Melbourne Symphony Orchestra & Melbourne Recital Centre present

Metropolis New Music Festival 2018

19 & 21 APRIL 2018
CONCERT PROGRAM

Presented in association with Melbourne Recital Centre and Monash University, the MSO’s Metropolis New Music Festival Education Partner.
METROPOLIS 1
THURSDAY 19 APRIL
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
Clark Rundell conductor
Wu Wei sheng
Australian String Quartet
Ligeti String Quartet No.1 Métamorphoses nocturnes
Chin Šu – Australian premiere

INTERVAL
Vincent Hood Yourself In Stars – world premiere
Chin ParaMetaString

METROPOLIS 2
SATURDAY 21 APRIL
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
Clark Rundell conductor
Jennifer Koh violin
Allison Bell soprano
Chin Rocaná – Australian premiere
Chin Puzzles and Games from Alice in Wonderland – Australian premiere

INTERVAL
Ligeti Atmosphères
Chin Violin Concerto – Australian premiere

MEET THE ARTISTS

UNSUK CHIN
COMPOSER

Unsuk Chin’s music has been performed by ensembles such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Ensemble intercontemporain, Kronos Quartet, Hilliard Ensemble, and Klangforum Wien, and conducted by Kent Nagano, Simon Rattle, and Neeme Järvi, among others. Awards include the 2004 Grawemeyer for her Violin Concerto and last year’s Wihuri Sibelius Prize. The Bavarian State Opera production of Alice in Wonderland was selected ‘Premiere of the Year’ in 2007 by the German opera magazine Opernwelt. Since 2006, she has overseen the contemporary music series of the Seoul Philharmonic, and, since 2011, served as Artistic Director of the Philharmonia’s ‘Music of Today’ series. Forthcoming performances include the UK premiere of cosmigimmicks, and Japanese premieres of the cello concerto, clarinet concerto, and Mannequin.

MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Established in 1906, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) is an arts leader and Australia’s longest-running professional orchestra. Chief Conductor Sir Andrew Davis has been at the helm of MSO since 2013. Engaging more than 3 million people each year, the MSO reaches a variety of audiences through live performances, recordings, TV and radio broadcasts and live streaming.

The MSO also works with Associate Conductor Benjamin Northey and Cybec Assistant Conductor Tianyi Lu, as well as with such eminent recent guest conductors as Tan Dun, John Adams, Jakub Hrůša and Jukka-Pekka Saraste. It also collaborates with non-classical musicians such as Elton John, Nick Cave and Flight Facilities.

Running time for each concert is approx. 1 hour and 45 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.
CLARK RUNDELL  
CONDUCTOR

Clark Rundell’s repertoire ranges from 18th century music to the present day. Recent appearances have included the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Residency Orchestra of The Hague, Ensemble 10/10 and BBC Philharmonic.

In June 2017, he conducted the European premiere of Daniel Snyder’s opera *Charlie Parker’s Yardbird*. He has premiered operas by James MacMillan and Orlando Gough. Other operas he has conducted include *Albert Herring*, *Carmen*, and *The Cunning Little Vixen*. He has recorded works by composers such as Peter Dickinson, arranged suites from Louis Andriessen’s operas, and presented cross-genre collaborations with Elvis Costello and the Wayne Shorter Quartet, among others.

Raised in Minnesota, he now lives in Manchester where he heads Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music.

ADE VINCENT  
COMPOSER

Ade Vincent is a prolific and diverse composer. His music has been heard on television, radio, digital media and film, as well as performed in a range of venues: from intimate bars to major music festivals and concert halls.

He fronts and writes music for indie-pop quartet *The Tiger & Me* who have toured Australia extensively, signed to the ABC label Four/Four.

In 2015 he co-founded Kaleidoscope Audio, specialising in music and sound for videogames.

Soon after obtaining his Masters in Composition he became the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra’s Young Composer in Residence and is now working on three new works for the orchestra.

He is currently completing a PhD in Composition at The University of Melbourne where he also teaches.

AUSTRALIAN STRING QUARTET

Dale Barltrop  violin
Francesca Hiew  violin
Stephen King  viola
Sharon Grigoryan  cello

Dedicated to musical excellence with a distinctly Australian flavour, the Australian String Quartet creates unforgettable experiences for audiences worldwide.

