



Omega

Ensemble

Beethoven's Trio

omegaensemble.com.au



Anna Da Silva Chen Violin

Photo: David Vagg

Beethoven's Trio

Saturday 16 February 2019

2:30pm

Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House

Presented as part of the
2019 Master Series

Acknowledgment of Country

Omega Ensemble acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we perform. We pay respect to the Elders both past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.



Please ensure your mobile devices are turned to silent and switched off for the full duration of this performance.



Please note that unauthorised recording or photography of this performance is not permitted.

Arnold Schoenberg

Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4

Felix Mendelssohn

Piano Trio No.1 in D Minor, Op. 49

Interval (20 mins)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Trio in B flat major, Op.11 'Gassenhauer'

This performance will last approximately
120 minutes including interval.

Omega Ensemble reserves the right to alter scheduled artists and programs as necessary.

2019 Season Calendar



Grand Mozart

A heavenly all-Mozart affair.

Mozart Serenade in B-Flat Major, 'Gran Partita'

Mozart Quintet for Piano and Winds in E-Flat Major

Mozart Piano Sonata No. 11 in A Major

Virtuoso Series

7:30PM

Tuesday 9 April 2019

City Recital Hall



Brahms in Love

Musical dedications and delightful devotions.

Brahms Clarinet Trio in A Minor, Op. 114

Palmer Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

Anderson Miniatures

Brady Clarinet Trio [World Premiere]

Master Series

2:30PM

Saturday 15 June 2019

Utzon Room, Sydney
Opera House



American Masters

Star-spangled masterworks.

Glass Sonata for Violin and Piano

Adams Shaker Loops

Muhly By All Means

Muhly No Uncertain Terms

Muhly World Premiere*

Virtuoso Series

7:30PM

Tuesday 2 July 2019

City Recital Hall

*Supported by Mark Wakely in
loving memory of Steven Alward



Mahler One

Symphonic forces take new form.

Mahler Symphony No. 1 "The Titan" (arr. Iain Farrington)

Chopin Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor (arr. for Piano
and String Quintet)

Kerry Clarinet Quintet [World Premiere]*

Virtuoso Series

7:30PM

Tuesday 10 September
2019

City Recital Hall

*Supported by Kim Williams AM



Romantic Chopin

Passion, drama, and romantic landscapes.

Chopin 24 Preludes, Op. 28

Chopin Ballades No. 1-4

Master Series

2:30PM

Saturday 5 October 2019

Utzon Room, Sydney
Opera House

From the Artistic Director



Welcome to the first concert of Omega Ensemble's 2019 Concert Season.

I am thrilled to share the three works in this exciting program. Each of these masterworks is unique, and in its own way, created a new musical dialogue; borrowing from the old, exploring the new, embracing the unexpected, and sometimes (in Beethoven's case), simply borrowing from itself!

Today we might wonder what the fuss was about, however, each work was once at the height of contemporary musical thought. Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1 filled a vacancy of great trios left by Beethoven; Schoenberg's early work *Verklärte Nacht* exposes a composer grappling with his Wagnerian schooling and radical harmonic ideas; and for Beethoven, well, there simply was no better source material than his own music, choosing to arrange his already incredibly popular Septet in E-flat into one of the most thrilling trios for clarinet, cello and piano.

I hope you will continue to join us throughout our 2019 Season to share in more musical discoveries and powerful performances.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Rowden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Rowden".

David Rowden

Artistic Director and Founder



Paul Stender Cello

Photo: Keith Saunders

From the Minister for the Arts



Music is a language we can all understand. It brings us together. It unites us across barriers of language, geography and time. It's able to help us free our imaginations, elevate our moods and evoke a world of memories like no other art form can. The sweep of a symphony orchestra, the special intimacy of chamber music, and the connection of the musicians to each other reaches out to us, the audience.

The NSW Government's vision is for NSW to be known for bold and exciting arts and culture that engages the community, and reflects our rich diversity.

Omega Ensemble contributes to the vitality of the State, and this 2019 concert season is proof of the power of music in enriching our lives.

