

KAWAI OPENING GALA: MOSAIC

8:00 PM

FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER 2025

REARDON THEATRE



Aaron WYATT (b. 1982)

Djeran

Christopher Moore, *Solo Viola*

Monica Curro, *Violin*

Jenny Khafagi, *Violin*

Caroline Henbest, *Viola*

Molly Kadarauch, *Cello*

Rohan Dasika, *Double Bass*

Elena KATS-CHERNIN (b. 1957)

Eliza Aria

Mia Robinson, *Soprano*

Monica Curro, *Violin*

Jenny Khafagi, *Violin*

Caroline Henbest, *Viola*

Molly Kadarauch, *Cello*

Rohan Dasika, *Double Bass*

Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913 – 1994)

Variations on a Theme by Paganini (arr. Crabb)

James Crabb, *Classical Accordion*

Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Georges BIZET (1838 – 1875) / Pablo de SARASATE

(1844 – 1908) / Efrem ZIMBALIST (1889 – 1985)

Carmen Fantasy (arr. Cassomenos)

Francesco Celata, *Clarinet*

Jonathan Békés, *Cello*

James Crabb, *Classical Accordion*

Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Introduction. Allegro moderato

Andante con molto sentimento

Moderato

Allegro moderato

Presto

Johannes BRAHMS (1833 – 1897)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25

Zoë Black, *Violin*

Christopher Moore, *Viola*

Timo-Veikko Valve, *Cello*

Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

1. *Allegro*

2. *Intermezzo. Allegro ma non troppo – Trio. Animato*

3. *Andante con moto*

4. *Rondo alla Zingarese. Presto*

KAWAI
— THE FUTURE OF THE PIANO —

Aaron WYATT (born 1982)
Djeran

Aaron Wyatt is a violist, violinist, conductor, composer, programmer and academic. Originally from Perth, he spent many years performing casually with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, before moving to Melbourne to take up an assistant lecturer position at Monash University. In 2021, he became the first Indigenous Australian to conduct a state symphony orchestra in concert, and has since gone on to further engagements with the Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. As a composer, Aaron has written for Ensemble Offspring, GreyWing Ensemble and Ensemble Dutala. He is a long-time member of new music ensemble Decibel, and is also currently artist in residence with Speak Percussion.

Conceived for solo viola and strings, *Djeran* was commissioned in 2023 by the Melbourne String Ensemble as part of their First Nations Seasons Project. In the words of the composer, “*Djeran* is the Noongar season from April to May. Represented by the colour green, it is the time of year when the oppressive heat of the summer months finally gives way to cooler weather and dewy mornings, when banksias start to flower, and the red gums and summer flame add their hue to the landscape. It is a time for renewed life and activity that took on a particularly personal note this year (and made the season an obvious choice), as my partner Cathrin and I welcomed our first child into the world. It is to him that this work is dedicated. (Life pro tip: don’t take on a commission that’s due when you’re going to have a newborn to contend with, if you want a stress-free existence.)

The work is in a single movement, but within that it has a condensed three-movement structure. After a slow intro that brings us from the heat of the previous season, *Bunuru*, into *Djeran*, each of the three sections begins with a solo viola moment that sets the tone of what is to come. The first is a celebration of life, of the return of water to a parched landscape, and of the birds, freshwater fish and frogs that revel playfully in this. The second section brings to mind a still, cool, starlit night. Some of the melodic fragments in the viola introduction are drawn from a simplified transcription of the song of the *koolbardi* (magpie), while the ensemble entry brings with it an ode to our new child. The final section marks the coming of rains, the blooming of the red flowers that colour the season, and a drive to prepare for the cold of *Makuru* that lies ahead.”

Elena KATS-CHERNIN (born 1957)
Eliza Aria

One of Australia’s foremost contemporary composers, Elena Kats-Chernin’s vibrant and distinctive music has reached millions worldwide, featuring at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, the 2003 Rugby World Cup and 2018 Commonwealth Games. Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, she has been the recipient of numerous prizes, including Helpmann, Limelight, Sounds Australian and Sydney Theatre Awards, the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award, and the 2022 Australian Women in Music Award for Artistic Excellence.

Kats-Chernin writes for ballet, opera, theatre, television and the concert hall, with her music performed by all the major Australian symphony orchestras, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Brandenburg Orchestra and World Orchestra, and a multitude of international orchestras and opera houses. Her music is published exclusively by Boosey & Hawkes, appearing on labels such as Deutsche Grammophon, Universal Music, ABC Classics, and Move, among others.

Thanks to its prominent use by Lloyds Bank in their “For the Journey” advertising campaign, *Eliza Aria* has become Kats-Chernin’s most well-known piece of music. Long-time listeners of ABC Radio National will also recognise it as the theme music to *Late Night Live* from 2011 to 2016. Originally for soprano and orchestra, Kats-Chernin has made well over a dozen arrangements of the aria for a variety of forces, including soprano, strings and piano, as with this evening’s performance.

