

11–12 October 2024

BERLIOZ & RAVEL

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WELCOME

Welcome to **Berlioz & Ravel**, a fascinating concert in the intimate surroundings of the Utzon Room of the Sydney Opera House.

Handpicked Wines is delighted to be a Presenting Partner of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Cocktail Hour with Handpicked Wines* series.

At Handpicked, we understand the power of passion, artistry and new horizons.

Drawing on both technical and creative inspiration, we craft wines that elevate and enhance experiences; just as the superb musicians of the Orchestra invite us to explore new and remarkable sound worlds.

In this concert you will encounter marvellous instruments not often placed at the forefront of our attention, performing a series of works by Vejvanovský, Ravel, Berlioz, Schubert, Caccini and Australian composer Gerard Brophy.

Together, these rarer instruments and lesser-known arrangements present a remarkable opportunity to be immersed in imaginative soundscapes connected to birds, bells and spring. The instruments are the stars, especially in the hands of the excellent musicians of the Sydney Symphony in the intimate surroundings of the Utzon Room

Handpicked and Sydney Symphony Orchestra's shared values of creativity, passion and the pursuit of perfection form the foundation of our extraordinary new partnership.

Both the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Handpicked embody a dedication to excellence and a strong commitment to the delivery of unmatched and rare experiences such as this one.

I do hope you enjoy the concert and the wines we have selected to accompany this unique and beautiful music.



William Dong
Managing Director
Handpicked Wines

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2024 CONCERT SEASON

Cocktail Hour with Handpicked Wines

Friday 11 October, 6pm

Saturday 12 October, 6pm

Utzon Room,
Sydney Opera House

BERLIOZ & RAVEL OBSCURATA!

GENEVIEVE LANG presenter

CAROLYN HARRIS alto flute, flute, piccolo

ALEXANDER MORRIS bass clarinet, E flat clarinet, basset horn

TIMOTHY CONSTABLE vibraphone, tam tam

SCOTT KINMONT alto sackbut, serpent, toy piano, dramatic actor

NICK BYRNE ophicleide

ALEXANDRE OGUEY bass oboe

DYLAN HOLLY double bass, harmonica, toy piano

DAVID CAMPBELL double bass

RICHARD LYNN double bass

STEVEN LARSON double bass

PAVEL VEJVANOVSKÝ (c.1639–1693) **ARR. KINMONT**

Offertorium ad duos choros (c.1650)

Andante

Sarabande

Allegro

GERARD BROPHY (born 1953)

Beautiful Birds (2019)

i. *Lyrebirds*

ii. *Flamingos*

iii. *Hummingbirds*

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937) **ARR. KINMONT**

Miroirs (1904–1905)

ii. *Oiseaux tristes* (Sad Birds)

v. *La vallée des cloches* (The Valley of Bells)

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828) **ARR. KINMONT**

Erlkönig, Op.1, D328 (1815)

Schwanengesang, D95: 13. *Der Doppelgänger* (1828)

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803–1869) **ARR. KINMONT**

Lélio, or the Return to Life, Op.14b (1831)

i. *Le pêcheur – Ballade* (The Fisherman – Ballad)

GIULIO CACCINI (1551–1618) **ARR. KINMONT**

La spagnoletta (Non ha'l ciel) (1614)

Estimated durations

Vejvanovský – 5 minutes

Brophy – 13 minutes

Ravel – 8 minutes

Schubert – 8 minutes

Berlioz – 7 minutes

Caccini – 5 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately one hour
and ten minutes

Cover image

Principal Double Bass

Kees Boersma and Tutti

Double Bass Benjamin Ward

Photo by Craig Abercrombie

Presenting Partner

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ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS

By Scott Kinmont

This concert is an exploration of sometimes obscure works by great composers, great works by obscure composers, or the use of obscure combinations of little-known instruments.

