

## **Richard Strauss (1864–1949): Horn Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major, Op. 11** *(Allegro, Andante, Rondo allegro)*

In his essay "*Recollections of My Youth and Years of Apprenticeship*", Richard Strauss wrote: "*My mother tells of my earliest childhood that I used to react with a smile to the sound of the horn and with loud crying to the sound of a violin.*" He grew up with horn playing all around him, as his father Franz was the principal hornist of the Munich Court Orchestra for 45 years. Richard began to compose in childhood and wrote his First Horn Concerto when he was only 19. The concerto is one of the most-demanding solo works for the horn, using the highest and lowest notes in the instrument's register, often in quick succession. Strauss had written the concerto for his father, hoping that he would give its premiere performance. However, although Franz practiced it for a short time, he deemed the numerous high notes too risky for him to undertake in public and convinced his student, Bruno Hoyer, to give the first public performance accompanied by piano rather than orchestra.

The score calls the solo instrument a "Waldhorn" - literally Forest Horn or hunting horn, a "natural" (valveless) instrument which his father and many others still often used, although horns with valves were gradually replacing the natural horn in orchestras. The concerto is said to be nearly impossible to play on a valveless horn, so perhaps the Waldhorn designation is a suggestion that the playing should remind us of a hunting horn. Certainly the opening cadenza, the dreamy slow movement, and the vigorous finale all evoke the Romantic world of the natural horn.

After a single loud chord to kick off the concerto, a heroic theme based on rising and falling arpeggios is stated by the solo horn without any accompaniment. The movement proceeds with the orchestra elaborating upon the soloist's statements. A fanfare-like motif, making use of the rising triad that opens the work, is magically transformed in slow motion to form a bridge to the slow second movement, now serving as a string accompaniment for another long and lyrical horn melody on top. The brass and timpani, so evident in the first movement, stand aside and woodwinds become more prominent. The finale is a fast rondo featuring a brilliant main melody for the horn. This gives way to more expansive material. The scherzo-like final bars require fine control and an extremely light touch. This is a joyful and exuberant work and its success stems from Strauss' deep understanding of the French horn's technical challenges and his devotion to its beauty.

## **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21** *(Adagio molto - Allegro con brio, Andante cantabile con moto, Minuet and Trio, Finale: Adagio - Allegro molto vivace)*

By the mid-1790s, Beethoven had composed works in most of the important instrumental genres, but had held off tackling the symphony and string quartet, perhaps because these were the kinds of pieces in which his teacher Haydn had made his greatest mark and enjoyed his most significant successes. Beethoven began to sketch his first symphony in 1795, but after struggling with it for a year, he put it aside to concentrate on his piano works and early string quartets. In 1799, he returned to the idea of writing a symphony and completed it early in 1800. It is not surprising that this symphony bore many of the hallmarks of the classical style he had studied with both Haydn and Mozart.

Yet it broke new ground, as exemplified by the adagio opening to the first movement with its series of chords coming from winds and horns with pizzicato accompaniment from strings. Instead of starting out conventionally with a C major chord, Beethoven teases the listener by suggesting first that the key is F major, and then G major, finally settling on C major with the arrival of the allegro main theme presented first by the violins. A critic at the time remarked: "*No one will censure an ingenious artist like Beethoven for such liberties and peculiarities, but such a beginning is not suitable for the opening of a grand concert in a spacious opera house.*" The second more lyrical theme is introduced by the oboe in conversation with the flute. From here on, the music has a classical format, but with more dynamic contrasts and harmonic colour and more densely scored than any of the symphonies of Haydn or Mozart.

The second movement begins with the second violins presenting a graceful theme that is taken up by other instruments as a series of entries in fugal style. This theme alternates with a more light-hearted melody. Although Beethoven named the third movement 'Minuet and Trio', what he wrote was a scherzo of energy and explosive dynamic contrasts. The pace is considerably faster than the sprightly minuet movements of Haydn, and indeed it would be a remarkably athletic feat to dance to it. The harmonic language is highly audacious. In the second half, Beethoven wrenches the music into D flat major before returning to the home key through a hushed, tense sequence of modulations. In contrast, the Trio, with its repeated horn and woodwind chords interrupted by little string flurries, is harmonically relatively stable and conventional.

