

John Choi: Violin Soloist

John started playing the violin when he was 5 years old and has won numerous awards since then. In 2005 he was awarded Royal School of Music Grade 8 Violin Distinction "High Achiever" and best performance at the Auckland Junior Music Contest. In 2009 he was awarded LTCL Violin Performance with Distinction. John has received scholarships to several violin and string quartet schools, has been a soloist with St Matthews Chamber Orchestra, and has participated in master classes with world-renowned violinists Yair Kless, Feng Ning and Vesa-Matti Leppanen. Currently John is in his third year of studying medicine at the University of Auckland.

ORCHESTRA

Conductor	Brecon Carter
Violins I	Michael Hunter, David Choi, Mary O'Brien, Sonya Bennett, Lucy Burrows, Fiona Murray, Ashley Ayton, Averil Griffin
Violins II	Alison Sorley, Tsui-Wen Chen, David Kayrouz, Roger Booth, Susie Kasza, Ben King, Vincent Phua
Violas	Robyn Strange, Emily Allen, Judith Gust, Celina Reyes, Neil Shepherd, Lawrence Yang
Celli	Maxine Cunliffe, Luke Choi, Hannah Jemmett, Graham Falla, Mary Greig-Clayton
Bass	Andrew Kincaid
Flutes	Pene Brawn-Douglas, Hannah Woo
Oboes	Ina Patisolo, Matthew O'Ryan
Clarinets	Julia Cornfield, Claire Turner
Bassoons	David Nation, Simon Smith
Horns	Jill Ferrabee, Reymond Takashima
Trumpets	Michael Plunkett, Mollie Cornfield
Timpani	Patrick Cornfield

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COMMUNITIES

Next Concert: Sunday 27th October, 2pm, Depot Artspace, Devonport

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Devonport Chamber Orchestra



John Choi - Violin
Brecon Carter - Conductor

Beethoven:
Prometheus Overture
Violin Concerto in D major

Sunday 1st September, 2pm
Harmony Hall, 4 Wynyard St
Admission \$10, Children under 12 free

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Overture to the Creatures of Prometheus Op 43

The early years of the 19th century were a crisis time for Beethoven as he realised his impaired hearing was incurable and sure to worsen. Nevertheless, he came through this period with strengthened determination, entering a new creative phase generally known as his "Middle Period" during which he was always searching for novel ways to become a "musical liberator of mankind from sorrow."

The idea for the ballet, The Creatures of Prometheus, came from the celebrated Neapolitan choreographer Salvatore Viganò who was one of the great dancers of the early 19th century. His fame has been compared to that of Nijinsky a century later and Nureyev and Baryshnikov in modern times. Viganò usually wrote the music for his ballets but because Prometheus was to be presented to the empress Maria Theresia at the Vienna Court Theatre, Viganò turned to Beethoven for music of corresponding importance. The ballet is the story of Prometheus, who creates a man and a woman, then brings them to life with fire stolen from the gods. He allows Apollo to take them to Parnassus, where the muses teach them all the things they must know to be fully human - music, human emotions, tragedy, sorrow, laughter and revelry. When they finally appreciate all the beauties of nature they are ready to begin life as real humans. It has been suggested that Beethoven saw something of himself in the character of Prometheus, once proclaiming that "music should strike fire in the heart of man." On another occasion he echoed the Promethean legend in a comment to Archduke Rudolph: "There is no loftier mission than to approach the Divinity nearer than other men, and to disseminate the divine rays among mankind."

The Overture to Prometheus is compact and dramatic. George Bernard Shaw wrote, "When I was a boy, an overture beginning emphatically with an unprepared discord made me expect something tremendous." The expectation of "something tremendous", generated by the openings of so many of Beethoven's works appears here in the very first bar of this overture. The electric opening chord initiates a lyrical slow introduction leading, without pause into a blistering Allegro, said to represent Prometheus fleeing from heaven after having stolen fire from the gods. There is no development section, and instead, Beethoven simply presents his themes, recapitulates them, and brings the overture to a close in around 5 minutes.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Violin Concerto in D major, Op 61

(Allegro ma non troppo, Larghetto, Rondo)

Beethoven's "middle period" was a time of extreme creativity. Following two huge works - the Eroica symphony and Fidelio opera - the floodgates opened in 1806 and Beethoven turned out a phenomenal number of extraordinary new works: 4th piano concerto, 4th symphony, three 'Razumovsky' string quartets, 32 'Diabelli' variations for piano, and the violin concerto. The concerto was commissioned by Franz Clement, a young violin virtuoso and friend of Beethoven, who wanted it for a concert in December, 1806. Folklore has it that Beethoven was still completing the

work so close to the day of the performance that Clement had no time to practise it and so had to sight-read much of it in concert. And as if sight-reading wasn't enough, Clement apparently also threw in a couple of his own compositions between the first and second movements, playing them with the violin turned upside-down. Such showmanship was typical of performances of the period, and although the audience appears to have enjoyed the event, critical response to the concerto was lukewarm. Beethoven subsequently revised the solo part and published it, along with a version for piano and orchestra. Neither was successful and were rarely performed during Beethoven's lifetime. It was not until 1844, 17 years after Beethoven's death, that the work gained popularity when another young virtuoso, 13-year-old Joseph Joachim, took the piece on a European tour with his friend Felix Mendelssohn conducting.

The violin concerto is one of the happiest works Beethoven ever wrote. It is also one of the longest written by any composer, and provides the soloist with the longest wait before playing. It is a work filled with unexpected strokes of genius starting with its remarkable beginning - another expectation of "something tremendous" - five soft beats on the timpani introducing a tranquil chorale-like melody in the woodwinds. Those five pulses subsequently serve a variety of roles through the first movement - sometimes functioning as accompaniment, sometimes as contrast with the soloist, sometimes as a way of modulating to new keys. As well as the five-note motive and the chorale, the movement is built around a beautiful second theme, presented both in the major and minor. This theme seems to be reserved entirely for the orchestra, and the solo violin doesn't get to play it in full until the very end of the movement, after the cadenza. Then, at last, the soloist makes the most of this delightful melody and takes it from the lowest register of the instrument to the highest. The simple and songlike style of performance is gradually altered by the addition of virtuoso scales and passages, and the volume rises to a powerful fortissimo to close the movement.

The second movement, Larghetto, is the concerto's still-point. It is a radiant set of variations on a sublime theme that is simple, pure, and breathtaking. The orchestral strings are muted and the motion of the harmonies is minimal. Sir Donald Tovey writes that the movement is "one of the cases of sublime inaction achieved by Beethoven and by no one else." At its end, the reverie of the second movement is interrupted by an abrupt outburst from the full orchestra and the soloist's cadenza leads directly into the third movement, a brilliant, exhilarating Rondo filled with delightful dialogues between the soloist and orchestral instruments. It is a dancing, pastoral movement, with a jaunty folk-like melody introduced by the soloist and complemented by hunting calls in the horns. The off-beat bass pattern has been compared with the lumbering of the "country band" episode from the third movement of Beethoven's 'Pastoral' 6th symphony. In each episode of the development the soloist is called upon to deliver displays of increasing virtuosity, ending with a flashing cadenza. The final restatement veers briefly into the minor and then closes the movement as energetically as it began.

(Notes by Roger Booth from sources including Phillip Huscher, Richard E. Rodda, Joan Olsson, Eric Bromberger, Beryl McHenry, Peter Laki and Barbara Heninger)