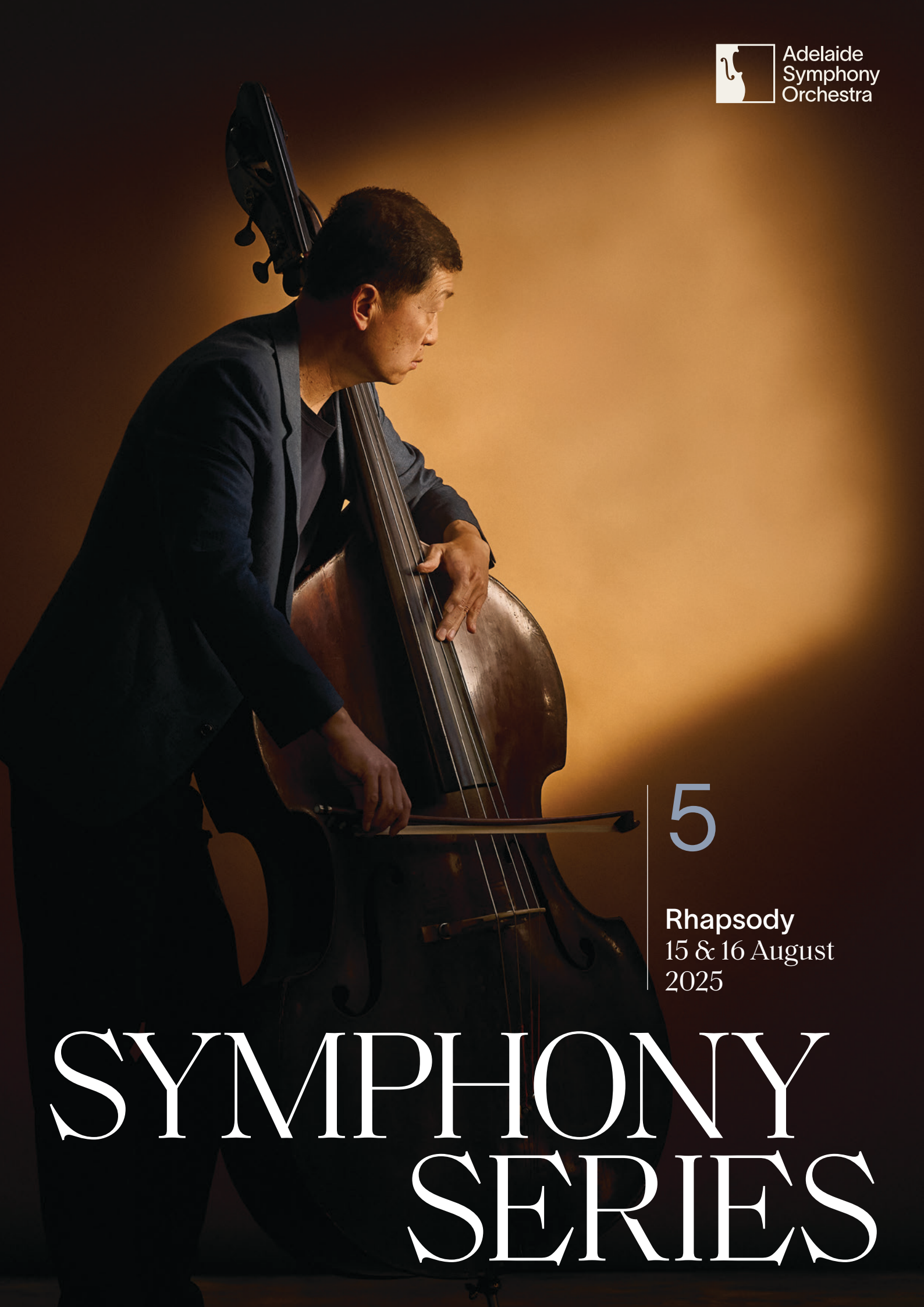

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

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Rhapsody
15 & 16 August
2025

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RHAPSODY

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Jamie Goldsmith arr./orch. Ferguson [2′]
Pudnanthi Padninthi II – Wadna

