

CHAMBER CONCERT 1

# Phantasy

CHAMBER CONCERT 2

# Giocoso

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SEASON 2021



June

Wed 9 & Sat 12  
Elder Hall





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## WELCOME

Chamber music and orchestral music are intrinsically linked. Whilst moments in a gargantuan symphony by Mahler can evoke the most tender intimacy, passages in a Brahms Quintet can be epic and visceral beyond words. It is for this reason that so many orchestral musicians also play chamber music. And of course, it is so much fun!

With a whole orchestra of instruments available for these concerts, the musical possibilities extended are far beyond what one would normally expect from a traditional chamber music recital. Similarly, as these concerts draw on music from early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, you'll enjoy an astonishingly varied palette of styles and colours, as composers of that era revelled in the unavoidable collision of old and new musical ideas.

It is Igor Stravinsky – the towering figure of 20<sup>th</sup> century music who bridges the two concerts. The folksy and swaggering Suite from *The Soldier's Tale* contrasts with the angular neo-classicism of his Octet for Winds. A selection from some of Stravinsky's many contemporaries round out the program. Maurice Ravel and Germaine Tailleferre fly the tricolour with luscious writing in the impressionistic style, whilst a teenage Benjamin Britten gives his occasionally pastoral Phantasy Quartet a surprisingly modern edge. Richard Strauss' Sextet from his opera *Capriccio* shows us that the romantic spirit was alive and well in 1942 whereas Ernő Dohnányi injects the tradition of Brahms with Hungarian sense of humour in his Sextet. The result is truly *Giocoso*!

I invite you to share in our love of intimate, spontaneous and epic music making.



**Lachlan Bramble**

CHAMBER SERIES CURATOR

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a baton, with another hand visible in the background. The baton is a thin, light-colored stick that extends diagonally across the frame. The background is solid black, creating a high-contrast image.

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## CHAMBER CONCERT ONE

# Phantasy

Wed 9 Jun, 6.30pm

DURATION

65 mins, no interval

STRAUSS

**String sextet from *Capriccio*, Op.85**

**Cameron Hill** Violin

**Gillian Braithwaite** Violin

**Justin Julian** Viola

**Michael Robertson** Viola

**Simon Cobcroft** Cello

**Gemma Phillips** Cello

STRAVINSKY

**Octet for Wind Instruments**

*Sinfonia (Lento – Allegro moderato)*

*Tema con variazioni (Andantino)*

*Finale (Tempo giusto)*

**Geoffrey Collins** Flute

**Darren Skelton** Clarinet

**Mark Gaydon** Bassoon

**Jackie Newcomb** Bassoon

**Josh Rogan** Trumpet

**Martin Phillipson** Trumpet

**Colin Prichard** Trombone

**Amanda Tillett** Bass Trombone

BRITTEN

***Phantasy Quartet* in F minor, Op.2**

**Josh Oates** Oboe

**Shirin Lim** Violin

**Cecily Satchell** Viola

**Gemma Phillips** Cello

RAVEL

***Introduction and Allegro***

**Suzanne Handel** Harp

**Lachlan Bramble** Violin

**Julia Brittain** Violin

**Justin Julian** Viola

**Ewen Bramble** Cello

**Julia Grenfell** Flute

**Mitchell Berick** Clarinet

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1864—1949

## Richard Strauss

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### String sextet from *Capriccio*, Op.85

Richard Strauss' final staged work, the opera *Capriccio*, is centred around the question which has plagued creatives for centuries: which should come first, the music or the text? Which element of the artistic process should reign supreme?

This debate plays out in a French chateau in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, where the elegant (and single) Countess Madeline is entertaining guests. Among them are two bachelors vying for her attention: a composer, Flamand, and a poet, Antoine. The opening minutes of the sextet serve as the opera's prelude. But as the curtain rises, we see the piece is actually being performed at the dinner party – it was composed by Flamand as a birthday gift for Madeline. Over the course of the evening, both the writer and the composer argue their case.

In keeping with the opera's setting, the sextet is broadly reminiscent of chamber music. At the same time, Strauss retains his rich harmonic idiom and aristocratic skill in elegantly balancing six voices without creating a cluttered sound.