The Quartet’s transcendent sound is enhanced by a matched set of 18th century Guadagnini instruments, handcrafted by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini between c.1743 and 1784 in Turin and Piacenza, Italy. The instruments are on loan to the ASQ for their exclusive use through the generosity of UKARIA.

In 2018, the ASQ embarks on national and international tours, delivers exhilarating concerts, festivals, regional and metropolitan residencies, new Australian recording initiatives, as well as ground-breaking live digital experiences.

WU WEI  
SHENG

Master of the sheng, Wu Wei has helped develop this 4,000 year-old instrument into a force for contemporary music.

Wu Wei studied at Shanghai Conservatory before attending the Hanns Eisler Academy in Germany. He has won numerous competitions for traditional Chinese music as well as Musica Vitale Competitions in Germany and the Global Root folk prize in 2011.

Wu Wei has appeared at festivals including the Berliner Festspiele, Munich Biennale, Edinburgh Festival, and Donaueschingen Music Days, as well as with orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, and Seoul Philharmonic. He has premiered over 150 works by composers such as John Cage, Jörg Widmann, and Tan Dun, and recorded Unsuk Chin’s *Šu*. He is also a prolific composer for sheng.

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Raised in Minnesota, he now lives in Manchester where he heads Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music.
La Scala Prize at the Viñas Competition of her generation. Awards include the performers of 20th and 21st century music. Allison Bell is one of the leading Ensemble Linea plays Eötvös the CD Académie du Disque Lyrique in Paris for in Barcelona and an Orphée d’Or from the BBC Symphony Orchestras for the World Bouchara, the Auckland Philharmonia and United Berlin/Jurowski for Claude Vivier’s Dean at the Berlin Philharmonie, Ensemble to sing works by Shostakovich, Berg and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin Ophelia”, received wide critical acclaim. Her recent recording of Brett Dean’s Soldaten-Sinfonie, create the role of Lei singing the role of Marie in Zimmerman’s Philharmonie under Emilio Pomerico to Sinfonietta/MTW/Geoffrey Petterson and perform concerts featuring the music of Verdi, Puccini and Ligeti in Seoul with Shinik Hahm and Symphony SONG.

ALLYSON BELL
SOPRANO

Allison Bell is one of the leading performers of 20th and 21st century music of her generation. Awards include the La Scala Prize at the Viñas Competition in Barcelona and an Orphée d’Or from the Académie du Disque Lyrique in Paris for the CD Ensemble Linea plays Eötvös.

Her recent recording of Brett Dean’s Second String Quartet “And once I played Ophelia”, received wide critical acclaim. In 2018 Allison joins Vladimir Jurowski and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin to sing works by Shostakovich, Berg and Dean at the Berlin Philharmonie, Ensemble United Berlin/Jurowski for Claude Vivier’s Bouchara, the Auckland Philharmonia and BBC Symphony Orchestras for the World and UK premieres of Face by Ross Harris. Further 2018 highlights include her WDR Sinfonieorchester debut at the Cologne Philharmonie under Emilio Pomerico to sing the role of Marie in Zimmerman’s Soldaten-Sinfonie, create the role of Lei for the UK premiere of Pascal Dusapin’s opera, Passion, with the London Sinfonietta/MTW/Geoffrey Petterson and perform concerts featuring the music of Verdi, Puccini and Ligeti in Seoul with Shinik Hahm and Symphony SONG.

JENNIFER KOH
VIOLIN

Jennifer Koh made her debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, aged 11. She won the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1994 and has since recorded Tchaikovsky with the Odense Symphony Orchestra conducted by Alexander Vedernikov.

Jennifer Koh believes strongly in music’s continuity from past to present. This belief underlies several of her commissioning projects, such as Bach and Beyond which explores the solo violin repertoire from Bach’s sonatas and partitas to the present-day. Other projects include New American Concerto which was launched mid-2017 with her premiere of Vijay Iyer’s Trouble, a co-commission of the Ojai Festival, Berkeley’s Cal Performances and the Boston Symphony. Recent performances include Limitless, in a project in which she brings composers onstage to perform their commissioned works with her.