Dvořák [15′]
Othello Overture, Op.93 B.174

Prokofiev [26′]
Concerto for Violin No.2 in G Minor, Op.63

I. Allegro moderato
II. Andante assai
III. Allegro; ben marcato

Interval

Smetana [12′]
Má Vlast: Vltava (The Moldau)

Janáček [23′]
Taras Bulba

I. Death of Andrei (Smrt Andrijova)
II. Death of Ostap (Smrt Ostapova)
III. Death and Prophesy of Taras Bulba (Proroctví a smrt Bulby)

AUGUST
Fri 15 & Sat 16
Adelaide Town Hall

Nuno Coelho
Conductor

Kate Suthers
Violin

Duration
1 hr 50 min (incl. interval)

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WELCOME

Welcome to *Rhapsody*, an evocative title for tonight's concert and a word that encompasses much of what I love about music. The genesis of the word 'rhapsody' is Ancient Greek, from two words meaning to stitch, and song (or ode). Modern dictionaries define a rhapsody as an intense expression of feeling, and when specific to music, that expression being somewhat improvisatory or spontaneous. What is music if not the work of a composer stitching together lines of song to form an expression of humanity?

Tonight's program is a quartet of musical rhapsodies. Three of them, *Othello*, *Vltava* and *Taras Bulba*, are expressions of the rich traditions in Czech music that stem from the folk music of Bohemia and Moravia. The enigma in the quartet then is Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No.2*, a piece that is less overt in its storytelling, but full of narrative all the same. Written in 1935, the year he was also starting work on *Romeo and Juliet*, this concerto is like a series of postcards from Prokofiev's life at that time. Living in Paris but about to move back to Moscow, and touring to countries including Spain – where this concerto was premiered – the colours of those countries and their musical traditions bleed into the different movements of this concerto. I find it almost cinematic in how evocative the score is. From the noir-ish opening, through whimsical and romantic episodes, to a rustic finale that has literal castanets. If in any doubt beforehand, that definitely signals Spain.

Standing in front of the orchestra I normally sit within is both a challenge and a privilege. It's a rarity to be the soloist, and to also have the ease and rapport to be playing with an orchestra of your friends and colleagues. It was important to me when choosing repertoire that this concerto would feature most of the membership of the ASO and showcase their brilliance in this imaginative Prokofiev score, as well as this piece being one that I love. I can't wait to share these two performances with everyone on and off the stage, and I hope you enjoy the concert!

Kate Suthers
Concertmaster

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Nuno Coelho
Conductor

Nuno Coelho has been Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of Spain's Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias since October 2022. The 2025/26 season sees him return to orchestras including Antwerp Symphony, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Orquesta Nacional de España, Gulbenkian Orchestra, and Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música. He also makes debuts with the Adelaide Symphony, Britten Sinfonia at London's Barbican, Trondheim Symphony, and Västerås Sinfonietta, and conducts Spain's National Youth Orchestra at the Konzerthaus Berlin and Rheingau Musik Festival.

In recent seasons, Nuno has appeared with the Minnesota Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, hr-Sinfonieorchester, BBC Scottish Symphony, and São Paulo Symphony, among others. Operatic engagements include *La traviata*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Rusalka*, *Manon*, and José Saramago's *Don Giovanni* at the Gulbenkian Foundation.

He won First Prize at the 2017 Cadaqués International Conducting Competition and has since conducted leading orchestras across Europe. He was a Dudamel Fellow with the LA Philharmonic in 2018–19 and made his debut with the Bavarian Radio Symphony, stepping in for Bernard Haitink.

Born in Porto, Nuno studied with Johannes Schlaefli in Zürich and was a Tanglewood Fellow, Assistant Conductor of the Netherlands Philharmonic, and part of the German Music Council's Dirigentenforum.

Kate Suthers
Violin

Based in the UK until her appointment as Concertmaster of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in 2022, Sydney-born violinist Kate Suthers' versatile career spans string quartet to symphony orchestra, and ranges across music of all ages and styles. Kate has always played music by living composers, and has worked with Thomas Adès, Jonny Greenwood, Sir James MacMillan, Anna Meredith and Jörg Widmann. She has collaborated across art forms in opera, theatre, film, and dance, and enjoys working with artists of different traditions.