Don Harwin MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Resources

Minister for Energy and Utilities

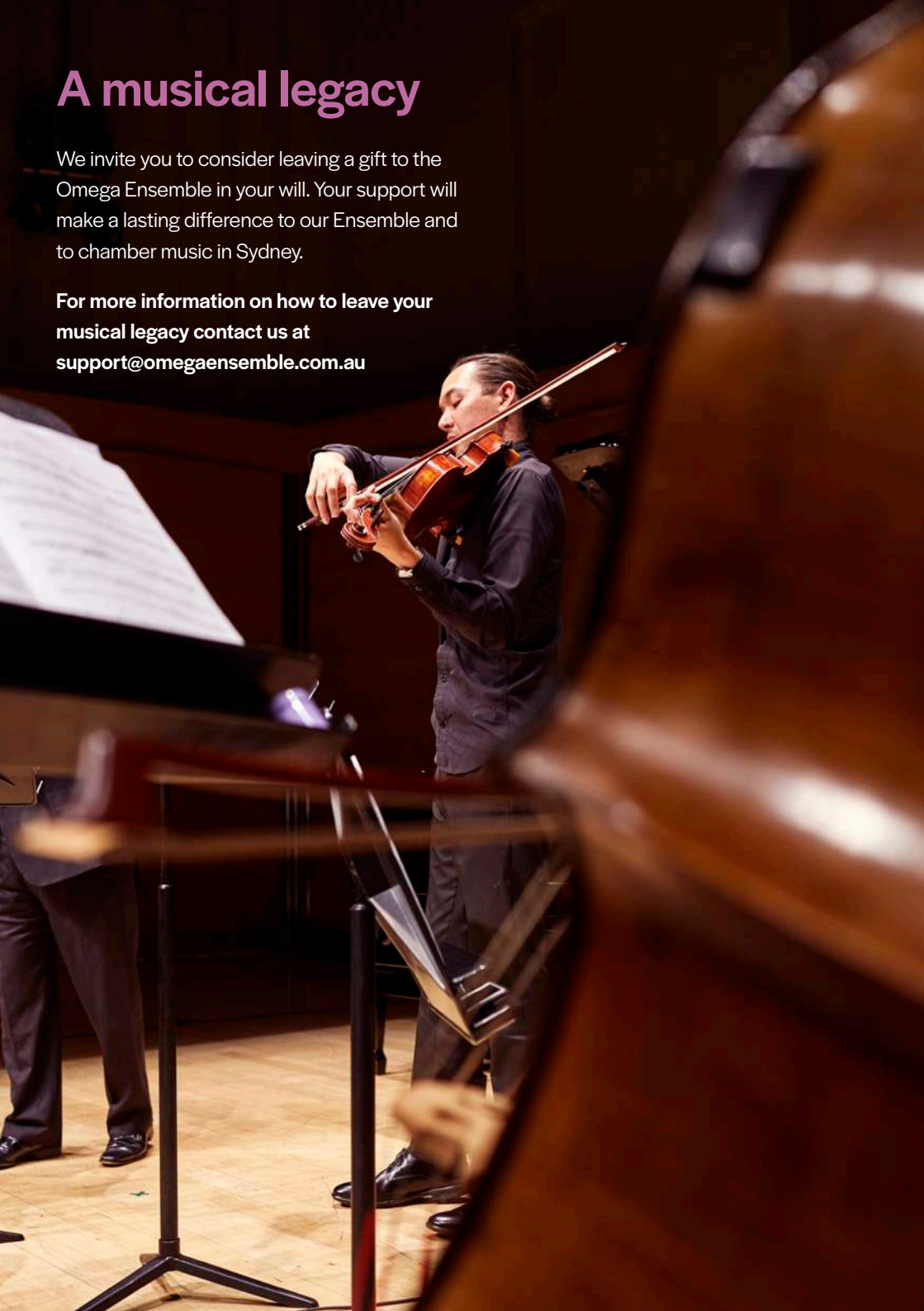
Minister for the Arts

Vice President of the Executive Council

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Music Notes



Arnold Schoenberg

Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)

Verklärte Nacht, Op.4

ORIGINALLY COMPOSED IN 1899.

