

LOVE LETTERS

Metro Series #4

Conductor: Chen Yang
Sunday 28 November 3pm
Old Museum, Concert Hall



**BRISBANE
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA.**

PHOTO: PIA JOHNSON

CONCERT PROGRAM

MIKHAIL GLINKA

Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64

i. Allegro molto appassionato

ii. Andante

iii. Allegretto non troppo – Allegro molto vivace

INTERVAL

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Romeo and Juliet Op.64 (Selections from Suites 1 & 2)

i. Montagues and Capulets (Suite No.2)

ii. Juliet as a Young Girl (Suite No.2)

iii. Scene (The Street Awakens) (Suite No.1)

iv. Madrigal (Suite No.1)

v. Minuet (The Arrival of the Guests) (Suite No.1)

vi. Masks (Suite No.1)

vii. Romeo and Juliet (Balcony Scene and Love Dance) (Suite No.1)

viii. Death of Tybalt (Suite No.1)

ix. Friar Laurence (Suite No.2)

x. Romeo at Juliet's Tomb (Suite No.2)



FIRST VIOLINS

Hayden Burton
(Concertmaster)
Tom Reithmuller
Karen Blair
Anya Tang
Isabel Young
Alison Giles
Jonathon Ward
Hwee Sin Chong
Tove Easton
Ailsa Hankison
Carmen Pierce
Amanda Lugton
Amie Stolz
Emma Eriksson

SECOND VIOLINS

Clare Cooney*
Drew Cylinder
Finn Williams
Amy Phillips
Chloe Richardson
Elena James
Ai Miura
Rachel Olsen
Lauren Jones
Nawres Alfreh
Vy Dinh
Elisna van Niekerk
Evangeline Jacobs
Isabel Tunstall
Anna Jenkins

VIOLAS

Sophie Ellis*
Courtney Schuurs
Anthony Rossiter
Daniel Tipping
Bronwyn Gibbs
Paul Garrahy AM
John McGrath
Callula Killingly
Michele Adeney
Jacob Seabrook
Katrina Greenwood
Jennifer Waanders
Brendon Crosby
Sammy Smith

CELLOS

Lynne Backstrom*
David Curry
Edward Brackin
Jane Elliott
Amy Naumann
Charmaine Lee
Renee Edson
Andrew Ruhs
Andrew Zischke
Gabriel Dumitru
Joanna Cull
Elouise Comber
Nicole Kancachian

BASSES

Sam Dickenson*
Dean Tierney
Angela Jaeschke
Chan Luc
Jemima Shepherd
Angela Batch
James Mulligan

FLUTE

Jo Lagerlow*
Jessica Sullivan

PICCOLO

Lucia Gonzalez*

OBOE

Gabrielle Knight*
Hui-Yu (Whitney) Chung

COR ANGLAIS

Anton Rayner^

CLARINET

Daniel Sullivan*
Dayna Johnston#

BASS CLARINET

Hugo Anaya Partida*

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Olivia Mariton^

BASSOON

Lisa Squires*
Elliott McGuire

CONTRABASSOON

Carl Bryant*

HORN

Melanie Taylor*
Helen Fiander#
Cedar Miller
Isabelle Raiz-Scanlon#

TRUMPET

Blake Humphrey*
Sophie Kukulies
Riley Nimmo#

TROMBONE

Zhao Ming Liu*
Richard Sanderson

BASS TROMBONE

Clayton Fiander*

TUBA

Michael Sterzinger*

PERCUSSION

Kerry Vann-Leeflang*
Davis Dingle
Patrick Hassard
Andrew Palmer

HARP

Grace Kikuchi^

PIANO/CELESTA

Jasmine Buckley^



Conductor CHEN YANG

Chen Yang graduated from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music with Distinction in Violin Performance in 1980. While a student at the Conservatorium he explored his interests in conducting forming string ensembles, giving concerts and also conducted several performances of a student production of the opera *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss.

At his first professional musical undertaking, he was offered the Concertmaster position to the Queensland Theatre Orchestra (QTO later renamed the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra QPO) in Brisbane under distinguished late legendary conductor, Georg Tintner.

