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Pre-concert talk at 6.30pm
Join the composer; know more.

Gordon Hamilton speaks about his new work, *The Trillion Souls* and Beethoven’s 9th Symphony.

CHAMBER PLAYERS
BRAHMS STRING SEXTET 7

Help us Go Green.
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SAT 14 FEB
7.30PM
QPAC Concert Hall

GALA OPENING

ODE TO JOY

Conductor Gergely Madaras
Soprano Dominique Fegan
Mezzo Soprano Nicole Youl
Tenor Henry Choo
Baritone David Wakeham
Choir The Australian Voices

Hamilton The Trillion Souls World Premiere
Beethoven Symphony No.9 Choral

Free pre-concert talk
with Gordon Hamilton at 6.30pm

QSO congratulates QPAC on its 30th Anniversary 2015. As QPAC’s resident orchestra, we are delighted to present these concerts as a tribute to our major venue partner.
Gordon Hamilton
(born 1982)

I  Come Join Us Here
    Hildegard Fragment
II For Daughters and Sons
III The Cretins
IV Our Soldiers
V The Wedding
    Hildegard Mosaic
VI For Queers, Fakes and Dykes
VII Marry For Your Sake

World Premiere

A companion piece to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, The Trillion Souls is intended to complement the Schiller ode An die Freude (To Joy) – sung in the fourth movement of the Beethoven – and cast it in a 21st-century light.

The text I’ve settled on is The Trillion Souls by Andy West, a BBC reporter. In memory of the countless dead who could not marry, he addresses the trillions* of gay people who’ve ‘lived and loved and longed alone’, inviting them to ‘come join us here’ and ‘to rise up and be known’.

I’ve used a few fragments of wordless plainchant (borrowed with affection from 12th-century nun and freethinker Hildegard von Bingen).

I smash these together with overtly modern (or retro?) elements, such as sampled percussion and a recording of Margaret Thatcher denouncing freedom of sexuality; her speech-melody is converted into a wedding fanfare.

For some passages, I’ve inverted the mighty Ode To Joy melody. In this way, a mirror image of the tune is used instead of the original; a step upwards becomes a step downwards. In a nod to an archaic meaning, I’ve nicknamed the tune ‘Ode To Gay’.

I’m dedicating the work to the memory of one of my favourite humans, Alan Turing (1912-1954), who saved the Allies from the Nazis, invented the computer and pioneered the field of artificial intelligence. He was convicted for homosexuality in 1952, a time when such acts were still criminalised in the UK. After receiving oestrogen injections, he died just shy of his 42nd birthday (officially a suicide).

* yes, ”trillions” is a wee-bit exaggerated, but the word “billions” (while accurate) is a humdrum word, found daily on financial reports. Andy and I prefer “trillions”.

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** The Trillion Souls **
Excerpt from Andy West’s poem

Come join us here, the trillion souls
Who lived and loved and longed alone
The decent men and decent women
Whose passions slept unknown.

We ask you now to grip our hands
And rise up from the dirt
Then shake the mud they threw at you
And bury all your hurt.

View the full poem at qso.com.au/trillion
PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Symphony No.9 in D minor, Op.125

Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
Scherzo (Molto vivace - Presto)
Adagio molto e cantabile - Andante moderato
Presto - Allegro molto assai (Alla marcia)

On 7 May 1824, Beethoven summoned Vienna’s leading musicians in the Kärnthnerthor Theatre to give the premiere of the Ninth Symphony. Profoundly deaf, Beethoven was long past being able to conduct, but stood beside the leaders, indicating the speeds. At the end, he was unaware of the applause, so that the contralto soloist had to turn him around, producing ‘a volcanic explosion of sympathy and admiration that seemed it would never end’. The applause was probably more for the composer than the performance.

Two rehearsals were insufficient to prepare the most difficult orchestral piece the musicians had ever encountered. Nevertheless, one reviewer found the opening Allegro ‘bold and defiant, executed with truly athletic energy’. Punctuating its enormous 15-minute design, strategically placed returns of its colossal opening idea underpin the almost fissile energy generated by the sheer mass of scraping, blowing and drumming. Never before had sounds of such sustained violence been imagined, let alone produced by instruments.

