

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 to 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

Violins I	Joseph Chen, Brecon Carter, Mary O'Brien, Helen Lewis, Joe Pinto, Alison Sorley, Tenwei Liu, Sofia Wigram
Violins II	Michael Hunter, Heidi Bowmast, David Kayrouz, Averil Griffin, Susie Kasza, Nicola Couch, Roger Booth
Violas	Robyn Strange, Henrietta Reid, Judith Gust, Neil Shepherd, Daniel Poloha, Pat Roderick
Cellos	Dora Green, John Early, Kate Parker, Graham Falla, Michelle Caldicott, Andrea McCracken, Mary Greig-Clayton
Basses	Michael Steer, Hana Agatsuma
Flutes	Pene Brawn-Douglas, Rebecca Grimwood
Oboes	Eugénie Middleton, Elizabeth Lewis Daniell
Clarinets	James Daniell, Hannah Boocock
Bassoons	David Nation, Kate Nelson
Horns	Miriam Robinson, Henry Swanson, Rebekah Gray, Michael Grimwood
Trumpets	Michael Plunkett, Sarah Robertson-Bickers
Timpani	Yvonne Chan

Acknowledgements and thanks to:

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



Next Concert: 2pm Sunday, 1st September, 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: Egmont Overture
Dvorak: Violin Concerto

Sunday 14th July, 2pm
Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport
Admission: Adults \$15,
Children under 12 free

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827): Egmont Overture, Op. 84

Beethoven moved to Vienna in 1792 and stayed there for the rest of his life, earning a living as a piano teacher, concert pianist, conductor and composer. In 1809, he received a commission to provide the incidental music for a revival production of Goethe's play 'Egmont'. At the time of the commission, Vienna was suffering French oppression under Napoleon Bonaparte. As a democrat and humanist, Beethoven abhorred Bonaparte's tyranny and, three years earlier had torn from the score of his Eroica Symphony the dedication to Napoleon after the Frenchman had proclaimed himself emperor. Goethe's play is based on an incident from 1567 involving the subjugation of the Netherlands to tyrannical Spanish rulers. The hero, Count Egmont, foresees the liberation of the Netherlands and, as a result of his own brave stand, is executed, but dies knowing that his martyrdom will eventually lead to freedom for his people. Beethoven revered Goethe, calling him "a great poet, the most precious jewel that a nation can possess" and so was delighted to be asked to compose incidental music for Goethe's play, especially given the political climate in Vienna at the time.

The Egmont overture is a compact tone poem that closely parallels the story of Goethe's drama, with a structure resembling the opening movement of many Classic symphonies. It begins slowly with a loud, sustained sound, followed by darkly brooding chords that impart a sense of foreboding. Beethoven was fond of placing extremely different material side by side, and throughout the overture, he juxtaposes contrasting tempi, dynamics, registers, and timbres to suggest the turbulence of Count Egmont's life. As the work draws to a close, the fortissimo chords from the introduction return in a coda but then there is a sudden and dramatic pause followed by four sustained chords, perhaps signalling Egmont's execution. At the end of the play, Goethe's called for a *Siegessymphonie* (Symphony of Victory) to be played, and Beethoven complied by writing a second coda marked *allegro con brio* (fast, with energy), moving from minor to major tonality and with stirring trumpet calls, so that the atmosphere shifts from one of oppression to heroism and victory.

Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904): Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53

(*Allegro ma non troppo, Adagio ma non troppo, Finale: Allegro giocoso ma non troppo*)

In his youth, Dvořák studied piano, organ, and viola, eventually becoming a decent enough violist to earn a living as an orchestra musician when he couldn't make any money from his compositions. For many years, his father had doubted the wisdom of his son's choice of music over a life as a butcher in the family business. Dvořák left the orchestra in 1871 to devote more time to composition, but soon realised it wasn't bringing in sufficient income. So, in 1874, newly married and in need of money, he entered fifteen compositions in the Austrian State Music Prize, an award designed to assist struggling young artists in their creative pursuits. He won first prize (and won again in two subsequent years). Among the panel of judges was Johannes Brahms who was so impressed with Dvořák's compositions that he recommended him to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, and also introduced Dvořák to his friend the famous violinist, Joseph Joachim. Simrock suggested to Dvořák that he write a violin concerto and Dvořák jumped at the chance. In 1879, he sent the completed score to Joachim

intending to dedicate it to him and have him premiere the work. Joachim however, was a notorious nitpicker and eventually returned the score peppered with comments and editing suggestions. Dvořák then extensively revised the concerto, saying that "not a single bar has been left unaltered". Unfortunately, Joachim was still not satisfied and Dvořák set the work aside for several months, eventually resubmitting his third draft for assessment in 1882. That still didn't meet with Joachim's approval, although he wrote to Dvořák, "While working on this revision I was struck by the many beauties of your work, which it will be a pleasure for me to perform." Even after further revisions, Joachim would not premiere the concerto; that honour went to František Ondříček. In fact, Joachim would never perform the work in public even though it was dedicated to him.

Although the concerto has the usual three movements, it was fairly radical for its time and that may have been part of what troubled the highly conservative Joachim. The opening movement is serious and dramatic, painting a complex world of rich musical colour and harmony. Instead of the traditional orchestral introduction, it opens with a striking fanfare answered by a dramatic main theme from the solo violin followed by a contrasting lyrical second theme. A lovely cadenza leads directly into the second movement. This lack of pause between the first two movements was one of the features to which Joachim objected. The second movement begins with a calm and lyrical solo melody that transitions to a turbulent middle section with some of the showiest passages for the soloist. The finale is a vibrant rondo, with melodies that take their inspiration from the syncopated dance rhythms of Bohemian folk songs. The opening theme and rhythm are those of the *furiant*, a rapid and fiery Bohemian dance with alternating metre and frequently shifting accents. This is followed by a melancholic and contemplative middle section based on the *Czech dumka*, a dreamy, wistful ballad. Finally, Dvořák returns to the opening *furiant* melody and the distinctive syncopated rhythms and melodic repetition build to a dazzling display of the violinist's technical prowess.

- Programme notes by Roger Booth from several sources including Phillip Huscher, Richard E. Rodda, Wanda J. Blakeney, René Spencer Saller, Peter Laki, James M. Keller, Luke Smith and Laney Boyd

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 17-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, Devonport Chamber Orchestra, and Nelson Symphony Orchestra, and was featured in numerous solo and chamber performances at the annual International Akaroa Music Festival. He has also started playing in the first violin section of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra since 2018.

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