Chen attributes his enthusiasm for the music of Bruckner from the inspiration and influence through working with Maestro Tintner. (Georg Tintner left a legacy of critically acclaimed complete recordings of the Bruckner Symphonies on the Naxos label). After a successful collaboration with the QTO, he joined the ABC Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO) between 1981-1989 as a member in the first violin section. Although Chen has had no formal conducting lessons many of his musical ideas were formalised during this period observing the many different ways distinguished conductors approached their craft working with the QSO learning musical repertoire as well.

Deciding on a change, he spent two years as musician-in-residence on tropical Dunk Island Holiday Resort in North Queensland where he led a string quartet and performed as a cabaret violinist entertaining guests. He continued as a freelance musician throughout the early 1990s performing in show orchestras for major Musical Productions at QPAC including “The King and I”, “The Wizard of Oz” and “Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat”

At present, Chen performs regularly with many musical ensembles in Brisbane. He is the leader and conductor with The Sinfonia of St Andrews & The Corda Spiritus Orchestra of Brisbane. He also led the Queensland Pops Orchestra last year in a successful show concert with entertainer Tim Minchin at the Convention Centre.

Other musical interest includes Early Music being a founding member of The Badinerie Players of Brisbane who specialize in performing on authentic styled instruments. He performs on a Baroque violin which is a copy of a Guanerius violin made by well known Australian violin maker Ian Clarke from Biddeston, Queensland.

Chen enjoys teaching and working with young musicians and is a strong supporter of the Queensland Youth Orchestra organization having been resident conductor of their QYO Third Orchestra from 1983-1988 and conductor at of their Junior String Ensemble since 1991. He is the string teacher and conductor at St Hilda’s School, Southport and adjudicates regularly at many Eisteddfods, Music Festivals and Competitions



Soloist COURTENAY CLEARY

Courtenay recently graduated with a Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School in New York where she studied with violin Professor Naoko Tanaka. During her time at Juilliard she was awarded the M. & E. Cohen Scholarship and the Charles H. Bechter Scholarship, and was a finalist in the 2020 violin concerto competition.

She received her Bachelor of Music degree with first-class honours from the Royal Academy of Music in London where she studied with professor Maureen Smith. In 2017 Courtenay performed as a soloist for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and other distinguished guests at Westminster Abbey for the Royal Commonwealth Service. This was broadcast live on BBC television. In 2018 Courtenay again performed for the HM the Queen at Buckingham Palace for the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. During her time in London, she has performed as a soloist at prestigious venues including the Wigmore Hall, St James' Piccadilly, the Regent Hall and Colston Hall.

She recently performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra in Sydney and gave the Australian premiere of David Lang's Mystery Sonatas, as well as two solo recitals in the Queensland Performing Arts Centre Concert Hall.

She is a Tait Memorial Trust and ABRSM scholar, and was recently awarded second prize at the Australian Concerto and Vocal Competition as well as the Dame Joan Sutherland Award from the American Australian Association and the Guy Parsons Award from the Portland House and Australian Music Foundations. Courtenay was recently awarded a full tuition scholarship to undertake her Doctor of Philosophy in contemporary violin music at the University of Queensland.

She is a member of the Patronus Quartet who in 2015 progressed to the semi-final of the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition. She has performed at many international festivals including Tallinn Music Week, the Melbourne Festival, the Aldeburgh Festival, Prussia Cove and the Juilliard Chamber Music Festival. She has performed in many masterclasses for esteemed artists including Julian Rachlin, Tasmin Little, Daniel Hope, the St Lawrence String Quartet, and the Borodin Quartet, from whom her own quartet received a letter of recommendation for the MICMC.

In 2011 Courtenay studied under the direction of Associate Professor Patricia Pollett at the University of Queensland. During this time she was concertmaster of the University of Queensland Chamber and Symphony Orchestras and was finalist in the university's Bach Prize and The Howard and Gladys Sleath Prize for Strings. She was the recipient of the Sleath String Scholarship for outstanding students and was a winner of the Sid Paige & Musica Viva/4MBS Chamber Music Prize.

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

The Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) is Brisbane's leading community orchestra. The orchestra brings together up to 200 musicians a year to play a variety of classical orchestral music. Over 100 members of the incorporated association form the core of the orchestra. Other players perform as casual musicians, but often join as full-time members after their first concert with BPO. The orchestra was founded on principles of musical excellence and development, communal participation, and organisational professionalism.

