

KAWAI OPENING GALA: COSMOS



8:00PM

FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER 2024

REARDON THEATRE

Shauntai Sherree ABDUL-RAHMAN (b. 1978)

Wula Murun

(World Premiere)

Helena Rathbone *Violin*

Monica Curro *Violin*

Christopher Moore *Viola*

Timo-Veikko Valve *Cello*

Douglas Rutherford *Double Bass*

Luke STYLES (b. 1982)

A Shot at the Stars

Carla Blackwood *French Horn*

Sławomir CZARNECKI (b. 1949)

String Quartet No. 2, Op. 33 'Spiski'

1. *Lento*

2. *Allegro*

Orava Quartet

Daniel Kowalik *Violin*

David Dalseno *Violin*

Thomas Chawner *Viola*

Karol Kowalik *Cello*

Thomas WEELKES (c. 1576 – 1623)

Thule, the period of cosmography

/ The Andalusian merchant

The Consort of Melbourne

Katherine Norman *Soprano*

Monika Harris *Soprano*

Alex Ritter *Alto*

Hannah Pietsch *Alto*

Robin Parkin *Tenor*

Timothy Reynolds *Tenor*

Lachlan McDonald *Bass*

Steven Hodgson *Bass & Director*

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835 – 1921)

Veni creator spiritus

Carlo GESUALDO (1566 – 1613)

Mentre, mia stella, miri

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756 – 1791)

Cantate Domino omnis terra, K. 73r/2

Erich Wolfgang KORNGOLD (1897 – 1957)

Piano Quintet in E major, Op. 15

1. *Mässiges Zeitmass, mit schwungvoll blühendem Ausdruck*

2. *Adagio. Mit grösster Ruhe, stets äusserst gebunden und ausdrucksvoll*

3. *Finale. Gemessen beinahe pathetisch*

Zoë Black *Violin*

Monica Curro *Violin*

Christopher Moore *Viola*

Molly Kadarauch *Cello*

Stefan Cassomenos *Piano*

Shauntai Sherree ABDUL-RAHMAN (b. 1978)

Wula Murun

Starting out as a singer-songwriter in soul and gospel music, Shauntai has since embarked on a career in the world of opera, classical music, composition and theatre-making. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Classical Voice from the Melbourne Conservatorium and is an alumna of the Melba Opera Trust. Shauntai is currently a principal artist with Short Black Opera, through which she has played leading roles in Deborah Cheetham Fraillon's *Pecan Summer* and *Parrwang Lifts the Sky*, and Christopher Sainsbury's *The Visitors* with Victorian Opera.

As an emerging First Nations composer in Melbourne, Shauntai has performed her compositions in the Melbourne Recital Centre Salon and Hamer Hall, as well as many other prominent venues and major events throughout Australia. More recently, Shauntai is one of five First Nations composers selected as part of *Lotjpa Biyiya*, a project which will see her collaborating in a new opera to be premiered by Short Black Opera and the Sydney Conservatorium next year. Shauntai is incredibly grateful to PFSMF artistic directors Stefan Cassomenos and Monica Curro for their continued support in her compositional journey.

Wula Murun is commissioned by Port Fairy Spring Music Festival. Of *Wula Murun*, the composer writes:

Wula murun: 'speaking life into existence' (Wiradjuri Dictionary – WCC Language Program)

As a believer of creation, I was inspired to take the opportunity to write a piece about the breath of life. As this is the very opening piece of the festival, I wanted this piece to give breath to what is to come. When God spoke the world into existence, He breathed, He resonated his voice as He spoke the universe into existence, and when He breathed the breath of life into man, man became a living soul.

When addressing the cosmos, I was interested to find out that research has found the similarities of humans' cellular formation to the cosmos. Our bodies contain striking similarities to the cosmos' structure, from atoms, to cellular networks, arteries, all resembling galaxies, star systems, including a powerful resonance and energy.

