MSO
AND THE
AUSTRALIAN STRING QUARTET
30–31 MARCH 2017
CONCERT PROGRAM
Welcome to tonight’s special program featuring personal favourites of the MSO’s Concertmaster Dale Barltrop, who not only performs but directs this incredible curation of music with our Ensemble in Residence, the Australian String Quartet.

Dale’s role as one quarter of the Australian String Quartet as well as MSO’s Concertmaster makes this unique evening one you won’t forget. This is what The Living Room Series represents: a series curated, conducted and performed by members of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and guests, providing you with an insight into what drives and inspires our performers.

Return later in this year’s Living Room Series to experience an intimate program emphasising the power and versatility of woodwind instruments in *MSO Plays Beethoven 8* with clarinetist and director Michael Collins, before MSO Concertmaster Eoin Andersen returns to direct some of his favourite works in *Sounds of Spring* in November.

I look forward to seeing you at the Melbourne Recital Centre and Robert Blackwood Hall for this special series.

**Sophie Galaise**  
*Managing Director*  
*Melbourne Symphony Orchestra*

Established in 1906, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) is an arts leader and Australia’s oldest professional orchestra. Chief Conductor Sir Andrew Davis has been at the helm of MSO since 2013. Engaging more than 2.5 million people each year, the MSO reaches a variety of audiences through live performances, recordings, TV and radio broadcasts and live streaming. As a truly global orchestra, the MSO collaborates with guest artists and arts organisations from across the world. Its international audiences include China, where the MSO performed in 2016 and Europe where the MSO toured in 2014.

The MSO performs a variety of concerts ranging from core classical performances at its home, Hamer Hall at Arts Centre Melbourne, to its annual free concerts at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. The MSO also delivers innovative and engaging programs to audiences of all ages through its Education and Outreach initiatives.

The MSO also works with Associate Conductor, Benjamin Northey, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus, as well as with such eminent recent guest conductors as John Adams, Tan Dun, Charles Dutoit, Jakub Hrůša, Mark Wigglesworth, Markus Stenz and Simone Young. It has also collaborated with non-classical musicians including Nick Cave, Sting, Tim Minchin, Ben Folds, DJ Jeff Mills and Flight Facilities.
ARTISTS
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
Australian String Quartet
Violin/Director Dale Barltrop

REPERTOIRE
Stravinsky
Concerto *Dumbarton Oaks*

Hindson
*The Rave and the Nightingale*

INTERVAL
Schubert/Mahler
String Quartet No.14
*Death and the Maiden*

Running time 1 hour 40 minutes
Brisbane-born violinist, Dale Barltrop, is Concertmaster of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and first violinist of the Australian String Quartet. He recently returned to Australia after 18 years in North America. Barltrop served as Concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra from 2009–16 and prior to that, as Principal Second Violin of the St Paul Chamber Orchestra in the U.S. He has appeared with all of these orchestras as soloist and director.

Barltrop has also appeared as Concertmaster of the Australian World Orchestra under Sir Simon Rattle, guest Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, ACO2 and the Camerata of St John’s chamber orchestra in Brisbane. He has performed at numerous music festivals across North America, including Mainly Mozart, Festival Mozaic, Music in the Vineyards, Yellow Barn, Kneisel Hall, Tanglewood and the New York String Seminar. He was a grand prize winner at the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition and winner of the violin division of the American String Teachers Association National Solo Competition.

Barltrop began his violin studies in Brisbane, made his solo debut with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra at the age of 15 and was Concertmaster of both the Queensland and Australian Youth Orchestras. He moved to the United States in 1998 to attend the University of Maryland and continued his studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music. His teachers have included William Preucil, Gerald Fischbach, the members of the Guarneri Quartet, Elizabeth Morgan and Marcia Cox.

A passionate educator, Barltrop has served on the faculties of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra School of Music and the Vancouver Academy of Music. He has also taught at the University of British Columbia, National Orchestral Institute in Maryland, Australian National Academy of Music and Australian Youth Orchestra.

