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WINTER 2024 VOL.50 NO.2

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RVW DANCES
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WINTER 2024

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PHIL NEWS IS PRINTED ON
(COVER) TAURO OFFSET 300GSM,
(TEXT) POLAR OFFSET 120GSM.

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> **Front cover image** Maxim Vengerov photographed by Diago Mariotta Mendez

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The New Zealand Herald

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From the Chief Executive



UPFRONT WITH **DIANA WEIR**

As Auckland's professional symphony orchestra, we have the pleasure of working with inspiring musicians every day. There are some artists, though, who transcend our already high expectations, leaving everyone speechless. Maxim Vengerov, who performs with us on 22 August, is one of these phenomenal artists.

Vengerov was a child prodigy who became a superstar. Not every gifted youngster manages that transition, and it doesn't happen by accident. Vengerov was coddled and cajoled, and received vital support from the likes of Mstislav Rostropovich and Daniel Barenboim.

That's one of the reasons we put so much time, energy and love into our Learn & Participate programme. Not every child will become a Vengerov, but every child deserves the opportunity to experience the transformative power of music. That's why we coddle, cajole and support where and how we can, at all ages and levels of the learning continuum.

In September we hold our Community Bash, which is open to anyone who loves music – see p32. While in October our Associate Principal Viola, Julie Park,

leads colleagues in two In Your Neighbourhood concerts. Julie has been involved with the Auckland Phil since she was a teenager, and was our Young Soloist of the Year, before heading to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music. You can read about her journey from gifted youngster to mature professional from p26.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the conductor Sir Andrew Davis, who was scheduled to perform with us this November, and who died in April. We are saddened by Sir Andrew's passing, which leaves an immense gap in the musical world, and in the lives of his family, friends, and the numerous people his talent reached.

Diana



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VINEYARDS

Karl-Heinz Steffens to conduct Beethoven, RVW

IMAGE CREDIT: SUSANNE DIESNER

We are thrilled to announce that Karl-Heinz Steffens will conduct Auckland Philharmonia's concert on 7 November. The concert, featuring music by Beethoven and Vaughan Williams, was to have been conducted by the late Sir Andrew Davis.

Maestro Steffens, who proclaims himself a real Vaughan Williams fan, made an enormous impression in May conducting Bruckner as a late replacement for Johannes Fritsch. "I have never heard Bruckner earning wolf whistles from an audience, but on Thursday night

they indicated the sheer elation after the Auckland Philharmonia's noble account of the Austrian's Symphony No. 9 in D minor. How fortunate we were to have maestro Steffens," wrote William Dart in *The New Zealand Herald*.



Concertmaster Andrew Beer has a new album out. The green-fingered violinist has teamed up with our orchestral pianist of choice Sarah Watkins, and Zurich-based cellist Lev Sivkov to form Levansa Trio. The recording features music by Martinů, Arvo Pärt, Schnittke and Sviridov.

"The concept was Eastern European repertoire we felt was under recorded internationally," Andrew says.

Levansa Trio highlights hidden gems

In particular, Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998) will be new to many listeners, but during the Cold War he was a major figure in Soviet music, and popular enough to write the theme to the country's only TV news programme. Sviridov's A minor piano trio (1945) carries a clear debt of thanks to the composer's teacher, Shostakovich, but you'll also hear bits of Tchaikovsky and even Mahler's Symphony No.4.

Andrew and Sarah have combined previously for their award-winning *11 Frames*, which saw them crowned Classical Artists of the Year at the Aotearoa Music Awards. Lev Sivkov was introduced to Andrew through musician Rosemary Harris, whose sister, Gillian, is executive producer of the album – and Lev's foster parent.

Reassuringly, Andrew says he has no plans to abandon Auckland Phil for the trio.

"I'm an orchestral musician, which is awesome and I love it, but it's also refreshing to work with people from other places in the world and maybe see how things are done differently there."

The CD, released by Atoll records, is available now from Marbecks, while the digital album hits streaming sites in August. You can read all about Andrew Beer's exploits away from the concert stage in our Off Stage feature from p28.

Phil Opera Fest

There's no such thing as too much Wagner, and for fans of his music, cups are about to runneth over. As well as our Opera in Concert performance of *Tristan und Isolde* (10 August – read all about it from p12), Auckland Phil has planned two special events – and both are free to attend.

Enticingly titled *I Love You to Death: Sex and Consequence in Tristan und Isolde* this lecture is presented by University of Auckland Head of Music Dr David Chisholm. Discover more about Wagner's life, his muse, and how *Tristan und Isolde* relates to queer

theory and romanticism, through themes of love and death. Perfect for opera enthusiasts and people who are simply interested in learning more. Join us in the Auckland Town Hall's Concert Chamber at 6:30pm, Wednesday 31 July.

And if you want to put your minim where your mouth is, circle 4 August in your diaries for the *Sunday Singalong with Wagner*. In association with NZ Opera, we're offering Aucklanders the chance to learn a Wagner chorus. You'll be coached by a professional choir director and repetiteur, and

we'll have a team of opera singers on hand to offer support. Whether you're a seasoned singer or a choral newbie, we'd love you to join us in the Auckland Town Hall Supper Room from 10:30am to 12:30pm.

Both events are free to attend, but to secure your spot, it's essential that you register via our website: aucklandphil.nz



INGRID MARTIN

Food of Love *Plays On in Takapuna*

By the time you read this, there will be just two concerts left in the 2024 Community Classics series, celebrating Shakespeare in music. Expect orchestral extracts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *West Side Story* and more. This year's NZ Assistant-Conductor-in-Residence, Ingrid Martin, stirs up the toil and trouble, while actor Kevin Keys – familiar to anyone who attended the Pop-Up Globe – brings some authentic thesp.

The shows takes place at the Due Drop Events Centre on Sunday 21 July and Bruce Mason Centre on Saturday 19 October. Both kick off at 3pm and are free to attend. No need to book, but entry is first in, best dressed.

Auckland Philharmonia Director of Learn & Participate, Thomas Hamill, says it's all about sharing the love potion.

"[Community Classics] helps to give more people greater access to the orchestra and share and inspire a love of orchestral music with the wider community," Thomas says. "These concerts are an uplifting hour of music that everyone can enjoy; simply come along to see beautiful music performed for free."

THE PHIL

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Synthony Pride hits Spark Arena

It's time to dust off the rainbow-coloured glowsticks in preparation for *Synthony Pride*, which takes place at Spark Arena on 3 August.

The multi-media show – the first Synthony to align itself with Pride – features Auckland Phil paired with instrumentalists, drag performers, dancers and singers, including Boh Runga, Harper Finn and Hugo Grrrl.

Conductor Sarah-Grace Williams is popping over from Australia to lead the orchestra. Burnett Foundation Aotearoa has been named charity partner.

Visit synthony.com/synthony-pride/ for more.

Talented youngster wins singing date with Auckland Phil

Congratulations to Lydia Clark, who has claimed the Kōkako Award for Best Children's Performance at the NZ Children's Music Awards. Eleven-year-old Lydia, who lives in Napier, won for her spirited performance of her original song 'Of Love We Are Made'. Lydia says the song is about including others and not letting anyone feel left out.

This is the first year the award has been offered, and was presented in collaboration with Auckland

Philharmonia and NZ Opera. The award aims to enrich the annual NZ Children's Music Awards, nurturing the blossoming talents of our young performers and highlighting the importance of children's creativity. As part of her prize, Lydia gets to perform her song with Auckland Philharmonia at *Tunes 4 Tamariki Kirihihmete*, on Saturday 30 November at the Auckland Town Hall and Sunday 15 December at the Bruce Mason Centre, Takapuna.

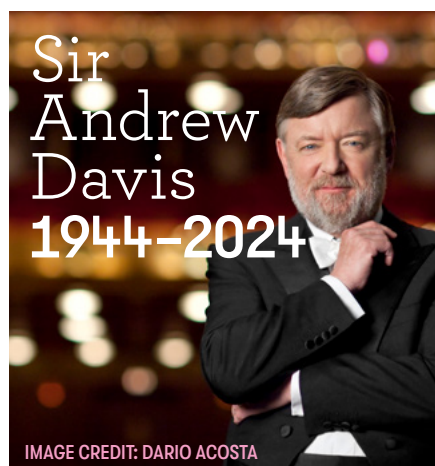


IMAGE CREDIT: DARIO ACOSTA

We were saddened by the death of the conductor Sir Andrew Davis. Sir Andrew, who was to conduct Vaughan Williams and Beethoven in November, was one of foremost interpreters of English repertoire. His passing leaves an immense gap in the musical world, and our thoughts go to Sir Andrew's family, friends, and the numerous people whose lives were enriched by his music making.

