

THE BARD & THE BIRD



3:00PM SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

#BrisbanePhilharmonic

CONCERT PROGRAM

AARON COPLAND

Four Dance Episodes from 'Rodeo'

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Violin Concerto No.5 in A major, K.219

INTERVAL

JEAN SIBELIUS

The Bard (tone poem for orchestra)

IGOR STRAVINSKY

The Firebird – Suite for orchestra (1919)



VIOLIN 1
Karen Blair[^]
(Concertmaster)
Matthew Gillett
Min Tan
Danny Kwok
Carmen Pierce
Hayden Burton
Tove Easton
Keith Gambling
Matthew Gamer

VIOLIN 2
Yvette McKinnon*
Samuel Markovic
Ryan Smith
Anna Jenkins
Rebecca Johnson
Emily Farri
Tylar Leask
Rebecca Blackburne
Nicholas Salmon
Cara Odenthal
Camilla Harvey

VIOLA
Timothy Tate[^]
Daniel Tipping
Jenny Wanders
Chris Lee
John McGrath
Georgia Stibbard

CELLO
Mathilde Vlieg[^]
Edward Brackin
Toby Saltwell
Kate Robinson
Nicole Kancachian
David Silman
Charmaine Lee
Elouise Comber
Amy Naumann

BASS
Samuel Dickenson*
Georgia Lloyd
Steven Dunn
Angela Jaeschke
Dean Tierny

FLUTE
Jo Lagerlow*
Kenny Han

PICCOLO
Lucia Gonzalez*

OBOE
Gabrielle Knight*
Hui-Yu Whitney Chung

COR ANGLAIS
Hui-Yu Whitney Chung[^]

CLARINET
Daniel Byrne[^]
Kendal Thomspn

BASS CLARINET
Hugo Anaya[^]

BASSOON
Patricia Brennan*
Carl Bryant

CONTRABASSOON
Carl Bryant*

HORN
Melanie Taylor*
Joyce Shek
Simon Miller
Cezanne Rossouw

TRUMPET
Blake Humphrey*
Sophie Kukilies
Akua Van Den Hooven

TROMBONE
Angela Prescott*
Peter Kleinschmidt

BASS TROMBONE
Clayton Fiander*

TUBA
Michael Sterzinger*

PERCUSSION
Kerry Vann*
Sarah Hundal
Thomasina Lawrence
Craig Rabnott

HARP
John Connolly*

PIANO/CELESTA
Julian Wade[^]



Conductor CHEN YANG

"Stravinsky's Firebird Suite is one of my bucket list pieces to conduct"

Chen Yang graduated from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music with Distinction in Violin Performance in 1980. While a student at the Conservatorium he explored his interests in conducting forming string ensembles, giving concerts and also conducted several performances of a student production of the opera *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss.

At his first professional musical undertaking, he was offered the Concertmaster position to the Queensland Theatre Orchestra (QTO later renamed the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra QPO) in Brisbane under distinguished late legendary conductor, Georg Tintner.

Chen attributes his enthusiasm for the music of Bruckner from the inspiration and influence through working with Maestro Tintner. (Georg Tintner left a legacy of critically acclaimed complete recordings of the Bruckner Symphonies on the Naxos label). After a successful collaboration with the QTO, he joined the ABC Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO) between 1981- 1989 as a member in the first violin section. Although Chen has had no formal conducting lessons many of his musical ideas were formalised during this period observing the many different ways distinguished conductors approached their craft working with the QSO learning musical repertoire as well.

Deciding on a change, he spent two years as musician-in-residence on tropical Dunk Island Holiday Resort in North Queensland where he led a string quartet and performed as a cabaret violinist entertaining guests. He continued as a freelance musician throughout the early 1990s performing in show orchestras for major Musical Productions at QPAC including "The King and I", "The Wizard of Oz" and "Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat"

At present, Chen performs regularly with many musical ensembles in Brisbane. He is the leader and conductor with The Sinfonia of St Andrews & The Corda Spiritus Orchestra of Brisbane. He also led the Queensland Pops Orchestra last year in a successful show concert with entertainer Tim Minchin at the Convention Centre.