Outside of its fame as a standalone piece, *Eliza Aria* forms part of Act I of Kats-Chernin’s 2002 ballet *Wild Swans*. Based on the Hans Christian Andersen fairytale of the same name, *Wild Swans* recounts the story of the princess Eliza, who must rescue her 11 brothers when they are turned into swans by their wicked-witch stepmother. In the words of the composer, the aria introduces Eliza “and expresses her pure soul, innocence, and faith in the good of the world”.

Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913 – 1994)
***Variations on a Theme by Paganini* (arr. Crabb)**

Allegro capriccioso – Meno mosso – Poco lento. Dolcissimo e molto legato – Allegro molto – Ancora più mosso

Hailed for his powerfully expressive and boldly innovative music, Lutosławski is one of the giants of 20th century music. The *Paganini Variations* are among his most popular pieces, and have their genesis in 1941 Nazi-occupied Warsaw. Barely three weeks after the outbreak of war, Lutosławski's unit was captured and taken prisoner by the Wehrmacht, but the composer managed to escape, making the 400-kilometre journey back to Warsaw on foot.

For the next few years, under a total ban on formal concerts, Lutosławski supported himself by playing piano duos in cafes with his friend, fellow composer and pianist Andrzej Panufnik. Together they created some 200 works for two pianos. When the Nazis razed Warsaw to the ground in 1944, almost all of this music was lost – with the sole exception of the *Paganini Variations*.

Based on the fertile theme of Paganini's 24th Caprice for solo violin, Lutosławski's twelve variations are a powerhouse of creative invention. Save for the sixth variation – a moment of fleeting, ethereal beauty – the listener is swept along amid torrents of rhythmic energy and dazzling virtuosity. In this evening's performance, we hear James Crabb's remarkable arrangement of the work for piano and classical accordion.

Georges BIZET (1838 – 1875) / Pablo de SARASATE (1844 – 1908) / Efrem ZIMBALIST (1889 – 1985)
***Carmen Fantasy* (arr. Cassomenos)**

Introduction. Allegro moderato
Andante con molto sentimento
Moderato
Allegro moderato
Presto

Of the myriad fantasies, suites and variations that have been inspired by the intoxicating themes of Bizet's *Carmen*, the most famous remains that of the Spanish violinist and composer Pablo de Sarasate. Written in 1881, Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy* is a tour de force through some of the opera's most popular numbers, including the *Aragonaise*, *Habanera*, *Seguidilla* and Gypsy Dance. In 1936, the great Russian-American violinist Efrem Zimbalist adapted Sarasate's fantasy into a tighter, more lyrical version, which we hear tonight in an arrangement by Stefan for clarinet, accordion and piano.

Johannes BRAHMS (1833 – 1897)
Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25

1. *Allegro*
2. *Intermezzo. Allegro ma non troppo – Trio. Animato*
3. *Andante con moto*
4. *Rondo alla Zingarese. Presto*

Along with his First Piano Concerto, all three of Brahms's piano quartets have their origins in the mid to late 1850s – the most turbulent period of the composer's life. In September 1853, Brahms travelled to Düsseldorf to meet and play for Robert and Clara Schumann. The two were completely bowled over by the man and his music, with Robert famously hailing Brahms in the press as a sort of musical messiah a few weeks later. The following February, however, Robert's precarious mental health finally collapsed, and after a failed suicide attempt, he was moved to a sanatorium. Brahms quickly resettled in Düsseldorf to support Clara and her seven children, all the while trying to reconcile his own deepening love for her with his respect for her husband, who ultimately died in the sanatorium two years later.

Published in 1861, the First Piano Quartet bears some imprint of the storminess of these years, though overall it is lighter than some of his other works from that period. More significantly, it reveals a brilliant young composer taking up the mantle of Beethoven, and also boldly asserting his own voice. Indeed, Brahms was confident enough of the work that, for his first ever public performance in Vienna the following year, he chose it to be the one and only piece on the program. At a run-through before the concert, the violinist Joseph Hellmesberger exclaimed, "This man is the heir of Beethoven!"

And in true Beethoven style, the opening theme of the first movement is like a seed that will generate all of the movement's musical material. Introduced by the piano in sombre, wistful tones, it casts a pervasive twilight air that, despite all the movement's passionate lyricism and heroic storm and stress, persists to the very end. A fleet-footed intermezzo ensues, its melody spelling out a transposed version of the so-called Clara theme – a personal musical motif devised by Robert for his wife. Though initially furtive and forlorn, the shadows lift in the sparkling and buoyant trio section.

With the arrival of the expansive third movement, we reach the quartet's brightest and most optimistic music. It opens and closes with an ardent, amorous theme in the strings, framing a quixotic march-like middle section. Brahms drives the quartet home with a fiery rondo-finale "in the gypsy style", full of impish playfulness and wild elation, described wryly by Andrew Ford as "the authentic sound of the Austro-Hungarian Empire".