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Beethoven <i>Coriolan</i> : Overture, Op.62	[8']	JUNE Fri 20 & Sat 21
Beethoven Concerto for Piano No.2 in Bb, Op.19 I. Allegro con brio II. Adagio III. Rondo: Molto allegro	[28']	Adelaide Town Hall Eduardo Strausser Conductor Stefan Cassomenos Piano
Interval		Duration
Shekhar Lumina	[11′]	1 hr 40 min (incl. interval)
Ravel Pavane for a dead princess	[6']	
Ravel Boléro	[13′]	

Free Pre-Concert Talk Join us for *Classical Conversations* one hour before the concert in the stalls of Adelaide Town Hall, as Conductor Eduardo Strausser joins broadcaster Russell Torrance to discuss the program.

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WELCOME

Good evening, and welcome to this unforgettable night of music with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Tonight's program bridges the elegance of the classical tradition, the passion of the early 20th century, and the most innovative voices of our time.

This season, we have the opportunity to hear all five of Beethoven's Piano Concertos. Tonight features soloist Stefan Cassomenos in Concerto No.2 – a work rooted in classical style, full of elegance, poise and charm. It's a brilliant showcase for the pianist's clarity and wit, and for the interplay between soloist and orchestra. Stefan is an artist of remarkable breadth – extremely active on and off stage – performing across Australia and internationally as a chamber musician, recitalist, concerto soloist, artistic director, mentor, and commissioner. We're thrilled to welcome him to Adelaide.

As we reach the halfway point of our season, I reflect on the ASO's continued artistic growth – especially under the guidance of Chief Conductor Mark Wigglesworth, whose interpretation of Brahms' four symphonies is a major highlight. My thanks and congratulations to all members of the ASO for their dedication to artistic excellence, whilst ensuring we connect with all South Australians.

We're also delighted to welcome Brazilian conductor Eduardo Strausser to the ASO for the first time. He brings an incredible range of experience in opera, orchestral music, and contemporary ensemble, and it will be our pleasure to hear those worlds converge in tonight's performance.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Jakub Jankowski's new work for the ASO has been postponed – but we are excited to share Nina Shekhar's *Lumina* in its place.

Tonight's concert concludes with Ravel's mesmerising *Boléro*, perhaps his most iconic work. With its insistent rhythm and gradually intensifying dynamics, it builds hypnotically to a breathtaking finale.

Thank you for joining us. I hope tonight's music leaves you inspired, uplifted, and eager for what's still to come this season.

Colin Cornish AM Chief Executive Officer

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Eduardo Strausser Conductor



Stefan Cassomenos Piano

In the 2024/25 season, Brazilian conductor Eduardo Strausser begins his tenure as Principal Conductor and Music Director of Norrlandsoperan, featuring a Nordic tour and the world premiere of Jenny Wilson's debut opera The Lovers. He also returns to conduct the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Concertgebouw Hall alongside soloist Yeol Eum Son.

Strausser continues his relationships with the Ulster Orchestra, Hallé, Royal Philharmonic, and Orchestre de Montpellier, and makes debuts with Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa, San Diego Symphony, and Pacific Symphony. His U.S. appearances include the Kansas City, Utah, North Carolina, Detroit, and Indianapolis symphonies.

In Australia, he returns to Sydney and Queensland symphony orchestras and debuts with the Malaysian Philharmonic and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Formerly Resident Conductor at Teatro São Paulo (2014–2016), he has led operatic productions including Elektra, Fosca, Tosca, Die Odyssee, and La bohème.

Eduardo studied at the Zurich University of the Arts and has worked with composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and György Kurtág. A skilled collaborator, he has performed with soloists including Paul Lewis, Isata Kanneh-Mason, and Augustin Hadelich. Eduardo speaks eight languages and is currently based in Berlin. Melbourne pianist and composer Stefan Cassomenos is one of Australia's most vibrant and versatile musicians. He has been performing internationally since the age of 10, and is now established as one of Australia's leading pianists.