PROGRAM NOTES

METROPOLIS 1
GYORGY LIGETI
(1923-2006)

String Quartet No.1
Métemorphoses nocturnes
Australian String Quartet

Allegro grazioso
Vivace, capriccioso
Adagio, mesto
Presto
Andante tranquillo
Tempo di valse
Allegretto, un poco gioviale
Prestissimo

Like many artists in totalitarian societies, Ligeti created a number of works ‘for the bottom drawer’. In the early 1950s, the Hungarian regime’s attitude to the arts was, as Ligeti put it, ‘insane’: the Budapest Museum of Art was obliged to put its considerable collection of Impressionist paintings into storage, and while Bartók was regarded as the great national composer and anti-Fascist hero…most of his works fell victim to censorship, as would this piece had it been performed.

Ligeti wrote his first quartet in 1953-54, before the brief experiment in liberalisation that was so comprehensively crushed by Moscow in 1956 and his flight from Hungary soon after, and it is his response – part homage, part assimilation – to Bartók’s quartets (particularly the Third and Fourth, which Ligeti, of course, had never heard, but studied in score). So thorough was this assimilation that Ligeti is said to have quipped that having written this work, he could now write Bartók’s Seventh and Eighth quartets, and the thematic motif that is the germ of the piece is, as scholar David Mitchell observes, borrowed from Bartók’s Fourth Quartet. It is that motif that undergoes the metamorphoses of the title; the adjective ‘nocturnal’ inevitably reminds us of the numerous ‘night-pieces’ in Bartók’s work, and as Richard Toop writes, ‘seems rather appropriate to the clandestine circumstance’ of the work’s origin. Toop also points out, however, that Ligeti’s choice of variation form here is in sharp contrast to Bartók’s preference for symmetrical structures such as sonata or ‘arch’ form. Variation, unlike those, is (theoretically at least) infinitely extensible, though Ligeti chooses to restate his thematic cell at the end.

This cell is made up of two major seconds linked by a semitone, not unlike the shape of the BACH signature, or Shostakovich’s DSCH motto. Ligeti’s metamorphoses take the form of the gradual opening out of these intervals in a sequence of eight, short, contrasting sections. The second section, vivace, for instance, gives way to a Bartókian adagio, mesto (slow and sad) that explores the effect of minor thirds on the theme. Despite an overall rhythm of slow movements alternating with fast ones, each slow movement, and each fast one, is relatively faster than the one that precedes it, and within and between sections there is a huge range of variation of speed, dynamics and colour – the tempo di valse has a decidedly Balkan ‘trio section’.

© Gordon Kerry 2013

This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.
UNSUK CHIN
(born 1961)

Šu – Australian premiere

Wu Wei sheng

Up to now, Unsuk Chin has largely avoided composing for instruments from traditional non-European musical cultures: the dangers of musical exoticism seemed too great to her. She changed her mind only after hearing the sheng virtuoso Wu Wei. A prolific musician, who feels equally at home in many different musical styles, Wu Wei has contributed like no other to the popularisation of the Chinese mouth organ outside of his native country. The premieres of some 130 contemporary works testify to his desire to expand the sheng’s technical and expressive possibilities.

The sheng dates back more than 3000 years, and is thus one of the oldest instruments based on the principle of the free reed (which found application in church organs and the accordion only in the eighteenth century). In recent times it has been radically modernised. The key mechanism has made possible a harmonic treatment of the percussion group distantly resembling traditional Korean music.

Unsuk Chin relates that she first experienced the saenghwang (the sheng’s Korean counterpart) as a child, when she heard someone playing it in the distance, on a mountain. This was unusual, since the mouth organ’s role in Korean music is merely that of an accompaniment instrument. Ms. Chin associated this experience with the image of a “yearning for a distant sound,” which constitutes another motivation for the composition of Šu (Shu). The title derives from Egyptian mythology in which it represents a symbol for air. Indeed, as a result of the spatial aspect and the timbre, one often has the impression here of an open-air music, of sound that has become nature, albeit in a non-naturalistic manner.

The traditional idea of the concerto as a competition or contest yields to a game with constantly changing perspectives that takes advantage of camouflage, mimicry, and morphing. The instruments of the orchestra, which are employed as a group, in chamber music-like formations act as the soloist’s shadow and echo, or form contrasts. At times they also blend with the sheng, to then run riot in striking passages and – like acoustic elemental forces – threaten to overwhelm the tonally powerful soloist. By means of exceptional playing techniques and unusual-subtle instrumentation, both the solo instrument as well as the symphonic apparatus are challenged anew. That which the latter traditionally suppresses, the sound verging on noise, becomes – in dialogue with “more normal” means of expression and ways of playing – a source of idiosyncratic beauty. Specific tone colours and, in particular, the treatment of the percussion group distantly resemble traditional Korean music.