Rona Colbert 1930-2024

The orchestra lost one of the family in January with the death of Rona Colbert. Rona was a loved member of the Auckland Philharmonia Friends for more than 25 years. She was a committee member for all that time, and was for many years treasurer, photographer and archivist. In 2019, Rona was highly commended at the Ōrākei Local Board Community Volunteer Awards for her contribution to arts, culture and heritage.

"Rona was so giving of her time and gifts and expected little in return," says Friends president Delysse Glynn. "She truly inspired me to think about how we can give back to our community at any age."

True to her nature and lifelong commitment to giving, Rona generously left a gift in her will to the Auckland Philharmonia Foundation. This legacy gift supports the ongoing stability of Auckland Philharmonia and ensures that all Aucklanders can continue to enjoy orchestral music for generations to come.



RONA COLBERT

Maxim Vengerov



Maxim Vengerov is the biggest name to visit New Zealand in 2024. A global superstar since his early 20s, Vengerov plays Sibelius with Auckland Philharmonia on 22 August. [David Larson](#) offers his appreciation of the violinist, before exploring the connections between Sibelius and this country, while [Amber Read](#) interviews the man himself from p10.

Flair on no G string

[David Larsen](#) reminisces about a special Vengerov moment.

Maxim Vengerov was 21 years old the first time I saw him perform, ancient for a violin prodigy; but it had become clear well before he left his teens that he was not just another young shooting star. Twenty-seven years later, I remember two things especially about that concert. First, the character of his sound.

Of the great violinists I had heard live before then, Shlomo Mintz, in an all-Vivaldi programme, had called the brightest, keenest sound out of his fiddle. Each note was a gleaming ice dagger; I'd thought I knew what clarity sounded like, and he taught me better.

Pinchas Zukerman taught me about big sound. It wasn't that he was necessarily loud, though when he reached for fortissimo he could stun a deaf person at 50 paces. It was the way his playing enveloped you, even when he dropped to a whisper. He obliterated distance. It was like being cradled in a giant's fist.

Vengerov was nearly in Zukerman's league when it came to filling a room with sheer presence of sound; though to be fair, I heard Zukerman at Carnegie Hall, and Vengerov was performing in the much smaller McCarter Theatre in Princeton. But the quality Vengerov possessed that I had never heard equalled – and I still haven't, not even when Alina Ibragimova played Shostakovich in Auckland in 2011 – was intensity. He played as though the world beyond that room had been destroyed, and God had promised to restore it if he put his whole heart into every last note.

That brings us to the second thing I remember from that concert, a climactic moment in the third movement of the first Prokofiev concerto, when Vengerov crunched his

bow right through his G string. That isn't so easily done. When violinists snap strings, it's generally the highest and weakest one, the E. With sufficient skill you can reach the high registers even on the lower strings, so sometimes these breakages lead to bravura episodes where a performer free-styles the concerto's remaining high moments on their A. You can't do that when you lose your G, because there's no way to go below a string's base value, and the G is the instrument's lowest.

Vengerov kept going anyway. He only made it about 45 seconds further before he came to a passage his violin could no longer play, and slumped, and stopped. He got warm laughter and applause before the concertmaster handed him up a replacement violin and they regrouped and finished the piece; but what I remember is the moment when he sagged in defeat. The music wanted him to keep playing, and you could see it on his face: nothing less than the impossible was good enough.



▲ JEAN SIBELIUS

Sibelius's Kiwi Connection

David Larsen explores the links between Sibelius and Aotearoa.

“It is really a sensual experience. One is literally carried away... zooming in over magnificent mountains and farmlands, held up by nothing but Sibelius... I emerged feeling quite proud of my country.”

That’s Marilyn Duckworth in 1971, giving a representative home-town review of *This is New Zealand*, a multi-screen promotional film made for the 1970 World Expo in Osaka and viewed by millions of people globally. The brief excerpt from the *Karelia Suite*, which underscores the aerial vistas of the opening minutes, is only one of the film’s many music cues, but it left a large cultural footprint. The passage is a million miles from the sombre brutality of *Finlandia*’s opening horn snarls, or the oceanic surges and jagged accents of the violin concerto. It’s Sibelius marching to victory, inexorable, four-square, exultant. As an accompaniment to those “magnificent mountains and farmlands”, it feels like a patriotic expansion of the film’s title: *This is New Zealand, be astonished*. In its wake, through the 70s and even into the 80s, you could detect a sense of understated Kiwi ownership towards any given Sibelius piece the Concert Programme cared to feature: one might concede if pressed that this music was Scandinavian to its bones, but its local meaning had become Duckworth’s one. It said that we were allowed to feel proud of our country.

Bernstein’s great half-truth, “Music is never about anything, music just is,” flips to a half-lie when applied to Sibelius. His music so often seems to be about things. He first rode to fame on the back of a decade’s worth of tone poems, music explicitly written to express thematic ideas or stories, most of them tied to Finnish nationalism. Like most well-to-do Finns born in the 19th century, he had to learn Finnish as a second language, having grown up speaking the Swedish of his now Russian-owned province’s former rulers. He became one of the great cultural champions of the Finnish independence movement, and his early works were received as expressions of Finnish identity, not least because he wrote them with that in mind. *Finlandia*, composed as part of a protest against Tsarist censorship (and performed by Auckland Phil on 22 August), became so popular that as it spread around the not-yet-country, it had to be performed under a range of made-up names, to hide the fact it had been programmed until it was too late for the local Russian overseers to shut down the concert.

National identity – if not nationalist pride – was, of course, a key theme in the early works of our own Douglas Lilburn, the closest thing Aotearoa has produced to a Sibelius. Lilburn’s assertion of a New Zealand musical language echoed Sibelius’s from the other side of the world. But if anyone asked, in the wake of *This is New Zealand*’s popularity at the Osaka

Expo, why Lilburn had not been used on the soundtrack, I can find no record of it. Instead, we basked in the warm glow of association with greatness: the world had glanced at us and smiled, and we were happy. Oh yes, this was New Zealand.

And yet the Kiwi cultural cringe does give us a distant claim to the music that fanned the fires of Finnish independence. The difficult tribal emotions that helped spark some of Sibelius’s most popular works belong to us as much as to anyone. Though if we’re wise, even as we glory in the music, we won’t take pride in that.



The New Zealand Herald
Premier Series

Vengerov & Sibelius

7.30pm, Thursday 22 August
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Okko Kamu
Violin Maxim Vengerov

Sibelius *En Saga*
Sibelius *Symphony No.4*
Sibelius *Violin Concerto*
Sibelius *Finlandia*

aucklandphil.nz/vengerov-sibelius



Vengerov Speaks

Amber Read speaks to
Maxim Vengerov

Amber Read: *The Sibelius concerto is a cornerstone of the repertoire, and your performance is part of an all-Sibelius programme. You have surely performed the work countless times as well as recording it. What are the links between the concerto and Sibelius's other works?*

Maxim Vengerov: I've performed the concerto hundreds of times if not more. It is one of the great milestones for every violinist, and it has many similarities in spirit and in the score with the symphonies. For someone like me who has conducted those symphonies, I can easily recognise the style of Sibelius and can view his violin concerto from a different perspective, from the perspective of a conductor. You get a fuller experience and a better understanding of what the Sibelius Violin Concerto is: basically, this is a symphony with integrated violin solo line.



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AR: How does your conducting influence your violin playing, and vice versa?

MV: I have always found conducting an inspiration. My mother was a choir conductor and when I visited my father's rehearsals (he played oboe), I always sat in the first row where I could see the conductor. I was just three years old so I always admired conductors, that they could lead an orchestra, they could lead musical events and that they could conduct such great symphonies.

When I was 17 or 18, I started meeting great conductors like Rostropovich, Barenboim, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti and Lorin Maazel, just to name a few. I learned so much from them and it was a privilege to be their student, especially with Rostropovich and Barenboim – I studied for many years and made many recordings with them. They set the bar; their level of music comprehension was extremely high. So for me to start conducting at the age of 26 was a normal evolution. I studied also for seven years with the conductor Yuri Simonov. He was my great mentor in conducting.

After having conducted so many symphonies, my approach to violin concertos has changed significantly, because I view these compositions no longer as purely violinistic pieces with a substantial orchestral part, but also vice versa – these are symphonies with an integral violin part. And if we talk about the concertos of Brahms, Sibelius, Beethoven and others, these concertos were written in a symphonic way. The violin has a substantial role, but the orchestra sometimes even leads. As a soloist it gives me a fuller, richer experience when I'm working with orchestras and conductors.