The sextet was played in a private concert before *Capriccio* premiered, for an audience brought together by the Governor of Vienna. In return for this gesture, the Governor promised to shield Strauss and his family (including his Jewish daughter-in-law) from the effects of Hitler's regime, so long as the composer did not publicly speak out against the Nazis.

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**DURATION** 12 minutes



1882—1971

## Igor Stravinsky

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### Octet for Wind Instruments

*Sinfonia (Lento – Allegro moderato)*

*Tema con variazioni (Andantino)*

*Finale (Tempo giusto)*

'My Octet is a musical object', Stravinsky wrote, and indeed this work of 1922 invites contemplation of its ingenious musical devices. Its form also harks back to the divertimento music of 18<sup>th</sup> century composers, and Stravinsky's 'rediscovery' of this medium, he tells us, came to him in a dream. 'I found myself (in my dream state) in a small room surrounded by a small number of instrumentalists who were playing some very agreeable music'. On waking, he couldn't recall the music, but remembered counting eight instruments – pairs of bassoons, trumpets and trombones, and one each of flute and clarinet. 'I awoke from this little dream concert in a state of delight, and the next morning I began to compose the Octet'.

Stravinsky's new objectivism coincided with his 'discovery' of sonata form, and the first movement is a sonata allegro with slow introduction, a form to be found in certain Haydn symphonies. The second movement – a theme and ingenious set of variations – leads, via a flute cadenza, to the final movement, a Rondo, with a typically 'Stravinskian' way of saying 'the end': chords in a compound metre, hesitant yet final.

Edited from an annotation by David Garrett © 2005

**DURATION** 14 minutes



1913—1976

## Benjamin Britten

### *Phantasy Quartet* in F minor, Op.2

Britten wrote his *Phantasy Quartet* when he was 19, while studying at the Royal College of Music. The 'phantasy' of the title refers to a compositional form conceived by Walter Willson Cobbett, adapted from the fancies and fantasias of Henry Purcell and William Byrd. Cobbett was a businessman and amateur violinist who established a competition for newly-composed chamber music in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A phantasy needed to have a short running time, contrasting movements, and an even focus on all the instruments in the ensemble. Britten actually won the Cobbett prize, but with a different piece: his *Phantasy* in F minor for string quintet.

Britten dedicated the *Phantasy Quartet* to oboist Leon Goossens, who took part in the work's first performances. The piece was well-received, and subsequently marked Britten's first international success, when it was performed in Florence by the International Society of Contemporary Music.

The quartet begins with a barely perceptible idea played by the cello. This figure develops into a brisk march motif taken up by the whole ensemble. Within the short running time, the quartet moves through lyrical phrases on the oboe, a section of swift intricate rhythms, and a slow movement on strings. The quartet concludes with the opening march motif trailing off into the distance.

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**DURATION** 14 minutes



1875—1937

## Maurice Ravel

### *Introduction and Allegro*

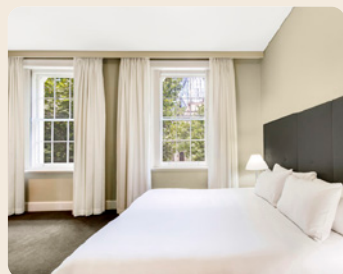
In 1905, the harp was caught up in a marketing battle between the rival firms of Pleyel and Erard. Pleyel had commissioned Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* (1904) to demonstrate the virtues of their new invention, the 'chromatic harp'. This was an attempted improvement on the double-action harp invented by the French piano builder Sébastien Erard in 1810. The Erard firm commissioned Ravel's work. (The Pleyel 'chromatic' harp, which created more problems than it solved, was short-lived, and both works are now played on descendants of the Erard-type harp.)

The *Introduction and Allegro* is a miniature concerto or concert-piece for harp 'accompanied by string quartet, flute and clarinet'. The *Introduction* introduces the two main ideas on which the whole rhapsodic work is based: a succession of intervals of fifths and fourths, then a rising and falling scale sounded by the strings. Once the *Allegro* begins, Ravel displays almost all the feats of virtuosity of which the harp is capable. He answers the technical challenge with beauty, and the piece delights the ear by the sheen, transparency, and unexpected richness of its sonority.

