

Nigel Westlake and Grigoryan Brothers in Concert

with the
Adelaide Symphony Orchestra



April

**Saturday 24
Festival Theatre**

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SPECIAL EVENT

Nigel Westlake and Grigoryan Brothers in Concert

Sat 24 Apr, 7.30pm
Festival Theatre

Nigel Westlake Conductor
Slava & Leonard Grigoryan Guitars

Jack Buckskin
& Jamie Goldsmith
(arr./orch. Ferguson)

Pudnanthi Padninthi
(‘The Coming and the Going’)

[2'30"']

Nigel Westlake

WORLD PREMIERE

Toward Takayna: Concerto for Two Guitars
In three movements

[20']

Slava & Leonard Grigoryan Guitars

Interval

Nigel Westlake

Antarctica – Suite for Guitar and Orchestra

[23']

The Last Place on Earth
Wooden Ships
Penguin Ballet
The Ice Core – Cadenza – Finale

Slava Grigoryan Guitar

Nigel Westlake

The Glass Soldier – Suite

[20']

The Glass Soldier
Symphonies of Glass
White Birds Fly Over the Valley of the Somme
I Was Blinded – But Now I See

Duration

This concert will run for approximately 110 minutes, including
a 20 minute interval.

We acknowledge that the land we make music on is the traditional country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that this is of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today. We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are with us for this performance today.

WELCOME

While Adelaide's resilience and community spirit over the last 12 months have been exceptional, it was still hard to forego so many of the cultural events that define us as a city – and the postponement of the 2020 Adelaide Guitar Festival was pretty devastating.

That makes tonight's concert all the more joyous an occasion, since it says, in the most spectacular way, that the Guitar Festival will be back this year, offering regional roadshows, free and low-cost workshops, master classes, artists' talks, panel discussions, and ticketed performances showcasing the world's finest guitarists.

Although the most intensive activity takes place here in Adelaide from 4-25 July, there are a number of exciting events presented by the Festival between now and then on Kangaroo Island, and in the Clare and Gilbert valleys and in Port Augusta. The full line-up will be revealed on Wednesday 28 April.

Tonight, we celebrate one of the great partnerships in Australian music, between the Grigoryan brothers and composer Nigel Westlake. Nigel has long wanted to create a concerto specifically for these two superb guitarists, and this concert is a dream come true for him, for Slava and Leonard and for everyone who has loved Nigel's music and can't wait to hear what he has created for two of his favourite musicians.

This concert is also a celebration of the enduring and fruitful collaboration between the Guitar Festival and the ASO, which has resulted, in recent years, in the premieres of other major works by major Australian composers, including Andrew Ford and Cathy Milliken.

Given the Anzac Day commemorations taking place tomorrow, Nigel's moving, heartfelt music inspired by Hannie Rayson's play *The Glass Soldier* is an inspired inclusion in the program; it tells the extraordinary story of a man who overcame incredible odds after his experiences on the killing fields of Europe in WWI.

Our warmest good wishes to you for a memorable evening.



Vincent Ciccarello
Managing Director
Adelaide Symphony Orchestra



Douglas Gautier AM
CEO & Artistic Director
Adelaide Festival Centre



COMPOSER & CONDUCTOR Nigel Westlake

Nigel’s career, spanning over four decades, began as a clarinettist touring Australia and the world with many ensembles.

He began composing from 1980, and was appointed composer in residence for ABC Radio National in 1984.

His film credits include *Paper Planes*, *Miss Potter*, *Babe*, *Babe II*, *Children of the Revolution* and the IMAX films *Antarctica*, *Solarmax*, *The Edge* and *Imagine* among numerous others. His television credits include numerous documentaries, telemovies, news themes and station idents.

He writes extensively for the concert hall and has received many awards including two ARIAs, 15 APRA awards across both classical and screen categories, and the Gold Medal for “Best Original Music” at the New York International Radio Festival.