Before holding positions in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Kate studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London with renowned violinist and teacher György Pauk. In 2022, Kate was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

Kate's upcoming engagements include performances with Scottish Ensemble, leading the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, chamber music in both hemispheres, and further performances as soloist and play/director with the ASO.

In 2026 she will take up the role of Artistic Director at the Coriole Music Festival in McLaren Vale.

Kate Suthers plays a Carlo Carletti violin from Pieve di Cento, Bologna, c.1920. Her musical heroes are Caroline Shaw, Bach, and the Danish String Quartet.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The rhapsody has often provided composers with the musical equivalent of an ultra-high-resolution panorama, enabling them to express complex philosophical ideas, sweeping narratives, and the full gamut of human emotions within a relatively compact, single-movement structure. The earliest exponent of the rhapsody as a musical form for solo piano may well have been the now-largely forgotten Czech composer Václav Tomášek, who wrote at least twelve of them across two volumes between 1810–40. Franz Liszt then took up the mantle with his nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies, S. 244 (1846–1853), followed by Johannes Brahms with his two Rhapsodies, Op. 79 (1879). Audiences today are probably more familiar with the orchestral incarnation of the form, immortalised by Maurice Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole* (1907), George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), and Sergei Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 43 (1934).

Only one of the works on tonight's program is explicitly designated a 'rhapsody', and it is not a single-movement piece. Yet all of the four works here are distinctly rhapsodic in their own way: closely related to the orchestral rhapsody are its cousins, the symphonic poem (inaugurated by Liszt in 1848 and taken to its zenith in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Richard Strauss, Jean Sibelius, and Ottorino Respighi, among others), and the overture, which during the nineteenth century grew increasingly prevalent as a stand-alone work inspired by extra-musical (literary, dramatic, pictorial or nationalistic) stimuli.

In September 1892, Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) concluded a short-lived post at the Prague Conservatory and set sail for America to accept a position at the new National Conservatory of Music in New York City, which offered him twenty-five times the salary he had been receiving in his homeland. Shortly before his departure to the 'New World', he embarked on a farewell tour through Czech and Moravian cities, which included a concert in Prague's Rudolfinum on 28 April 1892 that showcased a recently-completed triptych of programmatic concert overtures. At the time, these unpublished compositions were titled *Nature, Life and Love*, and were all grouped together on the program as Op. 91.

The three overtures were eventually published separately as *In Nature's Realm*, Op. 91, *Carnival*, Op. 92, and ***Othello*, Op. 93**, with the composer describing the latter as 'the after-reverie of a man whose imagination has been kindled by the theme of the play.' Although it is performed less frequently today than its more hopeful siblings, Othello's qualities immediately found favour with Brahms, who recognised in the overture's taut, riveting soundscape a composer in supreme command of his creative resources.

A *pianissimo* chord from the brass opens the curtain to a hushed, prayer-like chorale in the strings, suggestive of a sleeping Desdemona. A capricious, bi-polar quality defines much of overture, as it alternates between beauty and the foreboding menace of Othello's ever-growing jealousy. Hopes of reconciliation are soon

Frederick Richard Pickersgill——
Rhapsody/Othello and Desdemona, 1859

shattered, leading to the murder of Desdemona in her chamber. The prayer returns as Othello attempts to repent, but he is unable to escape from the consequences of his rage. The dramatic intensity builds to a fever pitch in the harrowing coda, culminating – as it must – with Othello's suicide.

Like Dvořák, Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) also drew inspiration from Shakespeare, and spent much of 1934 and 1935 searching for a home for his career-defining ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*. It was during this time that he also began writing the **Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63**, a work that had been commissioned by some wealthy admirers of the French violinist Robert Soëtens, with whom the composer had a pre-existing partnership. In 1935 Prokofiev and Soëtens embarked on an extensive concert tour; between performances, Prokofiev sketched out the various themes of the new concerto (in Paris and Voronezh), refining the orchestration in Baku before the completed work had its highly-successful premiere in Madrid in December that year.