This is an example of how Unsuk Chin amalgamates the influences of traditional extra-European musical cultures and “Occidental” musical history (up to the avant-garde) in equal measure into her personal style. Šu is based on a strict harmonic and formal plan: main notes, which form the harmonic foundation of this music, traverse a circle during the course of the piece, and in doing so are continually redefined in relation to one another. Other devices in the temporal organisation are certain numerical proportions, whereby the number seven plays a significant role. The following pattern appears particularly often: a measure is subdivided into 4+3 units and mirrored by a measure with which it is coupled.

The one-movement work begins very simply: time and again, the sheng gently circles a tone that is encompassed by glistening, halo-like string harmonics. From these fragments, Chin “generates” broad, organic musical processes flowing in time, whereby various instrumental groups alternating with one another, melodic fragments, and motivic snippets are introduced. A continually recurring, percussion-dominated, rhythmically agitated motif, which is like an agglomeration of energy, attains particular importance. A percussion attack and a noisy interlude lead to an unexpected caesura, as if the preceding musical processes were revealed to be an illusion. However, this calculated chaos in turn “generates” organically developing processes. Out of wildly proliferating orchestral textures that ultimately collapse into themselves, a hurdy-gurdy-like, rhythmically four-square motif emerges in the sheng, which dominates a whole section in dialogue with spatially disposed harmonicas. A section exploring the borderlines between noise and sound and evoking spatial expanse and temporal paralysis follows. From these textures, an animated rhythmic pattern develops in the sheng, which, in four attempts, pushes higher and higher each time. This concept derives from Korean peasant or “Samulnori” music, whereby that what the composer makes of it has little if anything to do with the model. Two worlds collide in this quasi-cadenza, resulting in a high level of energy: the sheng plays a continuous, repetitive, strictly rhythmic figure that is commented upon by quasi-aleatoric orchestral patterns. Initially answered by rhythmical interjections from the membranophones and other percussion instruments, a great variety of flitting sounds, colours, and characters flash up during the sheng’s perpetuum mobile. After a short general pause, the stretto devolves increasingly into chaos and noise, to then ultimately lead into a rampant orchestral tutti that simultaneously introduces a kind of recapitulation. The tutti sound implodes; an alienated, fluctuating contrabass note emerges from the texture. The sheng takes up the motifs of the beginning, reflected by strings, which are located in the auditorium: the music returns in mutated form to its beginning and sinks into silence.

© Maria Gethöni
This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.
But I am like a great oak under a cloudy sky,
And hood yourself in stars.

The title and much of the inspiration for the work comes from Amy Lowell’s poem Generations:

You are like the stem
Of a young beech-tree,
Straight and swaying,
Breaking out in golden leaves.
Your walk is like the blowing of a beech-tree
On a hill.
Your voice is like leaves
Softly struck upon by a South wind.
Your shadow is no shadow, but a scattered sunshine;
And at night you pull the sky down to you
And hoods yourself in stars.

But I am like a great oak under a cloudy sky,
Watching a stripling beech grow up at my feet.

© Ade Vincent (2018)

Ade Vincent’s Hood Yourself in Stars has been commissioned through the MEO’s Cybec 21st Century Australian Composers Program.

ParaMetaString was commissioned by the Kronos Quartet. The original string sounds were recorded by Eunryung Chang (cello) and Matthias Leupold (violin). The tape recording was produced in the electronic studio of the Technical University, Berlin (under the direction of Folkmar Hein), between November 1995 and April 1996.

© Unsuk Chin

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

UNSUK CHIN

ParaMetaString – Australian premiere

Australian String Quartet

ParaMetaString is a study based on string sounds. Its four movements can be characterised as follows:

The first movement uses blocks of sound from artificially condensed tremolo sounds. While these blocks are heard in alternation, a subliminal rhythmic structure is gradually established, creating an expanding time structure. Layers of sound which would be covered up by the sound of unmanipulated strings are brought into the foreground through a filtering process.

The second movement revolves around the study of the structure of harmonics. The col legno beats of the cello on the note C, which gradually become slower and heavier, are used as an ostinato bass. In contrast to this, a structure of harmonics unfolds, the rhythm of which is divided up into smaller and smaller units. These two lines develop in a complementary way – the slower the bass, the finer the division of the trebles.