What I found profound was the concept of 'string theory', which is why I chose to write for strings. Out of all the quantum theories, this theory resonates with me, as it is said that energy and resonance is made up of tiny strings, smaller than atoms that vibrate to create things, to resonate into existence, ultimately creating the universe within us and stretching forth, out into the cosmos. © Shauntai Sherree Abdul-Rahman, 2024

Luke STYLES (b. 1982)

A Shot at the Stars

Luke Styles is a British-Australian composer, prolific in opera, the theatre and instrumental music. His operas, including *Macbeth* (2015), *Ned Kelly* (2017/18) and *Awakening Shadow* (2021), have been performed at Glyndebourne, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Perth Festival and Carriageworks. In 2022, his saxophone concerto *Tracks in Orbit*, a co-commission between the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, was premiered in Cardiff, and a few months later his oratorio *Voices of Power* was premiered at the Three Choirs Festival with the Philharmonia Orchestra. Last year, Luke's vocal-orchestral work *Custodians of the Sky* was premiered at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, and in June this year his new oratorio *Jephtha's Daughter* received its premiere at Wigmore Hall.

Of *A Shot at the Stars*, the composer writes:

This solo horn work was commissioned by the London Sinfonietta for their principal horn Michael Thompson, and it is a short but personal work. My wife Ruth was a student of Michael (although she no longer plays the horn), and over years of hearing Ruth practice, I got to know a lot of solo horn repertoire and the horn parts of operas and symphonies. My work picks up some of those influences and alludes to some of the works I got to know, in particular works by Messiaen, Britten and Weber. These influences come in and out of focus as the piece charts its own territory, encompassing bursts of energy, rhythm and expressive melodies. © Luke Styles, 2024

Śławomir CZARNECKI (b. 1949)
String Quartet No. 2, Op. 33 'Spiski'

1. *Lento*
2. *Allegro*

A student of Piotr Perkowski, Romuald Twardowski and Olivier Messiaen, Polish composer Śławomir Czarnecki has amassed a large body of music, including symphonic poems, concertos, cantatas and other sacred works, and many solo, chamber and vocal pieces. Much of his music is written in a neoclassical idiom, and draws inspiration from Polish folklore, incorporating local dance forms and historical themes. Czarnecki currently teaches at the Józef Elsner Music School in Warsaw.

Very much in the vein of Bartók and Szymanowski, the Second String Quartet was written in 1997 during a period of intensive musicological research in the mountainous Spisz region of southern Poland. Drawing on the area's rich history and mix of cultures, Czarnecki casts the work in the form of a *csárdás*, a hot-blooded folk dance of Hungarian origin. The two movements of the quartet follow the traditional form of the dance, beginning slowly, with more lyrical, expressive music, before upping the tempo and ending in a blaze of festive exuberance. © Douglas Rutherford, 2024

Thomas WEELKES (c. 1576 – 1623)
Thule, the period of cosmography / The Andalusian merchant

Though perhaps overshadowed by his contemporaries Byrd, Dowland and Gibbons, Thomas Weelkes is widely regarded as one of the greatest and most creative of the English madrigalists. Published in the year 1600, *Thule* and *The Andalusian merchant* constitute a prime example of his musical brilliance. Alas, the name of the poet who devised the words has been lost in the sands of time, but Weelkes' tone-painting is superlative, full of rhythmic energy and rare chromaticism. Through the course of the music, the wonders of the natural world are contemplated with vivid imagery – Thule being a mythic land at the end (or period) of the Earth. Yet both madrigals end with an exaltation of the greater wonder of the human being: "...yet more wondrous I, whose heart with fear doth freeze, with love doth fry." © Douglas Rutherford, 2024

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835 – 1921)
Veni creator spiritus