Other musical interest includes Early Music being a founding member of The Badinerie Players of Brisbane who specialize in performing on authentic styled instruments. He performs on a Baroque violin which is a copy of a Guarnierius violin made by well known Australian violin maker Ian Clarke from Biddeston, Queensland.

Chen enjoys teaching and working with young musicians and is a strong supporter of the Queensland Youth Orchestra organization having been resident conductor of their QYO Third Orchestra from 1983-1988 and conductor at of their Junior String Ensemble since 1991. He is the string teacher and conductor at St Hilda's School, Southport and adjudicates regularly at many Eisteddfods, Music Festivals and Competitions



Violin Cameron Hough

Cameron Hough - Winner 2019 BPO Concerto Competition

Each year BPO holds a Concert Competition and auditions non-professional musicians of all ages, providing applicants the chance to feature as soloist in one of our metro concert at the Old Museum building. This year was String Classics.

Violinist and violist Cameron Hough started learning the violin at the age of five, learning privately in Wollongong from Elizabeth Francis, Katherine Chaffey and Scott Taggart. He is an experienced and accomplished orchestral musician and chamber music player and has been Concertmaster of the Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra for the past five years. He is also first violin with Point Quartet and plays regularly with other Brisbane orchestras and was previously concertmaster of Mosman Symphony Orchestra and principal viola of North Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

This is Cameron's concerto debut with BPO but he has previously appeared as violin soloist with Mosman Symphony in Saint Saens' Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso and as viola soloist in Berlioz's Harold in Italy.

Outside of music Cameron is an acoustic and theatre consultant with engineering firm Arup and specialises in the design of music venues including the acclaimed Ukaria concert hall in the Adelaide Hills and Brisbane's own Triffid and Fortitude Music Hall.



ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

The Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) is Brisbane's leading community orchestra. The orchestra brings together up to 200 musicians a year to play a variety of classical orchestral music. Over 100 members of the incorporated association form the core of the orchestra. Other players perform as casual musicians, but often join as full-time members after their first concert with BPO. The orchestra was founded on principles of musical excellence and development, communal participation, and organisational professionalism.

Since its creation in 2000, the BPO has become the community orchestra of choice for over 500 musicians. It is eagerly sought as a performance partner for touring choirs, festivals, and internationally acclaimed instrumentalists and vocalists. The BPO performs its own series of symphony concerts and participates in multiple community and festival events throughout the year, attracting an audience of over 2,500 people. The orchestra's main metropolitan concert series includes four to five symphony concerts at Brisbane City Hall and the Old Museum Concert Hall. Programs vary between concerts featuring the great classical, romantic, and 20th

century composers, light concerts including film music, as well as concerts with programs targeted at a younger audience. Additionally, BPO occasionally performs chamber music concerts, featuring smaller groups in a more intimate setting.

The BPO maintains many community partnerships including with the Queensland Music Festival, 4MBS Festival of Classics, Brisbane City Council, and The Brisbane Airport Corporation. These partnerships provide essential connections in artistic, educational, professional, and social programs and cater to the association's increased responsibility to culturally enhance localities and bring a diversity of people together in a fast-paced, ever-impersonal global village. Unusually for a community orchestra, entry to the BPO is by audition and the ensemble is the only community orchestra within the city that rotates guest conductors by invitation rather than establishing a permanent Music Director. Uniquely, this allows a variety of the finest local professional conductors to deliver diverse and innovative programming to artistically stimulate members of the orchestra.



PROGRAM NOTES

By Cameron Hough

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Four Dance Episodes from
Rodeo (1942)

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- I. Buckaroo Holiday
- II. Corral Nocturne
- III. Saturday Night Waltz
- IV. Hoe-Down

Although Copland composed in a variety of styles, including the moderately avant-garde, he won his most enduring successes with compositions that celebrate (and directly quote from) the folk culture of America. Topping his list of "hits" are the ballets *Billy the Kid* (1938), *Rodeo* (1942), and *Appalachian Spring* (1944).

