BRISBANE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA.

2014 SEASON / METRO #3

BOHEMIAN JOURNEYS

SUNDAY 20TH JULY, 3pm

OLD MUSEUM BUILDING

GREGORY TERRACE, BOWEN HILLS

CONDUCTOR NATHAN ASPINALL
HORN MALCOLM STEWART

PROGRAM:

BRAHMS
ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE

RICHARD STRAUSS
HORN CONCERTO NO. 1

DVORAK
SYMPHONY NO. 7

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CONCERT PROGRAMME

BRAHMS
Academic Festival Overture

RICHARD STRAUSS
Horn Concerto No. 1

DVORAK
Symphony No. 7

BRISBANE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

* DENOTES PRINCIPAL

First Violin
Kimberley Pitt*
Cameron Hough
Yvette McKinnon
Peter Nichols
Kylie Hinde
Emma Errikson
Phillipa JPerrott
Nawres Al-Freh

Second Violin
Amy Phillips*
Amanda Lugton
Ryan Smith
Keith Gambling
Camilla Harvey
Ailsa Nicholson
Lauren Jones
Richard Clegg
Lucy Tyler

Viola
Eva Mowry Lewis*
Dan Edwards
Tim Butcher
Fiona Bowley
Sarah Parrish
Katrina Greenwood

Cello
Helen Dolden*
Courtney Pitt
Nicole Kancachian
Charmaine Lee
Edward Bracken
Gabriel Dumitru

Double Bass
Samuel Dickenson
Lorna Berry
Sophie Collis
Glenn Holliday
Mike Watson

Flute
Jessica Hitchcock*
Jo Lagerlow

Oboe
Anton Rayner*
Ben Liversidge

Clarinet
Daniel Sullivan*
Sarah Johnson

Bassoon
James Grafton
Katie Collis

Contra-bassoon
Trevor Williamson

French Horn
Melanie Taylor*
Emma Holden
Janelle Harding
Ben Tomarchio

Trumpet
Tamaryn Heck

Trombone
Chris Thomson*
Nic Thomson

Bass Trombone
Jake Mirabito

Tuba
Michael Sterzinger*

Percussion
Kerry Vann*
Sangeetha Badya
Nicole Atkinson
Jessica Hazlewood

Front page musician: Golnar Ghorab, cello
Photographer: Nick Morrissey

Conductor Profile
NATHAN ASPINALL

From 2012 to 2013 Nathan held the position of Young Conductor with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

In this role Nathan assisted Chief Conductor Johannes Fritzsch and visiting guest conductors and conducted concerts for the education series. Nathan studied French Horn and Conducting at the University of Queensland and upon graduation was awarded the Hugh Brandon Prize. In 2012 Nathan attended the Aspen Music Festival studying with Robert Spano and Hugh Wolff. He was awarded the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize, inviting him to return to Aspen in 2013.

Nathan has participated in the Symphony Australia Young Conductors' Program, working with the symphony orchestras in Tasmania, Adelaide, Queensland and Western Australia as well as the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and Orchestra Victoria. In January 2012 Nathan made his Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut at *Symphony in the Domain*. He also acted as assistant conductor for Opera Queensland's productions of *Macbeth* and *Carmen*. Recent performances include concerts with the Queensland Conservatorium Chamber Orchestra and Mozart's Gran Partita with members of the Queensland Symphony.

In 2014 Nathan returns to the Queensland and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras and makes his debut with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. He has also been invited to attend the Conductor's Workshop at the Tanglewood Music Centre in July. Nathan studies Orchestral Conducting with Hugh Wolff at New England Conservatory.

ABOUT THE SOLOIST

MALCOLM STEWART

Malcolm Stewart was born in Terrigal, New South Wales, and commenced studying horn at age eleven whilst a student at Young Primary School. Following his school years, he studied at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music with Peter Luff before moving to Switzerland to complete a post graduate degree at the Music Hochschule Zurich Winterthur under David Johnson from the American Horn Quartet. During this time Malcolm held a Co-Principal position with the St. Gallen Symphony Orchestra for three years.

Whilst in Europe, Malcolm performed with the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bern Symphony Orchestra and festival orchestras throughout Germany. He also had lessons with renowned horn players from all over the world including Stafan Dohr, Hector McDonald and Ab Koster.

After returning to Australia in 2002, Malcolm was Guest Principal with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra for six months before taking up a one year contract as Associate Principal with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Following this, Malcolm was appointed Associate Principal with the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra; a position he held for nine years.

Malcolm has performed as a guest with most of Australia's orchestras and in 2011 was appointed QSO's Principal Horn.