AR: Violin performance, conducting, music education, recording – how do you find balance? Do you focus on just one thing for a month and then switch to another or do you have them all continuously?

MV: Juggling three professions can be challenging. I'm also married and I have three kids, and this is a full-time job! On the other hand, violin, playing, conducting and being a teacher can also be described as full-time jobs. I try to find the best and most efficient ways to be most effective at whatever I do. Mixing things is not always best for me. At the moment I have so many concerts as a violinist, it's difficult to combine conducting and playing and teaching, so I've reduced conducting significantly. I give regular masterclasses wherever I go. I would have loved to make use of all my skills, but I still need to devote time to my family, so conducting waits for now.

AR: Tell us about the instrument and bow you'll be performing with in August.

MV: I usually come with my Stradivari made in 1727, once played and owned by a legendary French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer. It's an incredible instrument that has been accompanying me since 1998, when I acquired it at a Christie's auction [for GBP947,500 – NZ\$2.8m in 1997, which is NZ\$5.08m today]. I'm very lucky to have this instrument. I play a modern bow by a Japanese maker, Mitsuaki Sasano, winner of many bow-making competitions, who is my dear friend and lives almost next door to me in Nice.

AR: You've had a long and vibrant international career, what changes have you noticed in performing life over the last 40+ years?

MV: Every decade something changes, but especially in the last 30 years with the emergence of the internet. Everything became faster, more instant. For music, lots changed after the pandemic. We have realised that some things can be done online, and it's okay to do that. However, we have also realised the value of interacting with one another. The way we listen to music has also changed. But I think the values that have been there for many centuries should be preserved. And I think that this is the mission of our generation.

AR: You'll celebrate your 50th birthday in New Zealand (congratulations!). Is there anything you're looking forward to doing to mark the occasion while you're here?

MV: I'm very excited to come to New Zealand, a country I've never visited before, and make a debut during my 50th birthday anniversary. I'm really looking forward to it. I'm a little sad that my whole family cannot join me on this trip, because my youngest son is only two and a half, and it would be difficult to travel such a long distance. My parents are coming with me and we're looking forward to visiting this amazing country. 🍷



TAKE NO



RICHARD WAGNER

As this year's Opera In Concert approaches, Richard Betts speaks with Wagner Society of New Zealand president Professor Terence Dennis about why Wagner was a great composer, where *Tristan und Isolde* sits in the composer's oeuvre, and how to approach good music by a bad man. Meanwhile on p15, our *Isolde*, Ricarda Merbeth, reveals what it's like to sing the role.



PROFESSOR TERENCE DENNIS

Phil News has caught Terence Dennis at an opportune time. Dennis, who is Professor of Music at the University of Otago, is in the middle of a U3A lecture series about Richard Wagner, both man and music. Since 2019, he has also been President of the Wagner Society of New Zealand – who better to quiz ahead of the orchestra's forthcoming performance of *Tristan und Isolde*?

Richard Betts: To the uninitiated, a Wagner opera can be daunting: for the length, for the stentorian singing, maybe winged helmets. What advice do you give someone who wants to dip their toe in?

Terence Dennis: His operas are long, yes, but Wagner lovers like that because they can listen over and over and always hear new sounds or concepts. It's not all noise and thunder. Much of it's in chamber music textures, beautiful orchestral colours, the instruments and voices interweave. I'd forget about the winged helmets, which you're not going to get in *Tristan*. I would say that the emotional quality of the music speaks across the decades, and I think that is timeless. From Wagner's day, most people when they heard it recognised that here was something of great integrity, and emotional and psychological richness. If you've never heard Wagner before, go with an open mind. He's not a composer who takes prisoners, in the sense that if you don't want to be taken by the music you won't like Wagner, because Wagner demands that. It's not a passive listen, it's a full-intensity

listen. If you've never heard anything from *Tristan*, which is one of the most powerful pieces of music ever written, and very influential, have a listen to the Prelude. That will tell you the intensity of the music that will go on for the next while. A little bit of exploration might help, put it that way. But the original audiences never had that, of course.

RB: You said that Wagner demands. But he also gives, which you can see in the way he inspires true devotion. For fans, what makes Wagner great?

TD: I think it's the power of the music and the great command he has. Nothing much happens on the stage and of all the operas, *Tristan* is particularly like that, so it's an emotional connection. If things do happen on the stage, it's generally pretty dramatic, and any dramatic action is marvellously controlled in the music. I think people feel that. He transformed the established idea of opera into long stretches of symphonic fabric in which the character motives, thoughts or a facet of the drama could be illustrated by the use of

PRISONERS



^ FESTSPIELHAUS BAYREUTH, SPIRITUAL AND LITERAL HOME OF WAGNER'S OPERAS.

“Wagner’s not a composer who takes prisoners. It’s not a passive listen, it’s a full-intensity listen.”

musical themes. He could do a lot psychologically because although the protagonists on the stage may say something, the orchestra may tell us something else that gives us a new layer. I think it’s that layer that’s so fascinating. And he’s able to weld these together into very long works using a combination of these themes that are constantly in change as the motivations of the characters and the plot develop. He said that music was the art of transition, not just getting an idea but how you develop it, and of course he’s a great master at that. He wrote his own words, too, so he was able to achieve a synthesis between the text and the drama as he wanted it.

RB: The ‘Tristan chord’ in the Act I Prelude may be the most famous chord in music (Phil News devoted a whole story to it in last winter’s issue – search ‘Phil News’ on the Auckland Phil website). But is *Tristan* an important opera in Wagner’s career?

TD: Yes, and he obviously had to write it. He wrote it while he was in the middle of composing the Ring. In his own words he put Siegfried to sleep under the tree in the forest of the second act. Then he wrote *Tristan* and *Meistersinger*, then he continued the rest of *Siegfried*. I often feel that there are things in Wagner’s life that he needed to experience. In *Tristan* there is this incredible intensity and tension where the plot’s veiled, and there are unresolved feelings and an exploration of the human psyche. So many strands are pulled in so many directions, it’s like he almost had to write them down just to get them out of him. I think the harmonic intensity and complexity is unlike any other Wagner opera; it stands alone in that respect. It’s the great iconic Romantic opera, in a way, and for some people it’s the most beautiful opera of all.

RB: He was a great composer but Wagner wasn’t a great guy. Additionally, people have used his work for their own political ends. Do we need to separate the man from the music?

TD: Wagner has many problematic facets; the human mind is complicated. But we forget that when we listen to the music, the glory remains in the scores. What they chose to do with him in Germany in the 1930s and early 40s was out of his control. The power of his music and the use of German myths, I can see why it could be used for other ends politically. My personal view is that we’ve got to accept that, we’ve got to take it warts and all, all the problems of these people’s characters – Wagner’s not the only one. I divorce that from the music, put it that way.

For more about the Wagner Society of New Zealand, visit wagnersociety.org.nz

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ISOLDE SPEAKS!

We asked Ricarda Merbeth about loving Wagner, preparing for Isolde, and facing an expert audience.
Translation: Claudia Ruff.

RICARDA MERBETH. IMAGE: MIRKO JOERG KELLNER

Phil News: How did you come to know and love Wagner's music?

Ricarda Merbeth: I completed my vocal studies in Leipzig in 1989, then at age 23 my singing career began with my first operatic role at the Theatre Magdeburg as Roßweiße, one of the eight valkyries in *Die Walküre* by Richard Wagner. Looking back, I really threw myself into these early roles with great passion, energy and diligence, taking joy in the music and people who worked with me.

Over the following seven years, the management of the Magdeburg Opera entrusted me with Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, Isabella in *Das Liebesverbot* and Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, in addition to many other roles, such as Pamina or First Lady from *The Magic Flute*. I learnt an incredible amount through these opportunities. This paved my path in German opera, and I now perform worldwide in the roles of Isolde and Brünnhilde.

PN: You are world-famous for your Isolde. What qualities does a soprano need to be a successful in the role?

RM: The most important qualities are years of experience on stage with various roles (including operas by Mozart, Puccini, Beethoven) to develop an excellent vocal technique, self-criticism, musicality, courage, self-confidence and a lot of humility. These qualities are not only applicable to the role of Isolde, but also to Brünnhilde or Elektra.

PN: You've sung at Bayreuth. What it's like for someone who specialises in Wagner to sing in this place to an audience that also knows and loves Wagner?

RM: Every summer, I reflect on the many wonderful, important, uplifting, and artistically enriching summers I experienced at Bayreuth. Wolfgang and Gudrun Wagner, both sadly now deceased, engaged me in 2000 for *The Ring Cycle* (directed by Jürgen Flimm) as Freia, Gutrune and Gerhilde.