PIANO TRIO ARRANGEMENT BY EDUARD STEUERMANN, 1932

When it was first performed in Vienna in 1902, Schoenberg's string sextet, *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night) shocked its audience and earned it the famous critical put-down that the music sounded as if someone had 'smeared the score of Tristan while the ink was still wet'.

Today we might wonder what the fuss was about. After all, it is as Andrew Ford notes, 'Brahmsian in scoring and Richard-Straussian in form', but the critic, perhaps unwittingly, was onto something. In *Tristan und Isolde*, Wagner had developed a musical language that embodied his theme of profound unfulfilled erotic longing, doing so by saturating his harmony with chromatic notes (those foreign to the prevailing key) and avoiding the resolution to consonance that such music demands. Schoenberg employs this method to some extent in *Verklärte Nacht* as a means giving musical expression to the poem of the same title by German Symbolist, Richard Dehmel (1863–1920).

Dehmel describes two people walking in a moonlit grove. The woman speaks, guilt stricken as she has discovered that she is pregnant by a stranger she met while desperate for love, before the man she is now with. The man points to the landscape, transfigured and gleaming under the moonlight.

He insists that the couple's love has transfigured the world,
that he regards the unborn child as his own, as the lovers
embrace and continue their walk among the oak trees.

Two people are walking through a bare, cold wood;
the moon keeps pace with them and draws their gaze.
The moon moves along above tall oak trees,
there is no wisp of cloud to obscure the radiance
to which the black, jagged tips reach up.
A woman's voice speaks:

**"My work should be
judged as it enters
the ears and heads
of listeners, not as it
is described to the
eyes of readers."**

Arnold Schoenberg

"I am carrying a child, and not by you.
I am walking here with you in a state of sin.
I have offended grievously against myself.
I despaired of happiness,
and yet I still felt a grievous longing
for life's fullness, for a mother's joys

and duties; and so I sinned,
and so I yielded, shuddering, my sex
to the embrace of a stranger,
and even thought myself blessed.
Now life has taken its revenge,
and I have met you, met you."

She walks on, stumbling.
She looks up; the moon keeps pace.
Her dark gaze drowns in light.
A man's voice speaks:

"Do not let the child you have conceived
be a burden on your soul.
Look, how brightly the universe shines!
Splendour falls on everything around,
you are voyaging with me on a cold sea,
but there is the glow of an inner warmth
from you in me, from me in you.

That warmth will transfigure the stranger's child,
and you bear it me, begot by me.
You have transfused me with splendour,

you have made a child of me.”
He puts an arm about her strong hips.
Their breath embraces in the air.
Two people walk on through the high, bright night.

(English translation by Mary Whittall)

Schoenberg's musical work falls into five sections, where sections one, three and five depict the couple's slow (Langsam) movement through the forest, and sections two and four their respective speeches. The 'broader' second section begins with an unexpectedly radiant E major chord, before the woman's self-denunciations introduce more chromaticism. The man's absolution and affirmation of his love looks, perhaps, more to the Wagner of *Parsifal* than *Tristan*, and the final section (marked 'very peaceful') is in a radiant, unmoving D major.

Eduard Steuermann (1892–1964) made his arrangement of the piece in 1932. A student of Schoenberg, Steuermann was also a brilliant pianist who premiered many of Schoenberg's works including *Pierrot lunaire* and the Piano Concerto. He thus 'translates' Schoenberg's original into perfectly idiomatic – and Schoenbergian – piano writing, often substituting rippling arpeggiation for the sextet's lush string sound, while etching out the two voices of the protagonists in the ecstatic solo string lines.

—



Felix Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Piano Trio No.1 in D minor, Op.49

COMPOSED IN 1839

- I. Molto allegro agitato
- II. Andante con moto tranquillo
- III. Scherzo: Leggiero e vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro assai appassionato

Mendelssohn had a firm schooling in the forms of the classical period, as well as the enormous advantage of an

“... the master trio of today...”

