

Sunday 11th June 2023
Church of All Nations
Carlton



Orchestra 21

Last Leaf



ORCHESTRA 21

Sarah Curro – Director, Violin

SIBELIUS	Andante Festivo
PARRY	Suite in F (Lady Radnor's Suite)
DEWEY	Little Suite for Strings
TURLEY	Interlude
KOCH	The Court of Bereview
DANISH STRING QUARTET	Last Leaf (selections), arranged by Michelle Wood

Duration (approximate): 5', 14', 20', 3', 7', 11'





Sarah Curro

Australian violinist Sarah Curro graduated in 1994 from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music where she was winner of the Conservatorium Medal for Excellence. After winning the Dorcas McLean Traveling Scholarship for Violinists in 1997, she studied, and then taught, at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and from 1999-2002 was a member of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. In Australia, she has performed with the Australian Chamber

Orchestra, Queensland Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestras, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria and is currently a full-time member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. In 2014 Sarah was granted a year of leave to explore the history of the violin through a Masters of Music Performance at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, graduating in December 2015. Her 'History of the Violin' recital presented 8 historically important violins and 5 bows from Baroque to electric with the appropriately matching music selections highlighting the development of the violin over a 400-year period.

Sarah's interest in education is inspired by her father John Curro, Founder and former music director of The Queensland Youth Orchestras. Her experience as a tutor and conductor (and sometimes soloist) includes work with the students and musicians from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Australian Youth Orchestra (including National Music Camp, Chamber Camp and Young Symphonists), Queensland Youth Orchestra, Melbourne Youth Orchestra (including MYM Summer School), Southern Cross Soloists Winter Music School, the Australasian Orchestra, Geelong Symphony Orchestra, Victorian Youth Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra 21 and more recently an MSO music camp with the students from ISY Music School in Yogyakarta Indonesia.

Photo by James Penlidis

Besides all the conservative things one can do as a violinist, Sarah's non-traditional ventures focus on the constant discovery, purchase, and promotion of new, mostly local compositions of every art form but most of all music. Through the fascinating and unique instruments of Melbourne's SPUR Violins, her solo series VOLUME (40 commissions), showcases these works in thoroughly modern venues to an ever-widening audience. Her COVID project - a publication of these pieces, The VOLUME Collection - will enable many more adventurous violinists to explore the wonderful sound worlds of contemporary music. Sarah hopes to continue this emotional and financial commitment to her arts community.

www.volumeconcert.com.au

Orchestra 21

Violin 1

Sarah Curro – *Director*
Bronwyn Henderson
Therese McCoppin
Bronwyn Francis
Mary Muirhead
Michael Semeniuk
Owen Bradfield

Violin 2

Michaela Mee*
Raymond Chan
Lisette Bush
Diana Greenslade
Caroline Matthews

Viola

Setsuko Minamikawa*
Lalita Wright
David Choate
Kate Walker

Cello

Julia Cianci*
Phillippa Clements
Dennis Vaughan
Jamie Wallis

Contrabass

Melody Chia*
Darren Steel

* *Denotes principal player*

Jean Sibelius (1865 – 1957), *Andante Festivo* (1922)

Jean Sibelius was a Finnish composer who is widely considered to be one of the greatest symphonists of the 20th century. Sibelius studied at the Helsinki Music Institute and later at the Berlin Conservatory, where he was exposed to the music of Wagner and other German composers. However, he also drew inspiration from his Finnish roots, incorporating elements of Finnish folk music and mythology into his works. Sibelius' music is known for its sweeping melodies, lush harmonies, and evocative orchestration. Throughout his career, Sibelius experienced health issues, and he stopped composing altogether after 1926. However, his music continues to be celebrated for its emotional power and innovative use of orchestral colour.

In 1922, Sibelius was commissioned to create a festive cantata for the 25th anniversary of the Säynätsalo sawmills. While the original version for string quartet showcased Sibelius' exquisite writing, he wanted more richness and majesty to be present in the work. It was not until his niece requested *Andante Festivo* to be played at her wedding that Sibelius made the decision to use two string quartets to re-orchestrate the piece, adding extra layers to the music. By the mid-1930s, Sibelius had re-orchestrated the work again, this time for a full string orchestra and timpani. In 1939, Sibelius conducted the full string orchestra and timpani version of *Andante Festivo*, which is the only recording of Sibelius as a conductor. The piece remained close to Sibelius' heart and was played in its original form at his funeral in 1957.