In 2002, under the direction of Christian Thielemann, I first sang Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* and then, in 2014, Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* for several years. Experiencing the fantastic acoustics and atmosphere of the stage and auditorium at the Bayreuth Festival was very special. The audience there is an experience in itself – they can sense when there's a strong artistic unity on stage between the direction and music, and conversely, you feel their energy.

PN: *Tristan und Isolde* lasts several hours. Is there anything that helps you focus for so long, and do you have any tricks or techniques to help your voice last from start to finish?

RM: The rehearsal period before a performance is always a training time for me. I practise the text and interpret the instructions from the maestro and direction into meaningful moves and reactions. Then, I go to the piano and play through the part over and over again. Before each rehearsal, I take my time to warm up well, then afterwards, I assess my performance. I have a notebook for each production, where I write the conductor's instructions and

stage directions, then self-criticism from performance to performance. At the end of the production, it's full of scribbles, but by recording my experience I'm able to take more from it. It is also important for me to have fun when I perform.

A very good vocal technique is essential. You build your technique with an experienced professional singing teacher and get it checked regularly by them during your career. Your own voice and intuition are also invaluable – I had to learn to listen to this. Ultimately, the environment is important, my family, my husband. Nobody sees it, but I feel it and that gives me a lot of strength. When the curtain rises, the only thing that applies in this moment is whether the singer is vocally fit and ready to give themselves to the music and the audience. This is a long road that does not always run straight, but we have the benefit of careers that last many years. Every day, step by step. 🍷

Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*

4pm, Saturday 10 August
 Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Giordano Bellincampi

Tristan Simon O'Neill

Isolde Ricarda Merbeth

Brangäne Katarina Karnéus

Kurwenal Johan Reuter

King Marke Albert Dohmen

Melot Jared Holt

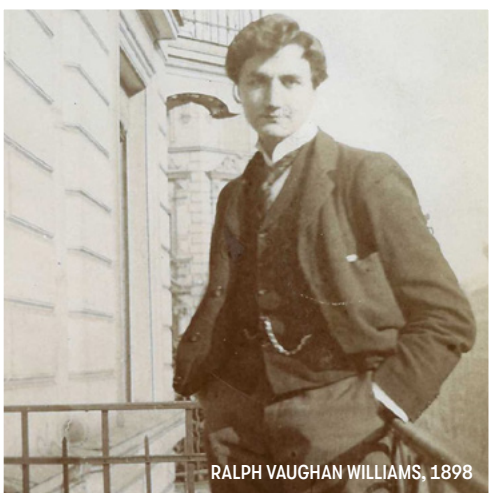
Sailor/Shepherd/Steersman Andrew Goodwin

with The New Zealand Opera Chorus

Stage Director Frances Moore

aucklandphil.nz/tristan-und-isolde

The Visionaries



Ralph Vaughan Williams (RVW) was by all accounts a curmudgeon. Or perhaps, more accurately, he liked to play the curmudgeon. Musical literature of the 20th century is peppered with gruff remarks by the composer when there seemed little call for them. Auckland composer and organist Ron Dellow delighted in telling the story, from his London student days, of finding a seat at a mezzanine cafe that just happened to give him a bird's-eye view of RVW's 80th birthday celebrations, and overhearing the great man say, in his best curmudgeonly voice, "Now,

William Green examines the overlapping lives of two great English artists: Ralph Vaughan Williams and William Blake.

I don't want it put about that I don't like birthday cake!" Similarly, UK-born – but latterly New Zealand-resident – Margaret Wegener was grateful for the help he gave her as a young composer in getting her music published, but alarmed at their first meeting when the distinguished composer surveyed her for a few seconds before exclaiming, "I thought you'd be taller."

Curmudgeon or not, Vaughan Williams was an independent thinker and a man of strong opinions that he had no trouble putting forth forcefully, and often dismissively. Having a dissenting voice in his family pedigree (he was the grand-nephew of Charles Darwin) would certainly have helped him express contrary views with confidence. As a child, he was spun the orthodox line by family members

on matters such as religion, often with the added proviso, "... although Uncle Charles doesn't think so."

Whether English artist and poet William Blake was a curmudgeon is open to debate, but no one could deny his fiercely independent spirit, nor his opinionated nature. Blake was a visionary in the literal sense, in that he saw actual visions and heard voices, for which many regarded him as insane. As a result, Blake felt sidelined and lost few opportunities for trenchant criticism of the mainstream, particularly established religion. His fellow artists were frequently in the firing line, Rubens in particular being "filled with tints and messes ... laid on indiscriminately" and given to filthy brown shadows "somewhat of the colour of excrement."



RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, 1954

Perhaps some sort of bond between the two men led Vaughan Williams to jump at the chance to write music for a ballet based on a selection of Blake's *Illustrations of The Book of Job*, for the artist's centenary, and which Auckland Philharmonia performs on 7 November. RVW's enthusiasm for the project was baffling. He famously hated ballet so much – especially dancing *en pointe* – that he insisted the finished product be called 'a masque for dancing', even though critics pointed out that the result isn't strictly a masque. Vaughan Williams was quite happy when the decadent Diaghilev turned the project down, declaring that the great Russian impresario would have made "an unholy mess of it."

The result is a long but close-knit score divided into nine scenes, where the agnostic composer delights in depicting God and the angels with triadic music, Job and his family with modal music and Satan with some of the most complex and dissonant music Vaughan Williams had written to date. Douglas Lilburn described *Job* as a pivotal work, in which his 57-year-old teacher proved he could go far beyond the pastoral style he'd been associated with, a point brought home forcefully five years later in RVW's Fourth Symphony.

What else did these independent thinkers, Vaughan Williams and Blake, share? A little-known fact about Blake is that, despite having no musical training, he used to compose his own tunes, which were often described as beautiful by those who knew him, and which were sometimes written down by musical professors (sadly, none of this music has survived). Blake often worked in three media simultaneously, making an engraving of his subject while writing a poem about it and setting the result to one of his tunes.



PRINT FROM BLAKE'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Neither artist gained recognition easily. Vaughan Williams began to be noticed only in his late 30s with the *Tallis Fantasia* (though one critic thought it "a queer, mad piece by an odd fellow from Chelsea"). Blake's struggle was greater, and after being branded "an unfortunate lunatic" by the sole reviewer of his 1809 exhibition, he gave up seeking public approval. Near the end of his life, Wordsworth and Coleridge – both Cambridge educated – showed an interest and spoke well of him, although they may have tittered at his idiosyncratic spelling (Blake never even went to school) and Wordsworth thought him mad.

Blake and Vaughan Williams identified strongly with London, and the street cries of this vast and complex city found artistic expression in their work. In *A London Symphony*, written by Vaughan Williams in 1914, the cries are incorporated into his depiction of a city waking up, with its subsequent hustle and bustle. Blake's poem 'London', on the other hand, deals with social injustice and depicts the poet wandering the streets at midnight and listening to the piteous cries of chimney sweep and harlots, and the fearful wails of babies born into such an unjust world.

At the very end of his long life, Ralph Vaughan Williams composed the *Ten Blake Songs*, for voice and oboe, for the Guy Brenton film *The Vision of William Blake*. Fittingly, the cycle begins with 'Infant Joy' and ends with 'Eternity', and sure enough, includes 'London', which the composer sets as a plaintive cry in free time for voice alone. Following 'London' is a simple, diatonic setting of 'Little Lamb',

a poem Vaughan Williams famously detested, proving perhaps that the crusty composer had softened in his old age.

This poignant work, a meeting of two great minds, was first performed on 8 October 1958, a premiere made more poignant still as the great composer had died in his sleep six weeks earlier. Perhaps these two artistic souls are communing somewhere in another realm, "burning bright" as with Blake's Tyger, or simply glimpsing "a World in a Grain of Sand/ And a Heaven in a Wild Flower."