PROGRAM NOTES

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)
Horn Concerto No. 1 in E flat, Op 11 (1882)

Written at the age of only 18, the first Horn Concerto is Strauss' first concerto and also one of his earliest works to have become a standard part of the performance repertoire.

Strauss's father Franz was a virtuoso horn player (the principal horn of the Munich court opera) and so it is hardly surprising that Richard gained from an early age an appreciation for the capabilities and character of the horn. The elder Strauss' technical skill was legendary – despite having no liking for Wagner's music (and making no attempt to conceal the fact), he played it with such assurance that Wagner commented "[Franz] Strauss is a detestable fellow, but when he plays the horn, you can't be angry with him".

With such an example of the possibilities of the horn, the solo part of Richard's horn concerto sets the player a fiendishly difficult challenge – jumping rapidly from the highest to the lowest ranges of the instrument. Richard specified it to be played on the 'natural' (valveless) horn – except the work is so difficult as to be almost-unplayable on the natural horn, and is a difficult enough challenge on the modern horn!

Despite it being written for Franz's technical skill, he never performed it publicly – although impressed by the piece, at the age of over 60 Franz felt that it

had "too many high notes" for him to risk a public performance and the task of premiering it passed to another hornist. First performed in 1885, the concerto became popular – as the greatest horn concerto written since those of Mozart a hundred years before – and as an engaging and charming piece in its own right.

Overall it is in largely Classical style, with the three movement fast-slow-fast structure of the standard concerto, but it has several 'Romantic' touches – for example the cyclic use of the solo horn's opening fanfare as a melody throughout the work (in transformed form it is the main theme of the third movement), and there are some richly lyrical episodes reminiscent of Wagner.

The first movement begins with an assertive statement of the E flat key of the piece, after which the soloist immediately plays a heroic fanfare motif which is taken up by the orchestra as the march-like main theme of the movement. The solo passages that follow show off the expressive and noble character of the horn, with a characteristic ascending triplet 'fanfare' recurring at different points. The climax of the movement features a brief interruption where the orchestra plays a descending "sighing" melody before continuing on with the march theme, which subsides and forms a smooth transition into the second movement.

In the unusual key of A flat minor (seven flats), the second movement has a wistful and atmospheric feel, with a slightly-melancholy melody by the solo horn set off by the triplet 'fanfare' passages from the first movement which are transformed into the orchestral accompaniment for the second. The lyrical mood is heightened by countermelodies for cello and clarinet at various points during the movement, while a contrasting E major central section with wind fanfares offset against string pizzicato brings a bit of 'sunshine' back into the movement. After a return to the melancholy feel, the movement ends with subdued chords.

The third movement follows almost without a break, with a brief orchestral introduction bringing back the 'triplet fanfare' and leading into the soloist presenting the theme of the third movement – itself a transformation of the opening fanfare of the first movement. The overall structure is a "hunting rondo" similar to Mozart's concertos, but with a much more virtuosic and demanding solo part requiring great agility in jumping between registers. Towards the end of the movement, the orchestra plays an ascending passage quoting from the first movement, and the soloist in answer plays the "sighing" melody from the end of the first movement, which leads into a quasi-cadenza section with the soloist recapping on several of the main musical ideas of the concerto. A spirited and cheeky "con bravura" coda restores the energy to the movement until the soloist has the last word – playing one final phrase as the orchestra plays concluding chords underneath.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Academic Festival Overture, Op 80 (1880)

In 1879, Brahms was honoured with a doctorate by the University of Breslau. The Academic Festival Overture from the following year represents Brahms' musical "thank-you" note to the University, and showcases Brahms' impressive compositional skills in creating a work that manages to be both musically accomplished and ever-popular.

The term "Academic Festival" overture seems to imply that it was composed to accompany a graduation or other ceremonial event; however the term (in German) might be better translated as the "academic" Festival Overture – i.e. a festive overture taking as its subject the many aspects of university life.

Intended to form a pair with the Tragic Overture that Brahms was working on at the same time, it is in Brahms' own words a "very boisterous potpourri of student songs". The Overture calls for a large orchestra – one of the largest Brahms' ever calls for – including a large percussion section, contrabassoon and tuba, and shows Brahms' talent in orchestration in the adaptation of instruments to the character of the various episodes of the overture.

As a work, it is an impressive fusion of wit and formality- most of the thematic material is based on student songs (often drinking songs!), woven together in a formal structure that nevertheless gives the impression of being a spontaneous flow of melody, and culminates in a spectacular contrapuntal setting of the traditional academic song *Gaudeamus Igitur*. Anecdote has it that the academics at Breslau were shocked (and secretly amused) by Brahms' quotations from some more irreverent student songs.