The soloist opens the ***Allegro moderato*** unaccompanied, with a yearning theme in G minor that begins in the lowest register of the violin. After some flighty virtuoso passagework, the warmer, lyrical second theme in B-flat major arrives, echoed by the horns and woodwinds. The two contrasting themes are tossed about in the turbulent development, before the recapitulation brings back the opening theme in the cellos and basses. When the second theme returns, it assumes a more sepulchral guise (bringing to mind the sumptuous neo-Romanticism of *Romeo and Juliet*), accompanied by a restless clarinet solo and a bass line that descends into ominous, inky depths. Two guillotine-like pizzicati thuds bring the movement to a chilling end.

The serenely lyrical second movement, ***Andante assai***, is Prokofiev at his most exquisite. Gently plucked strings and soft harmonies in the woodwinds provide a sense of constancy and innocence throughout, as the solo violin soars above in a sunlit reverie that is later embellished in a series of variations. The ***Allegro, ben marcato*** finale takes the form of a swashbuckling rondo, replete with biting dissonances, savage accents, and the echoes of a Spanish fiesta (listen out for the clicking castanets). Staccato double stops in the violin define the refrain, which grows ever more insistent and sardonic with each reprisal. In the exhilarating coda, the violin dances in furious 5/4 time, careening to the finish line in a *tumultuoso* denouement.

Má vlast ('My Fatherland') is a cycle of six symphonic poems by the 'father' of Czech classical music, Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), and is generally regarded as his magnum opus. Composed over a five-year period from 1874–79, the six works premiered individually before the complete set was heard on 5 November 1882 in Prague's Žofín Palace. Far and away the most

popular of the six, though, is the second work of the cycle, ***Vltava*** ('The Moldau'), which contains seven distinct episodes or musical 'signposts' written into the score by the composer.

It begins in the key of E minor at the Studená Vltava (warm spring). Delicate, rising semiquavers in the flutes are answered by pizzicato quavers in the violins (like water droplets bouncing off rocks), before the Teplá Vltava (cold spring) is introduced by the clarinets, swiftly followed by the violas. The orchestration gradually thickens as the two streams twirl round and interlace one another, trickling ever downward before merging into the Vltava, the arrival of which is announced by the ping of a triangle. The swirling motion of the two springs is passed to the second violins and cellos, now designated *lusingando* (alluring) and *ondeggiante* (undulating), before we hear the main melody in the first violins, oboes and bassoons.

Horns, trumpets and trombones introduce a forest hunt (first in dotted rhythms, then in leaps infused with the rhythmic motive of the main theme), as the strings maintain the momentum which propels us farther along. The scene changes once again: we are now eavesdropping on a peasant wedding. The metre pivots to 2/4; the orchestral texture is now homophonic and synchronised as the guests dance a sprightly polka (one of Smetana's favourite styles). But the bucolic frivolities are short-lived, for no sooner than we arrive at the wedding are we already floating away.

Suddenly we have entered a gorge at midnight, as wood and water nymphs bathe in the moonlight. The violins, violas and cellos are directed to play *tranquillo* (calmly) and *con sordini* (with mutes), enveloping us in a veiled and silvery blanket of sound that is complemented by luminous, rippling harmonies in the harp, representing the sparkle of the moon's reflection in the ripples on the water. As we gaze into the mirror, the music grows pensive and wistful, and we enter the darker key of C minor, before the semiquavers transport us back to the reprise of the main theme.

We are then sucked into the maelstrom of St John's Rapids: the imminent danger ahead is signalled by the repeated chords of the brass (marked *fortissimo*) and the icy interjections from the flutes and piccolos. We are pulled under the waves momentarily; the music bubbles ominously, before surging upwards like a dolphin showing us its greatest trick. The main theme reappears, this time with *più moto* (more movement), and the full orchestra explodes in a resplendent E major.

As we near the end, the majestic Vyšehrad theme from the first symphonic poem of the cycle (a blazing chorale of woodwinds and brass) reappears. Cymbals capture the effect of the water smashing against the rocks at the base of the dilapidated castle, with the strings overlapping one another in duplet, triplet, septuplet and octuplet figurations. As the river enters the great city of Prague, there is a sense of triumph and culmination. Having reached our destination,

Mihaly Zichy——Rhapsody/Taras Bulba, 1890s

we disembark, turning to watch the Vltava flow on before it fades into the distance, joining the waters of the Elbe and passing beyond our sight.