The third movement focusses on the diverse micro modulations within a cello note that slowly glides downwards, and, in contrast to this, on the ‘fluctuating’ fifths within the upward modulations of the other strings. The key note is D.

The fourth movement is, in essence, the development of the first. The rhythmic patterns of the first movement are used to create the rhythm of balls falling down and bouncing back, while the tempo increases and gravitation reverses its direction.

The music in Rocaná flows uninterruptedly. The overall picture and the overall structure are one entity, one “tonal sculpture”. However, one can look at it from various angles, since the inner structures are constantly changing. Even if the music at times gives the impression of stasis, subtle impulses, interactions, and reactions are continually present. Certain elements appear time and again, yet always in varied form.

They are not developed: they instead lead seamlessly into one another and blend, forming new interactions and processes. Orderly structures suddenly turn into turbulence and vice versa. Pointillist structures transform into cloudlike aggregates of sound and vice versa. These processes are often distinguished by self-similarity.

The composer once pointed out that because of her cultural background she has “a certain aversion to the sound world produced by traditional symphony orchestras rooted in 19th-century aesthetics, and I feel a great deal of affinity for non-European musical cultures. That is why I always try to introduce a completely different colour into my compositions as the physical phenomenon of a bodiless oscillation – their distortion, refraction, reflections, and undulations. This was not a matter of mere illustration, but of their depiction by musical means: “Art as harmony parallel to nature” (Cézanne). Since soundwaves – as the physical phenomenon of a bodiless oscillation – are similar to light waves, music seems the appropriate medium for a “translation” of light phenomena. Furthermore, physical phenomena like depth and density, spatial perceptions and illusions of various sorts were important associations in the composition process.

Olafur Eliasson’s installations The Weather Project and Notion Motion provided additional extra-musical inspiration.

The music in Rocaná is more or less standard, but an attempt was made to treat the orchestra like a “super-instrument” as well as like a virtuoso “illusion machine” that creates something new out of that which is familiar.

METROPOLIS 2

UNSUK CHIN

(born 1961)

Rocaná (Room of Light)

The title is Sanskrit and means “room of light”. For Unsuk Chin, the title does not have any specific religious or mythological meaning. Instead, it refers in many respects to the character of the work as well as to the composition techniques employed. The composer tells that in Rocaná she was concerned with the behaviour of beams of light – their distortion, refraction, reflections, and undulations. This was not a matter of mere illustration, but of their depiction by musical means: “Art as harmony parallel to nature” (Cézanne). Since soundwaves – as the physical phenomenon of a bodiless oscillation – are similar to light waves, music seems the appropriate medium for a “translation” of light phenomena. Furthermore, physical phenomena like depth and density, spatial perceptions and illusions of various sorts were important associations in the composition process. Olafur Eliasson’s installations The Weather Project and Notion Motion provided additional extra-musical inspiration.

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The composer once pointed out that because of her cultural background she has “a certain aversion to the sound world produced by traditional symphony orchestras rooted in 19th-century aesthetics, and I feel a great deal of affinity for non-European musical cultures. That is why I always try to introduce a completely different colour into my compositions based on my experience of non-European music.” In Rocaná, the instrumentation is more or less standard, but an attempt has been made to treat the orchestra like a “super-instrument” as well as like a virtuoso “illusion machine” that creates something new out of that which is familiar.
Primarily through the combination of various instrumental techniques, through rhythmic development and the interplay of overtone structures and microtones, shifts and changes of timbre are achieved; light and colour phenomena playfully alternate with one another.

© Maris Gothoni (translation by Howard Weiner)
This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

UNSUK CHIN
Puzzles and Games from Alice in Wonderland – Australian premiere

Allison Bell soprano

For Puzzles and Games, Unsuk Chin compiled passages from her opera Alice in Wonderland (2003-04). The Puzzles and Games cycle comprises eleven sections. The texts are either taken directly from (songs 1 to 6) or based on Lewis Carroll’s books Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There (1871). Librettist David Henry Hwang and Unsuk Chin worked together on the texts for songs 7, 8, 10 and 11. Part 9 is purely instrumental and was originally the prelude to A Mad Tea Party, scene five of the Alice opera. In it, the protagonist is meant to solve an unsolvable riddle.