Brahms' own university days were limited to a couple of months of carousing with university friends some 25 years earlier while in-between musical tours – he never formally attended university himself – and this perhaps explains why the overall atmosphere of the work lies more in the beer hall than the Great Hall!

PROGRAM NOTES (CONT)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)
Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op 70 (1884)

Dvořák stands as one of the great symphonists of the late 19th century, writing nine symphonies as well as several symphonic poems and concert overtures.

Although the Ninth – the famous New World symphony – is by far the most famous and most-frequently-played, his other mature symphonies (particularly the last five) are rewarding for both musicians and listeners even if they are somewhat overshadowed by the success of the Ninth.

Dvořák as a composer stands somewhere between the two main 'schools' of composition of the 19th century: the 'new music' school of Liszt and Wagner and the 'classical romantics' epitomised by Dvořák's good friend Brahms. In his early work, Dvořák was heavily influenced by Wagner; however he never abandoned the formal musical structures of the 'classical' school. The combination of his innate gift for melody (particularly when inspired by the rich folk music idioms of Bohemia and Moravia), the brilliant skills in orchestration he learned from his 'Wagnerian' days all framed in a logical formal structure makes Dvořák's music highly appealing.

The Seventh symphony, in D minor, is arguably the greatest of Dvořák's symphonic works; while not as bursting with luscious melodies as the Eighth or Ninth, it is brimming with emotional intensity (mostly) kept in strict check by its logical compositional structure that gives it its occasional-nickname as Dvořák's 'Tragic' symphony.

Some of this emotional intensity is no doubt due to the difficult personal circumstances of the previous years – his mother and eldest child had died recently, and Czech music as a whole suffered the loss of its 'founding father' Smetana earlier in 1884, but the 'Brahmsian' compositional rigour is no accident – over the previous ten years Dvořák had fostered a close friendship with his mentor Brahms.

His works of the early 1880s such as the Violin Concerto, the magnificent F minor Piano Trio and the Seventh Symphony share this engaging mix of "strong emotions wrapped in formal packages". In the case of the Seventh Symphony, Dvořák was strongly influenced by Brahms' own Third Symphony of the previous year, and echoes of Brahms' work can be seen in the structure of Dvořák's Seventh (for example the ominous, march-like character of the last movement).

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, Dvořák was beginning to gain fame across Europe on the back of works of his 'Slavonic' period. His Stabat Mater and Sixth Symphony were extremely well received in London, particularly the Sixth when performed for the Philharmonic Society of London under the baton of Hans Richter, which led to the Society commissioning Dvořák to write a symphony and electing him as an honorary member.

This was a high honour, and a daunting prospect for any composer: Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony was commissioned for the Philharmonic Society, and following in the footsteps of such a colossus would not be easy. Perhaps inspired by this, the new symphony is in the same key (solemn D minor) as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the opening indeed has a similar mood – a simmering fizz of suppressed intensity, ready to come to the boil at a moment's notice. Dvořák charts his own way, however, and the solemn theme that follows shares little with Beethoven's jagged melody. Initially on clarinet, the smoothly-rocking 6/8 melody comes with a "sting" in its tail with a fiery staccato flourish of dotted rhythms.

This theme was said to have come to Dvořák when he was awaiting the arrival of a train of Czech expats returning to Prague for a musical benefit concert at the Czech National Theatre. The Seventh Symphony, for Dvořák, took on an ambitious extra-musical scope – serving a purpose of national pride at a time when Czechs felt lost within the conglomeration of Austria-Hungary; the commission for London was an opportunity to foster awareness of Czech national identity on the world stage. Even more, with the passing of Smetana the baton of Czech music rested now in Dvořák's hands and he had to decide on how to develop his musical style to be successful internationally while still remaining true to his Czech roots.

These pressures spurred Dvořák to intense creativity, remarking to a friend that:

I am now busy with this symphony for London, and wherever I go I can think of nothing else. God grant that this Czech music will move the world!

Inspired, he completed the sketches for the first movement in only five days! Written for large orchestra with trombones (but no tuba), the whole composition of the Seventh Symphony took just four months – from December 1884 to March 1885.

The overall structure of the first movement is modified sonata form, with the main melodic material of the movement expanding on this contrast between legato and staccato, building in intensity to a powerful statement of the main theme by full orchestra. As the music subsides, fragments of the dotted rhythms are passed around the orchestra and the mood eases into the lyrical and smooth second subject played by the winds, with an embroidered accompaniment of running semiquavers on the strings.

PROGRAM NOTES (CONT)

Dvořák almost tricks the listener into expecting a repeat of the exposition, but instead a hushed introduction brings in the development section. After the restatement of the primary and secondary musical material in different keys a dynamic coda (accelerating to break-neck pace) brings the movement to its musical and emotional climax before falling away into a restatement of the solemn opening theme, giving an overall arch-like structure to the movement.