Please note that Karl-Heinz Steffens conducts this concert in place of Sir Andrew Davis. See the News section this issue for more on Maestro Steffens, and an appreciation of Sir Andrew, who died in April. 🌟

i

The New Zealand Herald
Premier Series

SIR ANDREW DAVIS: A TRIBUTE 1944-2024

7:30pm, Thursday 7 November
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Karl-Heinz Steffens
Piano Ingrid Fliter

Beethoven Leonore Overture No.3
Beethoven Piano Concerto No.3
Vaughan Williams *Job* – A Masque
for Dancing

aucklandphil.nz/davis-tribute



TRUMPETER TINE THING HELSETH, NZH PREMIER SERIES: TOTALLY TRUMPET



> The Year So Far

Images by Thomas Hamill and Sav Schulman



VIOLINIST INMO YANG, NZH PREMIER SERIES: OTHER WORLDS



CONDUCTOR DAVID KAY, BOOGIE WONDERLAND DISCO BALL



PETER AND THE WOLF WITH DYNAMOTION



BOOGIE WONDERLAND DISCO BALL



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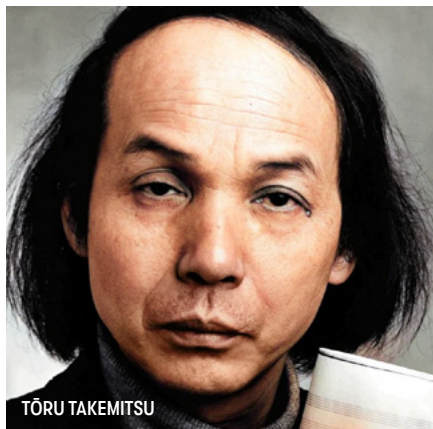
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ROGER WOODWARD WITH JAMES MALLINSON AND TÖRU TAKEMITSU, DECCA STUDIOS, 1973.

Tōru, Near and Far

Richard Betts on Tōru Takemitsu, the leading Japanese composer of the 20th century



TÖRU TAKEMITSU

If Tōru Takemitsu is today revered for his synthesis of Western forms with Eastern philosophy and culture, it wasn't always that way.

Born in Tokyo in 1930, Takemitsu's childhood was effectively halted by the war, and in 1944 he was conscripted into the Japanese army, an experience he described as "extremely bitter." It caused him to turn away from Japanese culture in general, and traditional music and instruments in particular.

"I hated everything about Japan at that time because of my experience during the war," he said.

A lack of opportunities in Japan to study the kind of music he wanted meant that Takemitsu remained mostly self-taught, but he was nevertheless championed early in his career by Stravinsky. However, it took an American, the composer John Cage, to steer Takemitsu eastward in the 1960s.

It was less Cage's music than his interest in Zen Buddhism that intrigued Takemitsu. In subsequent attempts to capture what critic Paul Kosidowski nicely sums as "the spirit

and spirituality of nature," Takemitsu expressed not only his 'Japanese-ness', but his rapport with the French masters Debussy and Messiaen, with whom he also shared a superb sense of orchestral colour.

November Steps (1967) was the breakthrough: Takemitsu's first work contrasting the Japanese shakuhachi and biwa against a Western orchestra. Its success as a composition and with audiences – and the members of the New York Philharmonic, who are said to have cheered following rehearsals for *November Steps*' premiere – sent Takemitsu on a new path.

Not that this road was straightforward, either. Takemitsu was astonishingly eclectic. As he got older his music became more tonal, and we know him best for works of crystalline beauty composed for the concert hall. He wasn't beyond kitsch, though. Takemitsu's classical guitar arrangements of pop songs, including music by The Beatles, contain occasional harmonic twists, but they'd also work as background listening for a chain of moderately priced restaurants.

Somewhere between the symphony hall and the steakhouse was the cinema. Takemitsu wrote around 100 film scores, including the music for Akira Kurasawa's masterpiece *Ran*. Auckland Philharmonia's *Joie de Vivre* concert (12 September) gives listeners a rare opportunity to hear *Three Film Scores for Strings* (1994/5), which rearranges snippets from the movies *Jose Torres* (1959), *Black Rain* (1989) and *Face of Another* (1966).

The first movement, 'Jose Torres: Music of Training and Rest', derives from a short film by Hiroshi Teshigahara about a Puerto Rican boxer. The movie was shot in New York, and Takemitsu's five-minute piece has the bluesy sway of a Gershwin or a Bernstein, but without either's brassy NYC edge.

'Black Rain: Funeral Music' – unrelated to the Ridley Scott/Michael Douglas action flick – is a contemplation on the bombing of Hiroshima. Takemitsu's music is suitably intense and brooding.

The final movement, 'Face of Another: Waltz' is the shortest of the three, a too-brief two-and-a-half minutes, whose dancing rise and fall is tinged with minor-key regret.

Three Film Scores was among Takemitsu's last works. He died in 1996, the most celebrated Japanese composer both inside the country and out, a final synthesis of East and West, played out in acclaim. 🎵

 The New Zealand Herald

Premier Series

Joie de Vivre

7.30pm, Thursday 12 September
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Samy Rachid*
Piano Louis Schwizgebel

Ravel Le Tombeau de Couperin
Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto No.2
Takemitsu Three Film Scores
Poulenc Sinfonietta

* Please note: Samy Rachid replaces the previously advertised Nodoka Okisawa.

aucklandphil.nz/joie-de-vivre



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Editor's CHOICE



PICTURE *Perfect*

William Green peeks inside the artist's studio to observe musicians who paint musical pictures.

As we mark 150 years since the composition of Mussorgsky's iconic *Pictures at an Exhibition* – and near Auckland Philharmonia's 17 October concert featuring said piece – it's interesting to speculate where art-inspired music began. A Byzantine monk chanting his response to a picture of a saint? An Egyptian twanging on a lyre after seeing an image of Horus? Perhaps a pair of far-distant ancestors gazing at a cave drawing then making their feelings known on rudimentary musical instruments? The list of composers inspired by paintings is long, ranging from Liszt, Debussy, Respighi and Saint-Saëns to Rautavaara, Dutilleux and Sondheim. Stravinsky's *A Rake's Progress* is based on paintings and engravings by William Hogarth. Even John Cage's *4'33"* was stimulated by a canvas, although admittedly a very blank one.

In this country, we have Rita Angus's influence on Douglas Lilburn (whose own electronic music in turn influenced visual artists like Michael Shepherd). Anthony Ritchie has written music inspired by Frances Hodgkins, Philip Claremont and Grahame Sydney. Janet Jennings has made a specialty of it, with the solo piano works *Pictures at the Waikato Museum* and *Aotearoa Pictures* framed next to *Twelve Colours: Homage to Paul Klee*, which in 2023 was given its premiere by the Ākarana Piano Quartet, a group composed of Auckland Philharmonia musicians.

Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* hangs highest, though, with its gallery stroll immortalising the life and work of the composer's dear friend, Viktor Hartmann. Its first outing left the Russian's musical colleagues scratching their heads in bewilderment, leading the composer himself to suspect that he'd gone too far. Mussorgsky's music often has a wild and untamed edge – it's one reason his friends felt the need to tidy his scores after his early death. Nevertheless, Mussorgsky's experimental set of piano pieces has inspired a staggering list of orchestrators. It's a tribute to his genius that there have been nearly a dozen new orchestrations in the 21st century alone. However, the Ravel orchestration, which Auckland Philharmonia plays in October, stands head and shoulders above all others – how could it not, in the hands of arguably the greatest master of orchestral colour? In a strange twist of musical evolution, virtuoso pianist Vladimir Horowitz concocted a piano version of the work from Ravel's orchestration rather than the original Mussorgsky piano score – a tribute, this time, to Ravel's genius.

Less known than Mussorgsky's *Pictures* is Bohuslav Martinů's *The Frescoes of Piero della Francesca*, which opens Auckland Phil's concert. Unlike the Mussorgsky set, which was written just a few years after the Hartmann paintings were completed, Martinů's music finds its source in frescoes painted in the Italian city of

Arezzo 500 years earlier. The three-movement work is based on *The History of the True Cross*, a cycle of paintings adorning the walls of the Basilica of San Francesco, which the composer visited in 1952. Martinů's work is less programmatic than Mussorgsky's, attempting to represent not what the younger composer sees, but how the frescoes make him feel.

"I tried to express in musical terms that kind of solemnly immobile calm and semi-darkness," Martinů said, "that palette of colours creating an atmosphere filled with delicate, peaceful, and moving poetry."

The result is sometimes mysterious, sometimes majestic, but always evocative. 🍷

 The New Zealand Herald
Premier Series

Pictures at an Exhibition

7.30pm, Thursday 17 October
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Shiyeon Sung
Piano Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

Martinů *The Frescoes of Piero della Francesca*

Bartók Piano Concerto No.2

Mussorgsky orch. Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition*

aucklandphil.nz/pictures-exhibition

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Requiem for a King



Ahead of Auckland Philharmonia's live cinema screening of *The Lion King*, Robin Lane explores one of cinema's most iconic scores.

Live With Orchestra

The Lion King

7.30pm, Friday 30 August
2.30pm, Saturday 31 August

Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre
Aotea Centre

aucklandphil.nz/lion-king



Composer Hans Zimmer was on a hot streak. He'd done *Rain Man* in the late 1980s, and he was fresh off soundtracks for *Thelma & Louise* and *The Power of One*. It was *The Power of One*, which Zimmer recorded in Africa, that convinced Disney studios that the German was the person needed for its new animation, *The Lion King*.