He is a two-time winner of the prestigious Paul Lowin Orchestral prize, in 2013 for *Missa Solis – Requiem for Eli* and in 2019 for *Spirit of the Wild – Concerto for oboe and orchestra*.

He holds an honorary doctorate from the University of NSW and was the recipient of the HC Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University in 2004.

He founded the Smugglers of Light Foundation with his family in memory of his son Eli in 2008.



GUITARS Slava & Leonard Grigoryan

Guitarists, Slava and Leonard Grigoryan are counted amongst the finest musicians of their generation, having developed a reputation for enthralling audiences with the energy of their performances and the breadth of their repertoire – embracing genres such as classical, jazz and contemporary music from around the world.

Between them, they have received four ARIAs awards and 25 ARIA nominations. As a duo they have recorded 12 albums and have been touring internationally since 2003, performing throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and the USA, as well as Brazil, South Africa, India and the Middle East.

Their diverse repertoire continues to present new opportunities for performances in traditional and unconventional settings, from projects with orchestras to duo performances in iconic venues such as London’s Wigmore Hall and Vienna’s Konzerthaus.

Their ability to perform in disparate genres has resulted in invitations from arts festivals, jazz festivals, folk festivals and Womad, as well as performing in more intimate spaces such as clubs and salons.

Growing up and performing together does not guarantee a symbiotic relationship, but what does create the perfect storm is the mutual respect and admiration the brothers have for each other. Perhaps this is the intangible quality that creates their ability to connect with listeners.

All music in tonight's concert is by Nigel Westlake (born 1958)

WORLD PREMIERE

Toward Takayna: Concerto for Two Guitars

In three movements

Slava & Leonard Grigoryan Guitars

The beauty and wonder of the natural world have inspired composers since the dawn of notated music (and almost certainly before that). From Vivaldi's immortal weather reports in *The Four Seasons* through to the Norwegian fjords you can almost "see" in Grieg's music, or the "big sky" sounds in Aaron Copland's evocations of the American west, composers have painted musical canvases filled with evocations of nature.

Throughout his composing life, Nigel Westlake has created music which speaks of a powerful affinity with natural environments and the creatures that live in them. Think of his music for the Imax film *Antarctica* (from which you'll hear the suite later tonight) and his glimmering *Six Fish*, which he created for Slava Grigoryan's guitar quartet Saffire. Two of his most recent concert works have been inspired by the magnificence and fragility of the Tasmanian wilderness. Not long before composing his oboe concerto *Spirit of the Wild*, created for Diana Doherty and the Sydney Symphony in 2016, he had been to Bathurst Harbour on Tasmania's South-West coast, and wrote:

'My trip there, with environmentalist Bob Brown, reminded me of the preciousness of the wilderness, and of mankind's propensity to become subsumed by materialism, neglecting our connection to country and the wonders of the natural world, choosing instead to value only those elements of our environment that can be quantified by monetary worth. Such wild places are truly priceless and we exploit and destroy them at our peril.'

Just as Westlake's Bathurst Harbour experience became the catalyst for *Spirit of the Wild*, so his 2019 journey to the Tarkine wilderness in north-western Tasmania became the inspiration for the concerto you will hear tonight. The Tarkine is home to Australia's largest temperate rainforest, and is alive with unique creatures and habitats. As Westlake explains:

'In 2019, thanks once again to Bob Brown, my wife Janice and I took a five-day road tour of the Tarkine, which is known as Takayna by the first nations custodians of this place. *Toward Takayna* is my musical response to this journey – a musical acknowledgement of this rich and delicate environment and perhaps a way for me to hold its enchanting beauty in my hand.

Additionally, *Toward Takayna* is informed by my long-term desire to write a work for my two dear friends Slava and Leonard Grigoryan. Some of the musical material for the work has been developed from *Six Fish*, and there is an allusion to *Hinchinbrook Riffs* – a piece of mine that Slava loves to play – in the final movement.'

