



“This concert is presented in association with Chamber Music New Zealand”

Duo Col Legno

*Andante cantabile**

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

One of the most revered Romantic Russian composers, Tchaikovsky originally wrote this piece as the second movement of his first string quartet and later arranged it for cello solo with string orchestra. We have developed this arrangement to a version for cello and marimba. The timbre of a marimba tremolo is well suited to imitate the sound of slow string accompaniment.

Tchaikovsky is well-known for his extreme dynamics notation such as “pppppp” (*pianissississississimo*), but in this piece there is only an occurrence of “pppp” (*pianissississimo*)....

Song of 'Almah

Andrew Beall

Rose of Sharon

An American composer and percussionist, Andrew Beall composed *Song of 'Almah for marimba and soprano* in 2006. The text was taken from the Old Testament book, Song of Solomon.

In the entirety of King Solomon's 700 marriages and 300 additional maid-servant relationships (!), his search for true love led him to one, 'Almah, who captured his passion like no other. 'Almah, meaning 'young girl' in Hebrew, grew up labouring in her family vineyards. She viewed herself as a common girl, like the meadow flowers, 'a rose of Sharon' and 'lily of the valleys', until the powerful ruler fell deeply in love with her and made her his only beloved.

This beautiful klezmer song was re-written by the composer in different versions, including this one for cello and marimba. One of the reasons why the composer chose this instrumentation was that he thought: 'The shortage of marimba/cello duets in the world is just too much.'

Three Japanese Songs*

Kojo no Tsuki (Moon over the Ruined Castle)
Karatachi no Hana (The flower of wild orange)
Zui-zui-zukkorobashi

Rentaro Taki (1879-1903)
Kosaku Yamada (1886-1965)
Traditional

After European music was introduced to Japan in the early 1900s, it developed in its own unique way. Composers used traditional Japanese poems called *Haiku* or *Waka* in vocal works. They mostly consist of five or seven syllable phrases.

The first song was written in 1901. It has the simple arrangement of three melodies with triadic harmony and clear five and seven syllable phrases.

Later, composers started to shape the melody to fit the 'inflections' of Japanese language and tried to move away from the five and seven syllable melodic patterns. As a result, the songs became more irregular in rhythm. The second piece is a good example of this. Throughout the piece, the metre changes between duple (2/4) and triple (3/4) time frequently.

The third song is an arrangement of a traditional children's song in contemporary style, reflecting the development of instrumental works in Japan.

It is also worth mentioning that in traditional Japanese theatre music such as 'Noh', a typical tempo structure is observed. This is called '*Jo* (slow), *Ha* (faster), and *Kyu* (fast)'. The three songs in today's programme are performed in this order.

Tahu-nui-ā-Rangi

Gareth Farr (born 1968)

Commissioned by du Plessis, *Tahu-nui-ā-Rangi* is the first work ever written for cello and marimba in New Zealand. It was created by renowned New Zealand composer Gareth Farr. *Tahu-nui-ā-Rangi* is the Māori word for the *Aurora Australis* (Southern Lights) and incorporates the belief of some Māori iwi that the aurorae are ancestors' campfires reflected in the sky.

Apart from depicting the southern night sky in his music, Farr managed to blend the sound of a string and a percussion instrument by using extended techniques, such as bowing the marimba. This produces a unique 'aurora-like' sound that merges beautifully with the cello's artificial harmonics. Furthermore, a string technique called *col legno* – 'with the wood', in which the cellist taps the string with the wooden part of the bow – is used, while the marimbist strikes the edge of the bar with the shaft of the mallets. This creates an exciting percussive effect to both instruments.

The commissioning, performing and recording of this piece was part of du Plessis' projects 'Cello for Africa' and 'Cellists Aotearoa'. These projects investigate the role of music in strengthening roots, connecting to a place and finding a 'sense of place'. *Tahu-nui-ā-Rangi* builds upon the idea of belonging to a single nation, ultimately part of an infinite connection to the universe, and members of one human family.

The world premiere of this piece was in Perpetual Guardian Planetarium at the Otago Museum in May 2019 with projected visuals of the night sky – atmospheric lights and colourful electric dancing veils.

Fratres*

Arvo Pärt (born 1935)

After 8 years of near silence, the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt came back in 1976 with a completely different style in his music – from dissonant, complex music to music built from very primitive elements. He composed *Fratres* without fixed instrumentation and arranged the piece himself for various instrumentations.

The structure of the piece is very simple. It consists of nine variations with a two-bar motif separating each variation. The harmonic theme is built on two elements: firstly, a fixed A minor triad throughout the piece, and secondly a chord sequence moving down by a 3rd in every variation. This style, unique to Pärt, is called 'Tintinnabulation'. After nine variations, the harmony comes back to the original, but two octaves lower. Because of the two harmonic elements, one fixed and one moving, each variation produces a different harmonic tension. The texture of the solo part also reflects the harmonic tension of each variation.