As the recipient of multiple prizes including the Second Grand Prize in the prestigious International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn 2013, Cassomenos has performed throughout Europe and Asia, and now performs regularly in Australia, Germany and the UK. He has performed concertos with several major Australian symphony orchestras, as well as orchestras overseas.

Cassomenos is a founding member of chamber ensemble PLEXUS, which since launching in 2014 has commissioned and premiered over 110 new works. Cassomenos' own compositions are regularly commissioned and performed throughout Australia. Cassomenos is joint Artistic Director of Port Fairy Spring Music Festival, with violinist Monica Curro.

Cassomenos is generously supported by Kawai Australia.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

A strong sense of grandeur and royal elegance runs through the pieces in today's program. While one could argue this is a natural side-effect of having the piano as the star instrument, these pieces have more in common than its bright, soothing timbre. Whether they were inspired by aristocratic figures, the balance of light and dark, or morally conflicted Roman generals, these pieces transport us to another time with an extravagant flourish.

Despite only being 17 years old when he first started sketching **Piano Concerto No.2 in Bb, Op.19**, Ludwig van Beethoven's regal voice was emerging clearly. Twenty years later, his powers were on full display in the magnificent **Coriolan Overture Op.62**.

Emerging Indian-American composer Nina Shekar's *Lumina* was inspired by the interplay between light and dark. She skillfully uses tone and timbre of different instruments to represent these warring forces.

The program is rounded out by two works by Maurice Ravel: *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, and his most famous work, *Boléro*. These pieces were written at opposite points of the composer's life, but both showcase his refined phrasing and mastery of orchestral colour.

Beethoven's *Coriolan* Overture opens with a spectacularly dramatic two-note motif utilising the full might of the orchestra. This overture was written for the 1802 play of the same name by Heinrich von Collin, following the legend of Roman general Caius Marcius Coriolanus. More famously, Coriolanus was also the subject of a Shakespeare play.

Coriolanus' story is one of pride and ego, and the tragic consequences of not admitting your mistakes. Coriolanus earned his surname due to an act of bravery at the siege of Corioli in 493 BCE, but his success led to hubris. He made a failed bid for political advancement and was cast out as a result. Rather than accept his punishment, he led an army of his former enemies against Rome. Ignoring his wife and his mother's pleas to stop while he still could, Coriolanus was defeated and the embattled general killed himself out of shame.

While the overture is not strictly programmatic, Beethoven imbues it with a sense of emotional conflict. In the same way that Coriolanus was torn between enacting his revenge and his mother's bid for peace, the overture features a push and pull between two distinct themes.

Herbert Glass describes the end of the overture in his program note: "Volumnia eventually seems to win her son over, but then the C minor theme returns, with less conviction, and the music literally falls apart, as does Coriolanus, whose only possible fate is death: in Shakespeare he is killed by the Volscians, whose army he ultimately refuses to lead against Rome. In Collin, he falls on his own sword. In Beethoven he fades away, almost imperceptibly."

Despite the name, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.2 in Bb, Op.19 was the composer's first published piano concerto. Records around this piece's beginnings are patchy: some scholars say the concerto was begun when the composer was still in Bonn, while others attest it was started from scratch after he moved to Vienna. William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, depicted in James Caldwell's woodcut version of a painting by Gavin Hamilton, 1803.



It would have been an exciting time for the young composer. Vienna was a city teeming with artistic life and Beethoven was studying with eminent teachers such as Joseph Haydn, Johann Albrechtsberger, and Antonio Salieri. He had even seen Mozart play in Vienna when he had visited some years earlier, so he was not wanting for inspiration in the great city.

The second piano concerto played an important role in Beethoven's early career. In addition to being one of the first works published by the composer, it was also the piece with which he made his debut as recital pianist to the Viennese public. This performance was met with "unanimous applause" according to the paper 'Wiener Zeitung'. The concerto also allowed Beethoven to showcase his prowess as an improvisor in the first movement cadenza.

Beethoven performed the piece many times over the following years, refining it in the process. According to his close friend Franz Wegeler, the third movement that was eventually published was written in a flurry: "Not until the afternoon of the second day before the concert did he write the *rondo*, and then while suffering from a pretty severe colic which frequently afflicted him... In the anteroom sat four copyists to whom he handed sheet after sheet as soon as it was finished."

