

## ORCHESTRA

<b>Conductor</b>	Ashley Hopkins
<b>Violins I</b>	Helen Crook, Mary O'Brien, Emily Bouwhuis, Joe Pinto, Helen Lewis, Shyam Sankaran, David Kayrouz
<b>Violins II</b>	Rachel Hopkins, Alison Sorley, Tsui-Wen Chen, Kai-Ting Yang, Roger Booth
<b>Violas</b>	Anne-Marie Forsyth, Pat Roderick, Alison Talmage, Megan Wang, Zoë Vincent
<b>Celli</b>	Janet Robinson, Judith Williams, Maxine Cunliffe, Graham Falla, John Early, Emily Giles, Ella Cornfield
<b>Bass</b>	Andrew Kincaid, Huko Kobé
<b>Flutes</b>	Christine Mori, Pene Brawn-Douglas
<b>Oboes</b>	Regine Hagg, Matthew O'Ryan
<b>Clarinets</b>	Julia Cornfield, Jared Marshall
<b>Bassoons</b>	Jacqui Hopkins, David Nation
<b>Horns</b>	Miriam Robinson, Reymond Takashima, Mia Camileri, Christine Breedon
<b>Trumpets</b>	Kay Mackenzie, Dominic Cornfield, Mollie Cornfield
<b>Trombones</b>	Kevin Newton, Steve Taylor, Bob Latimer
<b>Tuba</b>	Adrian Raven
<b>Harp</b>	Patrick Cornfield
<b>Percussion</b>	Jenny Raven, Jennie Hoadley, Madison Plummer

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Next Concert: 2pm Sunday, 26th June, Depot Artspace. For further information and to be on our mailing list, go to our website: <http://dco.net.nz/>

# Devonport Chamber Orchestra

*Conductor:*  
*Ashley Hopkins*

*Soloist:*  
*Patrick Cornfield*



*Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No 2*  
*Berlioz: Overture, Mahler: Adagietto*

**Sunday 8th May, 2pm**  
**Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport**  
**Admission \$20, Children under 12 free**

## Hector Berlioz (1803 - 1869): Benvenuto Cellini Overture

In his journal, Berlioz wrote: *“I had been very struck by a number of episodes in the life of Benvenuto Cellini. I had the misfortune to believe that they could provide a dramatic and interesting subject for an opera, and I requested Léon de Wailly and Auguste Barbier, the redoubtable poet of the lambes, to write a libretto for me. According to what even our common friends say, their work does not possess the elements required for what is considered a well-made drama. But I liked it, and to this day I am unable to see in what way it is inferior to so many others that are performed every day.”*

Although as an opera, Benvenuto Cellini was a failure, Berlioz recalled that the overture was greeted with “exaggerated applause”, while the opera itself was hissed “with admirable energy and unanimity”. The opera never caught on, closing after only three performances, and then not being staged again for fourteen years and seldom being revived since. Berlioz later salvaged some of the best music from the opera as his Roman Carnival overture which, along with the Benvenuto Cellini overture became a favourite in the concert hall. The overture to Benvenuto Cellini is a mini-drama in itself, beginning with a spirited fanfare, and, in the span of some ten minutes, encompassing music of solemnity, lyricism, passion (recalling Cellini’s love for his fiancée Teresa), and sure-fire orchestral brilliance.

## Gustav Mahler (1860 - 1911): Adagietto from Symphony No. 5

The adagietto (‘little adagio’) from the 5th symphony is arguably Mahler’s most famous single piece of music, and is the most frequently performed extract from his works. It is perhaps best known for its use in the 1971 film “Death in Venice”, yet it was frequently performed on its own before then, chiefly because in the early 20th century, music programmers didn’t believe whole Mahler symphonies would be acceptable to audiences. (How wrong they were - to many of us, Mahler is marvelous!) Indeed, the British premiere of the entire 5th symphony, over an hour in length, came 36 years after the adagietto alone had been introduced to British audiences.

The adagietto is strikingly beautiful and full of passion and, with its marking of *sehr langsam* (very slowly), it is often played much slower than Mahler may have originally intended. At very slow speeds it can evoke melancholic, tragic or despairing emotions, however the original score suggests that it was conceived at a faster tempo this is usual today and based on a love poem that Mahler wrote Alma Schindler who was to become his wife before he had finished writing the 5th symphony. *“Wie ich dich liebe, Du meine Sonne. Ich kann mit Worten Dir’s nicht sagen Nur meine Sehnsucht kann ich Dir klagen und meine Liebe. Meine Wonne!”* (“How I love you, you my sun. I cannot tell you in words, I can only lament my yearning and my love for you. My happiness!”) Whether Mahler wrote the adagietto and then added the poem to win Alma’s heart or whether he conceived the poem first and then wrote the music is immaterial, as the poetry is lovely and the music sublime.

## Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 - 1943): Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor

Rachmaninov was revered as one of the supreme pianists of his time, yet he had a highly unconventional career. After receiving the highest marks ever awarded by the Moscow Conservatory, Rachmaninov soared to fame at age 19 with his Prelude in C-sharp minor, a remarkably haunting four-minute slice of chromatic yearning. However, his first piano concerto was not well received and his first symphony was an abject failure. After its premiere, poorly conducted by a drunken Alexander Glazunov, the critic César Cui savaged it as having come from a “Conservatory in Hell”. Rachmaninov was devastated: *“My dreams of a brilliant career lay shattered. My hopes and confidence were destroyed. I felt like a man who had suffered a stroke and for a long time had lost the use of his head and hands.”* He was so disheartened, he couldn’t bring himself to sit at piece of blank composition paper for two years.

Seeing him depressed and drinking too much, relatives convinced him to visit Dr. Nicolai Dahl, a specialist in the new field of ‘neuropsychotherapy’, who had an interest in hypnosis. Dahl was also an amateur cellist and violist who performed in a string quartet. Between the doctor’s gentle hypnotic suggestions (“*you will begin your concerto*”, “*the concerto will be excellent*”) and his pleasant conversations about music, Rachmaninov found his depression lifting and began to write his second piano concerto. Whatever transpired during the sessions with Dr. Dahl, Rachmaninov emerged from his doldrums with a gorgeous, vibrant work that spoke with a distinctive personality, and which he dedicated to Dr. Dahl.

The opening of this concerto announces its character with striking immediacy. Deep resonant piano chords evoke both the Russian church bells of Rachmaninov’s roots and his complex personality - the outer notes remain steadfast while the inner notes subtly change the harmony, as if to suggest the emotion surging within the composer’s somber outward appearance. Following this majestic opening, the piano continues with a blizzard of notes that thickens the texture of an ensuing luxuriant string melody. Indeed, throughout the entire work, the piano rarely falls silent or relinquishes the spotlight to the orchestra, leaving no doubt that the composer was, at heart, a pianist.

## Patrick ‘Paddy’ Cornfield writes...

Christmas last came and went and as usual, we had yet to establish what I would be playing for my 8th annual DCO concert. All that was known was that I wished to avoid transporting my grand piano across my increasingly battered deck. It’s a financial challenge to source an instrument suitably muscular to do ‘Rach 2’ justice, let alone for a community orchestra that offers free entrance to children. Indeed, one well-established Auckland orchestra has abandoned the piano concerto idiom altogether, which must be a great shame to their regular audience. So imagine my delight when Roger Booth said he had procured a large Steinway for me to play on – a pleasure I have not had in 12 years, since I performed ‘Rhapsody in Blue’ at Eton College with the Windsor and Maidenhead Symphony Orchestra. Only this time, I wouldn’t have to fly 27 hours on a plane to be in Steinway heaven.

Many people were puzzled as to why I undertook the two Rachmaninov concertos “out of sequence”. True, my tackling this particular work has been a long time coming. I’ve had the music since I was a teenager, but was never inspired to learn it, for the following reasons: Rach 3 is the ultimate challenge for any pianist – so why not cut to the chase; the solo part of Rach 2 is not that satisfying to play alone – the pleasure comes from when you add the orchestra; Rach 2 has some finger-crunching stretches in the piano writing – I have fairly small hands; it’s rather a feminine work – I’ve historically played more butch repertoire, like Beethoven; Rach 2 is very popular and everybody wanted me to play it (especially my clarinetist wife...) – maybe I’m just an old contrarian!

Needless to say, I now love the work and I was wrong to be so resistant. Furthermore, despite the torturous nature of practice required to prepare these large-scale works for DCO concerts, this is the only year I have ever received fan mail from people in my street – as good a testament to the appeal of this concerto as ever I heard. And my closest neighbour frequently pointed out of the superiority of the listening experience with the lower numbered concerto.

That concludes the ‘Christmas letter’ from me for this year, except to add what a great privilege it is to be able to participate in these DCO concerts.

