

# Simplicity

4pm Saturday  
1 November 2025



## Artists

**Orchestra 21**  
**Vivian Horn** Conductor

## Program

<b>BENJAMIN BRITTEN</b>	Simple Symphony
<b>SAMUEL BARBER</b>	Adagio for Strings
<b>BÉLA BARTÓK</b>	Romanian Folk Dances
<b>ARVO PÄRT</b>	Fratres
<b>FLORENCE B. PRICE</b>	Andante Moderato
<b>GABRIEL FAURÉ</b>	Nocturne from <i>Shylock</i> Suite
<b>Duration</b> ( <i>approximate</i> )	18', 10', 7', 10', 7', 3'

## Vivian Horn Conductor



Vivian Horn is an accomplished orchestral conductor with a Master's degree in Music (Orchestral Conducting) from the University of Adelaide, where she studied under Dr Luke Dollman. During her postgraduate studies, she regularly conducted the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (ASO), gaining extensive experience with professional conductors and the orchestra.

In 2023, Vivian was honoured with the Rosemary and John Hopkins Conducting Award, recognising her ability to bring out the best in each musician. Her conducting experience spans across major orchestras including the Auckland Philharmonia, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, and the Elder Conservatorium Symphony.

Since 2022, Vivian has served as conductor of Melbourne Strings, an ensemble of all-female performers. She has also held artistic director roles with the Dandenong Ranges Orchestra and the Melbourne Arts Orchestra conducting an international piano competition. Her commitment to community music is evident through her work with the Frankston Symphony Orchestra, Bayside Chamber Orchestra, and Crashendo! with the East Gippsland Orchestra.

# Program Notes

## **BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913–1976)**

Simple Symphony

Benjamin Britten was born in East Anglia, England, in 1913 and became one of the most influential composers of the 20th century. His genius was evident early in childhood as he composed songs before he could read or write. He began formal training at the Royal College of Music at 13, after several years of instruction from composer Frank Bridge, who was impressed by him. From ages nine to twelve Britten wrote eight themes, which he later used in his *Simple Symphony* at age 20. The first performance took place in 1934 in Norwich, with Britten conducting an amateur orchestra. Although modest, the work quickly gained popularity and critical acclaim, launching Britten's career. Scored for string orchestra, it consists of four movements, each with two themes and an imaginative alliterative title. It was dedicated to Britten's childhood viola teacher, Audrey Alston.

*Boisterous Bourrée* boldly opens the symphony, its lyrical theme derived from his *Piano Suite No. 1* (1926). The melody alternates contrapuntally between the sections.

*Playful Pizzicato* draws from a 1923 piano scherzo and is marked *presto possibile* (as fast as possible), challenging players to pluck their strings at top speed! Britten offers a brief respite in an inventive interlude where the lower strings strum full chords beneath a treble melody, before the *scherzo* returns frantically to an exciting finish.

*Sentimental Sarabande* shows astonishing emotional depth for an adolescent. Its opening material, from *Suite No. 3* for piano (1925), is first played by violins then shared by the ensemble. The middle section, from a waltz composed when Britten was nine, unfolds a plaintive melody from *pianissimo* dynamics in violas and cellos. The first melody returns agitatedly before being weighed down by heavy *pesante* playing in celli and contrabass. Balance returns and the *Sarabande* concludes peacefully.

*Frolicsome Finale* begins explosively before the violins introduce a mysterious melody over a bubbling accompaniment. Syncopated rhythms take over in the second violins and themes from earlier movements reappear in altered forms. A general pause precedes the manic *Presto*, which brings the symphony to a rousing close.

## **SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)**

Adagio for Strings

Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* remains his defining legacy in American music. A prodigy from childhood, Barber declared his ambition to be a composer at nine. Though he excelled at piano and voice at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute, composition became his true focus. His early works gained attention through his aunt, contralto Louise Homer of the Metropolitan Opera, who performed his songs at Carnegie Hall in 1929.

While holidaying in Italy with his partner, composer Gian Carlo Menotti, Barber wrote the Adagio as the second movement of his *String Quartet, Op. 11*, inspired by Virgil's *Georgics* and the image of a small stream growing into a river. He later arranged it for string orchestra and sent it to Arturo Toscanini, who astonished Barber by memorising the entire score before its premiere in 1938 with the NBC Orchestra. The broadcast performance struck a deep chord in Depression-era America and soon became symbolic of national mourning and reflection.

The emotional arc that is the *Adagio for Strings* theme can be represented by one simple three step-wise note motif that is imitated at chromatic intervals both up and down by the violins, violas, and celli. The rising pitch of the motif increases the tension, which is unresolved over several repetitions. This is further intensified by a deliberate and gradual crescendo through to the chordal pinnacle, and then the motif is recapitulated in a soft dynamic at the end of the piece. Whilst the tempo does not change too much, the timbre of the leading 'voice' and the supporting chords are varied between instruments to emotionally draw the listener in.

## Program Notes

### BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

Romanian Folk Dances (1915) (arr. String Orchestra)

- I. Bot tánc (Stick Dance)
- II. Brául (Sash Dance)
- III. Topogó (In One Spot)
- IV. Bucsumí tánc (Dance from Bucsum)
- V. Román polka (Romanian Polka)
- VI. Aprózó (Fast Dance)

Béla Bartók was born in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary, and displayed prodigious musical talent from an early age. Taught piano by his mother, he later studied piano and composition at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest from 1899. Influenced by Richard Strauss and Claude Debussy, Bartók also formed a close friendship with Zoltán Kodály, with whom he shared a passion for collecting and studying folk music.