Wagner later pictured the second movement as a Bacchanalian spree of worldly pleasures. But while its motoric force is compulsive, Beethoven hardly thought of his big scherzo as mindless. Far from it; he keeps its overflowing energy meticulously controlled and channelled, not least when the predominant four-bar triple beat is dramatically jerked into three-bar phrases.

Berlioz imagined the slow movement ‘might better be thought as two distinct pieces, the first melody in B flat, four-in-a-bar, followed by an absolutely different one, in triple-time in D’. Yet, in Beethoven’s interweaving of this unlikely pair, Berlioz heard ‘such melancholy tenderness, passionate sadness, and religious meditation’ as to be beyond words to describe.

Everyone in the first Vienna audience in May 1824 must have known that something extraordinary was about to take place. Certainly, the London press intimated in advance of the British premiere a year later: ‘In the last movement is introduced a song! Schiller’s famous Ode to Joy - which forms a most extraordinary contrast with the whole, and is calculated to excite surprise, certainly, and perhaps admiration.’

But why did Beethoven take the unprecedented step of fitting out an instrumental symphony with a vocal finale? He had toyed with two distinct plans for a symphony with added chorus. In 1818, he made very preliminary notes for a ‘symphony in ancient modes’ on ancient Greek religious themes, including a choral adagio. But by 1822, he was sketching a ‘German symphony’, with chorus singing Schiller’s To Joy, though to an entirely different tune.
To Adolph Bernhard Marx – the early 19th-century music historian whose writings helped enshrine Beethoven as ‘supreme master’ and Germany as centre of the ‘cult of music’ – Beethoven’s earlier symphonies had suggested that instrumental music could be even more eloquent than words. Yet finally, Marx believed, Beethoven showed that this was not so: ‘Having devoted his life to instrumental sounds, he once again summons his forces for his boldest, most gigantic effort. But behold! – unreal instrumental voices no longer satisfy him, and he is drawn irresistibly back to the human voice.’

As the orchestra introduces brief flashbacks to each of the first three movements, the cellos and basses attempt an unlikely recitative: ‘... but when the string basses painfully attempt their ungainly imitation

of human speech; and when they begin to hum timidly the simple human tune, and hand it over to the rest of the orchestra, we see that, after all, the needs of humanity reach beyond the enchanted world of instruments, so that, in the end, Beethoven only finds satisfaction in the chorus of humanity itself.’

Despairing of instruments’ feeble efforts, the solo baritone announces (the introductory lines are Beethoven’s own, not Schiller’s): O friends! No more these sounds! Instead let us sing out more pleasingly, with joy abundant!

Graeme Skinner © 2014
SUN 22 FEB
3.00PM
QSO Studio, South Bank

CHAMBER PLAYERS

BRAHMS STRING SEXTET

Norablo String Quartet
Violin Priscilla Hocking
Violin Delia Kinmont
Viola Charlotte Burbrook de Vere
Cello Matthew Kinmont

Borodin String Quartet No.2

QSO Strings
Violin Rebecca Seymour
Violin Natalie Low
Viola Charlotte Burbrook de Vere
Viola Nicholas Tomkin
Cello David Lale
Cello Kathryn Close

Brahms String Sextet No.2
The group as a result tended to eschew the rigours of chamber music.

By 1881 however, Borodin had assimilated the techniques of Western music, and he wrote the second quartet remarkably quickly. The duet writing between violin and cello in the first movement, and the heart-felt cantilena of the celebrated Notturno suggest a spirit generous in love as in all else.