Barltrop performs on a violin crafted by JB Guadagnini, Turin, 1784. It is on loan from Ngeringa Arts and was purchased through the generosity of Allan J Myers AO, Maria J Myers AO and the Klein Family.
AUSTRALIAN STRING QUARTET

For more than 30 years, the Australian String Quartet (ASQ) has reached out across Australia and internationally from its home base of Elder Conservatorium of Music, Adelaide to create unforgettable performances, with a distinctly Australian character, connecting people with outstanding string quartet music.

The ASQ's distinct sound is enhanced by a matched set of 18th century instruments, handcrafted by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini in Turin and Piacenza, Italy. These are on loan for the quartet's exclusive use through the generosity of Ulrike Klein and UKARIA.

The ASQ's 2017 program includes their inaugural morning series at UKARIA Cultural Centre; a year-long association with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the world premiere of a new cello quintet by Gordon Kerry; the launch of the ASQ digital platform; as well as recording collaborations with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and a release with Slava Grigoryan.

Other 2017 highlights include collaborations with renowned Dutch cellist Pieter Wispelwey and Australian pianist Caroline Almonte for the ASQ’s flagship regional festivals in the Southern Grampians and Western Australia’s Margaret River; international performances with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra; the first stage of a cultural exchange project with the Adelaide Festival Centre in China; and the continuation of the new Close Quarters series, which will be delivered in tandem with the ASQ’s National Season and regional touring programs.

The members of the quartet play the following instruments:

Dale Barltrop –
1784 Guadagnini Violin, Turin;

Francesca Hiew –
1748-49 Guadagnini Violin, Piacenza;

Stephen King –
1783 Guadagnini Viola, Turin;

Sharon Draper –
c.1743 Guadagnini Violoncello, Piacenza, ‘Ngeringa’.
IGOR STRAVINSKY
(1882–1971)
Concerto in E flat Dumbarton Oaks
Tempo giusto –
Allegretto –
Con moto

Before migrating to the USA in the late 1930s, Stravinsky cultivated a number of philanthropic Americans such as Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss, who lived at Dumbarton Oaks, a mansion in the Georgetown area of Washington, DC. In 1937, Mildred Woods Bliss commissioned Stravinsky to write something for her 30th wedding anniversary, asking that it be a piece of ‘Brandenburg Concerto dimensions’.

Mildred Woods Bliss can’t have been disappointed: Stravinsky begins this work with clear allusions to both the third and sixth ‘Brandenburgs’, spinning out an opening gambit of almost completely immobile harmony enlivened by the interplay of rhythmically distinctive motives. The work combines and recombines different instrumental lines and contrasts these textures with the more massive sonority of the full ensemble. But where a Baroque work creates its contrapuntal tension against the background of a regular pulse, Stravinsky’s soon explores the effect of suddenly adding or removing beats. The complex metrical irregularity threatens to undermine the civilised certainties implied by the reference to Bach.

The second movement is even less Bachian with fleeting, contrasting textures like Webern’s, a balletic Tchaikovskian flute solo and short chordal codas. By the third movement, the references to other music have become, in the words of Stravinsky specialist Stephen Walsh, ‘distinctly surreal’. Stravinsky closes with an E flat major chord, compromised by the addition of the note D in some parts.

MATTHEW HINDSON
(born 1968)
The Rave and the Nightingale

Australian composer Matthew Hindson has garnered a reputation for harnessing a range of influences, from techno and heavy metal to earlier precedents. In The Rave and the Nightingale (2001), he re-imagines Schubert’s Quartet No.15 in G through a 20th-century filter. In Hindson’s homage, Schubert is now ‘DJ Franz’, ‘writing techno-inspired electronica anthems for the clubs of Europe’.