Edited from an annotation © Symphony Australia 2004

**DURATION** 11 minutes





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## CHAMBER CONCERT TWO

# Giocoso

Sat 12 Jun, 6.30pm

DURATION

70 mins, no interval

STRAVINSKY

### Suite from *The Soldier's Tale*

*The Soldier's March*

*The Soldier's Violin*

*The Little Concert*

*Three Dances (Tango – Waltz – Ragtime)*

*The Devil's Triumphal March*

**Cameron Hill** Violin

**Mitchell Berick** Clarinet

**Kristian Chong** Piano

TAILLEFERRE

### String Quartet

I. *Moderé*

II. *Intermède*

III. *Final. Vif – Très rythmé – Un peu plus lent*

**Emma Perkins** Violin

**Janet Anderson** Violin

**Michael Robertson** Viola

**Cameron Waters** Cello

DOHNÁNYI

### Sextet in C, Op.37

*Allegro appassionato*

*Intermezzo: Adagio*

*Allegro con sentimento – Poco Adagio, Andante tranquillo*

*Finale: Allegro vivace, giocoso*

**Kristian Chong** Piano

**Lachlan Bramble** Violin

**Linda Garrett** Viola

**Simon Cobcroft** Cello

**Dean Newcomb** Clarinet

**Adrian Uren** Horn

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1882—1971

## Igor Stravinsky

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### Suite from *The Soldier's Tale*

*The Soldier's March*

*The Soldier's Violin*

*The Little Concert*

*Three Dances (Tango – Waltz – Ragtime)*

*The Devil's Triumphal March*

Stravinsky was living in Switzerland when he created the short mixed-media theatre piece *The Soldier's Tale*, on which he collaborated with his friend and neighbour, the Swiss novelist C. F. Ramuz. Composed in 1918, it had a spoken narration (in French), and with an eye to the wartime restrictions that were affecting even neutral Switzerland, it was designed to be performable under the most makeshift of conditions by only a small company of actors, dancers and instrumentalists. Even so, after a heavily subsidised single performance in Lausanne on 28 September 1918, plans to tour the work to Geneva and beyond had to be abandoned almost immediately, as a result of the local onset of the international influenza epidemic, which by the end of that year reached as far as Melbourne.

Thereafter, in an attempt to ensure the wider utility and saleability of the music alone, the cash-strapped composer extracted two suites from his score, of which this is the first. The score's origins are largely Eastern European, with its recollections of traditional Russian, Hungarian, Gypsy, and even Jewish Klezmer street music. As well, Stravinsky included his own original recreations of an Argentinian tango and an American rag.

In its theatrical format, the work's scenario is based only loosely on a Russian folk tale about a violin-playing soldier and the devil. The concert suite retains the key elements of the original plot which, as further developed by Ramuz, bears closer resemblance to the Western European Faust legend. The soldier marching home on leave (*The Soldier's March*) begins to play his fiddle (*The Soldier's Violin*); he meets the devil in disguise, who obtains the soldier's violin in exchange for vast riches. The soldier is eventually disillusioned with his wealth, and, challenging the devil to a game of chance, wins back his fiddle, and cures a princess of her illness by playing to her (*The Little Concert*), after which she dances (*Tango – Vales – Rag*). When the devil tries to thwart their marriage, the soldier takes the fiddle and forces the devil to dance until exhausted (*The Devil's Dance*). The couple embrace, yet still the story ends with the devil reclaiming both the fiddle and the soldier's soul (*The Devil's Triumphal March*).

Adapted from an annotation © Graeme Skinner 2008

**DURATION** 15 minutes





1892—1983

## Germaine Tailleferre

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### String Quartet

- I. *Moderé*
- II. *Intermède*
- III. *Final. Vif – Très rythmé – Un peu plus lent*

Germaine Tailleferre was a talented pianist and composer whose works were performed for the fashionable circles of Parisian society. Tailleferre is also known as the only female member of the collective of composers known as *Les Six*.