THE INSTRUMENTS

A quick word about the instruments used here tonight. All of these instruments are in use in modern symphony orchestras from time to time (when there are players available to play them, in particular the truly obscure **serpent** and **ophicleide** which are sometimes substituted with more modern equivalents with varying levels of success). Each one reflects back to us ideas and sounds from different stages of music history, predominantly the 19th and early 20th centuries when composers were looking for new directions and to extend the range of families of instruments. Even the more 'standard' members of this evening's ensemble – the **double bass** and **piccolo** – only found their modern form during the 19th century: the four-string double bass replacing the earlier three-string model with slight variations in shape to assist the player, while the system of keys on the piccolo replaced the earlier, military-style fife that had only a few keys.

As the orchestra expanded in size during the early 19th century, there was a quest to find a bass voice for the brass family. The serpent was tried but its inability to produce enough volume (and difficulty to play in the modern tuning system owing to the holes being placed to fit the player's fingers rather than for any acoustic reason...) made it ultimately unsuitable. Mendelssohn clearly had a positive opinion of the unique sound it produced, calling for it in some fairly late works. The ophicleide (Greek for 'keyed serpent'), an instrument which used the latest in instrument design technology, was championed by composers such as Berlioz who were looking for a more solid foundation for the bass end of the orchestra; it superseded the serpent very quickly in the late 1820s. The invention of keyed systems for wind instruments radically changed both the woodwind and brass families, in particular the lower voices in each family where these new systems of keys and levers allowed makers to reach beyond the normal span of human hands, necessary for longer tubes. The new possibilities this offered were explored by makers and composers for the rest of the century: the **bass clarinet** as we know it today appeared in the late 1830s, the **alto flute** in the 1850s, and the **bass oboe** and **modern piccolo** emerged in the 1890s. The **vibraphone** was invented in the 1920s.



Members of the ophicleide family from the Rijksmuseum and Metropolitan Museum of Art

ABOUT THE MUSIC

PAVEL VEJVANOVSKÝ

Offertorium ad duos choros

The opening work in this concert – the *Offertorium ad duos Choros* by Pavel Vejvanovský – is an obscure piece by a sadly now obscure composer played, in my arrangement, on obscure instruments. Vejvanovský was Moravian-born but enjoyed considerable celebrity as a trumpeter as far afield as Vienna, before returning to Moravia to become music director to the Prince-Archbishop of Olomouc. A hundred years before this piece was written Europe was in the thrall of the explosion of creativity emanating out of Venice, with the musical epicentre of St Mark's Basilica culminating in the splendour of compositions by Giovanni Gabrieli. Gabrieli is perhaps not a household name today, but many composers made the pilgrimage to Venice to study with him and in Vejvanovský's piece his influence could still be felt. Gabrieli would use multiple choirs of instruments, voices and organs (the church had four) to give audiences the sense of grandeur of the space. In Vejvanovský we see a composer reflecting the essence of his times: in the 1650s, after the horrors of the Thirty Years War, Habsburg rulers like the Prince-Archbishop engaged in a program of rebuilding, and in addition to capital works supported elaborate artistic projects and a stable of fine musicians. Vejvanovský wrote music for courtly and church use; the *Offertorium*, effectively a short sonata of three movements, might have been an instrumental accompaniment to the ritual in which the bread and wine is carried to the altar for consecration at Mass, in a manner that echoes the grandeur of Venice a hundred years before.



Vejvanovský's memorial in the Czech city of Kroměříž.

GERARD BROPHY (born 1953)

Beautiful Birds (2019)

Australian composer Gerard Brophy has been commissioned and performed by some of the world's leading ensembles. Over recent years he has developed a keen interest in collaborating with artists from other disciplines and he is particularly active in the areas of ballet, dance and electronica. He has also been involved in exciting collaborations with musicians from other cultures among them the great Senegalese master drummers, the N'Diaye Rose family, and the *timbila* virtuoso Venancio Mbande from Mozambique.

Recent performances include the sell-out season of his ballet *Yo Yai Pakebi*, *Man Mai Yapobi* choreographed by Regina van Berkel and performed by the Residentie Orkest and the Nederlands Dans Theater; the premiere seasons of *Semele* and *Halcyon* as part of the Australian Ballet's highly successful *Interplay* and *Edge of Night* programs, and the Song Company's tour of *Gethsemane*, his contemporary passion play.

