was a conductor on Walt Disney's hit musical The Lion King in both the West End and later in Melbourne, and since 2013 is Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Stonnington Symphony - performing with a host of Australian artists such as Archie Roach, Lior, Ella Hooper, Patrice Tipoki, Dave Grainy, Rebecca Barnard, and Vika & Linda Bull, plus Classical names including Siobhan Stagg, Caroline Almonte, Jacqueline Porter, Kalina Krusteva and Liane Keegan. Other recent conducting highlights include return visits with Monash Academy Orchestra and overseas with the RTE Concert Orchestra in Dublin, plus the Bulgarian National Radio Orchestra, Sofia.

An acclaimed violinist, known for his musical diversity, engaging stage presence and blistering technical ability Roy was a Concertmaster with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and has guest led the Sydney & West Australian Symphony Orchestras, plus the Singapore Symphony and Hong Kong Philharmonic. Now happily freelancing, his solo playing is regularly appreciated by Melbourne theatregoers in shows from The Book of Mormon, to Evita, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Kiss of the Spider Women, and Opera Australia's recent productions of both The Phantom of the Opera and Cinderella. He also has his own 'Spectacular Violin Shows' and performs as a Guest Entertainer on board a vast array of super luxury Cruise ships.

A graduate of the Yehudi Menuhin School, the Vienna Conservatoire and the Royal Academy, London, he was a violinist in the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, until moving to Portugal in 2003 to take up the role of Concertmaster and Associate Conductor of the Orquestra do Algarve. He was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2012, holds a Masters in Business Administration (MBA), runs marathons, and plays lots of tennis when given the chance.



Brigid Coleridge

Brigid Coleridge is an Australian violinist and poet. At present, she divides her time between the USA and Australia. An “entrancing” (BBC Magazine) and “dynamic” (Classic Melbourne) performer, Brigid’s recent notable performance debuts have included Carnegie Hall and the Concertgebouw, and her playing has been broadcast across the US (WQXR), Australia (ABC Classic FM, 3MBS) and Europe (BBC Radio 3, and Radio 4 Netherlands). Brigid’s poems have appeared in Australian and international publications and she is the winner of the 2023 Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize.

Brigid is the violinist and a founding member of the critically acclaimed US-based Merz Trio. The trio won the 2021 Naumburg Competition and the 2020 Concert Artists’ Guild Competition, and their first album INK debuted at #2 in the Classical charts. From 2018-2021 the Merz Trio was in professional residence at the New England Conservatory, and the ensemble has undertaken further residencies in the US (at Yellow Barn and Avaloch Farm Institute) and in the UK (at Snape Maltings). Renowned for their innovative programming and fresh, nuanced interpretations, the Merz Trio made their Carnegie Hall debut in 2023. They have been featured on BBC Radio (UK) and WQXR (US). Merz Trio is represented by Epstein Fox Performances.

As a recitalist, Brigid has performed internationally in venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall, Jordan Hall, the Kennedy Center and the Purcell Room, and at festivals such as Yellow Barn, Olympic Music Festival, Australian Festival of Chamber Music, Lake Champlain, and Chesapeake Festival. She has been a solo artist in residence at Yellow Barn and Avaloch Farm Institute in the US, and will undertake a residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Ireland in 2024.

Brigid obtained a doctoral degree from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where she worked on Beethoven’s late Mass, the Missa Solemnis, under the supervision of Professor Scott Burnham. Her academic interests include music performance in the context of performance studies, language and music, embodiment, space-specific sound, and theories of translation. Brigid also holds an Artist Diploma and a Master of Performance degree from the Royal College of Music (London) and a Diploma in Chamber Music from the New England Conservatory (Boston). She graduated BA/BMus from the University of Melbourne following studies in English Literature, French Language, and Violin Performance. Her important musical mentors have included Donald Weilerstein, Daniel Phillips, Vivian Weilerstein, Mark Steinberg, Ulf Schneider, Maciej Rakowski, Mark Mogilevski, Gerhard Schulz, Isabel Charisius, Geoff Nuttall and Alasdair Tate.

Brigid grew up in Stonnington and is delighted to be back in the familiar surroundings of the Malvern Town Hall for this performance

Violin Concerto No.1 in A Minor, Op.99

Dimitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)

Nocturne: Moderato

Scherzo: Allegro

Passacaglia: Andante – Cadenza (attacca)

Burlesque: Allegro con brio – Presto

Together with Stravinsky and Prokofiev, Shostakovich was one of the greatest Russian composers of the 20th century. He was born at a critical time in Russian history as his career ran in parallel with the history of the new Soviet state. His 15 symphonies and 15 string quartets are among the finest 20th century works in that media. He was often at odds with official artistic doctrines and although he appeared at times to bend with the fluctuating Soviet attitudes to music, he maintained to the last an integrity and individuality which marked him as the most important composer in the USSR.

Shostakovich studied the piano at home with his mother and then at the Petrograd Conservatory with Leonid Nikolayev. He also studied composition with Max Steinberg and Gluzanov, whose influence is apparent in his early work. He soon went on to develop his own brittle, witty and satirical style. For several years he was regarded as the 'great white hope' of Soviet music.