Since its creation in 2000, the BPO has become the community orchestra of choice for over 500 musicians. It is eagerly sought as a performance partner for touring choirs, festivals, and internationally acclaimed instrumentalists and vocalists. The BPO performs its own series of symphony concerts and participates in multiple community and festival events throughout the year, attracting an audience of over 2,500 people. The orchestra's main metropolitan concert series includes four to five symphony concerts at Brisbane City Hall and the Old Museum Concert Hall. Programs vary between concerts featuring the great classical, romantic, and 20th

century composers, light concerts including film music, as well as concerts with programs targeted at a younger audience. Additionally, BPO occasionally performs chamber music concerts, featuring smaller groups in a more intimate setting.

The BPO maintains many community partnerships including with the Queensland Music Festival, 4MBS Festival of Classics, Brisbane City Council, and The Brisbane Airport Corporation. These partnerships provide essential connections in artistic, educational, professional, and social programs and cater to the association's increased responsibility to culturally enhance localities and bring a diversity of people together in a fast-paced, ever-impersonal global village. Unusually for a community orchestra, entry to the BPO is by audition and the ensemble is the only community orchestra within the city that rotates guest conductors by invitation rather than establishing a permanent Music Director. Uniquely, this allows a variety of the finest local professional conductors to deliver diverse and innovative programming to artistically stimulate members of the orchestra.



PROGRAM NOTES

Mikhail Glinka (1804 - 1857)

Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila

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In his memoirs Mikhail Glinka recalled his early fascination with the folk songs the family's serfs would sing, and also play when they assembled into a private orchestra on his uncle's estate. For a young aristocrat, however, a career as a composer was out of the question; so, at his father's insistence, Glinka passed several years in the government bureaucracy. It was at that time that he became friendly with the poet Alexander Pushkin.

In the fall of 1830, Glinka found himself torn between filial duty and artistic yearnings, and so he took a trip abroad, to Italy. It was a watershed moment to be in Milan, where that winter Glinka heard Donizetti and Bellini conduct the premieres of their respective operas *Anna Bolena* and *La Sonnambula*. By the time he returned to Russia, upon his father's death in 1834, there was no turning back on his career as a composer. His first opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, met with great enthusiasm at its premiere in 1836, and Glinka quickly set his sights on a second opera that he would base on the satirical fairy tale *Ruslan and Ludmila* by his friend Pushkin.

He hoped that Pushkin would draw up the scenario, but the possibility was obliterated when the poet, only thirty-eight years old, was killed in a duel in January 1837. Glinka started composing the opera without a libretto, and the literary side of the project moved ahead when a fellow

named Konstantin Bakhturin listened to the composer play excerpts from the score. Glinka largely stuck with Bakhturin's plan even as he enlisted other writers to refine the text.

Ruslan and Ludmila still holds the stage in Russia, but performances elsewhere are rare. Not so the opera's Overture, written late in the game, when the opera was already in rehearsal. It's a quicksilver piece, an irresistible curtain-raiser and undoubtedly the most frequently enjoyed of Glinka's compositions. Its ebullience suggests that Rossini was its spiritual ancestor.

James M. Keller



PROGRAM NOTES

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)

Violin Concerto in E minor,

Op.64

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- i. Allegro molto appassionato**
- ii. Andante**
- iii. Allegretto non troppo – Allegro molto vivace**

THE BACKSTORY

Ferdinand David was more than the first violinist to play the Mendelssohn Concerto; the work was intended for him from the beginning. David and Mendelssohn had been friends since 1825. When Mendelssohn founded the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843, one of the first faculty appointments he made was David. David was held in the highest regard as soloist, as a model concertmaster, as quartet leader, and teacher. In the history of Mendelssohn's Concerto, David played a role parallel to that taken a generation later by Joseph Joachim with the Brahms. Mendelssohn's Concerto is in fact the first in the distinguished series of violin concertos written by pianist-composers with the assistance of eminent violinists.