The piece begins delicately with the upper strings playing the first theme, and the cello entering in its upper register, creating a glorious atmosphere. The interplay between the instruments is intimate, with the cello answering the melody while the upper strings are in unison. The slow melodic movement culminates in a long-held chord played by all instruments, emphasizing the idea of each instrument moving towards unification. Sibelius employs dynamic contrasts throughout the work, with shifts becoming more intense each time, leading to a controlled forte and a final repetition of the melody at a soft piano. The melody remains largely unchanged, with the use of suspensions creating a rich texture. The top

violin provides the final resolution, and the lower instruments conclude the work with a poignant 'amen' chord.

Hubert Parry (1848 – 1918), *Suite in F* (1894)

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|----------------|----------------|
| I. Prelude | IV. Bourrée |
| II. Allemande | V. Slow Minuet |
| III. Sarabande | VI. Gigue |

Sir Hubert Parry was an English composer, musicologist, and teacher. He was one of the most influential figures in English music of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Parry's early musical education was influenced by the German composer Johann Sebastian Bach, and he later became interested in the music of other composers, including Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms. In addition to composing music, Parry was also a professor of music at Oxford University and was appointed director of the Royal College of Music in London. He was knighted in 1898 and was appointed to the Order of Merit in 1911. He was a prolific composer, writing in a wide range of genres, including orchestral, choral, and chamber music. His best-known work is perhaps the stirring hymn *Jerusalem*. Parry's music has had a lasting impact on the English musical tradition, and his contributions to music education in England are still felt today.

The *Suite in F*, also known as *Lady Radnor's Suite*, was commissioned by Lady Radnor, a prominent patron of the arts. The first performance was conducted by Lady Radnor herself at the Royal College of Music in London in 1894. The performance was a significant event in the history of English music, as it was unusual for a woman to conduct an orchestra at that time. Lady Radnor's decision to conduct the premiere herself was a powerful statement of her commitment to promoting women's participation in music. The suite was well-received, with many critics praising its beauty and elegance, and it helped to establish Lady Radnor's reputation as a patron of the arts and supporter of women in music.

The suite in six movements is characterized by its lyrical melodies, lush harmonies, and elegant orchestration. The first movement *Prelude*, is a gentle and introspective piece that sets the tone for the rest of the suite.

The *Allemande* is a lively and graceful dance that showcases Parry's skill at writing for string instruments. The third movement, *Courante*, is a fast-paced dance with a lively and energetic feel. The *Sarabande*, is a slow and stately piece that features rich harmonies and expressive melodies. The fifth movement, *Slow Minuet*, is a playful and light-hearted dance that contrasts with the more serious tone of the previous movement. Finally, the suite ends with *Gigue*, a lively and exuberant dance that brings the suite to a rousing conclusion.

Matthew Dewey (1984 –), *Little Suite for Strings* (2011)

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| I. <i>Grandly – Darkly - Grandly</i> | IV. <i>With Great Warmth</i> |
| II. <i>Delicately, with Energy</i> | V. <i>Tenderly</i> |
| III. <i>With a Gentle Sadness</i> | VI. <i>With Great Energy</i> |

Matthew Dewey is a composer and music director based in Sydney, Australia. He began composing at a young age, with his first chamber opera being written and staged when he was just 18. At the age of 24, his first symphony and orchestral suite were recorded in Moscow by the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra. Matthew studied composition at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music, where he received the Don Kay Scholarship for Music Composition. In addition to his work as a freelance composer, Matthew was the Music Director of ABC Classic FM from 2015 to 2021 and is currently Executive Producer (Music Projects and Partnerships) for ABC Classic and ABC Jazz. During his tenure at ABC Classic FM, he oversaw a number of significant changes to the network's programming and content, including the introduction of more diverse and contemporary classical music, as well as a greater emphasis on Australian music and artists.

The *Little Suite for Strings* was commissioned by Grant Bewick for the Derwent Symphony Orchestra in 2011 and revised in 2012. The suite has six movements, with each movement built around a different melody, each of which is carefully crafted to convey a particular emotion or mood.

