

The New Zealand Herald
Premier Series

Auckland
Philharmonía.

Wagner's
**Tristan
und Isolde**

4pm, Saturday 10 August
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Giordano Bellincampi
Featuring Simon O'Neill as Tristan and Manuela Uhl as Isolde
with The New Zealand Opera Chorus

Tristan und Isolde is a searing portrait of agonised, unstoppable, uncontrollable desire that can end only in death. From its very first notes, Wagner reshaped music for ever. This is a performance not to be missed.

Duration: Approx. 5½ hours – three acts with one 30min interval and a 60min dinner break.

**Bach &
Bruckner**

🕒 7.30PM, THURSDAY 2 MAY



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CONDUCTOR Karl-Heinz Steffens

PIANO David Fray

J.S. BACH Keyboard Concerto No.5, BWV 1056

J.S. BACH Keyboard Concerto No.4, BWV 1055

BRUCKNER Symphony No.9*



For artist biographies,
please visit our website

Programme Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Keyboard Concerto No.5,
BWV 1056 (1736)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Presto*

DURATION: c.10'

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Keyboard Concerto No.4,
BWV 1055 (1736)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Larghetto*
- III. *Allegro ma non tanto*

DURATION: c.13'

Bach wrote seven concertos for solo keyboard (which in his time would have been heard on the harpsichord rather than on the then-newfangled fortepiano). The concertos all survive in a single manuscript probably written in the late 1730s, but we know nothing for certain about why or for whom they were composed. Bach was the director of Leipzig's Collegium Musicum at the time, so he may have written them for that society; we also know he went on a

performance tour to Dresden in 1738 and may have played them there.

It is often stated that Bach 'invented' the keyboard concerto, but as usual such monolithic statements are only partially true. The 'concerto', meaning a stand-alone genre for virtuoso soloist and orchestra, did not yet exist in the 1730s; rather, the label referred to a wide variety of music. 'Concerto' merely means together (Latin con) plus resolve (Latin certare), as in resolving or disputing a question; any piece that involved different groups of instruments could be labelled a concerto. Bach's concertos are best seen as an adaptation of existing forms (and in the case of these two concerti, probably of existing pieces for other groups of instruments), simply highlighting the keyboard more than most prior composers had.

The fourth concerto, BWV 1055, is the best known of the lot, probably due to its sprightly writing and that it serves as such a clear model for the future structure and function of the concerto. The ritornello-solo alternations of the first movement are especially well worked out, with the strings playing the whole melody in the ritornellos and then punctuating the keyboard part with fragments of it in the solos.

Because Bach's concertos were not published and would have circulated only in manuscript copies, if at all, they have not had quite the foundational role in the history of the genre that Vivaldi's violin concertos or Handel's organ concertos had. It was primarily Bach's sons, especially Carl Philipp Emanuel, who would make the keyboard concerto a more public genre, writing and publishing concertos that would influence Mozart, who would influence Beethoven, and so on. It is only with the rediscovery of Bach's music in the 19th century that his concertos were retrospectively placed at the forefront of the genre, but since then they have influenced a huge swathe of composers ranging from Camille Saint-Saëns to John Adams.

INTERVAL

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

Symphony No.9 (1887-1896)

- I. *Feierlich. Misterioso*
- II. *Scherzo. Bewegt, lebhaft – Trio. Schnell*
- III. *Adagio. Langsam, feierlich*

DURATION: c.60'

Bruckner's Ninth Symphony is one of the most famous incomplete works in the literature. While he started work on it as early as 1887, the new Eighth Symphony and revisions to some of his earlier symphonies distracted Bruckner's focus from the would-be Ninth. When Bruckner died, the first three movements were essentially complete but he had only got halfway through the fourth in a race against heart problems, cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), and diabetes (apparently he was working on the symphony the day he died). The first three movements were first performed in 1903 in Vienna, conducted and

edited by Bruckner's colleague Ferdinand Loewe. Loewe's arrangement often departed quite far from Bruckner's score, and subsequent editors have sought to return to Bruckner's alleged intentions. The finale has also been completed by about 10 different composers.

Like most of Bruckner's symphonies, the Ninth is composed on a vast scale. Bruckner took the rhetorical lengths of Beethoven's Ninth (also significantly in D minor) and expanded them further, adding Wagner's endless melody to the mix as well as his own sense of religious feeling (Bruckner's day job was as Vienna's court organist). Musicologists argue whether the Ninth is a conservative or progressive work: the influence of earlier composers is very clear, but so is Bruckner's experimentation with formal expansion, emancipated dissonance, and orchestral textures.

The first movement is an expanded version of the usual sonata form, with two main thematic blocks (mysterious minor-mode material based on a D pedal and lyrical major-mode melody). Bruckner moves this material through nearly every key using striking chromatic transformations between triads, a style familiar to us today from epic film music where such transformations evoke a sense of wonder (think especially John Williams' *Star Wars* scores and Howard Shore's music for *The Lord of the Rings*).

The Scherzo opens bizarrely, with a full bar of rest and an opening chord that has no clear harmonic function. It eventually settles into a diabolical D minor. The Adagio is religious in character, using the orchestra like a giant organ console. Because of Bruckner's untimely death we will never know how this massive work would have ended after his usual intensive process of revision; it remains a beguiling torso.

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*This work, published by Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, has been supplied by Clear Music Australia Pty Ltd, as the exclusive hire agents in Australia

Notes Fund: Music for this concert has been supported by Anne Hargreaves and Mathew Mercuri.