This orchestral song cycle by Unsuk Chin is a kaleidoscope of scenes, episodes and moments from her opera. It portrays the Mad Tea Party, the Mouse’s Tale, the story of the baby that turns into a pig, and many other moments of comic confusion. These really are Puzzles and Games.

Reprinted from a note by Stefan Fricke © 2017 Translation © Brian Long
This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

GYÖRGY LIGETI
(1923-2006)

Atmosphères

Atmosphères is Ligeti’s second ‘mature’ work for orchestra, and, thanks to Stanley Kubrick’s inspired, if unauthorised, use of it in 2001: A Space Odyssey, one of the pieces that brought him international fame.

After escaping from communist Hungary in 1956, Ligeti went first to Vienna and then to Cologne. In Hungary, Ligeti’s exposure to modernist Western music had been severely limited by official disapproval. Vienna, by contrast, had latterly been the city of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, while music in Cologne was dominated by the precociously brilliant Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Cologne was also home to a vital electronic music scene where Ligeti quickly mastered new technologies that enabled him to create sounds unimagined by him a few years before. Colleagues like Boulez and Stockhausen explored abstract and often highly complex models to determine the structure of their works, while Ligeti, perhaps in relieved revolt against the formal constraints of socialist realism, wanted to write ‘music without beginning or end’. The possibilities offered by the electronic studio allowed him to experiment with pure texture, which he transferred to the orchestral palette with his characteristically precise ear for sound. As he wryly put it, ‘rhythmic patterns and harmonies and intervals were boring for me, and therefore I destroyed them’, creating, in Atmosphères, an ‘uninhabited, imaginary musical space’.

The space, though, is one through which the listener moves, if, largely, at seemingly glacial speed. The piece begins with what would become staple gesture – a tone cluster consisting, as Alex Ross notes, of 59 notes spread over five-and-a-half octaves. Marked pp and dolcissimo, the effect is, as Ross puts it, ‘mysterious rather than assaultive, a seductive threshold to an alien world’. The fabric of sound is almost always continuous (most unusually for a composer of his generation, Ligeti includes no percussion), but with subtle and gradual changes of colour and dynamics within the cloud of sound, so that more or less diatonic chords occasionally take shape before dissolving and leaving not a wrack behind. The piece consists of some 20 sections that Ligeti describes as ‘built on very clear proportions with a certain construction’, which are technically, if not necessarily audibly, discernible. Some, however, are dramatically articulated: one section culminates in a famously thrilling passage for four piccolos before the abyss opens to leave a rumbling texture of low strings that supports a passage of micropolyphony. This technique, which creates something of the intricately chaotic effect of aleatoric counterpoint, is in fact notated with absolute precision. In one such passage, the late Richard Toop ventured to hear a reference to the ‘sheep’ music from Richard Strauss’ Don Quixote, a piece that the young Ligeti much admired, as well as other moments that recall Schoenberg and Berg. The final moments of the piece constitute another moment of discontinuity, in that their music is derived from Ligeti’s immediately previous work, Apparitions.

Atmosphères was ‘retrospectively commissioned’, as Toop put it, by South West German Radio for the prestigious Donaueschingen Festival and premiered there in 1961.

© Gordon Kerry 2018
The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra first performed Atmosphères on 6 March 1971 at a Proms concert conducted by John Hopkins, and most recently on 14 June 1997 under the baton of Stephen Barlow.

UNSUK CHIN
Violin Concerto – Australian premiere

Jennifer Koh violin

Not only is the orchestration primarily classical, but the structure as well – with the opening movement followed by a slow one, then a scherzo and finale, which contains references to the first movement. The solo violin part is extremely demanding, with extraordinary technical challenges and yet the soloist forms more of a partnership with the orchestra, rather than being in opposition.

The work commences softly, but soon the significance of the variety of percussion instruments becomes apparent – with the marimba contributing a special atmosphere. Gradually more and more instruments join in, and eventually the virtuoso violin becomes more subdued as the orchestra displays its virtuosity.

The second movement starts on open strings, with delicate and colourful plucking. Primarily a slow and quiet movement, there are however brief fast sections reminiscent of the first movement.
Fleeting passages in the strings highlight the virtuoso solo part, and the effect of the percussion is further enhanced by clusters in harp and celeste parts.