Disney may have been convinced but Zimmer wasn't. He hated musicals, for a start. And why would a serious composer – someone who'd recently scored the ultra-violent, Tarantino-adjacent *True Romance* – want to write music about fluffy animals? Fluffy cartoon animals. Zimmer had at least one good reason: he wanted to show off to his daughter, Zoë, who was six years old and too young to attend ultra-violent, Tarantino-adjacent movies.

Zimmer found himself more invested in the *Lion King*'s music than he expected. The composer was just six when his own father died, and when it came time to write music around the death of Simba's father, Mufasa, it touched an emotional nerve. Zimmer tapped into his grief to produce a requiem for his own father, music of sincerity and gravitas.

The film's opening was less sincere and grave, but it was the perfect way to begin a movie. The scene was originally intended to include 20 seconds of Elton John and Tim Rice's song 'Circle of Life'. Zimmer instead arranged something that lasted four

minutes. Disney was so impressed by Zimmer's demo, that the studio reworked the entire opening to use everything Zimmer had written.

An important but under-acknowledged figure in all of this was vocalist Lebo M. Lebo M had fled apartheid South Africa as a teenager, becoming a recording studio assistant in LA. A chance encounter with Zimmer led to a collaboration on *The Power of One*, and when Zimmer started work on *The Lion King*, he knew he needed to get Lebo M involved.

The film was deeply personal for Lebo M, who saw his own exile from his homeland in the story of Simba, and, in the image of Mufasa, the vision of Nelson Mandela becoming the first black person to lead South Africa – which happened two months before *The Lion King*'s release.

The film, of course, was a global box office smash, and picked up Oscars for Best Original Score and Best Original Song, while the soundtrack sold more than 15 million copies. In recent years the music has taken on a new life as part of Hans Zimmer's live performances, as members of the Auckland Philharmonia found out when they performed with Zimmer and Lebo M in 2017 – and as audiences will discover when experiencing the full score performed live in sync with the film this August. And if that's not the circle of life, I don't know what is. 🍌

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Season partners



AUCKLAND
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Grit and Personality

Richard Betts speaks with Associate Principal Viola Julie Park.

Julie Park has only ever had one orchestral audition. She aced it, of course, which is how Auckland Philharmonia's Associate Principal Viola became Auckland Philharmonia's Associate Principal Viola.

Julie's connection with the orchestra goes back to her school days.

"I grew up watching Auckland Phil, especially [Section Principal Viola] Robert Ashworth. In high school I did internships and competed in all the Auckland Philharmonia young soloist programmes."

Julie didn't just compete; she was crowned Auckland Philharmonia's Young Soloist of the Year, an honour that saw her performing Cecil Forsyth's Viola Concerto in G minor with the orchestra at Auckland Town Hall.

The award was all the more impressive for the fact that Julie came to viola relatively late. She began her musical life playing violin, spurred on by an inspirational music teacher at her primary school. She didn't fall for viola until high school.

"I loved playing but I didn't feel a big connection to the violin," she says. "I was encouraged to try the viola and it really connected. Having played the violin for a long time, I felt the viola had more grit, a bass-y depth, and I enjoyed being able to produce that

sound. In terms of personality, too, I was quite shy, so I didn't want to always be in the spotlight; having the role of supporting and blending clicked with me."

Julie will have nowhere to hide in October, when she leads colleagues in *Viva Viola!*, a pair of In Your Neighbourhood concerts featuring music by Beethoven, Dohnányi and Bowen.

"The Beethoven is a lovely, short duet for viola and cello, which is a rare combination. I've always loved playing the Dohnányi *Serenade*; it's feisty. It's written in a lovely register and showcases the mellow sound a viola can produce. The Bowen speaks for itself: *Fantasia for Four Violas*."

York Bowen (1884–1961) is a composer dear to Julie's heart. Following a Bachelor's degree in Auckland, she did her postgraduate study at the Royal Academy of Music, London, where she played plenty of English repertoire. Bowen became a staple.

"He was an amazing composer who wrote a lot of music for Lionel Tertis, who's often called the 'father of the viola,'" Julie explains. "I wish more people knew about Bowen."

It's not for want of effort. At RAM, Julie became the first violist ever to be invited to study for an Advanced

Diploma and was awarded a full-ride Bicentennial Scholarship. Part of the scholarship was a recording contract with Linn Records – a company famed for its extravagantly priced hi-fi gear and the exceptional audio quality of its CDs. Unsurprisingly, Julie recorded a disc of Bowen. Julie describes her years at RAM as some of the best of her life.

"It was eye-opening to be surrounded by so many good musicians. We'd learn off each other, watch performances, try to explore as much as we could. I learnt so much from my teachers but also my friends."

Julie's final year was curtailed by the pandemic, and while she was in a UK lockdown, Auckland Philharmonia got in touch about a temporary contract. The timing was right.

"[In lockdown] I realised playing solo wasn't for me," Julie says. "I loved collaborating."

So Julie had her one and only orchestral audition.

"The day I landed in New Zealand for MIQ, I got an email saying I got the job. I made the right choice coming back; working with the orchestra has literally been the best thing ever." 🍀

> Park's Picks

Julie selects some of her favourite viola works.

Walton, Viola Concerto

“The top one for me is Walton's concerto, which I've played.”

Delius, Viola Sonata No.2 (arr. from violin)

“Studying at the Royal Academy has a big part to play in my choices. English viola music has so much to offer.”

Forsyth, Viola Concerto

“Cecil Forsyth wrote a lovely concerto. It's three movements, very technical, and it has a cadenza, which is rare for viola concertos. I was lucky to play it with the Auckland Philharmonia when I was Young Soloist of the Year.”

Bridge, Two Pieces for Viola

“It's very dynamic and shows the technical side of the viola – I always go for these things because people need to know more of what the viola can produce. It also has a deep, lyrical sense of melody that's so charming.”



▲ JULIE PERFORMING FORSYTH'S VIOLA CONCERTO AS AUCKLAND PHIL'S YOUNG SOLOIST OF THE YEAR.

In Your Neighbourhood



Viva Viola!

6.30pm, Monday 7 October

St Luke's Church, Remuera

6.30pm, Tuesday 8 October

All Saints Church, Howick

Featuring Julie Park, Associate Principal Viola

Beethoven Duet with Two Obligato Eyeglasses

Dohnányi Serenade

Bowen Fantasia for Four Violas

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CAN YOU DIG IT?

Concertmaster Andrew Beer gets out into the garden. Following him with a trowel: [Tiana Miocevich](#)



ANDREW BEER. IMAGE: ADRIAN MALLOCH

Canadian-born Andrew Beer might have a newly minted New Zealand passport, but it's his enthusiasm for New Zealand's icon of nationhood – the feijoa – that passes the real citizenship test.

"I know it's a love or hate thing when it comes to feijoas, and I absolutely love them," the Auckland Phil Concertmaster says. He's just emerged from the annual feijoa glut of April and May, and is still marvelling at how productive his backyard has become in just a few years.

Growing up in Vancouver, Andrew didn't expect gardening to be a big part of his life. "My parents were really into it when I was a kid, I helped them out in the garden a bit then. But in my earlier professional years and in university, of course I didn't own land. I didn't even own an apartment. And then I was in Montreal, where it's frozen for about eight months of the year."

It wasn't until Andrew moved to Auckland in 2014 that he realised the country's forgiving climate could produce food from the garden year round. Gardening has also been forgiving on Andrew himself. "I used to love playing sports, especially tennis and hiking, but I've found that now I'm in my 40s, my body is telling me I'm not young anymore. Of course, I want to protect my body to be able to play violin as much as possible."

With veggie gardening, Andrew explains, you're still outdoors and you're still getting a little bit of exercise and fresh air, but it's easier on the body.

A series of raised garden beds has been installed on the sloping section of his home in Albany, which he shares with his wife Michelle and four-year-old daughter Audrey. Trees surround the garden beds, including peach, lemon, lime and mandarin, as well as the once-neglected feijoa trees he brought back to life when he moved into the house, though not everything Andrew grows has been so successful.

"It's not something I do to be good at it," he says. "I don't study the best techniques. I kind of just do it by feel, and if it doesn't work out with some plants, it's fine. But I always feel better after I've been in the garden."



> ANDREW BEER'S GARDEN



ANDREW BEER WITH GILLIAN WHITEHEAD. IMAGE: ADRIAN MALLOCH

Rhubarb refused to take off in the clay-heavy soil and warm micro-climate, but asparagus has been the surprise winner, easily producing shoots for around nine months of the year. “I can’t figure out why it’s so expensive in stores,” he laughs. “For me, anyway, it’s been easy to grow. And it lives up to 25 years – it just keeps giving.”