Looking to show its support for America's efforts in the Second World War, the renowned dance company *Les Ballets russes* (Russian Ballet) commissioned a ballet on an American subject from dancer/choreographer Agnes de Mille. She turned to Copland for the music because of his success with *Billy the Kid*. The troupe's classically trained dancers were leery of performing de Mille's naturalistic, exuberant choreography, the very opposite of what they were used to, and known for, but the premiere in New York City, with de Mille dancing the lead, scored a huge success.

The plot is simple. A cowgirl who is infatuated with a handsome wrangler dresses and acts like a man in hopes of impressing him. It doesn't work, so she goes back to wearing skirts and wins him over. In addition to original material, Copland's score for *Rodeo* makes use of several authentic cowboy songs.

Here's his own introduction to the suite.

"The first section is the most complex. Included are variations on two folk tunes, *If He Be a Buckaroo by His Trade*, and *Sis Joe*. The second section, *Corral Nocturne*, is characterised by woodwind solos in 5/4 time. I was striving here for a sense of the isolation felt by the heroine.

In *Saturday Night Waltz*, country fiddlers are heard tuning up, followed by hints of the tune *Old Paint*.

The final movement, *Hoe Down*, is the best known and most frequently performed episode. Two square dance tunes are included: *Bonyparte* and a few measures of *McLeod's Reel* played in folk fiddle style. Pizzicato strings and a xylophone add a comic effect to *Bonyparte*, and the music winds down like a clock before the tune returns for the last time."



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Concerto for Violin No. 5 in A major "Turkish", K219 (1775)

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In an alternate world, Mozart may have been remembered as one of the great violinists - he certainly had the natural talent (encouraged by his father Leopold who wrote a very influential treatise on violin playing in the year Mozart was born) and toured as a performer on both violin and piano when young. Sadly the influence of the overbearing Leopold seems to have tainted the violin as a solo instrument for Mozart and after he left Salzburg for Vienna he gave up the violin (playing the viola when playing through his quartets) and wrote for the violin as a solo instrument no longer.

One can only imagine the heights to which Mozart might have taken the violin concerto if he had developed it as much as he did the piano concerto. Nevertheless the five concertos for violin that Mozart did write are amongst his finest concertos. Mozart's final violin concerto dates from 1775, a year in which he devoted his attention to the violin as a solo instrument more than any other in his life.

Written while he was engaged as the concertmaster of the Archbishop's orchestra in Salzburg, the five violin concertos he wrote in Salzburg were probably first performed by him - in one letter he wrote to his father saying he "played as if he was the finest violinist in Europe", although at least some were also performed by his colleague in the Salzburg orchestra, Antonio Brunetti - Mozart's letters to his father Leopold make reference to performances of his concertos by others.

The A major concerto is arguably the finest of the violin concertos and one of Mozart's finest compositions to date, and along with its two predecessors is the earliest piece by Mozart to have entered the standard repertoire. These concertos can therefore be viewed as the moment in which Mozart entered his musical maturity.

While not as outwardly virtuosic as the preceding D major concerto (K218), K219 has a depth of musical intensity and drama matched by few other Mozart concerti, while being no slouch in terms of its technical demands either. It is scored for pairs of oboes and horns as well as strings, the standard orchestra of the time. Beginning with a 'stripped back' ascending melody, the opening tutti is marked *Allegro aperto* - "open, broad", a very rare tempo marking, and ends with a 'throwaway' ascending arpeggio figure.

The gear changes to *Adagio* - the only time in Mozart's concerto output that an opening movement is interrupted midway - and the soloist enters with an improvisatory solo based on an ascending triad with the strings playing a gentle murmuring accompaniment beneath. The effect is very operatic, and indeed the whole movement has a very dramatic feel as if an aria for violin rather than voice, with decorated phrases and contrast between loud and soft passages. After the slow interruption, the movement restarts, but now with the soloist playing the 'real' melody of the movement, an ebullient embellishment of the ascending triad of the *Adagio*.

The first subject is largely based on the ascending arpeggio phrase that finished the tutti, while the second subject is based on an ascending passage of broken thirds. The development section turns minor key and intensifies the drama, but the mood does not stay stormy for long and the sunny mood returns for the recapitulation. The final solo passage ascends particularly high in a brilliant run up the instrument and then after a brief tutti the soloist plays a cadenza.