© Gordon Kerry 2004

Alexander Borodin
(1833-1887)

String Quartet No.2 in D

Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro
Notturno: Andante
Finale: Andante – Vivace

The illegitimate son of a Georgian prince, Borodin was educated in St Petersburg. Gifted in both music and science, he chose a career in medicine and chemistry, ultimately becoming Professor of Chemistry at the St Petersburg Medico-Surgical Academy where he displayed progressive attitudes and personal generosity. In 1859, he was sent by the board of the Academy to Western Europe for further study, and, in Heidelberg in 1861, met Ekaterina Protopopova, a pianist who introduced him to much Western music. Scarcely were they engaged when Ekaterina became ill and had to go to Italy to recuperate. Borodin went with her, studying acid salts by day and playing chamber music at night. Twenty years later, Borodin wrote his Second String Quartet to recall the days of their youth, and dedicated it to Ekaterina.

Borodin had been a member of the group often described as the ‘Mighty Handful’. Led by Mili Balakirev, these composers tended to avoid studying ‘foreign’ ideas like elaborate harmony and counterpoint. (Tchaikovsky, who was not a member of the group, sneered that Borodin possessed ‘a very great talent, which, however, had come to nothing for want of instruction’.)

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Sextet No.2 in G, Op.36

Allegro non troppo
Scherzo (Allegro non troppo) – Presto giocoso – Tempo primo
Adagio – Più animato – Adagio
Poco allegro

Brahms suffered performance anxiety when it came to the music of the past, but the ‘giants’ of Viennese music had not written string sextets, so Brahms felt more at ease in this genre, and having six players meant he could explore richer harmony and textures than in a quartet.

Composed in 1864, the G major Sextet represents also a kind of exorcism for Brahms. Six years earlier in Göttingen, he had enjoyed a flirtation with a young woman, Agathe von Siebold.
This led to tension between Brahms and his dearest friend, Clara Schumann, and, in any case, Agathe failed to appreciate Brahms’ Second Serenade for orchestra, which he wrote with her in mind.

In the spacious and varied first movement Brahms bids farewell to Agathe, spelling her name in the second group of themes with the notes A, G, A, B (which is rendered as ‘H’ in German) and E, and then implying ‘Adieu’ in a motif using A, D and E. ‘In this work... I have freed myself of my last love,’ Brahms wrote to a friend.

The Scherzo, in 2/4, reimagines the gavotte, a Baroque dance, though the central trio section is in a more conventional fast triple time. The slow movement is a set of five variations on a faintly modal theme that Brahms had composed a decade earlier. Any nostalgia is dispelled in the glittering finale with its many textures and intricate fugal centre. Farewelling his last love, Brahms embarks on his solitary life, ‘free but happy’.

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Gergely Madaras
Conductor

In 2013, Gergely Madaras was appointed Music Director of the Orchestre Dijon Bourgogne. In September 2014, he also took up the post of Chief Conductor of the Savaria Symphony Orchestra in his native Hungary. This season, orchestral highlights include debuts with the Munich Chamber Orchestra, BBC Symphony, Janáček Philharmonic, Academy of Ancient Music and his North American debut with the Houston Symphony, as well as returns to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra of the Teatro Regio in Turin. The 2014/15 season also sees Gergely make his Australasian debut conducting the Melbourne Symphony, Queensland Symphony and Auckland Philharmonia Orchestras.

Gergely Madaras is also establishing a fine reputation as an opera conductor. In 2012, he was appointed as the inaugural recipient of the Charles Mackerras Fellowship at the English National Opera. In Autumn 2013, he was invited by ENO to conduct Simon McBurney’s new production of The Magic Flute in London. He will reprise this production for his debut at De Nederlandse Opera Amsterdam in Spring 2015. Future opera engagements include his debut at the Grand Théâtre de Genève with another new production of The Magic Flute.
Dominique Fegan
Soprano

Dominique appears regularly as the soprano soloist with Underground Opera. She has been a company member of Opera Queensland since 1995 and has performed in over 20 operas in the chorus, as a soloist, an understudy and in small roles.

In the UK, Dominique performed the roles of Violetta in La Traviata, the title role in Tosca (Park Opera) and Musetta in La Bohème (Canglelight Opera). In Australia, she sang the role of Annina in a Brisbane Festival performance of La Traviata and performed the role of Carlotta in the Queensland premiere production of The Phantom of the Opera with Savoyards.

In 2014, Dominique made her debut with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and performed in a number of Music on Sunday’s concerts throughout the year.