He’s also introduced a lot of Chinese vegetables to the garden, a nod to his wife’s culture. A bumper crop of fo shou gua (also known as ‘Buddha’s Hand’ in China, and part of the choko family) is currently threatening to take over the backyard. “It grows like crazy; I think we’ve picked about 200 in the last three months.” Fortunately, Michelle is great at cooking traditional Chinese cuisine, and makes short work of the harvest.

Beyond delicious meals and the satisfaction of growing his own food, Andrew says he enjoys the solitude of gardening.

“I think that’s part of the reason I feel good when I’ve been in the garden. You’re there without distraction, and you’re not able to touch your phone because your hands are dirty. When I’m gardening, that’s all I can do, and I love it.”

Lately, the demands of an active four-year-old, and a busy schedule with the orchestra have competed with the garden for Andrew’s attention and time. On his mind at the moment is the Wynton Marsalis Violin Concerto

says. “In my opinion it’s the best new violin concerto written in the last 30 years, it’s fantastic music, and just gorgeously written.”

Andrew credits Auckland Phil’s Director of Artistic Planning, Gale Mahood, for taking on the New Zealand premiere of the piece when he approached her with the idea. Andrew describes the concerto as full of jazz, Americana, and accessible yet demanding writing for the violin. It was written in close dialogue with Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti, for whom the concerto was composed. Contemporary music is one of Andrew’s passions, and Marsalis strikes an excellent balance of melody and modernism.

Andrew is animated when talking about the prospect of bringing something new to audiences, and recalls the New Zealand premiere of the Ligeti Concerto and the world premiere of Gillian Whitehead’s violin concerto *Tai timu, tai pari* as stand-out memories.

In recent years, Andrew has also embraced the idea of new music in other ways, as one-fifth of the Aotango quintet. The group includes NZTrio pianist Somi Kim, jazz guitarist Sam Swindells, Auckland Phil Principal Double Bass Gordon Hill, and world champion accordionist Grayson Masefield, performing world music and tango to packed venues around the country.

“Improvising is new and exciting for me; your heartbeat’s racing. Suddenly you have to come up with something right in the moment”

he is performing in November, in an all-American programme of music conducted by Music Director Giordano Bellincampi.

“That’s going to be so much fun,” Andrew

“I’m finding it a lot of fun, because I’m not trained as an improviser but improvisation is a big element of performing that style of music. So, it’s new for me and it’s exciting; your heartbeat’s racing. Suddenly you have to come up with something right in the moment, and if you mess up it’s okay.”

There’s something in his *laissez-faire* attitude to messing up in tango music that feels distinctly ‘New Zealand’, Andrew agrees.

Having secured New Zealand citizenship last year, and then getting a passport this year, Andrew wonders if having the combination of the “coolest citizenships in the world” and being a bit more Kiwi, at least on paper, has changed him at all.

“I’d have to think about that. Maybe it’s some of the vocabulary I use now, or maybe it’s just my way of being. I guess I’m a bit more relaxed now.

“Or maybe it’s just the feijoas.”

The New Zealand Herald
Premier Series

City Lights

7.30pm, Thursday 28 November
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Giordano Bellincampi
Violin Andrew Beer

Wynton Marsalis Violin Concerto
Bernstein Symphonic dances
from *West Side Story*
Gershwin *An American in Paris*

aucklandphil.nz/city-lights

A woman in a black dress is playing a violin in a studio setting. The scene is lit with dramatic, low-key lighting, featuring strong red and blue hues. The woman is captured with motion blur, suggesting movement and energy. The background is dark, with some studio equipment visible on the left and right sides. The floor is made of light-colored wood.

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My Great Listen

Gemma Peacocke

Composer Gemma Peacocke shares three pieces of music that changed her life



Baroque & Beyond

Colours of Brass

7:30pm, Thursday 31 October
Holy Trinity Cathedral, Parnell

Director Huw Dann

Byrd *The Earl of Oxford's March*

Gabrieli *Sonata pian' e forte*

Giazotto *Adagio in G minor*

Clarke *The Prince of Denmark's March*

Gemma Peacocke *New work for Brass and Percussion (world premiere)*

aucklandphil.nz/colours-brass



Anna Meredith *Nautilus*

Nautilus is one of the most gloriously fierce and fun orchestral pieces I've ever heard. This aggressive, bass-heavy synthpop piece is by Anna Meredith, a Scottish composer and producer who wrote it when she was first starting to use electronics in her instrumental music. Its rising bassline comprises a series of 12/8 bars followed by a 15/8 bar; the off-kilter time signatures lend *Nautilus* a slightly unhinged vibe. Various arrangements of *Nautilus* have been used in Lady Gaga's film *Five Foot Two* and on the *Eighth Grade* soundtrack, and a full orchestral version was released this year by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Dalia Stasevska.



Björk 'All Is Full of Love', from *Homogenic*

Björk has been a superstar of avant-pop since the 1990s and I fell in love with her music as an earnestly angst-y teenager. For me (and a lot of other lugubrious young people), Björk's music was a gateway drug to Icelandic bands Sigur Rós and Múm. I had all three on high rotation when I was finishing my music degree at Vic. I loved that, like me, these Icelandic oddballs were also from a small, isolated and misty country, and that they combined unusual harmonies and extended song forms with pop sensibilities.

The version of 'All is Full of Love' that still cuts me to the quick is the trip-hop mix with a futuristic, queer cyborg music video. The music is structurally simple and harmonically rich with major seventh chords that are bittersweet and that create a heartrending tension. The orchestration is incredibly stripped back; it is mostly understated synth pads and pentatonic zither flourishes so that Björk's multitracked voice singing "All is full of love" over and over becomes ecstatic in its ritualistic repetition.



TrinityRoots 'Home, Land & Sea' from *Home, Land and Sea*

Warren Maxwell is both a wildly fantastic musician and a beautiful human being. 'Home, Land & Sea' takes my breath away; it's one of my all-time favourite songs from Aotearoa and it pulls me back home whenever I listen to it. It's also a perfect protest song in that the sound is joyous and sweet, belying the defiance and heartache in the lyrics. The Rhodes keyboard and laid-back drumset playing give the song a nostalgic feeling, calling back to protest music from an earlier era. Hollie Smith's harmony on the final chorus opens the song up into an anthem.

TrinityRoots released this song on their second album, *Home, Land and Sea*, back in 2004. Two decades later, the subject matter is as rich and important as ever, and the music is still causing homesickness in Kiwis everywhere.

Learn and Participate News



Bash declares 'War'

Time to tighten up your bow: this year's Community Bash is coming.

Words: Richard Betts.

Images: Sav Schulman.

They came in their hundreds, travelling from far and wide. Girls and boys and women and men from all backgrounds, each of them clasp an instrument except the singers, who weren't. Some had played for decades, while some barely read music. They didn't care. We didn't care. They filled Auckland Town Hall to the brim for the Auckland Philharmonia Community Bash. And now they're doing it all again.

Community Bash is a play-in where musicians and singers of all ages and skills join players from Auckland Phil to workshop and then perform music. It doesn't matter if you haven't picked up your violin for years or have never sung in a choir, Community Bash is about making music for the joy of making music.

This year's repertoire features selections from Karl Jenkins' mass for peace, *The Armed Man*, and two movements from Holst's *The Planets*, including 'Mars, The Bringer of War'. It's going to get loud.

The Community Bash takes place on Sunday 9 September. Registration starts at 1:30pm, rehearsals kick off at 2pm, in preparation for the public performance at 4:10pm.

Music is sent out in advance so participants can practise at home. For instrumentalists, sheet music is arranged for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Choristers get recordings sent to them. Cost to you? Zero dollars. (You're welcome!) 🍷



➤ For more information contact learnandparticipate@aucklandphil.nz or phone **09 638 6266**. You can register at

👉 aucklandphil.nz/community-bash

Development News

Que Syrah

“All wine is a celebration – like music. There is joy in creating something beautiful.”

SIR GEORGE FISTONICH

In May, Auckland Philharmonia welcomed Čuvar Winery to the family as the orchestra's wine partner. It's a philanthropic homecoming for the winery's founder, Kiwi wine pioneer Sir George Fistonich, who also supported the orchestra during his time at Villa Maria. We spoke with Sir George about his connection to music, the role it plays in his winemaking and why he's proud to return as Auckland Philharmonia's wine partner.

“Making wine is a bit like conducting an orchestra,” says legendary wine maker Sir George Fistonich. “It takes time and patience. You build a great team who collectively pursue a like-minded goal with passion and enthusiasm. People often have visions of being out in the field stomping on grapes, but my role is really as a teacher and creator of culture.”