In this performance the cadenzas of Franz Beyer are played, which are written in the style of the extant Mozart cadenzas for his other concerti and perhaps give an impression of what a contemporary improvised cadenza may have sounded like.

Concerto Continued..

The elegant second movement is the original slow movement of the piece, however Mozart also provided an alternate slow movement, the Adagio in E K261 for Brunetti who disliked the original slow movement as being "too studied" - Mozart obliged, although his letters to Leopold indicate he held a dim view of Brunetti's musicality; the original version has overwhelmingly been preferred in subsequent performance.

The gently sighing phrases and the decorated solo passagework give this movement a serene beauty, while sudden forte - piano contrasts maintain the operatic drama of the first movement. For his last three violin concertos, Mozart used the French Rondeau form for the finale, in which a series of dances are assembled into an overall rondo structure - which is then interrupted by a contrasting central section. For K219, he selected the courtly minuet as the dance form for the outer sections, but offsets this by an impish sense of humour in the solo writing, as if sending up the stuffy traditional dance form.

The soloist introduces the minuet melody, featuring characteristic grace notes, which is then taken over by the orchestra, and then punctuated by a concluding phrase by the soloist and an ascending passage of grace notes.

The first solo episode that follows has the soloist sailing above the orchestra and embarking on some brilliant passagework, finishing with an Eingang, a brief embellished mini cadenza that acts as a transition back to the return of the rondo theme.

The second solo episode is darker and more dramatic, with forceful solos low in the instrument's range and contrasts between register and between loud and soft. Another Eingang leads back into the minuet theme again after which there is a sudden break.

The contrasting central section of the A major concerto's finale goes far beyond the folk music quotations of the other two concerti - here Mozart indulges in some musical exoticism by adding some "Turkish" music (then in vogue and based on the musical style of Ottoman janissary bands) with impassioned solos from the soloist in between outbursts from the orchestra.

Although the true "Turkish" style added cymbals, triangle and bass drums (e.g. in his overture to The Abduction from the Seraglio, or in the "Turkish" section of the finale of Beethoven's Ninth) here Mozart cleverly gets the effect without requiring additional instruments - the lower strings play sudden forte-pianos with grace notes, or play col legno with the wood of the bow, giving an effect much like percussion.

Although known as "Turkish" music, the actual musical material for this movement is based on Eastern European (particularly Hungarian) folk music including a sinuously chromatic rising-and-falling phrase with sudden loud and soft contrasts. Another Eingang for the soloist follows, before leading back into the minuet theme, and then a modified version of the first solo episode, now in a different key, and finishing with a final Eingang.

A final statement of the minuet theme - now highly decorated - follows and then after a longer orchestral tutti the soloist has the final word, bowing out with a cheeky ascending run of grace notes as a 'throwaway' ending.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

The Bard, Op 64 (1913)

Sibelius's music is steeped in the traditions and myths of his native Finland, so much so that even in non-programmatic music there seems to be some echo of the ancient sagas and legends. Written in 1913, the Bard is one of Sibelius's later tone poems, and was written at the same time (and was perhaps originally intended as a companion piece to) his work The Oceanides.

It is a moody and evocative musical depiction of an aged poet in a castle harping and singing of bygone times: "something like an ancient Scandinavian ballad from the time of the Vikings", in Sibelius's own words. Although lacking the direct obvious narrative of some of Sibelius's tone poems, Erkki Salmenhaara wrote of The Bard that "The form advances as a free poem, like something dimly visible in the distance, containing references, whispers, and small emphases."

The musical writing is static and brooding with dark orchestration, with lower string and clarinet textures dominating. Blocks of tone colour are interspersed with declamatory harp chords and ascending-and-descending melodic fragments on lower strings. The entry of the winds provides a brief surge of momentum, but then the mood stills and the writing dies away to leave just the harp playing a series of chords.

