

Peter Thomas: Conductor

Peter Thomas is a New Zealand-based conductor and music educator. He is the Music Director and conductor of the Auckland Symphony Orchestra and Head of Music at Epsom Girls Grammar School. Peter has conducted many orchestras, including the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Auckland Youth Orchestra, St Matthew's Chamber Orchestra, Devonport Chamber Orchestra and West Michigan University Orchestra, either during master classes or as a guest conductor. Though his repertoire is broad, he feels a particular affinity with Romantic and 20th century works and is passionate about performing new music. Peter graduated with a Bachelor of Music from the University of Auckland some time last century. As a music educator, he inspires his students to strive for excellence, but have fun while doing it - a philosophy which he extends to many other walks of life. His other activities include contract work for NZQA, occasional radio and TV appearances, and directing Remuera Music School.

ORCHESTRA

Conductor	Peter Thomas
Violins I	Joseph Chen, Brecon Carter, Mary O'Brien, Joe Pinto, Edward Liu, Alison Sorley, Susan Davis, Gillian Baynes
Violins II	Heidi Bowmast, Averil Griffin, David Kayrouz, Susie Kasza, Nicola Couch, Ben King, Roger Booth
Violas	Matthew Gough, Yuhka Nagai, Cameron Stanley, Daniel Poloha, Logan Wu, Pat Roderick
Cellos	Claire Postlethwaite, Rachael Clark, Kate Parker, John Early, Hannah Jemmett, Michelle Caldicott
Basses	Sam Brannigan, Madeleine Lie
Flutes	Pene Brawn-Douglas, Edwin Yu
Oboes	Eugénie Middleton, Elizabeth Lewis
Clarinets	Julia Cornfield, James Daniell
Bassoons	David Nation, Jo Cakebread
Horns	Miriam Robinson, Rebekah Gray
Trumpets	Dominic Cornfield, Mollie Cornfield
Timpani	Patrick Cornfield

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- The Vicar and parish of Holy Trinity Church who have made us welcome



Next Concert: 2pm Sunday, 15th July, Holy Trinity Church. For further information or to be on our mailing list, visit our website: <http://dco.net.nz/>

Devonport Chamber Orchestra

Benedict Lim
Violin

Peter Thomas
Conductor



Beethoven:
Coriolan Overture
Violin Concerto in D major

Sunday 27th May, 2pm

Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport
Admission \$10, Children under 12 free

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Coriolan Overture, Op 62

Beethoven composed this work for the play *Coriolan*, written by his friend Heinrich von Collin. Collin's play is based on Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, which also served as the source of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Collin's version of this tale differs from Shakespeare's in that Coriolanus is not killed by the Volscians, but commits suicide. He has been driven from Rome and has joined the Volscians, the traditional enemy of Rome. He leads the Volscian forces against Rome, and is on the point of victory when his wife and his mother, still living in Rome, come to his tent to plead with him to spare the city. They succeed, and he withdraws his troops. He has preserved family honour by not conquering Rome, but believes he has betrayed his promise to the Volscians. Like so many heroes of Greek drama, much admired by Collin, he takes his own life in remorse.

The overture was written in 1807 and the themes bear some resemblance to those in Beethoven's fifth symphony, written in the same year. The opening chords form a motif which recurs throughout the piece and suggest the determination and strength of Coriolanus. The first principle theme reflects the agitation of Coriolanus grappling with conflicting obligations. The next major theme is lyrical and gracefully feminine, perhaps suggesting the exhortations of Coriolanus' wife and mother. These two themes interplay and conflict with each other, the former being gradually softened by the latter, until at the end, Coriolanus has given in. The end comes with the soft dying of the Coriolanus motif, a brief reiteration of the agitated theme, and a final four pizzicato notes, pianissimo.

At the time that Beethoven composed the Coriolan Overture, he was living in Vienna and was eager to secure a position as the house composer of the Theater an der Wien. Beethoven hoped eventually to compose an opera based on a libretto by Collin. In the meantime, he thought that the overture would demonstrate his theatrical style to his prospective employers. Although they were impressed by his music, they didn't offer Beethoven the job. Collin's play was not a success either and sank into obscurity, but at least it served to justify Beethoven writing this wonderfully dramatic overture.

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.

Programme notes by Roger Booth from several sources including Phillip Huscher, Richard Rodda, Joan Olsson, Eric Bromberger, Beryl McHenry, Peter Laki, Barbara Heninger, Richard Freed, Alexander Rothe, Paul Serotsky and James Adams

Benedict Lim: Violin Soloist

Benedict has been studying the violin with university violin lecturer Stephen Larsen since the age of 7. Besides having won prizes at international violin competitions in New York, Czech Republic and Italy, the 16-year-old had also been invited to perform at the Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival in UK, and has toured as part of the Pettman Ensemble in Glasgow, Leeds, Beverley and the Royal Overseas League Clubhouse in London in 2017.

Locally, Benedict has appeared as a soloist with Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Manukau Symphony Orchestra and Nelson Symphony Orchestra, and was featured in numerous solo and chamber performances at the annual International Akaroa Music Festival. He has given full public violin recitals in Auckland, Kerikeri, Christchurch, Rangiora and Akaroa, and has also performed as part of the Pettman Players at the QuintEssence Mini-Festival organised by Chamber Music New Zealand in 2016.