In the words of composer, "*Tintinnabulation is an area I sometimes wander into when I am searching for answers ... In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for unity. ...Traces of this perfect thing appear in many guises – and everything that is unimportant falls away*" (Arvo Pärt)

Après un Rêve*

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Après un Rêve is one of the most established works for voice by French composer Fauré, who is known for his peaceful and sensitive music.

The piece forms part of a larger work, 'Three Melodies', opus 7. The original lyrics, by a French poet Roman Bussine, are about a man who had a dream about his lost lover and wishes to return to the illusion of the dream. The nostalgic sonority of the cello emphasizes the emotion of the melody.

Tonzologia*

Atanas Ourkouzounov (born 1970)

- I. *Contempotango*
- II. *Valse / Slave*
- III. *Bulgarian Rock*

Ourkouzounov is a Bulgarian composer and guitarist. *Tanzologia* is a very colourful piece and was originally written for cello and guitar. The work uses sounds produced in unusual ways. In this arrangement, the marimba player creates different resonances and overtones by, for example, hitting the frame and even flipping the mallets to play with their back-ends. The piece is structured in three contrasting movements. The first movement has a tango groove with an exciting percussive section (for both cello and marimba) in the middle. The second movement is a slow waltz with lots of unusual sounds. The third movement is based on a characteristic Bulgarian melodic line over a folkly 11/8 (2+2+3+2+2) metre, leading to an energetic ending.

A Sense of Place

Peter Klatzow (born 1945)

- I. *The Mask*
- II. *Shaka's Victory Dance*

Commissioned by du Plessis for her project 'Cello for Africa' – exploring the notion of music, people, place and a sense of belonging – this piece for marimba and cello was composed by internationally renowned South African composer Peter Klatzow in 2012. He succeeded in bringing out the best in both instruments, combining them in a way that resembles the diversity of cultures living together in South Africa.

Klatzow based the composition on two painted woodcuts by legendary South African painter Cecil Skotnes (1926-2009). The artwork that *The Mask* is based on is dark and austere. The vacant eyes are represented in the music by tense silences, sombreness, and atmospheric sounds. The wooden mask, a disguise, a front, resonates in the sound of the marimba and is echoed by the cello – its hidden soul revealed in the melodic parts. The self (cello) is reflected in the other (marimba), yet their sameness is concealed behind a stern veneer.

The second movement, *Shaka's Victory Dance*, is based on Skotnes' image of Shaka, the Zulu King and warrior. Shaka is depicted as an heroic figure, legendary for his leadership, strength, courage and vigour. The cello often imitates the ululating sounds of Zulu women celebrating victory. The music recalls Zulu warrior dances accompanied by energetic high kicking movements and pounding feet, vigorously leading to a victorious ending.

Programme notes by Yoshiko Tsuruta, March 2019

BIOGRAPHIES

“**Yoshiko Tsuruta** began playing the marimba as a primary school student growing up in Japan. After relocating to New Zealand, she graduated from the New Zealand School of Music. Then she moved to Austria and has completed her Masters Degree (1st Class) at the Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität in Linz. There she studied marimba with Bogdan Bacanu and percussion with Leonhard Schmidinger. As a soloist, Yoshiko has performed concertos on marimba with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, St Matthew’s Chamber Orchestra, Bay of Plenty Symphonia, Hutt Valley Orchestra, Kāpiti Concert Orchestra, NZSM Orchestra and Waikato University Orchestra.

While establishing herself as a marimba specialist, Yoshiko also plays in the percussion section of orchestras regularly. She was the principal Percussion of the National Youth Orchestra in 2008 and currently she plays timpini for Opus Orchestra. Yoshiko has won numerous awards, notable among these are International Australian Marimba Competition (2016), reaching the semi-finals of International Marimba Competition in Salzburg (2012), Percussion Prize/Tiromoana Recital Prize at the Gisborne International Music Competition (2009) and first prize in the NZ National Concerto Competition (2008).”

“Qualified with four post-graduate degrees in performing arts from renowned institutions including the Conservatory of Geneva and Peabody Institute, **Heleen du Plessis** advanced her talent with esteemed masters, Peled, Groscurin, Starker, Rostropovich, Litschauer and Aaron. Highlights of recent performances include an international concert and CD recording premiering *Concerto for an African Cellist* (Huysen) and *A Sense of Place* (Klatzow) in South Africa. The CD, nominated by The Violoncello Foundation for the International Listener’s Choice Awards (2014), was acclaimed as embodying “the highest standard of artistry”, and a “genuine attempt to build a meaningful cross-cultural dialogue”. Cellists Aotearoa, a multimedia production at the Arts Festival Dunedin (2016) in which Heleen was joined by cellists Andrew Joyce, Ken Ichinose and Ashley Brown, was acclaimed as a “superlative performance of a superlative programme and superlative players...”. This formed part of projects supported by research grants investigating identity and a sense of place by commissioning and premiering works by South African and New Zealand composers. She performs in diverse settings and genres with distinguished artists such as Terence Dennis, Matthew Marshall, Luca Manghi, the Peninsula Trio and the 12 most prominent cellists at the Adam Chamber Music Festival in Nelson (2017).”