Shostakovich composed his Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor between 1947 and 1948, but it was only premiered in 1955 by the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Yevgeny Mravinsky. This concerto was written during the period when the USSR had adopted Zhdanovism, the doctrine that marked the most restricted and demanding phase of 'socialist realism.' This meant censorship for any work of art that did not respect the party's propaganda. The Violin Concerto No. 1 was therefore reworked many times with the assistance of David Oistrakh, violinist and dedicatee of the piece, and not performed until two years after Stalin's death. Talking of the Violin Concerto No. 1, Oistrakh remarked on the 'depth of its artistic content.'

In 1997 Richard Taruskin wrote 'No one alive today can imagine the sort of extreme mortal duress to which artists in the Soviet Union were subjected, and Shostakovich more than any other.' For Shostakovich, a knock on the door from the KGB (secret police) in the middle of the night was a real possibility. For a time, the composer slept in the stairway of his apartment building to spare his wife and children the trauma of seeing him taken away. It was amid this terrifying environment that Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto was born.

Fun Fact: Shostakovich was a Soviet football fanatic. He attended every game and wrote meticulous notes about the scores. He even became a qualified referee.

Set in four movements, this Violin Concerto was once described by Shostakovich as 'a symphony for solo violin and orchestra'. Much like a symphony it has four movements:

Nocturne: *Moderato*

This is not the magical, shimmering night music of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Instead, we are plunged into the quiet terror of the night. This ghostly nocturnal landscape is filled with lament and persistent anxiety. For Oistrakh, it represented 'a suppression of feelings'.

Scherzo: *Allegro*

The second movement is a demonic Scherzo. It is a grotesque dance, infused with jagged rhythms. The snarling solo violin (often called the Devil's instrument) is surrounded by ghoulish, shrieking woodwinds. Echoes of Klezmer music seem to rise in defiance of Stalin's anti-Semitic reign of terror.

Passacaglia: *Andante - Cadenza (attacca)*

Popular during the Baroque period, the Passacaglia features a series of variations over a recurring bass line in triple meter. As it evolves, more instruments join the conversation.

Burlesque: *Allegro con brio - Presto*

This movement is a boisterous, sardonic romp. It is wild, unabashed Russian fiddle music. Oistrakh described it as 'a joyous folk party, with even the bagpipes of traveling musicians.' There is a mocking reminder of the Passacaglia theme and a fragment of this theme, heard in the horns, has the final word as the Burlesque hurtles to a conclusion

A Note from Brigid Coleridge

Shostakovich's first violin concerto has lived with me for a long time. I first learned it when I was an undergraduate: I remember being intoxicated by Shostakovich's dramatic musical world, by the powerful and idiosyncratic voice he demands from the violin, by the volatile dynamic he creates between soloist and orchestra. But I also remember feeling emotionally out of my depth in that first encounter with this concerto: suburban Melbourne seemed far away from the world of a composer grappling with artistic identity and suppression in Stalinist Russia. Nothing in my life since has inched me closer to Shostakovich's reality - how could it?

Nonetheless, to return to this piece after all this time has been a very moving experience: a real lesson in the ways we bring ourselves as performers and listeners to the music. I hear the concerto differently now; it feels different in my hands. This time, I am struck by the sheer loneliness in this music, the stark quality of its isolation - something that Shostakovich knew only too intimately, but also an experience that I think we might all know a little more about after these last few years. Alongside the loneliness, however, there are many other colours: tenderness, irony, abandon, glee, and above all a hell-bent energy that often expresses itself in raucous dance-rhythms, as though you're at a party for the end of the world. I like remembering that when Shostakovich wrote this piece, he had no idea of what was to come - no way of knowing that Stalin would shortly die, that the piece would be performed and become hugely popular, that life might change. There's something for us all to hold onto there I think: a consolation, a challenge

Tod und Verklarung, Op.24

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Richard Strauss, like Rachmaninov, was a Romantic composer who outlived his era. Elgar and Sibelius stopped composing shortly after World War One, perhaps realising that the spirit of the age contradicted their personal artistic visions. But their contemporaries, Strauss and Rachmaninov enjoyed a late Romantic Indian Summer, oblivious to stylistic change.

Richard's father, Franz Strauss, was the principal horn player in the Munich court orchestra. His mother came from an affluent family of brewers. Strauss showed musical talent early producing his first piano piece and his first songs at the age of six. His musical education was informal, his principal teachers being players in his father's orchestra. His father's contacts also ensured that Richard's early works reached a broad public, while financial assistance from his mother's family enabled several scores to be published. These early works show classical bias fostered by his father, who was inherently reactionary and fiercely anti Wagnerian. The influence of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schumann, of whom Strauss's father approved, is clearly apparent.

Strauss had a lengthy and successful career as a composer from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. He is best known for his seven orchestral tone poems, two of which we hear today.

Contrasting with the work *Till Eulenspiegls Lustige Streiche*, this piece is a depiction of an old artist in his death throes, who struggles to live, reviews events in his life and eventually succumbs and passes into the next world, in a transfiguration of his being.