Currently he divides his time between Brisbane and Calcutta.

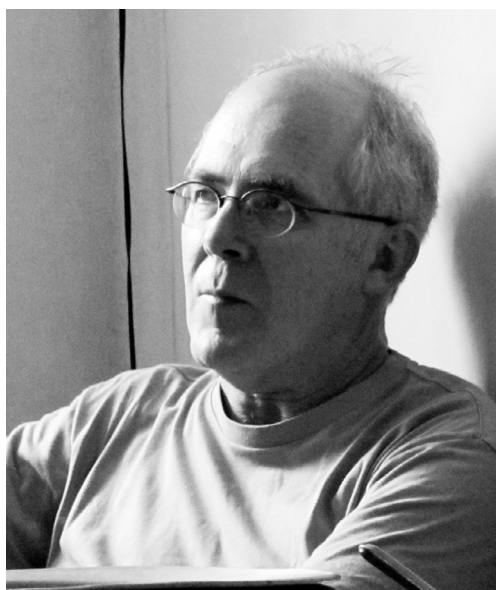
ABOUT THE MUSIC

The composer writes:

Beautiful Birds showcases birds' characteristics in three distinctive movements -

- i. Lyrebirds – skittish, quirky birds with a mischievous temperament and an astounding penchant for mimicry;
- ii. Flamingos – elegant, stately yet slightly melancholic creatures;
- iii. Hummingbirds – fluttering, quivering souls flitting from one gorgeous blossom to the next.

Written for Ensemble Offspring, *Beautiful Birds* is a true exploration of the trio's virtuosity. In this epic three movement work an array of joyous bird calls are interwoven into dexterous lines. While *Lyrebirds* establishes the piece as a highly energetic celebration of sonic colours, *Flamingos* explores delicious and still moments of quiet conversation between the three instruments. The piece finishes with *Hummingbirds*, mimicking the bird's fast yet ever changing humming in an impressive display of swift-flying unison lines.



Gerard Brophy

MAURICE RAVEL

Miroirs

Alborada del Gracioso (Morning Song of the Jester), a popular orchestral work by Ravel, began life as one piece in a five movement suite for piano entitled *Miroirs*. A further two of these pieces – *Oiseaux Tristes* (Sad Birds) and *La Vallée des Cloches* (Valley of the Bells) – show Ravel's genius in being able to convey a sense of distance and space. In these arrangements I have experimented with the idea of immersing the audience 'inside' the instrument to try to replicate this sense of space that Ravel so successfully encapsulates in his work. The diversity of timbres of the instruments used here make for a wide variety of birds and bells, and in a wonderful stroke of luck one of our bassists, Dylan Holly, also plays the harmonica so this makes a guest appearance in our *Sad Birds*. The careful listener will also identify the sounds of a toy piano.



Maurice Ravel around the time he composed *Miroirs*.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

FRANZ SCHUBERT

There is nothing obscure about the songs of Schubert, and these two – *Der Doppelgänger* and *Erlkönig* – are amongst some of his best loved and well known. *Der Doppelgänger*, from the late collection known as *Schwanengesang*, depicts the jilted lover seeing his double in anguish on the street, while *Erlkönig* tells the story of the evil elf king's abduction of human child. However, we are reasonably confident that hearing them played by bass oboe and bass clarinet with double bass accompaniment – to showcase the distinctive sounds and expressive capabilities of these unique combinations – is a world first.



