

# SHARDS OF LIGHT

11:30AM

SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER 2024

REARDON THEATRE



**Melody EÖTVÖS (b. 1984)**

***Shivelight***

(World premiere)

Quercus Trio

Carla Blackwood *French Horn*

Elizabeth Sellars *Violin*

Rhodri Clarke *Piano*

**Sir Edward ELGAR (1857 – 1934)**

**Violin Sonata in E minor, Op. 82**

1. *Allegro*

2. *Romance. Andante*

3. *Allegro non troppo*

Helena Rathbone *Violin*

Stefan Cassomenos *Piano*

**Melody EÖTVÖS (b. 1984)**

***Shivelight***

Melody Eötvös was born in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. From the age of five, she studied piano and music theory under her parents' tutelage, and at eight she began learning the cello, which coincided with her first experimentations in composition. Melody has composed 19 orchestral works to date, and embraces both acoustic and electronic components across her extensive output. Melody holds a Doctor of Music from the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University, and a Master of Music from the Royal Academy of Music, London. She is currently a Lecturer in Composition, Aural Studies, and Orchestration at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Recent commissions include a major new work for Synergy Percussion through Percussion Australia, a string trio for the Stradbroke Chamber Music Festival, a wind quintet for Arcadia Winds in celebration of their 10-year anniversary, and an orchestral work for the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music Symphony Orchestra's tour to Singapore and Malaysia.

*Shivelight* is commissioned by Continuo Community, through the awarding to Eötvös of the Continuo Commissioning Circle's 2023 commission. The composer writes:

This work takes its title from a word first used by the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, who coined the term to describe the shafts of light that pierce and filter through the canopies and foliage of trees.

I have an affinity for finding and growing plants that thrive in the given climate and environment, very much in opposition to those who force them to try and grow where they can't and shouldn't. As a child of an immigrant, the metaphor of how the oak grows in Australia has another very particular connection to me – through my Hungarian ancestry.

I have a now distant and invisible connection to my European ancestry, and while I know that is where my ancestors once lived and thrived, it's now blended indistinguishably into my heritage – I don't speak the language; I've never set foot in Hungary; and my father (the last link) has passed away. As a result, it feels like my Australian identity has become stronger, even though my origins can be traced back to somewhere else.

*Shivelight* is inspired and generated from the philosophy at the core of the unique and remarkable ensemble, Quercus Trio: "True oak trees aren't native to Australia, yet an acorn grows its roots deep into Australian soil and becomes an oak tree, wholly itself and of the place where it stands, whilst still being connected to its European origins and genus. It grows and takes on the Australian soil and air, thriving and becoming a part of its environment." © Melody Eötvös, 2024

## **Sir Edward ELGAR (1857 – 1934)**

### **Violin Sonata in E minor, Op. 82**

1. *Allegro*

2. *Romance. Andante*

3. *Allegro non troppo*

Composed over three weeks between late August and mid-September 1918, Elgar was inspired to write his Violin Sonata in the verdant surrounds of Brinkwells, a small cottage nestled deep in the West Sussex countryside, where Elgar, his wife Alice and their daughter Carice stayed for about three years. The family had just recently moved there to escape the heavy atmosphere of wartime London, and though at first Elgar concerned himself with fishing, gardening, amateur carpentry and exploring in the woods, eventually the old composer had his piano pulled out of storage and sent up by rail. The day after it arrived, his wife noted in her diary, “E. writing wonderful new music, different from anything else of his. [I call] it wood magic. So elusive and delicate.”

Nine days later, Elgar was visited by his good friend Billy Reed, concertmaster of the London Symphony, and together they worked through the nascent sonata. Reed recalled, “...[it] was well advanced. All the first movement was written, half the second – he finished this, actually, while I was there – and the opening section of the finale. We used to play up to the blank page and then he would say, ‘And then what?’ – and we would go out to explore the wood or to fish in the River Arun.” Elgar described Reed’s visit more concisely: “fiddled, fished & fooled”.

As the Cello Concerto is often characterised as Elgar’s ‘war requiem’, so his Violin Sonata might be considered a more private, personal reflection on those dark years, at least in part. The work opens frenetically with a resolute but embattled theme in the violin, marked by wide intervallic leaps and forceful accented notes. This intensity gives way to a tranquil second subject, a constantly undulating arpeggiated figure in the solo part, which Billy Reed described as like the wind blowing through the Aeolian harp that Elgar had wedged in his study window. Though here and there glimmers of sunlight peak through the clouds, agitation and melancholy pervade the first movement.

Repose is found in the second movement, the heart of which reveals a soulful romance, veiled on either side by a sort of shadowy caprice. Finally the last movement sways gently into being with an enchanting pastoral calm, gradually building to a broad, heroic declamation. In contrast to the first movement, the music of the finale largely exudes a sense of brightness and optimism. Near the end, Elgar poignantly quotes the theme of the romance, finally culminating in a joyfully exuberant coda. © Douglas Rutherford, 2024