Alex Turley (1995 –), *Interlude* (2023)

Alex Turley is a composer, arranger, and collaborative artist based in Melbourne. His work is characterized by a broad range of musical influences and a willingness to experiment with different styles and traditions. He has worked with a number of prestigious organisations and musicians, including the Sydney and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, Genesis Owusu, Rūfūs Du Sol, and the singer-songwriter Ngaiire. Alex has composed a diverse range of works for orchestras, chamber groups, and solo performers, with recent commissions including pieces for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Opera House. He has also worked on cross-cultural collaborations, including an orchestral piece developed in collaboration with South Asian artist collective Sangam. Alex has won numerous awards and scholarships and completed a Master of Music (Composition) at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

On *Interlude* Alex writes:

The *Interlude* is a sort of half-arrangement of Ngaiire's song, *Ordinary* with a bit of my composition in the mix. It's one of my favourite songs of hers and, when I was asked to arrange the music for her orchestral tour, it was the first song that I suggested. Something in the harmony is really mesmerising and I love the way the vocal line meanders on top.... I re-worked the song into an *Interlude* which features both a violin and cello soloist.

This version of *Interlude* arranged for strings has been commissioned by Sarah Curro for Orchestra 21.

Anton Koch (1972 –), *The Court of Berevew* (2021)

- I. The Messenger
- II. The Advisors
- III. The Conflict
- IV. The Court

Anton Koch is a composer, arranger and orchestrator with extensive experience in live events, film, TV and recording projects. Anton graduated

in music from the University of Queensland and performed with the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra while establishing his career as a composer. In 2003, Anton won the inaugural Brian May Scholarship, enabling him to study scoring for film and television at the University of Southern California. He currently resides in Sydney where he continues to work on national and international live events, film, musicals and other theatrical presentations.

Anton writes:

The Court of Berevew is a fantasy for strings in four short movements commissioned by Scotch College Melbourne for their senior string ensemble, the Academy String Orchestra. The work is cinematic in style, evocative of a bygone world and a tale of warfare, politics, brinkmanship and triumph.

The work begins with urgency as a repeated central motif, introduced by the violas, follows *The Messenger* riding under the cover of darkness. Decisions are pondered upon by *The Advisors*, represented by low strings, including a short refrain symbolising the institution, before *The Conflict* ensues. A second rhythmic pattern and frenetic tremolos highlight the movement. An anthem and repeat of the short refrain signify *The Court* before returning to a frantic conclusion and the beginning of a new chapter.

Danish String Quartet, *Last Leaf* (2017), selections

Arranged for string quintet / string orchestra by Michelle Wood

Tjønnblomen (Water Lily)
Unst Boat Song
Polska from Dorotea

Last Leaf is an album by the Danish String Quartet (Frederik Øland, Tonsgaard Sørensen, Asbjørn Nørgaard and Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin) released in 2017. It features a collection of Nordic folk tunes arranged for string quartet and original compositions. The album was well-received critically and was nominated for a Grammy award in the category of Best

Chamber Music / Small Ensemble Performance. The album title is a reference to the Codex Runicus, a 14th century codex written in runes and containing early Nordic laws. The last leaf of parchment in the codex features the song *Drømte mig en drøm* – the oldest known secular song in Nordic countries. This has been arranged by the quartet and appears as the last track on the album.

Today, Orchestra 21 plays a selection of three pieces from this album, arranged by Michelle Wood for string quintet / string orchestra.

Tjønnblomen (water lily) is a traditional Norwegian tune with a serene and elegant melody evoking the tranquillity of a peaceful pond. Associated with the Valdres region in southern Norway, known for its vibrant folk traditions, *Tjønnblomen* captures the essence of Norwegian folk music.

The magnificent *Unst Boat Song* is a traditional Shetland folk tune originating from Unst, the northernmost inhabited island of the Shetland archipelago in Scotland. It was originally sung in the old Norse language. Its melancholic and haunting melody reflects the rugged beauty of the region.

Polska from Dorotea is a lively and spirited polska originating from the village of Dorotea in Sweden. The arrangement captures the infectious energy of the dance form, characterized by its distinctive syncopated rhythm and driving tempo. In English, "polska" can be translated as "polka," but it is important to note that the Swedish polska is distinct from the more widely known polka dance. The Swedish polska has characteristic three-beat rhythm as opposed to the two- or four-beat rhythm of a polka. The term "polska" is derived from the Swedish word "pols" or "polska," which means "Polish."

Sarah Curro, Michelle Wood and Orchestra 21 would like to thank the Danish String Quartet for allowing this arrangement. The original sheet music is available for purchase (www.danishquartetshop.com).

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Orchestra 21 would like to thank 3MBS, Michael Semeniuk and our concert day volunteers.

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Owen Halliday

Helen Mee and Roger Mee

John Smyth



Orchestra 21 in 2016 – Photos by Nico Jonker