The work is as refined and peaceful as the *Coriolan* Overture is bombastic and grand. The opening movement unfolds over fifteen minutes with mellifluous, winding lines of virtuosic writing on the piano. The piece owes a clear debt to Mozart's late piano concertos but follows a more the standard form, with a theme being established by the orchestra before being expanded and teased out by the piano.

The second *adagio* movement provides some gentle contrast in the middle of the piece. It hovers on the edge of melancholy and possesses a graceful elegance which gently unfurls over the movement. The final rondo: *molto allegro* movement joyfully takes the reins back, skipping and hopping through a charming dance.

While composer Nina Shekar is only in her early thirties, she already has an impressive resume as a composer. Her music has been commissioned and performed by the New York Philharmonic, LA Philharmonic, and Nashville Symphony to name a few. She is also a PhD candidate in Music Composition at Princeton University and has an active performance career as a flautist, pianist, and saxophonist.

For *Lumina*, Shekar was inspired by the idea of "contrasts and light verses dark... [she portrays] this musically by creating sonic clouds that use dense harmonies and microtones which are alternate tunings, in which several instruments play different inflections of the same note, and this creates a shadow-like blur effect.

[Shekar contrasts] these sonic shadows by using brighter timbres that pop out, like harmonics and sharp attacks that represent the light."

"Silence is really important to this piece," she explains in a video for the New York Philharmonic, "As an Indian-American, I was really inspired by Hindustani classical music which often involves a soloist who leads a group through improvisation... the other musicians need to breathe together and hear together, in order to speak together."

Shekar also collaborates with Maggie Dave, a music project by visual artists Sean David Christensen and Mark Christopher which explores vivid pop melodies with R&B rhythms. In an interview on their website, she reflects on classic compositional forms and how they influence her work.

"Narrative is a big driving force. As composers, something that we always struggle with is form. How does a piece begin? Where does it go? How does it end?

There was a time where [...] there was a really rigid sonata form [...] that everybody had to conform to. Then later on it was always, "Oh, here's a piece and then it rises. You have a climax and then it ends. And then it returns to the original theme."

I think what people struggle with [...] is we already have this expectation of where a piece is going to go, we don't really allow ourselves to enter that narrative. It's just given to us on a platter and something that we are expecting. It doesn't really force us to pull ourselves in and really challenge what this is, and seize a totally different path. It's always the same path.

But something that I've been trying to explore in my work is how can I break away from that to explore

a different narrative? How can I do something that challenges those expectations and pulls a listener on a different journey?"

Ravel's Pavane pour une infante défunte started life in 1899 as a work for solo piano. The 24-year-old composer was commissioned by one of the most sophisticated tastemakers of the time: Princess Edmond de Polignac. She was heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune, as she was in fact an American by the name of Winnaretta Singer.

After performing *Pavane pour une infante défunte* in Princess de Polignac's salon, Ravel was catapulted to stardom practically overnight. The piece remained enduringly popular, leading Ravel to arrange it for orchestra eleven years later.

The title caused some confusion: it translates to *Pavane for a dead princess*, but is not meant quite so literally. The composer explained, "It is not a funeral lament for a dead child, but rather an evocation of the pavane [a stately dance form] which could have been danced by such a little princess as painted by Velázquez."

Typically for an artist, Ravel became harsh in his assessment of the piece later on in life: "I no longer see its good points from such a distance. But, alas, I perceive its faults very clearly: the glaring influence of Chabrier and the rather povertystricken form! The remarkable interpretation of this incomplete and unoriginal work contributed, I think, to its success."

Portrait of dancer Ida Rubinstein by Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861-1942).



Ravel was similarly conflicted about his most famous work: *Boléro*. In an interview with Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi, Ravel describe the piece as an experiment, as "orchestral tissue without music." There are conflicting reports on whether the piece was popular when it was first performed. As one story goes, (told to musicologist Roger Nichols by composer Alexandre Tansman), conductor Arturo Toscanini changed the entire fate of the work by speeding it up:

"Toscanini came with the New York Philharmonic and played [*Boléro*] much faster. And Ravel was not pleased at all. We were in the same box and he wouldn't stand up when Toscanini tried to get him to take a bow. Then he went backstage and told Toscanini, "It's too fast," and Toscanini said, "It's the only way to save the work."