Nicole Youl
Mezzo Soprano

On the concert platform, Nicole Youl has performed as soloist in Mahler’s Symphony No.8, Verdi’s Requiem, Rachmaninov’s The Bells, Bruckner’s Te Deum and Strauss’ Four Last Songs with the major Australian orchestras. She sang Wellgunde in Götterdämmerung and Tove in Gurrelieder for the Perth Festival and Ortlinde in Die Walküre for the Sydney Symphony.

In recent seasons, Miss Youl has sung the title roles in Tosca, Suor Angelica and Madama Butterfly, Amelia (Un ballo in Maschera), Leonora (Il trovatore), Giorgetta (Il tabarro), Mimi (La bohème) and Santuzza (Cavalleria Rusticana) for Opera Australia.

Henry Choo
Tenor

Malaysian-born Henry Choo is one of Australasia’s most outstanding and popular tenors.

Major roles for Opera Australia have included Tamino (The Magic Flute), Acis (Acis and Galatea), Almaviva (Il barbiere di Siviglia), Ferrando (Cosi fan tutte), Nadir (The Pearl Fishers), Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni), Lysander and many others for West Australian Opera – Don Ottavio and Nadir.

Concert highlights have included Bach’s Cantata No.207 with the Melbourne Symphony and Beethoven’s Symphony No.9 with the Hong Kong Philharmonic; Henry has also been a frequent soloist with the Sydney, Queensland, Adelaide and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, Orchestra Victoria, Sydney Philharmonia, Australia Ensemble and Bach Musica, New Zealand.
David Wakeham
Baritone

The British based baritone David Wakeham has established an international reputation, with critically acclaimed performances at La Scala Milano, Komische Oper Berlin, Oper Leipzig, Bayerische Staatsoper München, Staatsoper Stuttgart, and Opera Australia in major roles in the Czech, German and Italian repertoire. He has worked with many renowned conductors and directors, including: Sir Andrew Davis, Kyrill Petrenko, Christine Mielitz and Achim Freier.

In 2010, he sang the Australian premiere of Ich Wandte mich und sah an alles Unrecht, by Bernd Alois Zimmermann, coupled with Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the QSO and Johannes Fritzsch. This continues his concert repertoire which includes Bach's Magnificat and St. Matthew Passion, Messiah, Brahms Requiem, Orff's Carmina Burana and Mahler's 8th Symphony.

Not Now, Not Ever! (2014), a musicalisation of Julia Gillard’s ‘misogyny’ speech.

Their album for Warner Classics (2012) was observed by Gramophone Magazine to "boast a crisp, resonant delivery of the sonic goods under Hamilton's confident direction.” In 2013, they released a songbook with Edition Peters.

Recently the group has brought their distinct sound to China, the UK, Germany, USA and Palestine. In 2015, they will collaborate with Topology in Unrepresentative Swill, a concert inspired by prime-ministerial speeches.

Norablo String Quartet

The Norablo String quartet was formed in 2012. The quartet was named after the Latin for “North”, since all its members lived and rehearsed together on the north side of town.

They have played at many charity events and concerts, and for the previous two years as part of the QSO Chamber Players series. Its members spend time together pursuing the pleasures of chamber music as well as working together in QSO.

As chamber music is "a conversation between friends" (Catherine Drinker Bowen), underlying friendships form the basis of the Norablo Quartet. Matthew Kinmont (cello) and Delia Kinmont (violin) are married and have managed to stay that way for 23 years, and the quartet is completed with their good friends Priscilla Hocking (violin) and Raquel Bastos (viola). Raquel Bastos was unable to perform for today’s concert and so the north wind has blown further south: the quartet welcomes Charlotte Burbrook de Vere (viola) to perform with them in the 2015 Chamber Players Opening Concert.
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Patrons are advised that the Performing Arts Centre has EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES, a FIRE ALARM system and EXIT passageways. In case of an alert, patrons should remain calm, look for the closest EXIT sign in GREEN, listen to and comply with directions given by the inhouse trained attendants and move in an orderly fashion to the open spaces outside the Centre.
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