

## **Melbourne Digital Concert Hall**

Friday 10 July 2020 – 8.30pm (AEST)

live-streamed

from the Athenæum Theatre, Melbourne Australia

## **Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra**

Rachael Beesley | Violin

Anna McMichael | Violin

Simon Oswell | Viola

Katie Yap | Viola

Natasha Kraemer | Violoncello

Emma Sullivan | Double Bass

Special thanks to the Co-Directors of the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall, Chris Howlett - cellist, festival director and producer, and Adele Schonhardt - Media & Public Affairs Manager at Musica Viva Australia, for their dedication and creative spirit in creating the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall to support the Australian arts industry during the COVID-19 crisis. Their mission is to provide a means for Australian artists to continue their profession and to connect communities around the country through live music.

# AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC & CLASSICAL & ORCHESTRA

RICHARD GILL AO | FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra

Inspire – Educate – Enlighten

The Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra specialises in historically informed performance of late 18th- to early 20th-century orchestral and chamber music repertoire and is at the forefront of the historically informed performance scene, staying abreast with the latest research and developments around the world by collaborating with key guest musicians and musicologists. Under the co-artistic direction of Rachael Beesley and Nicole van Bruggen, the orchestra has been highly praised as “rich, impassioned, and faultlessly realised ... a thrilling example of HIP with all the right strings attached” (The Age, 2018).



Founded under the artistic direction of renowned musician and educator, the late Richard Gill AO, the orchestra’s twin goals of performance and education are delivered through live concerts in Australia’s capital cities and in metropolitan and regional centres, collaborations with guest ensembles, radio broadcasts, innovative education programs, pre-concert presentations and specialist online resources. Bringing together leading Australian and international exponents, the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra brings historical insights and new perspectives to masterpieces from the Classical and Romantic periods.

In tandem with the main concert season, the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra presents two cornerstone education programs – *Voyage of Musical Discovery* and *Young Mannheim Symphonists*. For more information on the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra’s educational activities, please visit [arco.org.au/education](http://arco.org.au/education)

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756–1791)

Divertimento in F Major K.138

*Allegro*

*Andante*

*Presto*

This divertimento and two others were composed by a sixteen-year-old Mozart in Salzburg, shortly after returning from his second trip to Italy. Divertimento as a title is somewhat confusing, as the script at the top of the original manuscript is not in Mozart's hand. They could have been written with festive outdoor events in mind, in which case the Salzburg Symphonies – as they are sometimes referred to – would have had multiple players on each part, as they are presented tonight. In any case, Mozart's trademark unison motifs are punctuated with inventive harmonies and frequent rhythmic surprises. The three movements and their internal design are an apt and beautiful expression of the rich mixture of influences – Italy to the south and Germany to the north – that coalesced not only in the young composer, but in 18th-century Austrian art and culture more widely.

### **Franz Xaver Richter** (1709–1789)

Sinfonia à Quattro in B-flat Major

*Spiritoso*

*Andante*

*Presto*

Published in Paris in 1744, this work is an example of Richter's mastery of contrapuntal writing. Each string part is of equal importance and melodic ideas are passed deftly from one voice to another. Although Richter worked alongside Johann Stamitz, he had no taste for virtuosic special effects. His music was of a more learned style, never quite relinquishing its Baroque-era aesthetics. However, alongside fugal techniques, sequential repetitions and frequent appearances of the minor mode, Richter did incorporate elements of the contemporary Italian style. He also adapted the prevailing Mannheim fashions and made them his own, taking advantage of the skill and precision of the city's orchestra. Despite these innovations, Richter's admiration for old-fashioned compositional techniques ultimately left him watching from the sidelines as other equal or lesser composers enjoyed success in the Mannheim Court. Exasperated, in 1769 he left Mannheim to take up the position of maître de chapelle at the Strasbourg Cathedral.

## **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770–1827)

Cavatina from String Quartet No.13 in E-flat Major Op.130

*Adagio molto espressivo*

As one of the last works completed before Beethoven's death, the Op.130 belongs to a set of three string quartets commissioned by the Russian Prince Galitzin. Due to a resurgence in the fashionability of string quartets, Beethoven was also able to sell it and the Op.132 to his publisher for amounts almost equivalent to the annual salary of a school teacher or orchestral musician. The Op.130 departs from the newer four-movement format and extends to six movements – of which the Cavatina is the fifth. Beginning in the 1960s, scholars began collecting, reassembling and analysing the contents of Beethoven's many compositional sketchbooks, providing new insights into his working methods. The Op.130 underwent many changes – notably a new finale and alternate keys for movements – and there are detailed sketches showing different versions of the sinuous lines that make up the songlike Cavatina. It appears that he was searching for melodic shapes that were unusual for the time – including constructing phrases of uneven lengths, and lingering on unexpected pitches. The Cavatina is the final piece of music on a gramophone recording containing a sample of the earth's sounds and languages on board the Voyager 2 space probe – launched in 1977.

## **Gioachino Rossini** (1792–1868)

String Sonata No.1 in G major

*Moderato*

*Andante*

*Allegro*

Although often performed nowadays by string ensembles, Rossini's six string sonatas were written for a quartet of two violins, cello and double bass. The presence and independent role of the double bass was presumably due to the works being composed while Rossini was on a summer holiday in Ravenna staying with amateur double bassist Agostini Triossi. Rossini was just twelve at the time, and had barely begun his music studies. No.1 has the standard fast-slow-fast arrangement of movements for the time, and rather than undergoing the complex development familiar in the works of Mozart or Beethoven, its melodic themes are primarily presented in consecutively contrasting variations and transpositions. The two violins share much of the material between them, and there are already many hints of the spirited bel canto and humorous musical dialogue that would become the hallmarks of Rossini's acclaimed operatic works years later. The original scores of the string sonatas were presumed lost until discovered in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. in 1954.

## **Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)**

Sinfonia No.10 in B minor

*Adagio – Allegro – più presto*

There is a melancholy to the opening of Mendelssohn's 10th string symphony that is surely present in the hearts of many thirteen-year-olds, but perhaps not always possible to express. Between his twelfth and fourteenth birthdays, Mendelssohn wrote twelve string symphonies as well as other chamber works. They were composed for performances at his home in Berlin, where his wealthy parents hosted concerts for friends and associates. Since the family's arrival in Berlin from Hamburg, Felix and his sister Fanny had enjoyed a wide-ranging education, including piano and composition lessons. Both children showed extraordinary musical talent, but the pursuit of music as a career was only deemed suitable for Felix. These early string symphonies are milestones in the path of Mendelssohn's musical development. Since the age of nine, he had been studying composition with Carl Friedrich Zelter, who taught him the forms and expectations of late 18th-century music. The string symphonies are well-crafted examples of these, and Mendelssohn explores different expressive possibilities of the instruments without straying far from standard harmonic progressions. Fresh and engaging, they offer many clues to the musical ingredients that were to appear just four years later in his first work of striking originality, the Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream.

© written and edited by Charles MacInnes, June 2020

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra is supported through the COVID-19 pandemic by the City of Sydney's Cultural Resilience Fund.

**CITY OF SYDNEY** 

Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra's 2020 Concert Season is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.



Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra is supported for this live-streamed concert at Melbourne Digital Concert Hall by **Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, Monash University.**

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