Such a scenario creates a conflict: between Schubert’s finely wrought melodic imagination – denoted by Hindson as the ‘nightingale’ – and the less melodic, rhythmically generated idioms of modern music – the ‘rave’. Much of Schubert’s material is woven into the piece. The first four
minutes are a direct quotation from the original, then the contemporary treatment takes over for the remainder of the piece. This is mostly easily recognisable, featuring modern string techniques, and rhythmic and harmonic figurations associated with present-day popular music.

© Symphony Australia
This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797–1828)

String Quartet in D minor, D.810, *Death and the Maiden*
Arranged for string orchestra by Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

*Allegro*
*Andante con moto*
*Scherzo (Allegro molto)*
*Presto*

This arrangement of Schubert’s masterpiece by another great Austrian composer takes us to the very heart of the Viennese musical tradition. It is a transcription of Schubert’s string quartet for full string orchestra, which Mahler made so that he could conduct the work in concert.

Schubert’s D minor Quartet is his most played and admired, not only because it has a suggestive title, but because of its unity and power. All four movements are in minor keys. The use of material from Schubert’s song *Death and the Maiden*, a setting of a poem by Claudius, gives the clue to the whole quartet. The agitated girl expresses her terror of Death, and begs him to leave her untouched. Death solemnly and reassuringly offers himself as a friend, in whose arms she will find sleep. Death, its tragedy and release, has been found in all four movements, especially in the last, a tarantella often described as a dance of death. Schubert, when he composed this quartet in 1824, after recovering from treatment for syphilis, had mortality much in mind. He also seems to have been suffering a crisis of creative confidence. Yet this was one of the most fruitful periods of Schubert’s life, producing his A minor and G major string quartets and also the Great C major Symphony.

The opening, with its triplet rhythm, is a defiant challenge which pervades the movement. It ends with a kind of double coda, in which Schubert plays a masterstroke by twice seeming to modulate to E flat major, as though trying and failing to escape from the sombre threat of death.

The slow movement is a theme and set of five variations; only one of these, the fourth, is in a major key, otherwise G minor prevails, except in the coda, where the major key seems to suggest that Death’s invitation has been accepted.

Following the fiercely syncopated Scherzo and berceuse-like trio is the finale, a headstrong tarantella, unavoidably suggesting a dance of death. Whether this dance is deathly or
not, it is certainly energetic – the tarantella is a dance ending in the collapse of the dancers.

Throughout his life Gustav Mahler loved chamber music – one of his earliest works was a one movement Piano Quartet. In 1894, when Mahler was conducting at the Opera in Hamburg, he bought a C.F. Peters edition of Schubert String Quartets and for one of his concerts with the opera orchestra he arranged Quartet No.14 *Death and the Maiden* for string orchestra.

As a conductor Mahler was eager to present masterpieces from the chamber music repertoire to a larger audience, but he felt, these works needed ‘enhancement’ in order to work in the space and acoustics of a big concert hall. For Mahler the sonorities of a full string section could bring out an additional dimension that remained hidden behind the notes.

His arrangement of this Schubert Quartet, as well as the one he made of Beethoven’s String Quartet op.95 some years later, are therefore very free and not limited by the addition of a double bass part. Mahler’s extensive performance markings, the use of solo against tutti passages and the use of mutes, testify to his exceptional skills as an arranger, and also serve as a written interpretation of the Schubert Quartet. We are therefore able to hear the original work through Mahler’s ears.

Needless to say, the conservative Hamburg audience, who only heard one movement of the arrangement, was not very appreciative – as was the Vienna audience when Mahler presented his Beethoven arrangement. It was not until Mahler’s daughter Anna donated some of her father’s library, including the Peters Schubert volume, to the eminent musicologist Donald Mitchell, that Mahler’s arrangement was discovered. Mitchell, together with his colleague David Matthews, made a performing edition of the piece, which we will hear tonight.

Abridged from a note by David Garrett © 2004
*The only previous performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra took place in March 2001, conducted by Kolja Blacher.*
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