While studying at the Paris Conservatoire, Tailleferre won a number of awards in harmony and counterpoint. To get to the institution, she had to overcome her father's fierce opposition – he compared the shame of his daughter attending the Conservatoire to her becoming a street walker. He eventually relented, although he never gave any financial support, leaving Tailleferre to fund her own studies through tutoring younger students.

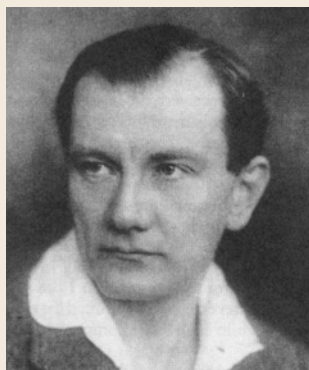
One auspicious day, Tailleferre was introduced to Erik Satie at the home of pianist Marcelle Meyer. Satie was struck by what he heard in the pieces, so much so that he invited Tailleferre to contribute to a concert series he was curating at a Montparnasse artists' studio in the rue Huyghens. The series was entitled *Furniture Music*, as the program was designed to complement the art on display with light, gently bubbling background music listeners could sit on like furniture.

Tailleferre's *Sonatina* for Strings opened one of the *Furniture Music* concerts and was performed by an all-female string quartet. The *Sonatina* later developed into the first two movements of her string quartet. A number of the composers programmed in this concert went on to become Tailleferre's artistic colleagues in *Les Six*: Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey, and Francis Poulenc.

Tailleferre explores a number of stylistic choices within this short piece. Two main themes are stated in the first movement, but not developed at length. Tailleferre is unafraid to give all four instruments melodic roles, with motifs played by the violins heard alongside countermelodies on the cello. The final movement brings together intricate, rippling rhythms with a burst of dissonant colour.

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**DURATION** 12 minutes



1877—1960

**Ernő Dohnányi**

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**Sextet in C, Op.37**

*Allegro appassionato*

*Intermezzo: Adagio*

*Allegro con sentimento – Poco Adagio, Andante tranquillo*

*Finale: Allegro vivace, giocoso*

Dohnányi's first musical training was from his father, an amateur cellist. It rapidly became clear that the boy was preternaturally gifted as a pianist, but rather than travel from his native Bratislava to Vienna or Berlin, the young Dohnányi set a precedent by deciding to study at the Budapest Academy. His friend and colleague, the younger Béla Bartók followed his example, and in doing so helped to establish the Academy as a major musical institution.

In 1898 Dohnányi stunned the London public with a performance of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto; within a decade he was regarded as one of the finest pianists alive. At the invitation of Brahms' violinist colleague Joachim, Dohnányi taught in Berlin from 1905-1915, returning to Budapest to single-handedly raise the standard of concert giving in his native country. He was appointed head of the Academy by a left-wing government in 1919 and sacked later that year by its right-wing successor, and while he stayed in Hungary, he also began touring the USA regularly in the 1920s. In the 1930s he was reappointed to the Academy, resigning in 1941 in protest at the Nazi race laws then in force in Hungary. In 1945 he left Europe, eventually settling in Florida, where, sadly, he was dogged by unfounded rumours of collaboration with the Nazis.

Dohnányi was one of the troika of composers, along with Bartók and Kodály, who laid the foundation for modern Hungarian music. The more senior Dohnányi, especially in his role as conductor, was a great supporter of his younger colleagues. His own work, however, is less steeped in the idioms of Hungarian and Balkan folk music than the others'; rather he attempted to bring together the harmonic expressivity of Romantics like Liszt and Wagner with the classical forms which Brahms had successfully revived.

The Sextet was composed in 1935 but only published in 1948. Its unusual instrumentation out-Brahmses Brahms by including instruments that the German composer had used in some of his greatest chamber work: horn and clarinet. They are also 'Romantic' instruments par excellence, and Dohnányi gives them due prominence at the start of his work. But as we might expect it is the piano writing which is particularly brilliant, reminding us of his inheritance from his countryman, Liszt.

Gordon Kerry © 2006

**DURATION 30 minutes**



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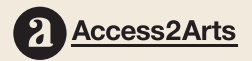


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