Schumann commenting on
Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1

in-house string orchestra to play through his earliest works. A brilliant pianist, his earliest mature chamber music (indeed, his earliest published works, dating from the early 1820s) are three Piano Quartets and a Violin Sonata. Among the works predating these is a Trio where viola replaces cello, but it was not until 1839, when Mendelssohn was ensconced in Leipzig that he wrote his first Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor.

Like Beethoven – from his Op.1 on – Mendelssohn casts his trio in four, rather than three movements. He showed the first draft to his colleague Ferdinand Hiller. He and Hiller had been friends since boyhood, and Hiller – a student of Hummel – had gravitated towards the music of composers seen to be avant-garde in their day, such as Berlioz, Chopin and especially Liszt. Mendelssohn and Liszt were friendly too, Liszt having appeared at the Gewandhaus, but it was Hiller who suggested that Mendelssohn consider enriching the piano part of his Trio, more in line with the emerging style of Romantic pianism.

The result was what Robert Schumann called ‘the master trio of today... a lovely composition which years from hence will still delight grand- and great-grand children’. In fact, apart from Beethoven and Schubert, there were comparatively few trios of any great note in the earlier nineteenth century, which gives the sense Mendelssohn’s work also solved certain problems. Among these may well be the changes to instruments brought by technology: the piano, for one thing, was now a much louder and more resonant instrument than it had been for even the late eighteenth century.

In the event, Mendelssohn solves the problems of balance perfectly in the opening movement despite its turbulent minor mood. The slow movement is inevitably compared with Mendelssohn’s *Songs Without Words*, and it is supremely lyrical with all three instruments given their chance to sing. Almost as inevitably, the Scherzo’s dazzling lightness is compared to that of Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* score, which rather underplays its more dramatic

gestures. Interestingly, Mendelssohn dispenses with the conventional trio section at the heart of this movement, preferring an episode of intricate counterpoint. The ‘fast and passionate’ rondo finale indulges in much Romantic hair-tossing until the final episode (a lovely cello melody) which leads to a sparkling, major-key conclusion.



Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Trio in B flat major, Op.11

‘Gassenhauer’

COMPOSED IN 1797

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio
- III. Tema con variazioni

Beethoven’s student Czerny unhelpfully tells us that the composer wrote his Op.11 trio in 1797 ‘for a clarinetist’. This was most likely his direct contemporary Joseph Bähr (1770–1819), whose career began as a chorister and violinist at a southern German court where the local prince encouraged him to take up the clarinet. Rapidly becoming a virtuoso, he left the court and toured widely until settling in Vienna. Much sought after, he took part in the premieres of several works of Beethoven, including the Septet, Op.20 and the Wind Sextet, Op.71.

Beethoven’s Piano Trio in B flat major, dedicated to the generous patron of composers, Countess Thun, is often regarded as something of a trifle among his chamber works. Unlike his conventional Piano Trios, this is in three rather than four movements, and the emphasis is, naturally enough, often on the songlike possibilities of the clarinet in particular — Beethoven, nevertheless, maximised his work by also issuing a version for violin, cello and piano. This didn’t stop the critic of the *Allgemeiner Musikalische Zeitung* complaining that

Beethoven had composed ‘unnaturally’, and that had he not, his work would have outshone the ‘hurdy-gurdy tunes’ purveyed by his lesser contemporaries. This might, just, refer to the themes of the first movement, which encourage the music’s frequent modulation to other keys, but hardly to the soulful song of the slow movement, which unfolds in three spacious chapters.

“Before we work we must eat!”

the popular tune from Joseph Weigl’s comic opera *L’Amor Marinaro* (“The Corsair in Love”) on which Beethoven based the Trio’s finale.

The finale is responsible for the nickname *Gassenhauer* which is sometimes used for the piece: a ‘Gassenhauer’ is a tune so popular it can be heard whistled and sung in the Gassen, or alleyways of the city. This hit tune was *Pria ch’io l’impregno* (Before we work we must eat) a trio for three basses, from Joseph Weigl’s opera *L’amor marinaro* (Love at sea) a comedy involving a pirate, a disguised opera singer, a deaf Kapellmeister and various others. Beethoven uses the tune for nine variations in which he explores unusual textures (the clarinet and cello alone, for instance) and some serious counterpoint. The pianist, as Beethoven’s friend Ries pointed out, ‘cannot show himself to any great advantage’; visiting pianist/composer Daniel Steibelt was so unimpressed hearing it that some days later he tried to upstage Beethoven with a bravura ‘improvisation’ on the tune. Beethoven retaliated by turning the cello part of one of Steibelt’s pieces upside down and stabbing out a lumpen improvisation with two fingers. Relations never recovered.