Sir George says he's always found music to be a release from the eight-days-a-week job of winemaking.

“I listened to Dean Martin when I was younger but I grew to love opera. I'm not an expert but I enjoy it. A good opera singer – you can listen to that for hours. I travelled a lot internationally for work and I always tried to seek out opera performances when overseas. My favourite singer is Pavarotti. We have excellent opera singers here in New Zealand – Sol3 Mio performed in our vineyards with the Auckland Philharmonia.”

Sir George's association with Auckland Phil goes way back. Villa Maria was for many years the orchestra's wine sponsor, and he's recently returned to the Phil family with his latest venture, Fistonich Family Vineyards. The new company has two labels, Oblix and Čuvar, offering a harmonious range of varietals that can be sampled in the Town Hall on concert evenings.

“Oblix is a party wine, a good match for modern music, like when Auckland Philharmonia plays with Che-Fu & the Kratez. Čuvar is a more

refined palate, with the chardonnay being a nice fit for Mozart, while the bold cabernet-sauvignon and syrah blends suit a pairing with Prokofiev or Shostakovich.”

Sir George is pleased that some of his former Villa Maria team have joined him at Fistonich Family Vineyards, but why, after 60 years of business innovation – New Zealand's first restaurant winery, early adoption of screw caps, BioGro certification – did he feel the need to orchestrate a new group?

“The truth is,” he says, “I couldn't stand doing nothing. All wine is a celebration – like music. There is joy in creating something beautiful.”

It is, of course, nice to have him back. He thinks so, too.

“We're proud to return as partners with the Auckland Philharmonia,” Sir George says. “I've supported a lot of charities over the years and loyalty is key; we're building community together.”

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Ode to an Egg Sandwich

Gemma Henderson on a little-known aspect of the Auckland Philharmonia Friends' behind-the-scenes efforts.

The Auckland Philharmonia Friends are a welcoming group of music lovers who have supported Auckland's orchestra for more than 40 years. Among their many activities, you can spot the Friends selling programmes on concert night, helping out at community events and staffing registration tables, and they fundraise through countless events and raffles throughout the year. They sponsor Auckland Philharmonia Music Director Giordano Bellincampi, too. In short, they do a lot for the orchestra.

An aspect of the Friends' support that goes unnoticed by the public, however, is the preparation of the food that's served to our musicians every concert evening. Playing symphonies and concerti for the people of Auckland is no easy task – banging the bass drum can cause a musician to work up quite a hunger. Enter the Friends, who over the years have discovered exactly what the people on stage need to get through the second half of a concert.

When we asked the players about their favourite supper offerings, they were united on three items: the egg salad sandwich, a particularly good caramel slice, and the asparagus roll. Whether tinned asparagus or fresh, mayonnaise or cream cheese, the musicians always gravitate towards these. The players appreciate the effort, and the role the Friends play in the wider Auckland Philharmonia whānau.

"They are our most loyal and devoted supporters," says Assistant Concertmaster Miranda Adams. "In short, they are heroes."

Jenny Raven, Sub-Principal Percussion: "It is always great to see the members of the Friends and talk to them. We are so lucky to have supporters who offer practical help as well as financial, and they love the music as much as we do."

We asked the Friends their top tips for preparing interval snacks for starving musicians.

Find out more about the Auckland Philharmonia Friends at:

aucklandphil.nz/friends

Food the Friends Way

Rona Colbert

Rona, who died in January, was one of the most dedicated members of the Friends. She also made a mean egg sandwich, which was ironic, because she was allergic to eggs and never got to taste them. This is her recipe for excellent eggs.

"Take a loaf of bread (white), 10 eggs hard boiled. Mash the eggs with mayonnaise and a little bit of dijon mustard – the trick is to put plenty of filling into each sandwich. We were all encouraged to use healthy bread but the players' preference is plain old white bread."



Anne Stewart

Anne coordinates the Friends' concert night suppers, and despite accepted wisdom, reckons tinned asparagus works just fine in rolls. "Fresh asparagus is great," Anne admits, "but it's not always available and can be a bit tough, so asparagus rolls are often better with tinned asparagus – sacrilege, I know.

"I often roll the bread out with a rolling pin to thin it, because it makes the bread easier to roll after filling. I butter the bread with a bit of mayo added to the butter – yep, I'm old fashioned and do use butter! Put several spears into each and top and tail them so each end is even. I roll them corner to corner, then I cut each one in half. Be sure to add a bit of seasoning."

< **RONA COLBERT IN 2023 CELEBRATING 25 YEARS AS AN AUCKLAND PHILHARMONIA FRIEND**

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July – December 2024

Concerts

DATE	CONCERT	TIME	LOCATION
Sun 21 Jul	Community Classics: SHAKESPEARE IN MUSIC	3pm	Due Drop Events Centre
Wed 31 Jul	Phil Opera Fest: WAGNER LECTURE	6.30pm	Concert Chamber, Auckland Town Hall
Sat 3 Aug	SYNTHONY PRIDE	7pm	Spark Arena
Sun 4 Aug	Phil Opera Fest: SUNDAY SINGALONG WITH WAGNER	10.30am	Supper Room, Auckland Town Hall
Sat 10 Aug	Opera in Concert: TRISTAN UND ISOLDE	4pm	Auckland Town Hall
Thu 22 Aug	NZ Herald Premier Series: VENGEROV & SIBELIUS	7.30pm	Auckland Town Hall
Sat 24 Aug	OBOE HANG #1	3pm	School of Music
Fri 30 Aug	THE LION KING LIVE IN CONCERT	7.30pm	Aotea Centre
Sat 31 Aug	THE LION KING LIVE IN CONCERT	2.30pm	Aotea Centre
Sun 8 Sep	COMMUNITY BASH	2pm	Auckland Town Hall
Mon 9 Sep	Phil After 5: PERCUSSION SECTION	5.30pm	Q Theatre
Thu 12 Sep	NZ Herald Premier Series: JOIE DE VIVRE	7.30pm	Auckland Town Hall
Wed 18 Sep	THE PHIL GALA	6.30pm	The Civic
19/21/25 Sep	NZ Opera Season: RIGOLETTO	7.30pm	Aotea Centre
Fri 27 Sep	BASSON HANG #2	6pm	Fickling Convention Centre
Sat 28 Sep	HARP HANG	10am	Fickling Convention Centre
Sat 28 Sep	LOW BRASS HANG	3pm	Fickling Convention Centre
Thu 3 Oct	CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON	7.30pm	Aotea Centre
Mon 7 Oct	In Your Neighbourhood: VIVA VIOLA!	6.30pm	St. Luke's Remuera
Tue 8 Oct	In Your Neighbourhood: VIVA VIOLA!	6.30pm	All Saints Church, Howick
Sat 12 Oct	HORN HANG #2	3pm	Fickling Convention Centre
Thu 17 Oct	NZ Herald Premier Series: PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION	7.30pm	Auckland Town Hall
Sat 19 Oct	Community Classics: SHAKESPEARE IN MUSIC	3pm	Bruce Mason Centre
Thu 24 Oct	Bayleys Great Classics: MOZART & DVOŘÁK	7.30pm	Auckland Town Hall
Thu 31 Oct	Ryman Healthcare presents: COLOURS OF BRASS	7.30pm	Holy Trinity Cathedral
Thu 7 Nov	NZ Herald Premier Series: SIR ANDREW DAVIS: A TRIBUTE	7.30pm	Auckland Town Hall
Mon 11 Nov	Phil After 5: WOODWIND SECTION	5.30pm	Q Theatre
Sat 15 Nov	OBOE HANG #2	6pm	Fickling Convention Centre
Sat 16 Nov	DOUBLE BASS HANG	3pm	Otara Music Arts Centre
Thu 21 Nov	Bayleys Great Classics: ROMANTIC JOURNEYS	7.30pm	Auckland Town Hall
Thu 28 Nov	NZ Herald Premier Series: CITY LIGHTS	7.30pm	Auckland Town Hall
Sat 30 Nov	TUNES 4 TAMARIKI CHRISTMAS	10am & 11.30am	Auckland Town Hall
5-8 Dec	RNZB Season: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM	7.30pm & 1.30pm	Aotea Centre
Fri 13 Dec	Stanley St presents: CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS	7.30pm	Holy Trinity Cathedral
Sat 14 Dec	Stanley St presents: CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS	3pm	Holy Trinity Cathedral
Sun 15 Dec	TUNES 4 TAMARIKI CHRISTMAS	2pm & 3.30pm	Bruce Mason Centre

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Auckland Philharmonía,

PO Box 7083
Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142

Ticketing (09) 623 1052
Administration (09) 638 6266



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