Together, Bartók and Kodály travelled throughout Hungary and neighbouring regions, documenting and recording peasant melodies that would become central to their compositional voices. Bartók also visited Algeria in 1913 to research Arab folk music, an influence that later coloured several of his works.

Opposed to fascism, Bartók grew increasingly disillusioned with Hungary's politics and emigrated to the USA in 1940, where he continued composing until his death in 1945. Though he never achieved the same recognition there, his legacy as a pioneer of ethnomusicology—the study of music in its social and cultural context—endures.

His *Romanian Folk Dances* (1915) are based on traditional Transylvanian tunes and explore various musical modes, including Dorian, Aeolian, Mixolydian, and Lydian. Bartók's distinctive blend of folk rhythm, classical form, and modern harmonic language gives these brief movements their unmistakable vitality and authenticity.

### ARVO PÄRT (1935–)

Fratres (arr. String Orchestra and percussion)

Arvo Pärt, Estonia's best-known composer, developed an early style shaped by life under Soviet rule and influenced by composers such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Although Pärt supported himself writing film music, it was not his preferred medium, and when religious themes appeared in his work, they were quickly censored by the Soviet authorities. Pärt underwent an eight-year compositional silence during which he studied Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony, re-emerging in 1976 with a deeply meditative and tonal sound he called tintinnabula (Latin for "little bells"). This is aptly showcased in the 1977 work *Fratres* (Latin for "brothers"), a three-part, variation-based piece without fixed instrumentation. It has since been reworked into many different ensembles, including this string orchestra and percussion version premiered in 1991.

*Fratres* combines stillness and motion, built around a recurring six-bar theme punctuated into different sequences by percussion motifs (the "refuge") with alternating time signatures. The piece's structure reflects mathematical clarity driven by three main voices over a constant drone accompaniment (A-E). The low and high voices are each restricted to playing notes from the D harmonic minor scale (D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C#); the middle voice is restricted to the notes of the A minor triad (A, C, E). The movement of the upper and lower voices in similar motion generates chords of changing major and minor tonalities. Each sequence builds in harmony and volume until the piece's apex, before fading away by reversing these techniques until the whispering conclusion. Pärt's philosophy emphasizes simplicity, purity, and introspection—believing that a single note, if played beautifully, can hold immense spiritual weight. He is a pioneer of spiritual minimalism music composition and his oeuvre stays popular in modern times: from 2011 to 2018 and again in 2022, Pärt was the most performed living composer in the world.

## Program Notes

### FLORENCE B. PRICE (1887–1953)

Andante Moderato from String Quartet in G major (arr. String Orchestra)

Florence Beatrice Price (née Smith) was born in Little Rock, Arkansas into a mixed-race family, with her father an African-American dentist, and her mother a music teacher. Gifted from a young age, she gave her first piano performance at four years old, and had her first composition published at 11.

After graduating high school she enrolled in the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, with a double major in organ and piano teaching, graduating with honours in 1906. Price later moved to Chicago with her husband and children to escape racial oppression in the south and was the first African American woman to have her music played by a major US orchestra, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performing her First Symphony in 1933. After her death, her music had mostly remained in obscurity until 2009, when a substantial collection of her compositions and papers were found in an abandoned house on the outskirts of St. Anne, Illinois, which she had used as a summer home.

The second movement of Price's *String Quartet in G major* (1929), like some of her other works, shows the influence of Dvořák and other late Romantic composers, but its melodies resonate with the African American spiritual tradition. The main theme of the Andante moderato is in the style of American folk songs, with a series of improvisations on the theme seen throughout the movement, with the first lyrical, then encompassing pizzicato. A variant of the theme as a waltz, beginning in a minor key, leads to a climax and the quartet's bright ending.

### GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

Nocturne from *Shylock* Suite

Gabriel Fauré occupies a central position in French music at the turn of the twentieth century. He was a student of Camille Saint-Saëns and later Director of the Paris Conservatoire. Fauré's compositional style marks the transition between Romanticism and the early modern French impressionism of Debussy and Ravel.

Fauré composed the *Shylock* Suite in 1889 from incidental music written for Edmond Haraucourt's French adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The suite consists of six movements, of which the *Nocturne* is the most frequently performed. It serves as an interlude of calm within the larger dramatic setting.

The *Nocturne* opens with a gentle, rocking accompaniment over which a graceful, flowing melody unfolds. The harmonies shift constantly but subtly, creating a feeling of gentle movement without any strong cadences. Fauré's use of colour and shading gives the music a distinctive atmosphere—neither major nor minor, but something more fluid and ambiguous.

# Musicians

## VIOLIN I

Michaela Mee\*  
*Concertmaster*  
 Bronwyn Henderson  
 Bronwyn Francis  
 Jean McMullin  
 Mary Muirhead  
 Janine Manwaring

## VIOLIN II

Therese McCoppin\*  
 Ciara McCoppin  
 Owen Halliday  
 Lisette Bush  
 Diana Greenslade  
 Caroline Matthews

## VIOLA

Kate Walker\*  
 Setsuko Minamikawa  
 Jane Standish  
 David Choate

## CELLO

Julia Cianci\*  
 Phillipa Clements  
 Cath Brennan  
 Barbara Manovel

## DOUBLE BASS

Mary MacMillan\*  
 Michael Taylor

## PERCUSSION

Charlotte Greenslade\*  
 Diana Greenslade

## Orchestra 21 would like to thank

Michael Semeniuk, Adrian Downes and our concert day volunteers.

## Orchestra 21 thanks its generous Patrons

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Helen & Roger Mee  
 John Smyth

## Orchestra 21 committee

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Caroline Matthews  
 Setsuko Minamikawa  
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\* Section Leader



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