The textures thicken and build with syncopated lower strings, woodwinds and sustained horn notes, with the harp playing flourishes, until the lower brass enter with a chord in their only appearance in the piece, until the intensity ebbs away and the tone poem finishes as it began in a mood of bleak melancholy - until a sudden major chord.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Suite from The Firebird (1910/1919)

The first of Stravinsky's ballets as part of his extremely successful collaboration with Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets-Russes (which also produced Rite of Spring and Petrushka), the L'Oiseau de feu (The Firebird) was highly successful in its premiere in 1910 and was Stravinsky's breakthrough into international fame.

The ballet is based on Russian fairy tales involving the mythical phoenix and the mixed blessing and curse it bestows on its owner, melded with another folk story of the evil sorcerer Kashchei who forms the villain of the scenario. The hero Prince Ivan defeats the evil Kashchei with the help of the Firebird and breaks the magic spell that was holding the land in thrall.

Stravinsky's masterful writing makes it difficult to believe that the Firebird was his first major orchestral composition and only his fifth composition overall - he was only 27! Although the influence of previous Russian composers can be heard - particularly his teacher Rimsky Korsakov, the Firebird already sounds authentically Stravinsky.

A particular feature of the score is the use of diatonic folk-like melodies to depict the hero Ivan and his princess love interest, but the use of extreme chromaticism to depict the otherworldly creatures of the Firebird and Kashchei. Stravinsky later extracted three suites for orchestra from the music, revising the orchestration for each time.

Firebird Continued..

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This was motivated in part by financial grounds - Diaghilev owned the rights to the ballet version and after WW1 Stravinsky was in dire straits financially. While he had arranged a concert version of the work in 1911 it used the original huge orchestration which was a barrier for orchestras trying to put on the work - plus the parts were held by a Russian publisher and after the 1917 revolution and the abolition of property rights in Russia this meant it was not a reliable source of income. It occurred to Stravinsky that under European copyright law a new arrangement of the ballet would count as a new work and allow him to publish and earn money outside Russia. This is why the 1919 version of the suite, which is most commonly played, has only a medium sized orchestra, but the quality of the orchestration and the range of musical colours produced is such that the effect is of listening to a huge orchestra. (A similar financial rationale explains why he later arranged a third suite in 1945!)

The first section, Introduction, depicts the hero Prince Ivan stumbling into the enchanted forest that is Kashchei's realm while hunting. It begins ominously but with relentless momentum with lower strings playing an oscillating six note motif over which winds and horns layer. Tremolo strings, staccato chirping winds and harp build until a sudden brass 'sting' in the aftermath of which glissando tremolos on the strings gives an eerie mood. Flute and oboe take over the motif and then the mood subsides into an ominous stillness that is suddenly interrupted by loud string tremolos that introduce the second section. In this short but virtuosic second section, The Firebird and its Dance, muted string and woodwind trills and virtuosic woodwind flourishes combine to evoke the chirruping and swooping of the Firebird, culminating in a sudden chord.

The third section, The Princesses' Dance, depicts the hero falling in love with one of the 13 princesses that Kashchei has captured, and begins tenderly with solos for flute, violin, oboe, cello, clarinet and bassoon over a warm accompaniment of harp and horns.

Muted strings take over the melody, before a return to the solos of the opening. Winds and horns take over in a section with more movement, interspersed with swells of string sound. The Prince then confronts Kashchei and requests the princess's hand in marriage. Kashchei refuses and orders his magic creatures to attack in the vigorous Infernal Dance with its primal rhythms and virtuosic orchestral writing which anticipates the Rite of Spring.

The highly chromatic musical scale used in this movement was adapted from the scale Rimsky-Korsakov used to depict the evil Chernobog in his opera *Mlada*. The momentum grows throughout and builds until a pattering coda and a barrage of orchestral sound as the Firebird comes to Ivan's aid and bewitches Kashchei into an enchanted sleep. This unnatural sleep is depicted by the Berceuse (Lullaby) that follows on without a pause, with sinuous bassoon and oboe solos over an underpinning of muted strings and harp. The unsettled, slightly creepy mood continues as the energy grows and ethereal celesta notes give an otherworldly feel. The lullaby melody returns, now under crystalline muted string countermelodies and gossamer tremolos which descend chromatically and transition seamlessly into the Finale.