THE MUSIC

In his G minor and D minor piano concertos, Mendelssohn gives us just enough of an orchestral exordium to propel the soloist into action. In the Violin Concerto, he reduces the orchestra's initial participation still further. There is only a backdrop for not as much as two

seconds of E minor, given an appassionato character by the quietly pulsating drums and plucked basses.

Across this, the violin sings a famous melody. The first extended passage for the orchestra is dramatically introduced by the boldly upward-thrusting octaves of the violin; it also gives way quickly to the next solo, a new melody, full of verve, and barely begun by the orchestra before the soloist makes it his own. As in most concertos between Beethoven and Brahms, the orchestra here is not so much partner or rival in dialectic discussion as provider of accompaniment, punctuation, scaffolding, and a bit of the clarinet (with another clarinet and a pair of flutes) introduces the new tune. The presentation is immediately reversed, with the violin playing the melody and the four winds accompanying. Either way, the combination of wind quartet with a single stringed instrument is wonderfully fresh.

The first movement cadenza is famous. In Classical practice, the cadenza occurs at the joint of recapitulation and coda. Mendelssohn uses it instead at the other crucial harmonic juncture, the recapitulation, the return to the home key after the peregrinations of the development. He prepares this homecoming subtly, allowing himself some delicate anticipations of what it will be like to be in E minor again, managing this maneuver as a gradual subsidence of wonderful breadth and serenity. On the doorstep of home, the orchestra stops and defers to the soloist.

A couple of years earlier, in his Scottish Symphony, Mendelssohn experimented with the idea of going from movement to

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movement without a break. Here he takes the plan a step further, not merely eliminating the pauses but actually constructing links. The Andante emerges mysteriously from the close of the first movement. This could be one of Mendelssohn's songs (with or without words). It is a lovely and sweet melody of surprising extension, beautifully harmonized and scored. Listen to the effect, for example, of the woodwinds in the few measures in which they participate. The middle section brings an upsurge of passion and a return to the minor mode. Then the first melody returns, still more beautifully set than before, with the accompanying instruments unable to forget the emotional tremors of the movement's central section.

Between the Andante and the finale Mendelssohn places another kind of bridge, a tiny and wistful intermezzo. Strings only accompany the violin, which sets off nicely the touch of fanfare that starts the finale. It is sparkling and busy music whose gait allows room for swinging, broad tunes, as well as for the dazzling sixteenth notes of the solo part. Here, too, Mendelssohn delights in the witty play of foreground and background, and so he steers the concerto to its close in a feast of high spirits and with a wonderful sense of "go."

Michael Steinberg

Sergei Prokofiev (1891 - 1953) *Romeo and Juliet Op.64* *(Selections from Suites 1 & 2)*

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THE MUSIC

Romeo and Juliet is probably Prokofiev's most loved score today, but its early history was not easy. He wrote the music in a critical period of his life. After nine years of voluntary exile from Russia, mainly in the United States and Paris, he was approaching the end of a decade of uneasy shuttling back and forth between the two worlds. It was a difficult and sometimes bewildering retransition. Russian audiences did not accept such works as *The Buffoon* and the *Scythian Suite*, which had been successful in Paris, but they loved the *Violin Concerto No. 1*, which Paris had rejected as too conservatively lyrical. Through all this, Prokofiev was coming closer to the step he finally committed to in 1936, renting an apartment in Moscow for himself, his wife, and their two children. Later, as he was subjected to government harassment, he must sometimes have questioned the wisdom of his judgment.

Toward the end of 1934, there was talk that the Kirov Theater in Leningrad (as it then was) might stage a ballet by Prokofiev. In his 1946 biographical sketch, Prokofiev wrote with characteristic dry detachment:

"I was interested in a lyrical subject. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet was suggested, but the Kirov backed out and I signed a contract with the Moscow Bolshoi Theater instead. In the spring of 1935,

PROGRAM NOTES

Radlov [Sergei Radlov, a theater director renowned for his Shakespeare productions] and I worked out a scenario, consulting with the choreographer [Leonid Lavrovsky] on questions of ballet technique. The music was written during the summer, but the Bolshoi declared it impossible to dance to, and the contract was broken.