The sense of a wonder-filled journey in *Toward Takayna* is palpable from the opening bars, in which the gently chugging strings form the backdrop for evocations of birdsong by the woodwinds. When the guitars emerge from the orchestral undergrowth, as if singing back to the figures that have just been “sung” to them, their phrases are embedded on a cushion of shimmering sound, in which the harp, celeste, and multiply divided strings feature most prominently. Throughout this opening movement, the shifting time signatures suggest the rocking of a boat, until we reach a moment when orchestra and soloists seem overwhelmed by the beauty of Takayna itself. After this powerful climax, the two guitars have a short, rapt cadenza, which seems to leave you suspended in mid-air until, with the very next chord, you realise that you are in a different musical space.

The overriding impression of *Toward Takayna* is one of serenity, felt most powerfully in this second movement. The descending chromatic passages for the soloists suggest the movement of night creatures, while the ensuing dialogue between wind, harp, percussion and guitars makes it difficult not to imagine a canopy of stars.

In the latter part of this movement, and towards the end of the third, Leonard swaps his six-string guitars for a 12-string. As Westlake explains: ‘Not many people enjoy playing the 12-string or play it as well as Lenny. It has a bright, rich sound, and brings a specific colour to certain passages in the piece. It’s inclusion here is also a tribute to the shared admiration that Slava, Lenny and I all have for the playing of 12-string master Ralph Towner.’

No sooner has the second movement concluded than the soloists launch into the concerto’s second cadenza, a dazzling passage that, it soon turns out, acts as the beginning of the finale. In his exhilarating movement, Westlake often treats the guitars colouristically, as they weave them in and out of the vibrant, virtuosic orchestral texture, sometimes playing very percussively. Then, (just before the final swap to 12-string guitar), the mood changes from that of high adventure to one in which we seem to be meditating on the journey that began with the concerto’s opening bars. With a final glisten of marimba and harp, Westlake seems to say, Takayna is a moment in time, and a place, that lives forever in his memory.

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Toward Takayna was composed for and is dedicated to Slava and Leonard Grigoryan, with generous funding provided by Andrew and Renata Kaldor and the Albert H. Maggs Composition Award, presented by the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music of the University of Melbourne.

Antarctica – Suite for Guitar and Orchestra

The Last Place on Earth

Wooden Ships

Penguin Ballet

The Ice Core – Cadenza – Finale

Slava Grigoryan Guitar

In 1991 I was invited by filmmaker John Weiley to compose the score for his film, *Antarctica*. Filmed in Imax, it was shot over a three-year period, and involved 20,000 kilometres of travel around the polar ice cap by helicopter, truck, boat and dog sled. It is a film about the spirit of enquiry, about looking beyond the known – past the edge of everything.

My brief was to compose music that captured the awe-inspiring grandeur, beauty, desolation & harshness of the images. I started by sketching some ideas for solo guitar and orchestra. John Williams was in Sydney at the time, and I took him to the cutting room to view the rushes. He was immediately taken with the picture, and we both agreed it would make a marvellous vehicle for solo guitar.

Unfortunately, last-minute changes to the film meant that I had to abandon the idea of a guitar-based score, and was unable to pursue the collaboration with John, although the fragments of guitar music still remaining in the score were performed by Timothy Kain on the films' soundtrack.

When the ABC invited me to write a guitar concerto for John Williams and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra a year or so after completing the film, I seized the opportunity to explore some of my original ideas for the film in the form of a suite for guitar and orchestra. The suite also incorporates ideas developed during the initial writing process but not included in the film. It is in four movements, the last comprising two sections joined by a short cadenza.

In *The Last Place on Earth*, the music begins at an aerial shot of the ice cap, taken at midnight. Due to the midnight sun, it is in full daylight. The first explorers came in *Wooden Ships*. In the *Penguin Ballet*, Emperor penguins are seen as never before by human eyes in a kind of ballet underneath the ice cap. They leave the water at fantastic speeds through a hole in the ice to avoid being eaten by leopard seals. The drilling of an *Ice Core* by Antarctic scientists reveals recent changes in the earth's atmosphere. The hole in the ozone layer was first discovered here. The Antarctic treaty was signed just as the film was being completed, providing an optimistic note on which to finish – as reflected in the *Finale*.

