

HARMONIC ARTISANS

11:30 AM

SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER 2025

REARDON THEATRE



Frédéric CHOPIN (1810 – 1849)
Selections from the Mazurkas

Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

1. *Op. 50, No. 3 in C# minor*
2. *Op. 6, No. 3 in E major*
3. *Op. 7, No. 1 in B♭ major*
4. *Op. 24, No. 2 in C major*
5. *Op. 30, No. 2 in B minor*
6. *Op. 41, No. 3 in B major*
7. *Op. 56, No. 1 in B major*

Lee BRADSHAW (b. 1977)
Piano Trio (world premiere)

PLEXUS

- Monica Curro, *Violin*
- Philip Arkinstall, *Clarinet*
- Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

1. *Con moto assai*
2. *Andante, triste*
3. *Scherzo. Vivace*
4. *March. Moderato ma non troppo*

Frédéric CHOPIN (1810 – 1849)

Selections from the Mazurkas

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If Johann Strauss II is the Waltz King and Benny Goodman the King of Swing, Chopin... well, reigns supreme with the mazurka. Over the course of his life, he wrote more than 50 of them, making it the musical form he returned to most often, and in many ways the one most reflective of his identity. Originally a lively, offbeat folk dance in triple time from Mazovia (central-eastern Poland), by the late 18th century the mazurka was a staple of Polish ballrooms, and growing increasingly popular in aristocratic circles throughout Europe. In the hands of Chopin, it became an artform of extraordinary subtlety and depth, at once a symbol of national identity and a medium for the most intimate expression.

Chopin wrote his first mazurka in about 1825 when he was still a teenager, while his final one, Op. 68, No. 4, is believed to be the last piece he ever wrote, a year or two before his death. In this way, the mazurkas not only trace the inner journey of his life; they display his constantly evolving powers of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic invention. Intimate in scale, yet vast in expressive range, they require of the player, in the words of Chopin scholar Mieczysław Tomaszewski, “an almost naive freshness and a mature mastery”. For most audiences, they were (and are) like a glimpse into an alluring, exotic world. For Chopin, however, his homeland under the Russian yoke, they were a lifeline to a place he could never return.

For today's concert, Stefan presents a group of seven mazurkas that capture a moment in Chopin's life. The year is 1843, and his Opus 50 mazurkas have just been published. As he sits down at the piano, Chopin's mind wanders to the past, back to his first published set of mazurkas from 1830/1, when he was marooned in Vienna during the November Uprising. Then he remembers the years and mazurkas in between – Opus 24, around the time of his meetings with Mendelssohn and Schumann; Opus 30, amidst his doomed engagement to Maria Wodzińska; and Opus 41, during his travels with George Sand. In the glow of nostalgia, he gathers the threads and starts on his next mazurka, Op. 56, No. 1.

Lee BRADSHAW (born 1977)

Piano Trio (world premiere)

1. *Con moto assai*
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Lee Bradshaw is an Australian composer whose music spans opera, orchestral, chamber and cross-genre works. His opera *Zarqa Al Yamama* (2024) was the first Western opera sung in Arabic, and the first opera ever staged in Saudi Arabia, in a landmark production featuring Dame Sarah Connolly, the Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno and the Dresdner Sinfoniker. His *Requiem For Those Left Behind* (2024) is the first Australian classical work premiered in Egypt, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of Australian-Egyptian diplomatic relations.

Beyond classical composition, Bradshaw leads the progressive rock project Horizon, whose 2025 album includes the final studio performances of Noiseworks guitarist Stuart “Chet” Fraser, alongside Brett Garsed and Angus Burchall of the John Farnham Band. Bradshaw's forthcoming projects include a major co-commission from the Brundibár Arts Festival (UK) and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, in addition to several international releases recorded at Emil Berliner Studios. Writing on Bradshaw's music, OperaWire described it as “striking for its fusion of tradition with modernity, moving between intimacy and grandeur with clarity of voice”.

Bradshaw's new Piano Trio was the first major work completed after *Zarqa Al Yamama*, and the first in a concentrated series of chamber works written in late 2023. Composed for Stefan and his ensemble PLEXUS, it extends a longstanding collaboration with Stefan that also includes a new recording of Bradshaw's First Piano Sonata, captured at Emil Berliner Studios in July 2024. An impassioned work emerging from a deeply personal landscape, Bradshaw's Piano Trio is shaped by the composer's strong ties to his mother's Eastern European heritage and his cultural identity as an Australian-born artist.