. . . The ballet itself was rather unlucky. In 1937 the Leningrad Ballet School signed an agreement undertaking to produce it on the occasion of its 200th anniversary, and in 1938 the Brno Opera agreed to stage it, too. The Ballet School violated its agreement, and so the premiere took place in Brno in December 1938. The Kirov produced the ballet in January 1940 with all the mastery for which its dancers are famed. . . .

The excerpts we hear (a combination of music from Prokofiev's first two orchestral suites) reveal how a great composer shaped character, communicated emotion, and captured the dramatic sweep of one of the world's great love stories.

THE MUSIC

The Montagues and Capulets combines the ominous Introduction to Act III with Dance of the Knights, which introduces the Capulet clan during the Act I ballroom scene. It is the best-known music from the ballet, and its bellicose haughtiness aptly conjures both feuding families. The blustering is silenced by a chilly minuet during which the 13-year-old Juliet fails to warm to Paris, an older suitor to whom she's been betrothed.

The creepiness is brilliantly underscored with viola portamenti tracing a filigree of flute melody, against an icy background with harp, triangle, tambourine and celesta.

The Young Juliet, takes place earlier that afternoon, while the exuberant Juliet and her friends tease her nursemaid as they prepare for the evening's ball. Lady Capulet interrupts their frolic, hoping to persuade Juliet to welcome Paris's marriage proposal.

The following **Scene: The Street Awakens** is simpler still, its chipper mood guaranteed by the steady pulse of its prancing accompaniment.

Madrigal: This lovely, delicate music sets the scene in the Capulets' ballroom and accompanies Romeo and Juliet's first meeting at the Capulet ball.

The **Minuet** accompanies the arrival of the guests to a ball at the Capulet home. The surroundings are palatial, but as the guests arrive to the sound of a courtly minuet, the welcome is distinctly heavy-handed and the stately dance alternates with contrasting episodes.

Masks is the music to which Romeo and his friends make their entrance (masked) at the Capulets' ball. Romeo, his cousin Benvolio, and his best friend, Mercutio lead the intrusion. A typical Prokofiev "wrong note" melody opens with a strutting march. Note the tambourine coloration. The music is suspenseful as the group slinks into the party. Romeo is wearing a clown mask which Tybalt (Lady Capulet's nephew) considers a mockery of the occasion.

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From here we move to the Capulets' garden. At the ball that evening Romeo has fallen for Juliet, as she has for him.

The Balcony Scene finds Juliet standing in the Veronese moonlight. Romeo appears, and they swear their devotion to each other. In the strings we hear the call of the cuckoo. Over this, Prokofiev sends the violins into a long melody. Love music blooms in divided strings and rises into the night. A climax, and the music relaxes as an oboe introduces a section in which the second violins scurry beneath the long melody sung by the firsts. The ending is gentle.

Death of Tybalt moves into the morning streets soon after Romeo and Juliet's secret marriage. Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, challenges Romeo to a duel, but Romeo refuses because he alone knows they are now related. Mercutio accepts the challenge, and turns the duel into a farcical dance. Tybalt surreptitiously stabs Mercutio, who dies while his friends congratulate him on his convincing death scene. When Romeo realizes that his friend really is dead, he pursues and slays Tybalt, punctuated by 15 violent chords.

The Capulets bear their slain kinsman before the Prince of Verona to demand justice. Romeo is spared execution, but is banished

The next movement, **Friar Laurence**, is a musical depiction of the humble, trustworthy, and kind-hearted Franciscan monk who hopes to make lasting peace between the feuding families by joining the young lovers in marriage.

Romeo goes into exile for having committed the murder. **Romeo at Juliet's Tomb** finds the hero in his beloved's crypt. Friar Laurence, who had married them, has given Juliet a potion that has put her into a death-like trance; his plan is that Romeo will join her at graveside and that, when she awakens, both will escape together. But Romeo has never received the Friar's message detailing the plan. Despairing over Juliet, he plunges his dagger into his heart. And Juliet, awakening from her sleep, finds Romeo dead and kills herself.

Michael Steinberg



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Being a member of the BPO is a rewarding community experience and a lot of fun. Our members are just like you – ordinary people who enjoy coming together to make extraordinary music! Auditions are held to fill vacant positions or to appoint suitable reserve players capable of filling temporary vacancies from time-to-time.

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