Program notes by Gordon Kerry (2019)



Clemens Leske Piano

Photo: Keith Saunders

Musicians



David Rowden Clarinet

Orchestras Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, The Queensland Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. **Ensembles** Omega Ensemble, Australia Ensemble, Sydney Soloists. **Premieres** George Palmer: Clarinet Concerto, Ian Munro: Clarinet Quintet.

Selected Recordings Omega Ensemble: Mozart—Munro—Palmer (ABC Classics), Play School 50th Anniversary Special (ABC3). **Awards/Study** BMus (London), LRAM, Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (ARAM)



Anna Da Silva Chen Violin

Orchestras Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Canberra Symphony Orchestra **Ensembles** Australia Piano Quartet, Selby & Friends, Ensemble Q. **Awards/Study** BMus Performance (Sydney Conservatorium of Music, USYD), Kendall National Violin Competition winner, National Fine Music 102.5 Young Virtuoso Award winner, Australian National Youth Concerto Competition winner, Gisborne International Music Competition prize-winner, ABC Young Performers Awards string and grand finalist. Music Competition prize-winner, ABC Young Performers Awards string and grand finalist.



Paul Stender Cello

Ensembles Australia Ensemble, Song Company, Burgundian Consort (guest soloist), Sculthorpe String Quartet. **Orchestras** Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, ACO Collective (guest principal). **Selected Recordings** Omega Ensemble: Munro-Mozart-Palmer (ABC classics). **Awards/Study** Canberra School of Music, Universität für Musik Wien



Clemens Leske Piano

Orchestras London Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Virtuosi, Guangzhou (Pearl River) Philharmonic, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Australian Youth Orchestra, Australian Doctors' Orchestra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Queensland, West Australian and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras.

Ensembles Ensemble Offspring, Halcyon, Sydney Soloists, Moorambilla Voices, TrioKroma.

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Awards/Study Juilliard School, NYC, BMus. Hons., Hattori Foundation (London), Australia Council, Marten Bequest, Queen Elizabeth II Trust, Churchill Fellowship, David Paul Landa Scholarship, ABC Young Performer of the Year.

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Veronique Serret
Violin



Neil Thompson
Viola



Paul Stender
Cello



Alex Henery
Double Bass



Maria Raspopova
Piano

Omega Ensemble champions Australia's most outstanding talents in a powerful chamber music setting.

Founded in 2005 by clarinetist David Rowden, the Ensemble has fast become a musical force in Australia, hailed as 'first-rate musicians' (the Daily Telegraph) and 'the best chamber music outfit in town' (Sydney Morning Herald).

The Ensemble's artistic programs are diverse and provocative, presenting music from the late-Baroque to 20th Century, as well as frequent world premieres. Omega have commissioned over 40 works to date, from leading Australian and International composers.

Omega Ensemble perform regularly in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as touring to regional areas and appearances at national music festivals. Omega has also toured to China, with sellout performances and masterclasses at the Beijing Central Conservatory, Chang Chun's JiLin College of Arts and Dalian University.

In addition to performances, Omega maintains a growing OnDemand catalogue of live concert videos, available online as well as broadcast on Qantas In-flight Entertainment. The Ensemble's performances regularly air on ABC Classic and the Ensemble's debut studio album was released on ABC Classics in 2016. In 2018 the Ensemble launched the Omega Classics label for independent release of new studio recordings, and an expansive back catalogue of live recordings.



David Rowden Clarinet

Photo: David Vagg

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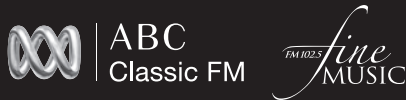
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