The shimmering strings suddenly take on a bright mood as a noble horn solo enters and the finale builds in an ecstatic outpouring of joy - with the Firebird's help Ivan was able to defeat the evil Kashchei and free the forest from his sorcery, and Ivan marries the princess. The repeated melody that occurs throughout the finale is a transformed triumphant version of the ominous six note motif that opened the introduction, although unusually for much of the Finale Stravinsky has the metre in 7/4 so that the six note motif is separated by a beat of rests. The magnificent coda has the full orchestra suddenly drop to quiet and then build to a final "fairy tale" chord. Public reaction was ecstatic with the Firebird being hugely popular - especially how well the music matched and was an integral part of the plot rather than feeling like an "add-on" as in many ballets, describing it as a "danced symphony" in which "Stravinsky applied the rejuvenating influence of Debussy's impressionism to the by now somewhat faded Russian fairytale tradition". Debussy himself was at the premiere and was so impressed that he invited the young composer out to dinner immediately!

THE TEAM

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AUDITIONS

Being a member of the BPO is a rewarding community experience and a lot of fun. Our members are just like you – ordinary people who enjoy coming together to make extraordinary music! Auditions are held to fill vacant positions or to appoint suitable reserve players capable of filling temporary vacancies from time-to-time.

Visit our website to download audition excerpts and fill out the online form to sign up! www.bpo.org.au

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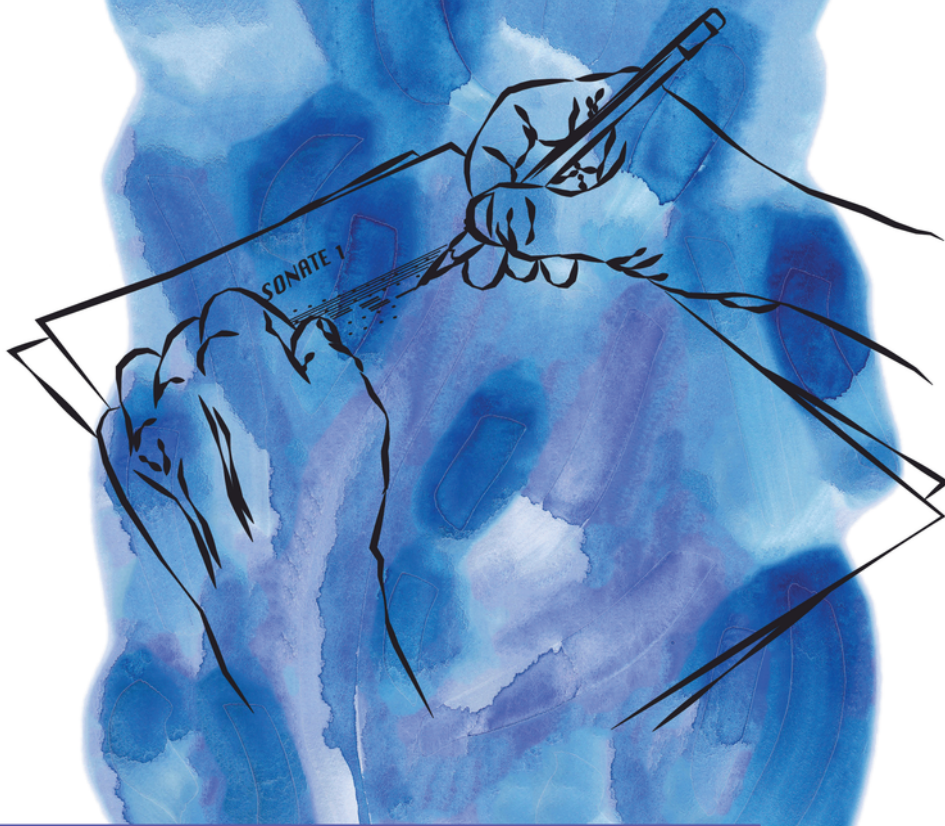
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