

John Mietus: Conductor

John is an American conductor and double bassist. Based in Auckland, he currently serves as Music Director of the Devonport Chamber Orchestra and Resident Conductor of the Auckland Metropolitan Orchestra. He also appears regularly as a guest conductor with the XiangJiang Philharmonic Orchestra in Changsha, China, and has led performances across a broad range of orchestral and chamber repertoire. Equally at home on the podium and the concert stage, Mietus maintains an active international career both as a conductor and as a double bassist. Since 2022, he has served as Associate Principal Bass of the Auckland Philharmonia and has performed with ensembles including the Houston Symphony and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. As a soloist, he became the first bassist in the world to perform the *Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* on double bass with orchestra, a landmark achievement that expanded the instrument's repertoire. Mietus studied conducting with Sharon Lavery at the University of Southern California and further developed his approach during his masters under the late Larry Rachleff at Rice University. He has appeared as guest faculty at Northwestern University, the Australian National Academy of Music, and James Madison University. Away from the podium, John enjoys spending time with his two cats, Zuko and Azula.

ORCHESTRA

Flutes	Esther Hunter, Kathleen Mistry
Oboes	Joy Liu, Elizabeth Lewis Daniell
Clarinets	Julia Cornfield, Song-Yi Choi
Bassoons	David Nation, Simon Smith
Horns	Miriam Robinson, Christine Breeden
Trumpets	Neil Cording, Aiden West
Timpani	MingHsuan Lee and Daniel Lee
Violins I	Selena Sun, Michael Hunter, Nicola Couch, Helen Crook, Chisato Aida, Joe Pinto, Takashi Schwarz, Charlotte Lamb
Violins II	Jerry Lam, Tenwei Liu, David Kayrouz, Dianne Sainsbury, Lawrence Yang, Neil Shepherd, Susie Kasza
Violas	Judith Gust, Michael Vidulich, Stephanie Thomas, Iona McDonald, Charlotte van Asch, Anne-Marie Forsyth
Cellos	Claire Postlethwaite, John Early, Andrea McCracken, Mary Greig-Clayton, Michelle Caldicott, Iain Rea, Joanna Pinto
Basses	Andrew Kincaid, Michael Steer

Acknowledgements and thanks to:

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

Next Concert: 2:00pm Sunday, 6th September, Holy Trinity, Devonport. For further information or to be on our mailing list, visit our website: <https://dco.net.nz/>

ASB Account: Devonport Chamber Orchestra 12-3015-0630092-00

Devonport Chamber Orchestra



Piano: Patrick Cornfield
Conductor: John Mietus
Faure: Pavane
Mozart: Così Fan Tutti Overture
Schumann: Piano Concerto, Op. 54

2pm, Sunday 5th July, 2026
Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport
Adults: \$25, Seniors/Students \$20,
Children under 12 free

Wofgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791): Cösi Fan Tutti Overture

Così Fan Tutte marked Mozart's third and final collaboration with Lorenzo Da Ponte, following The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni. All three are comedies (opera buffa) with Cösi Fan Tutti, subtitled "*La scuola degli amanti*" (The School for Lovers), being the most light-hearted, dealing as it does with the vagaries of the male/female relationships in a 'fiancée-swapping' love experiment. During the 19th century and into the early 20th, it was often dismissed as trivial or immoral because of its storyline. However the music is delightful and, these days the opera is very popular. Unlike many operatic overtures, the overture to Così Fan Tutti contains nearly no melodic material from the opera, with the exception of the chords used to end the andante introduction. These same chords are used in Don Alfonso's Act 2 aria when he sings the words "*Così fan tutte!*" - roughly translated as "*everybody does it*".

Gabriel Fauré (1845 - 1925): Pavane

In his compositions, Fauré preferred the gentler romantic French traditionalism passed on from his teacher Saint-Saëns rather than the heavier scoring of many other late romantic composers. His music – whether piano, chamber, vocal or orchestral – conveys the impression of a personal and private statement or intimate conversation. In this vein, Fauré's Pavane is a serene and delicate masterpiece. Although better known in its orchestral form today, the Pavane was originally composed as a piano piece dedicated to his patron, the Countess Greffulhe. At request of the Countess, Fauré arranged it for orchestra and added an optional chorus. The piece opens with a leisurely main melody passes around by flute, oboe, and clarinet, floating above a pizzicato string accompaniment. There is a brief, dramatic middle section using sixteenth-century modal harmony, before the piece drifts back into the dreamy, melancholic primary theme at the end.