Unusually, the final movement also begins slowly. After a loud chord from the whole orchestra, the first violins slowly work their way up the notes of the scale - first three notes, then four, five, six, and seven, eventually tipping over into the energetic octave scale that initiates the fast tempo sustained for the rest of the movement. This movement is as playful and spirited as anything that Haydn wrote. Although not yet the heroic or the revolutionary Beethoven, it proves brilliantly that the student had learned his teachers' lessons well. It is perhaps fitting that Beethoven composed this masterful first symphony at the dawn of a new century that would be dominated by his conception of the symphonic form.

*Programme notes by Roger Booth from several sources including Betsy Schwarm, Christopher H. Gibbs, Ronald Comber, Hilary Hatch, Phillip Huscher, Richard Wigmore, Marianne Williams Tobias*

## **Anita Austin: French Horn Soloist**

Anita is currently based in Brisbane undertaking her second year of a Master in Music Studies (French horn) at the Queensland Conservatorium, studying with Assoc. Prof. Peter Luff, Ysolt Clark and Malcolm Stewart. She previously completed a Bachelor of Music (Hons.) majoring in Classical Performance, French Horn in 2017 with Emma Eden and Nicola Baker of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. During her studies, she was awarded an Auckland University Summer Research Scholarship that looked at teaching brass to 5-7 year olds via age-appropriate pedagogies, was a 2017 New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Fellowship student and 2016 Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra Intern. She was the principal horn of the Auckland Youth Orchestra from 2014 to 2016 and member of the NZSO National Youth Orchestra.

*continued over ...*

Alongside her love of teaching, she currently works as a freelance horn player in both New Zealand and Australia with ensembles such as the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Hawkes Bay Orchestra, Dunedin Symphony Orchestra, Camerata - Queensland Chamber Orchestra as well as chamber music ensembles.

### **Warwick Robinson: Conductor**

Warwick is the Head of Music at Westlake Boys High School. He holds a master's degree in clarinet performance from the University of Auckland and now divides his time between classroom teaching, conducting, composing and arts administration. As Musical Director, Warwick has led the Westlake Concert Band to receive a number of accolades, including the "1st Place with Outstanding Success" award at the 2014 Summa Cum Laude International Festival in Austria. Warwick is also the Administrator of the annual KBB Music Festival. He is married to Miriam and they have two children.

## **ORCHESTRA**

<b>Violins I</b>	Brecon Carter, David Choi, Mary O'Brien, John Choi, Michael Hunter, Joe Pinto, Alison Sorley, Tenwei Liu
<b>Violins II</b>	Heidi Bowmast, Tsui-Wen Chen, David Kayrouz, George Wang, Nicola Couch, Ben King, Roger Booth
<b>Violas</b>	Judith Gust, Cameron Stanley, Neil Shepherd, Daniel Poloha, Pat Roderick, Anne-Marie Forsyth
<b>Cellos</b>	Claire Postlethwaite, John Early, Kate Parker, Graham Falla, Michelle Caldicott, Kripa Ravi, Luke Choi
<b>Basses</b>	Ted Malan, Jessie Colbert
<b>Flutes</b>	Pene Brawn-Douglas, Gail Nathan
<b>Oboes</b>	Eugénie Middleton, Elizabeth Lewis Daniell
<b>Bassoons</b>	David Nation, Charlotte Naden
<b>Horns</b>	Miriam Robinson, Christine Breeden
<b>Trumpets</b>	Neil Cording, Adrian Hirst
<b>Timpani</b>	Paddy Cornfield

### **Acknowledgements and thanks to:**

The Vicar and parish of Holy Trinity Church who always make us welcome



For further information or to be on our mailing list, visit our website:  
<http://dco.net.nz/>

# Devonport Chamber Orchestra

*Strauss: Horn Concerto No. 1*  
*Beethoven: Symphony No. 1*



*Horn Soloist: Anita Austin*

*Conductor: Warwick Robinson*

**Sunday 31st March, 2pm**  
**Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport**  
**Admission: Adults \$15,**  
**Children under 12 free**