The subject of death is not a happy subject but is typical of the intensity of German Romantics of the time. What is not typical, however, is that the music came first, and then, at the request of Strauss, Alexander Ritter wrote a poem that follows the music and makes clear that which is depicted. The poem and the music are in four parts that proceed through the narrative of the end of this man's life.

The opening Largo, creates an atmosphere of life's impending end with soft repeating notes that sound like an ominous clock ticking, as the poem by Ritter suggests: 'The sick man lies in bed, asleep, with heavy irregular breathing; friendly dreams (in the form of woodwind and violin solos) conjure a smile on the features of the deeply suffering man.' Followed by a struggle the tempo quickens, and in Allegro molto agitato 'he wakes up; he is once more racked with horrible agonies; his limbs shake with fever' amidst an orchestral maelstrom, which suggests his struggle to forestall his end. Suddenly, the storm breaks as a new theme sounds softly, in the trumpet, trombones, and tuba: the first glimpse of transfiguration, heard as three ascending notes followed by an octave leap upward.

The third section, *Meno mosso ma sempre alla breve*, quieter and more reflective, moderates the struggle as a dying man thinks of his long and active life including happier times: ‘the time of his youth with its strivings and passions’. The protagonist appears as a strapping young man with a faster, fanfare-like theme for horns and wind. Finally, starting softly, the last section, *Moderato*, depicts the transfiguration of his soul and his departure from our world. In Strauss’s inimitable way, the main theme of transfiguration, three ascending notes followed by a soaring octave leap upward, begins quietly, then grows in intensity and with brass filling the hall, shepherds the man’s soul into eternity.

Most interestingly, Strauss wrote this piece at the age of 25. Though he had adopted a decidedly secular worldview as a teenager, he brilliantly depicted the physiological and psychological states of a dying man with almost scientific precision, using the most advanced orchestrations and harmonies of his time. The piece was not based on any personal experience, but intriguingly, on his deathbed, Strauss remarked that ‘dying is exactly as I composed it sixty years ago in *Death and Transfiguration*’.

The significance of that theme was central to the life and work of Strauss. Almost 60 years later, in 1949 as an old man of 84, he returned to it in his beloved and strikingly beautiful *Four last Songs*. You may remember we performed these with Roy Theaker and Lee Abrahmsen (soprano) at our 40th Year Anniversary Gala last November,



Till Eulenspiegls Lustige Streiche, Op.28

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Till Eulenspiegel was an actual historical character of the 14th century. His reputation for practical jokes and roguish adventures defying all authority were documented in German literature of the early 16th century. Richard Strauss originally became interested in Till as the subject of an opera. However, Strauss was enjoying considerable success as a composer of symphonic poems. So reshaping his ideas as a tone poem, he completed the score of *Till Eulenspiegels Merry Pranks*, destined to become one of his best-loved orchestral works.

Strauss's own notations in the score guide us through the story (here translated by Norman Del Mar). The string introduction suggests the narrative 'Once upon a time there was a roguish jester.' Soon Till bursts in on the scene in two themes: the first given to the now famous comic-heroic horn solo (spanning nearly three octaves) and the second a jaunty giggling flourish on clarinet. This clarinet motif will stand for much of his pranks and essential cheekiness as the tale unfolds.

Till's first adventure comes with a 'Hop! On horseback straight through the market women.' Listen out for the sound of the horses riding, scored in the violins. Till rides destructively, creating confusion and escaping 'off and away in seven-league boots.' He checks to see if the coast is clear then reappears. 'Dressed as a priest, he oozes unction and morality. Yet the rogue peeps out of the big toe.' Suddenly, 'he is seized with a horrid premonition about the outcome of his mockery of religion.' Next comes 'Till the cavalier, exchanging sweet courtesies with beautiful girls,' until he falls in love and learns that 'a delicate jilt is still a jilt. He vows he will take revenge on all mankind.'

The final section works up to Till's trial for blasphemy during which he is 'still whistling to himself with indifference.' The sentence is passed, and Strauss portrays the execution in grisly detail. Listen for the sound of a strangled clarinet. 'Up the ladder with him! There, he dangles; the breath leaves his body; the last convulsion and Till's mortal self is finished.' The music observes his passing by a little silence. In an epilogue, the 'Once upon a time' music returns, as if to say that this has been only an entertaining tale.

Program Notes prepared by Stonnington Symphony Violinist Justine Siedle

Fun Fact: When asked whether he had any 'metaphysical' intentions in *Till Eulenspiegls Lustige Streiche* Strauss responded, 'Oh, no—I only wanted to give the people in the concert hall a good laugh for once.'

Stonnington Symphony presents

Ballade

Sunday 17 November 2024 | 2:30pm | Malvern Town Hall

Sunday 24 November 2024 | 2:30pm | Castlemaine Town Hall

Program

BRAHMS

Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op.56

COLERIGE-TAYLOR

Ballade, Op.33

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Symphony No.5 in D Major

Guest Conductor

Carlos Del Cueto

Stonnington
Symphony

Roy Theaker Artistic Director



Stonnington **Symphony**

Roy Theaker *Artistic Director*