©Nigel Westlake

Antarctica – Suite for Guitar and Orchestra was commissioned by ABC Concert Music with financial assistance from the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council. It is dedicated to John Williams and John Weiley.



Nelson Ferguson
Photo: Courtesy Don Farrands

The Glass Soldier – Suite

The Glass Soldier

Symphonies of Glass

White Birds Fly Over the Valley of the Somme

I Was Blinded – But Now I See

The Glass Soldier was commissioned by Don Farrands in memory of his grandfather N.H. Ferguson, and in honour of his contribution to art and his virtuous life.

In four movements, the suite is inspired by Hannie Rayson's epic play of the same name which tells the story of Nelson Ferguson's misfortune in war and his ultimate triumph against adversity.

1. The Glass Soldier

Beginning slowly and tentatively, this is a portrait of the young Nelson, an artist imbued with dignity and optimism as he embarks upon his journey to France, an ill-fated adventure that will change his life forever.

The low-register trumpet phrases in the final bars suggest an apprehension of the fate awaiting Nelson and his comrades that lies over the horizon.

2. Symphonies of Glass

Escaping from the horror of the trenches, Nelson has carved out a moment in time (on leave) and finds himself inside an ancient village church somewhere in the French countryside. He admires the grandeur of the stained-glass windows and lovingly communes with the spirits of the artisans responsible for such beauty, empathising with and marvelling at their work – their search for beauty, for colour. Basking in the play of light, the music opens with a reference to the 15th-century French Advent plainchant *Veni, veni Emmanuel* over which is superimposed a filigree texture of harp arpeggios, celesta, crotales (pitched metal discs) and solo violin.

Nelson reflects on the meaningless slaughter of the war and berates the Almighty for allowing such atrocities to occur. The orchestral texture is expanded and intensified, exploding at the peak of his anger as a stray bomb lands on the roof of the church, covering Nelson in broken glass as the windows collapse upon him. Engulfed by mustard gas, he experiences panic and a deep awareness exploding in a sense of catastrophe. He is hurled into darkness. His visual world is destroyed and his life with it. He is buried alive, suffocated by helplessness and claustrophobia. The mustard gas takes his sight.

3. White Birds Fly Over the Valley of the Somme

Solo cello is featured in a slow lament for the aftermath of the battle of Villers-Bretonneux in northern France (24-25 April 1918) in which Nelson, a stretcher-bearer, was embroiled.

The image of white birds juxtaposed over a desolate landscape devastated beyond recognition is a metaphor for hope, the title inspired by a scene from Hannie Rayson's original play. As Nelson surveys the killing fields of the Somme he yearns to be back in the arms of his true love, Madeleine. The sweet sounds of her piano-playing inhabit his daydreaming and offer a glimpse of hope amongst the scarred earth and mud-filled trenches.

4. I Was Blinded – But Now I See

This is the struggle of a man plunged into darkness to find the light. Literally and metaphorically. For Nelson, blindness is akin to being a lost man, caught up in turmoil and anxiety and unable to be the author of his own life. With extraordinary tenacity, the trumpet cadenza charts Nelson's journey as he sets about the process of regaining control.

Optimistic and uplifting, this finale speaks of hope and rebirth, the regeneration of the human spirit.

I would like to thank Hannie Rayson for her guidance and feedback throughout the composition process and also Don Farrands for offering me a unique opportunity to render his family's powerful story through the medium of music.

© Nigel Westlake



Nelson wrote on the back of this watercolour of a tree trunk on a battleground: *"The days are sunny and quiet but the nights were truly nightmares. Beaucoup [much] gas and shells."*

Image: Courtesy Don Farrands

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Amanda Tillet*

(Guest Principal)

Tuba

Peter Whish-Wilson*

Timpani

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