Robert Schuman (1810 - 1856): Piano Concerto in A minor, Op 54

(1: *Allegro affettuoso*, 2: *Andantino grazioso*, 3: *Allegro vivace*)

Friedrich Wieck was a celebrated piano pedagogue from whom Schumann took lessons while he was a law student. Friedrich's daughter, Clara, as a young girl, promoted by her ambitious father, gave solo piano recitals all over Europe. She was not only a phenomenal pianist, but she could also sing, play the violin and compose. In her teens, Clara fell in love with Robert Schumann, nine years her elder, and wanted to marry him. However, her father, perhaps jealous of his precious daughter's happiness, worried about the deleterious effect of marriage on her highly lucrative career, and unimpressed with Schumann's uncertain prospects, refused his consent. The lovers began a bitter three-year battle which ended in the courts amid wild and slanderous accusations. They eventually won their case and were married in 1840. Until that time, Schumann had written mostly small-scale pieces - songs and piano music. His astute wife however, quickly realised that success would depend on his branching out into larger orchestral works. Over the next 12 years, with Clara's support and gentle coaxing, Schumann produced four symphonies, six overtures, three concertos and other orchestral works. He also wrote an A minor Fantasy for piano and orchestra. Later, he added another two movements to it to produce his piano concerto which was premiered by Clara with Mendelssohn conducting.

In her diary, Clara wrote of this concerto: "*the piano is interwoven with the orchestra in the most delicate way – one can't imagine the one without the other.*"

The opening of the concerto is very dramatic, beginning with an orchestral statement followed by the piano with a powerful cascade of chords leading to a wistful oboe tune. Edvard Grieg heard Clara Schumann play the concerto and later, used a very similar opening in his own

Piano Concerto. Like many composers, Schumann was fond of encoding names in his music. Some scholars have suggested that the first four notes of the oboe theme which opens the concerto (C, B-flat (H in German), A, A) could be taken to spell Chiara, or CHiArA - the Italian version of Clara's name, and a version that Schumann's often used when writing about his wife. This oboe theme dominates the first movement, and when it is transformed into a tender exchange of intimacies between the piano and clarinet, it becomes the most poetic and magical moment in the concerto. Later, after the sweeping cadenza, 'Chiara' returns at end of the first movement as a quick march with off-beat accents and suppressed excitement.

The second movement is slower and more reflective with some lovely lyrical writing for both piano and orchestra. It ends with the main theme of the first movement as a hunting call-like transition into the finale, which is robust and joyous. Schumann puts a theme in the middle of the finale that sounds as though it is in triple meter at half the tempo, but writes it in the original meter so that it becomes a minefield of very difficult syncopations and displaced accents. Finally, the movement closes with a buoyant waltz.

Programme notes compiled by Roger Booth from several sources including Elizabeth & Joseph Kahn, Thomas May, Lori Newman, Lynne Haslam, Google AI, Michael Steinberg, Wendy Thompson, Paul Horsley

Patrick 'Paddy' Cornfield writes...

I had hoped Artificial Intelligence would effortlessly write these programme notes for my 21st DCO piano concert. I fed ChatGPT all my previous notes, eccentricities et al. The best it came up with was this:

"I'm pleased to report that the piece hasn't become any easier. If anything, it has grown more mysterious with age, which is possibly true of both the concerto and the soloist".

Ok, so quite funny. But the rest was mostly waffle about Clara and cross-rhythms. So, I'm back to doing things the old-fashioned way.

Reviewing my notes from when I first played the Schumann in 2017, a few themes and facts stood out. Let's see what the passage of time has done to them:

2017 – Lamenting the lack of family members in the audience.

2026 – Lamenting the lack of family members in the orchestra (2nd Trumpet and '*last child standing*' Dominic, suddenly decided travel to deepest Borneo with his girlfriend – a quality excuse).

2017 – Self-flagellation about the poor state of our property.

2026 – New roof, gutters and a much-reduced bank balance. Garden mostly unchanged.

2017 – Newish conductor.

2026 – New conductor, the 5th since I started. Not including myself conducting from the piano (badly...)

2017 – Helen Crook was Leader.

2026 – Helen Crook playing (hooray!) but not leading, due to injury.

It's hard to believe it's been over 20 years since the DCO first presented a full-sized piano concert with a conductor. We still began the concert with a chamber work back then. I do hope John Mietus enjoys the experience this year.

I have only one DCO ambition remaining - to present an all-English program. Arthritic fingers crossed for next year then.