Franz Schubert

HECTOR BERLIOZ

For the regular orchestral concert-goer, *Symphonie Fantastique* by Berlioz is an intriguing work; the backstory to this piece is as engaging as the work itself. Berlioz felt it imperative that the audience be aware of the story to each movement, his aim being to represent in music the story at hand. In short, the story follows an artist and his obsessive fascination with his beloved. For Berlioz, this was truly art imitating life – in 1827 he had become ‘emotionally deranged’ (according to his biographer Hugh MacDonald) with the Anglo-Irish actress Harriet Smithson. At one point in the narrative the artist falls under the spell of an opium-inspired dream, where he imagines he has killed the object of his affections and is led to the guillotine where he witnesses his own execution. From there he is transported to a witches’ sabbath where his beloved appears, with a ‘*Roar of joy as she arrives ... She joins in the diabolical orgy*’. One can only imagine the impact this had on Smithson when she witnessed the first performance – Berlioz says ‘she felt the room reel about her; she heard no more but sat in a dream, and at the end returned home like a sleepwalker.’ But whatever her opinion at the time within a year she had married the French composer – while this may have been a successful ploy in Berlioz’s time, in today’s world it would most likely lead to an AVO..... Anyway, *Leio* (subtitled ‘or the Return to Life’) is the sequel to these events, with the artist awakening in an alarmed state from the dream and contemplating the events that took place in it.

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Tonight, you will have the pleasure of savouring wines from our esteemed Platinum Partner, Handpicked. Their wines proudly showcase a diverse array of Australia's most renowned grape-growing regions. Handpicked's commitment to craftsmanship and passion for the art of winemaking resonates deeply with the values of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.



Collection Tasmania Sparkling Cuvée NV

Crafted from the finest Tasmanian fruit, this sparkling blend features 50% Chardonnay and 50% Pinot Noir. With richness from time on lees and the oaked reserve wine and brioche notes from lees, it offers delicate red fruits, sweet lemon, and oyster shell nuances. Balanced acidity and a fine mousse leading to a clean finish.



Regional Selections Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon 2019

A signature Coonawarra character shines through with trademark aromas of blackberry, cassis, and choc-mint, showcasing ripe complexity. The palate delights with concentrated dark fruits, balanced by leafy freshness and firm, lingering tannins. Truly a classic Coonawarra Cabernet.



Trial Batch Tasmania Reisling 2022

This wine entices with delicate white flower aromatics leaving the palate bursting with elderflower, lime curd, honey, and subtle ginger spice. Its lip-smacking powdery acidity frames the palate and guides to a long, fine finish. Fermented naturally in a large concrete egg, this wine showcases Tasmanian style by preserving its bright acidity while offering a touch of sweetness.



Collection Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir 2022

Vibrant hues of red and black cherry fruits tantalize the senses, accompanied by alluring notes of spicy oak and potpourri complexity. On the palate, vibrant fruit flavours dance gracefully, intertwined with silky smooth tannins that caress the tongue. A harmonious symphony of flavours unfolds, offering a truly luxurious and memorable tasting experience.



Collection Yarra Valley Chardonnay 2019

Great vibrancy and depth. A combination of spice and savoury elements from the valley floor with citrus and acid line from the Upper Yarra. Layers of citrus and ripe stone fruits with a mineral edge.

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ABOUT THE MUSIC



Hector Berlioz, drawn (possibly by Ingres) in the 1830s.

In fact Berlioz composed new music, spoken text and lyrics (and recycled earlier pieces) for *Lelio*, which begins with a setting of a French translation of Goethe's poem, *Der Fischer*, about a young man who is lured to his death by a mermaid or water sprite. In the original it is sung by a tenor representing Lelio's imaginary friend Horatio. The idea of the somewhat obscure ophicleide as the solo instrument for this version is no random choice. As mentioned earlier, Berlioz was a champion of this and other new instruments as he sought to expand the palate available to orchestral composers.



Harriet Smithson and Charles Kemble in *Romeo and Juliet*.

GIULIO CACCINI (1551–1618) *La spagnoletta (Non ha'l ciel)*

The final piece on tonight's program is a genuine 'knees up' from the Italian composer Giulio Caccini, a Roman singer who spent most of his career at the court of the Medici in Florence. Today he is more famous for his role as father of the modern opera (his *Euridice* was one of the earliest) than for catchy dances. *La spagnoletta* was also published in 1614 as a song, *Non ha 'l ciel cotanti lumi*, about the sorrows and pains of love. It's really just an excuse to feature each of the instruments used this evening.



Giulio Caccini

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