The third movement immediately makes references to the second movement – this time using percussive, short notes – and the strings play extensive pizzicato passages. The shortest of the four movements, it is close to being a traditional ‘scherzo’ movement.

The four open strings and their tonal relationship form the basis of the first three movements, and the fourth provides a contrast. The solo part starts very high, then gradually expands towards the lower register. Reminders of the previous movements keep re-surfacing and culminate in an ending distinctly reminiscent of the opening of the work.

The circle closes, and with it a concert form reminiscent of the opening of the work. This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

LIBRETTO

UNSUK CHIN
Puzzles and Games from Alice in Wonderland for soprano and orchestra

1. Alice – Acrostic
Voice
A boat, beneath a sunny sky
Lingered onward dreamily
In an evening of July
Children three that nestle near,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Pleased a simple tale to hear--
Long has paled that sunny sky;
Echoes fade and memories die;
Autumn frosts have slain July.
Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under sky
Never seen by waking eyes.
Children yet, the tales to hear;
Eager eye and willing ear,
Lovingly shall nestle near.
In a Wonderland they lie,
Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die;
Ever drifting down the stream
Lingered in the golden gleam
Life, what is it but a dream?

2. If I never reach the garden
Alice
If I never reach the garden
will I ever come to leave it?
If I turn and walk away,
will I ever start to go?
One day I was a grown-up
then I grew into a baby.
It’s always too late
it’s always too soon
But it’s never, ever now
“Drink me!”

3. What a curious feeling
Alice
What a curious feeling!
I must be shutting up like a telescope.
Shutting down?
Closing up?
No, closing down.
That’s not right.
 “Use your words,”
Nanny tells me.
Well, I’d like
to see her try,
If she were standing
where I am now.
No, not standing,
sinking.
That’s not right either.
This may lead
to my going out altogether
like a candle.
I wonder what I should be like then?

4. Curiouser, curiouser
Alice
“Eat me.”
Curiouser and curiouser!
Now I’m opening out
like the largest telescope that ever was!
Goodbye foot!
Hand me over to the largest water-cask
that ever was made!
Eager eye and willing ear,
Lovingly shall nestle near.
And pour the waters of the Nile
improve his shining tail,
and welcomes little fishes in,
How cheerfully he seems to grin,
And pour the waters of the Nile
on every golden scale!
How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
With gently smiling jaws!”
I’m sure those are not the right words,
I’m sure those are not the right notes,
I must have been changed for Mabel -
Who am I, then?
Tell me that first!
If I like being that person, I’ll come up:
If not I’ll stay down here till I’m
somebody else -
Oh dear, who in the world am I?
Ah, that’s the great puzzle!
Was I the same when I got up this morning?
How puzzling it all is!
Who in the world am I?
Tell me who I am!
Tell me!
Tell me!
Tell me!

5. Who in the world am I?
Alice
Who in the world am I?
Ah, that’s the great puzzle!
I’m sure I’m not Ada,
for her hair goes in such long ringlets,
mine does not go in ringlets at all;
I’m sure I can’t be Mabel,
for I know all sorts of things,
and she, oh she knows such a very little!
Besides, she’s she, and I’m I -
Who in the world am I?
Was I the same when I got up this morning?
Ah, that’s the great puzzle!
Four times five is twelve,
four times six is thirteen,
four times seven is fourteen,
four times eight is fifteen,
four times nine is sixteen,
four times ten is seventeen,
four times eleven’s eighteen,
- Oh, dear! I shall never get to twenty!

“How doth the little crocodile
improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
on every golden scale!
How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
With gently smiling jaws!”
I’m sure those are not the right words,
I’m sure those are not the right notes,
I must have been changed for Mabel -
Who am I, then?
Tell me that first!
If I like being that person, I’ll come up:
if not I’ll stay down here till I’m
somebody else -
Oh dear, who in the world am I?
Ah, that’s the great puzzle!
Was I the same when I got up this morning?
How puzzling it all is!
Who in the world am I?
Tell me who I am!
Tell me!
Tell me!
Tell me!