However it was initially received, *Boléro* has remained staggeringly popular in the decades since and secured a place in popular culture. *Boléro* was written after Ravel was asked to create ballet music for dancer Ida Rubinstein.

While holidaying in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Ravel came up with the concept for the piece: a melody that is repeated on a loop as the dynamic gradually increases from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*. The ballet premiered with the Paris Opera in November 1928 with Rubinstein in the starring role.

Ravel's initial idea for the ballet was one of a tempestuous relationship playing out in front of a factory. While the setting was changed, the Spanish character of the music remained. Ravel's fascination with Spanish culture makes sense when take into account his parents met in Madrid: his father was Swiss and his mother was Basque.

Boléro's industrial influences are undeniable. According to the composer: "In my childhood I was much interested in mechanisms. I visited factories often, very often, as a small boy with my father. It was these machines, their clicking and roaring, which, with the Spanish folk songs sung to me at night-time as a berceuse by my mother, formed my first instruction in music!"

David Gilbert dissects the piece's unique construction in his program note for Tucson Symphony Orchestra: "The first sound you hear is the snare drum playing a two bar, eight beat, rhythmic pattern: the *boléro* rhythm. It will be repeated without change up to the penultimate bar, 169 times.

The only two melodies in the entire work follow; the first melody repeated twice, then the second melody repeated twice. That block of music is then repeated four times, but we hear each melody nine times because in the closing fifth section the two melodies are played only once. In this coda, the harmony and the key finally deviate from C major, although up to that point Ravel has squeezed almost everything possible within the key of C."

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Music for every child: the Foskett Foundation

Just over the hill from McLaren Vale, on a winding road past Kuitpo Forest, lies Top Note – a premium cool-climate vineyard, lovingly run by **Cate** and **Nick Foskett**. With a background in opera and IT respectively, the Fosketts have always combined passion with dedication. Now, through the Foskett Foundation, their energy is being channelled into causes close to their hearts: music, children, and wellbeing.

Their support of the ASO's *Relaxed* concert program is a natural extension of these values – combining music and community wellbeing, inclusive access, and their shared belief that "music should be a part of every child's life."

"We are proud to support the ASO's vision of accessible concerts for the whole community." Cate and Nick say. "By supporting the ASO's *Relaxed* concerts, we are helping to create opportunities for children with diverse needs to hear the power and excitement of the orchestra... and would love to build a future where every South Australian child has the opportunity for music to be an integral part of their education."

ASO's *Relaxed* concerts are designed specifically for children and families who may find traditional concert settings overwhelming. With adjusted lighting and sound, sensory-friendly breakout spaces, and a flexible, informal environment, these concerts welcome neurodiverse audiences, children on the autism spectrum, and those with sensory or communication challenges. The ASO's first *Relaxed* concert for 2025 was *Tale of the Fire Phoenix* – a magical blend of shadow puppetry, mythology, narration, and music. In September, we will also present a *Relaxed* performance of *Settle the Score*, and for the first time, we are expanding the program beyond the concert hall, taking *Relaxed* concerts directly into specialist schools, including Suneden Specialist School and Adelaide North Special School.

For Cate and Nick, supporting this work through the Foskett Foundation aligns perfectly with the Foundation's focus on the arts, children and medicine – as well as with Cate's passion for mental health and wellbeing, which she is now exploring through a Master's degree in counselling, and recent work with Star Bear Loss and Grief Camps, supporting children who have lost a family member.

Thanks to the generosity of the Foskett Foundation, the ASO is able to expand its reach and impact – creating musical experiences for children who might otherwise miss out, and building a more inclusive and compassionate future for South Australians through music.

There are many ways to support the ASO. To discuss how you can help, please contact **Lucy Eckermann, Head of Development**, for a personal conversation.

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