Composed between 1915–18 and undoubtedly influenced by the geopolitical convulsions of World War I, the three-movement rhapsody ***Taras Bulba*** by Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) loosely depicts three episodes from a novella of the same name by Nikolai Gogol, which the composer had read in 1905. A devout Russophile, Janáček was captivated by the novella's brutal account of the eponymous Zaporozhian Cossack warrior Taras Bulba and his sons Andrei and Ostap, finding affinities with the book's universal themes of oppression and resistance. He sought to channel much of its patriotic fervour into a gripping orchestral tour de force that captured the struggles of his own country and time, dedicating the work to 'our army... the armed protector of our nation.'

The first movement, '**The Death of Andrei**', chronicles the demise of Taras Bulba's youngest son during the siege of the Dubno Castle by the Cossack army. It is here that Andrei unexpectedly reunites with a Polish officer's daughter (whom he had met earlier in Kiev), and promptly falls in love with her. After witnessing the savagery of his own comrades, Andrei renounces his Cossack heritage and defects to the enemy. When the Polish army is vanquished, however, he must confront his fate: Taras is forced to execute his own son for his treachery, shooting him 'ignominiously, like a dog.' Janáček paints this grisly tableau with vividly contrasting sonorities: listen, for example, to the haunting melody first heard in the cor anglais (English horn, representing the fate of the two lovers), accompanied by the eerie, ecclesiastical presence of the organ; and the blazing trombones and trumpets (representing the armies in battle), punctuated by tolling tubular bells (both a harbinger and confirmation of death).

'**The Death of Ostap**' is similarly gruesome: Taras Bulba's grief-stricken elder son Ostap is captured during battle by the Poles and swiftly carted away. Taras manages to track the enemy back to Warsaw, entering the city hidden in a cartload of bricks and disguised as a German count. He watches, powerless to intervene, as his son is broken on the wheel and mutilated. The Poles celebrate their victory in a grotesque Mazurka, as Ostap calls out to his father in a shrieking E-flat clarinet solo.

'**The Prophecy and Death of Taras Bulba**' takes us out of the frying pan and into the fire, as the Cossacks attempt to avenge Ostap's execution. A great battle erupts in a ruined fortress, where Taras is ultimately caught and nailed to a tree, before being set alight. As the flames consume his body alive, Taras yells out the defiant prophecy ('A Tsar shall arise from Russian soil, and there shall not be a power in the world which shall not submit to him!') that represents both the work's apotheosis and its raison d'être.

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The Impact of ASO's Learning Programs

Susan Ferguson is the presenter behind many of the ASO's interactive concerts for schools. We asked her what kind of impact she hopes ASO Learning Program has on students.

I really hope the schools' concerts can spark joy for the students and give them a lifelong love of music! My Nana taught me that if we have music in our life (in whatever form it takes) we will never be lonely, and that has always stayed with me.

Countless studies have confirmed what humans throughout history already knew intuitively: experiencing and sharing music with others does wonderful things for our minds and souls. The combination of words with music is such a rich medium: we remember words and stories so much more when they are connected to a melody.

The lyrics to catchy songs can remain in our brains for life. The words can come out at key moments and encourage us, helping us deal with situations in the schoolyard or the wider world. For many people it can just be a joyful thing to sing and dance: these little moments of silliness are also a great stress release and help us to connect with each other.

For example, my year 1 students (who were my guinea pigs for many of the *Around the World* activities and songs) will often spontaneously start singing one of the songs from the show whilst engaged in a totally unrelated activity. This heightens their connections with each other, engages their brains in different ways, and makes them happy!

Whether or not students decide they'd like to try learning an instrument after being involved in a concert, become a musician, or a future orchestra concert goer, their minds and ears will have been exposed to something different as they go on a musical journey with us. They will have learnt some new things about the world, its people and their role in it.

Find out more about the ASO Learning Program at aso.com.au/learning

ASO Learning Programs are generously supported by SA Power Networks and the FWH Foundation

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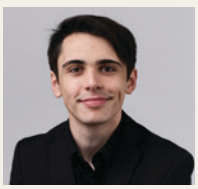

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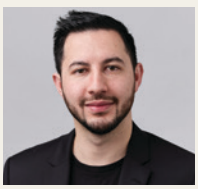

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