© Habakuk Traber; translated and adapted from his text which appeared in the programme booklet for the world premiere, 20 Jan 2002.
This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.
6. The tale-tail of the mouse

Mouse
Fury said to the mouse that he met in the house
Let us both go to law: I will prosecute you
Come, I will take no denial
We must have the trial
for really this morning, I’ve nothing to do
Said the mouse to the cur,
“Such a trial, dear Sir, with no jury or judge, would be wasting
our breath.”
“I will be judge, I will be jury,”
said cunning old Fury
“I will try the whole cause, and condemn
you to death”

7. Sleep tight, my ugly baby

Alice
Sleep tight, my ugly baby
so beautiful and fine.
No longer ugly, baby,
since you became a pig
Sleep tight, my beautiful pig,
and dream of mud and play.
Too young to become bacon,
so breakfast is far, far away

8. Cat’s Aria

Cat
My world is a box
My box is the world
and in it I am
either dead or alive
So I am here
by not being here,
avile through death;
and dead through life;
all the while here and not-here
So smile, wretched child!
Go through the world,
without pause to wonder
or question.
For if you wait
till matters make sense,
you will soon become
only a grin.
Ah...

9. Overture

10. Twinkle, twinkle, little star

Voice
Twinkle, twinkle, little star!
How I wonder what you are!
Twinkle, sprinkle, brittle stew!
How I thunder what you are.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star!
How I wonder what you are!
Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you’re at!
Twinkle, sprinkle, wrinkle, crinkle,
Triple, treacle, scramble, scribble,
Twinkle, sprinkle, prickle, trickle,
Crackle, scrabble, sparkle star!
Twinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle, twinkle,
Crinkle, crinkle, star!
Twinkle, sprinkle, wrinkle, crinkle,
Triple, treacle, fiddle-faddle,
Fiddle-faddle, twinkle, shrinkle,
Frinkle, giggle-gingle trifle,
Twiddle-fiddle, wriggle star!

Twinkle, twinkle, little star!
How I wonder what you are!
Twinkle, tangle, gingle pig!
How I wonder how you dig!
Twinkle, sprinkle, trickle, truckle,
Brinkle, prickly, wrinkly, crinkle,
Twinkle, tiddle-taddle, frinkle, prinkle,
Spinkle, sizzle-fizzle, frizzle star!
Twinkle, dwindle, twindle, twindle,
Twinkle, twiddle-twaddle, trinkle, trunkle,
Prinkle, finkle, little-riddle,
Drizzle, dribble, ripple star!
Twinkle, twinkle, little star!
How I wonder what you are!
Twinkle, sprinkle, prinkle Pat,
How I wonder how you’re fat!
Twinkle, twiddle, fiddle-faddle, crinkle,
Prinkle, wrinkle, sprinkle, shrinkle,
Riddle-liddle, twinkle, twingle, gingle,
Trinkle, twinkle, tickle-tackle,
Twinkle, wrinkle, ruffle-ripple,
Spinkle, crinkle, giggle-goggle,
Prinkle, needle-ladle, feeble-dibble,
nibble-niggle,
Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle star!
How I wonder what you are!
Twinkle, crinkle, brinkle Bill!
How I wonder what you fill!
Twinkle, twinkle, little star!
How I wonder what you are!
Twinkle, twiddle, griddle Ed!
How I wonder how you’re mad!
Twinkle, riddle, fiddle-faddle, dibble-double,
Shrinkle, sprinkle, tickle-tackle,
Twinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle, nibble-dibble,
nibble-noodle,
Riddle-liddle, wrinkle, prinkle, tinkle,
Tingle, trickle, feeble-fizzle, fiddle-faddle,
Riddle-liddle, middle-meddle, giggle-goggle,
Nibble-niggle, twiddle-riddle,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

11. Speak roughly to your little boy

Duchess
Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him, shake him, push him
when he cries;
For he can thoroughly enjoy
the pepper when he pleases’!

Wow, wow, wow...
There is nothing like pepper, says I...
Not half enough yet. Nor a quarter enough.
One for Missus, two for the Cat,
Three for Baby, four for Duchess,
One! Two! three!!!
Boil it so easily
Mix it so greasily,
Stir it so sneezily,
One! Two!! Three!!!
Wow, wow, wow...
Speak roughly to your little boy!
It’s love be sure to gain;
Teach it in accents rough and mild;
It may not long remain.
Speak roughly to your little boy
Push him, pinch him, shake him
when he sneezes,
He only does it to annoy,
because he knows
Wow, wow, wow...

Text by David Henry Hwang and Unsuk Chin based on Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass by Lewis Carroll.
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