The meditative second movement, which Dvořák subtitled *From the Sad Years*, is full of gorgeous melodic invention. Anticipating some of his later slow movements, its structure is more like an essay with 'paragraphs' of different melodies following each other in succession. Although reminiscing on past sorrows, it also has moments of looking forward to future happiness; the composer described this movement as: *What is in my mind is Love, God, and my Fatherland*.

It opens with a bittersweet melody on clarinet, followed by a more sunny melody on flute; however the contented mood is interrupted midway by forceful chords and a spiky fanfare dotted rhythms. A warm and rich section with a radiant, rhapsodic horn melody (with a bit of a 'Wagnerian' character) briefly dispels the sadness, but the emotional intensity builds into a brief outpouring of sorrow by the full orchestra.

The following section has a searching character with the interplay between several melodic fragments passing between different instruments, and then leading back into the 'bittersweet' opening melody via a characteristically-Dvořákian transition passage of slowly-shifting repeating melodic fragments. After a return through the melodic material of the movement, the climax of the movement comes and a gentle coda (with more classic-Dvořák passing of melodic fragments between instruments) brings the movement to a delicate, cathartic finish.

The energetic third movement is a furiant – a Czech folk dance characterised by cross-rhythms of alternating between one bar of three long beats and two bars of three short beats (i.e. 1… 2… 3… 123 123). The feeling is similar to the Slavonic Dances, some of which also use the furiant rhythms. As the name suggests, the furiant is typically an energetic and vigorous dance.

Unlike its violent counterpart in the Sixth Symphony (also a furiant), the scherzo of the Seventh conceals some of its intensity behind a skipping dotted rhythm and lyrical countermelody – but it just means that when the fire comes it is more startling and effective.

The trio section is a gentle respite from the intensity of the scherzo – lilting, folk-like melodies on the winds on top of a warm foundation of string writing – but all-too-soon a torrent of fiery notes heralds the return of the scherzo.

The last movement is both the simplest and most complex movement of the symphony. Simple in that its overall 'straight' sonata form structure is easily analysed; complex in that the melodic ideas comprising each of these sections are layered and mixed together.

The main 'A' section begins with a anguished phrase (almost but not quite a fanfare) on horns and celli, which builds up in intensity into a ominous and uneven (starting halfway through the bar) march, interrupted by violent triplet flourishes by the upper winds and strings. Dvořák wrote that this movement demonstrated the Czech people's ability to display "stubborn resistance to oppressors" – which is apt, since the various themes of the 'A' section have a bellicose, somewhat-adversarial tone (this 'march theme' of the finale of the Seventh has some strong similarities to John William's battle music for the *Star Wars* movies; Williams melodic writing has a strong debt to Dvořák, extending to outright quotation at times!).

In contrast, the themes of the 'B' section are warm and lyrical, with four bar sections of music shifting in mood from expansive to calm to playful and finally to heroic and celebratory. The development interweaves the various themes of the 'A' section in an ominous and dark fashion.

In the coda the various melodic elements of the 'A' section are mixed together and interwoven into an intense accelerando until finally the 'horn call' of the opening is heard sped-up played by the whole orchestra and turning into a torrent of notes until the first violins ascend to highest D (almost at the very top of the orchestra's range) and the rest of the orchestra plays out the 'horn call' melody one last time to bring the movement to a triumphant close.

Just five weeks after completing the symphony, Dvorak himself conducted the work to great acclaim in London. A contemporary reviewer stated:

Dvořák's music is equally interesting, and we may add satisfying, to adherents of the conservative and the progressive schools of art – to the former because it illustrates the fact that it is possible to create something entirely new and original without departing from the formal outlines or the canons of art laid down by the greatest masters of the past; to the more modern school because of the boldness of his harmonic progressions and the freedom of his rhythmic combinations.

Its ongoing legacy in England, at least, was significant – although until after WW2 Dvořák's orchestral music (other than the New World symphony) was rarely played outside of Czechoslovakia, the Seventh remained well-known in England, so much so that great musicologist Sir Donald Tovey did not hesitate to rank Dvořák's Seventh as one of the "greatest and purest" examples of the symphony post-Beethoven. In such august company as Brahms' symphonies and Schubert's Great C major symphony, this is a fitting epitaph for the quality of the work.

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

The Brisbane Philharmonic Association Inc acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we perform and rehearse.

The Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) is Brisbane's leading community orchestra. It is also the only Queensland community orchestra to have been recognized at the National Orchestral Awards. It 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.

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