Composed in October 1858 and dedicated to his friend Franz Liszt, this *Veni creator spiritus* (*Come creator spirit*) is one of 50 or so hymns, motets and other short sacred works by Saint-Saëns that have survived to the present day. The majority of these pieces came about as part of his duties as titular organist at the Madeleine, then the official church of the French Empire, where the young composer had just been appointed – quite a coup for the 22-year-old. Scored for a choir of tenors and basses, Saint-Saëns adeptly combines elements of Palestrinian polyphony and Gregorian chant, culminating in a powerful final amen. © Douglas Rutherford, 2024

Carlo GESUALDO (1566 – 1613)
Mentre, mia stella, miri

At the same time a highly inventive yet conservative composer, Carlo Gesualdo is also infamous as the Prince of Venosa who killed his wife and her paramour after catching them in his bed, *post flagrante*. Though the prince's later madrigals (and eventual self-isolation) attest to the psychological toll of the bloody double murder, his first two books of madrigals, originally published in 1591, quite possibly were written before the tragedy occurred. Taken from Book I, *Mentre, mia stella, miri* (*While, my star, you wonder*) paints a beautiful, celestially imbued picture of two lovers watching the sky at night. © Douglas Rutherford, 2024

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756 – 1791)
Cantate Domino omnis terra, K. 73r/2

This beguiling little *Cantate Domino* (*Sing to the Lord*) forms part of a group of four puzzle canons that Mozart wrote most likely at the age of 14, after spending three months in Bologna under the tutelage of revered pedagogue and composer Padre Giambattista Martini. Mozart took the texts and some of the melodies of his puzzle canons directly from ones found in the first two volumes of Martini's *Storia della Musica*. The 'puzzle' here lies in the fact that, as originally notated, only the first vocal part is written out, leaving it up to the other singers to figure out or guess their entrances – preferably in rehearsal and not in concert. © Douglas Rutherford, 2024

Erich Wolfgang KORNGOLD (1897 – 1957)

Piano Quintet in E major, Op. 15

1. *Mässiges Zeitmass, mit schwungvoll blühendem Ausdruck*
2. *Adagio. Mit grösster Ruhe, stets äusserst gebunden und ausdrucksvoll*
3. *Finale. Gemessen beinahe pathetisch*

A prodigy to rival Mozart and Mendelssohn, and arguably the last of the great Austro-German Romantic composers, Erich Korngold was universally celebrated for much of his life. However, in his later years and for decades following his death, Korngold's music fell almost into oblivion, due largely to his "old-fashioned" style being eclipsed by Schoenberg and Stravinsky, and the stigma of his association with Hollywood, where he escaped before the war and spent the last 19 years of his life. Thankfully Korngold's standing has gradually been revived over recent decades, and this evening's gala concludes with a performance of his magnificent Piano Quintet in E major.

Korngold set to work on the quintet in the summer of 1921 and completed it the following year. At this point in time, he was approaching the height of his fame in Europe, following the double-premiere in Hamburg and Cologne of *Die tote Stadt*, widely considered his greatest opera. According to biographer Jessica Duchon, "[The quintet] is the work of a ridiculously gifted 24-year-old composer head over heels in love." Indeed, in the second movement, Korngold adopted some of the music from his own *Songs of Farewell*, which he had just composed partly in tribute to his future wife, Luise von Sonnenthal, after their parents had forbidden them from seeing each other.

The sweeping, quasi-operatic first movement opens with bold, declamatory chords in the piano and an extroverted, intensely romantic theme shared amongst the strings. A calmer, beautifully lyrical second subject eventually emerges, first heard in the cello over cascading triplet and quaver figures in the piano. The Adagio that follows, at turns ethereal and ecstatic, is a set of nine variations on the song *Moon, thus you rise once more*, from his *Songs of Farewell*. Korngold jolts us back to reality with a fierce, unison outcry in the strings, marking the arrival of the rondo-finale. Full of wild playfulness and impish humour, the music bounces about unpredictably before the final race to the finish line, where Korngold suddenly and artfully ends with the very opening theme of the whole quintet.