



BRAHMS & TCHAIKOVSKY

Saturday 18 November 7.30pm, Federation Concert Hall, nipaluna/Hobart

Eivind Aadland conductor

Simon Trpčeski piano

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

BRAHMS Piano Concerto No 2 in B flat, Op 83 (48')

Allegro non troppo

Allegro appassionato

Andante

Allegretto grazioso - Un poco più presto

INTERVAL (20')

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No 5 in E minor, Op 64 (44')

Andante - Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Valse (Allegro moderato)

Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace

Brahms and Tchaikovsky, masters of the Romantic period, were highly aware of each other's careers, neither being fond of the other's work. Tchaikovsky wrote scathing comments about Brahms in his diaries and letters, criticising his music for lacking emotional expression and grumbling about his popularity. Brahms seemed to be similarly unimpressed by Tchaikovsky's music. The two first met, by surprise, when Tchaikovsky was invited for lunch in Vienna and found Brahms rehearsing a piano trio at his host's house. Tchaikovsky listened politely but was relieved to find himself saved from making any comment on the work by the arrival of Grieg. He privately noted "Brahms was doing his best to be friendly", and his subsequent writings distinguished between Brahms and his music: "Like all my Russian musical friends... I only respected in Brahms an honourable, energetic musician of strong convictions; but in spite of all efforts to the contrary, I never could, and never can, admire his music... There is something dry, cold, vague, and nebulous in the music of this master which is repellent to Russian hearts."

Brahms's Second Piano Concerto, which the composer premiered as soloist, showcases the rich harmonies and rhythmic complexity that Tchaikovsky was unable to appreciate. In an endearing habit, Brahms tended to downplay the scale of his works, thus referring to the concerto as "a tiny, tiny piano concerto with a tiny, tiny wisp of a scherzo." The concerto opens with a horn call that is subsequently mined for much of the melodic material of the movement. An early cadenza surprises the listener with an intensity that would usually be saved for the culmination of the movement, and only after this outburst does the full orchestra get its turn. Notable for the addition of a scherzo to make the typical three movement concerto into a quasi-symphonic four, Brahms explained that the first movement was "too simple [and that] he required something strongly passionate before the equally simple Andante." The third movement delights with solos from the cello, bassoon, and oboe before the piano once again ramps up the intensity. After three resolutely serious movements, the final movement provides a playful release.

Tchaikovsky considered his fifth symphony a failure at its premiere, but audiences from the past century and a half would beg to differ. Tchaikovsky takes the main theme on a dramatic journey, toying with it in moods that range from the sombre opening clarinet melody to the triumphant march in the final movement. In the second movement, a hauntingly beautiful string introduction leads to a sublime horn solo, with cameos from the clarinet and bassoon. A master of ballet music, Tchaikovsky replaces the traditional third movement scherzo with a graceful waltz. While luxuriating in the expressive melodies throughout the symphony it is possible to understand Tchaikovsky's frustration with Brahms's more academic approach. For his part, a year after their first meeting, Brahms attended a rehearsal of Tchaikovsky's Fifth, and shared some honest feedback with him over lunch afterwards – he didn't care for it.

Eloise Fisher, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2023



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Violin

Emma McGrath *Concertmaster*

Ji Won Kim *Associate Concertmaster*

Jennifer Owen *Principal Second*

Miranda Carson *Principal First*

Yue-Hong Cha

Margaret Connolly

Frances Davies

Edwina George

Michael Johnston

Elinor Lea

Susanna Low

Phoebe Masel

Jennen Ngiau-Keng

Christopher Nicholas

Rohana O'Malley

Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba

Hayato Simpson

Grace Thorpe

Viola

Caleb Wright*

Douglas Coghill

Sandra Ionescu

William Lane

Anna Larsen Roach

William Newbery

Cello

Jonathan Békés*

Alexandra Békés

Ivan James

Nicholas McManus

Martin Penicka

Sophie Radke

Double Bass

Stuart Thomson*

Marian Heckenberg

Aurora Henrich

James Menzies

Flute

Rosie Gallagher#

Rachel Howie

Lloyd Hudson *Piccolo*

Oboe

Shefali Pryor#

Dinah Woods *Cor Anglais*

Clarinet

Andrew Seymour*

Eloise Fisher *Bass Clarinet*

Bassoon

Tahnee van Herk*

Jamie Dodd

French Horn

Greg Stephens*

Philip Paine#

Jules Evans

Roger Jackson

Rebecca Luton

Trumpet

Mark Fitzpatrick#

Mark Bain

Trombone

David Robins*

Pius Choi

Bass Trombone

Mitchell Nissen*

Tuba

Rachel Kelly#

Timpani

Matthew Goddard*

* principal player

guest principal

Concertmaster Emma McGrath plays an 1845 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin on loan from two of our generous Tasmanian patrons.