

# MOZART CLARINET CONCERTO

Friday 22 January, 5.30pm and 8.30pm  
Federation Concert Hall, Hobart

**Johannes Fritzs** conductor  
**Andrew Seymour** clarinet  
**Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra**

**RICHARD STRAUSS** Serenade for Winds in E-flat, Op 7 (11')  
**BRAHMS (arr. Hermann)** Liebeslieder Waltzes (20')  
**MOZART** Clarinet Concerto in A, K 622 (25')

Richard Strauss (1864-1949) was aged only 17 when he composed the single-movement Serenade for Winds Op 7. This well-crafted work was written in 1881 under the watchful eye of his horn-player father, Franz Strauss, whose conservative taste in music meant that he had little enthusiasm for anything composed after mid-period Beethoven. In choosing to write for a wind ensemble of 13 musicians, Strauss appears to be emulating Mozart, whose Gran Partita K 361 makes use of the same number of players. The Serenade proved to be crucially important in kickstarting Strauss's career. It came to the attention of leading conductor Hans von Bülow who, on the basis of this work, described Strauss as 'by far the most striking personality since Brahms'. In 1885 Bülow appointed Strauss as his conducting assistant and from that moment on, Strauss never looked back.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) composed the Liebeslieder Waltzes in 1868-9. The 18 waltzes in the collection (12 of which are being performed in this concert) were intended for domestic consumption rather than the concert hall and were composed for four voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) and piano. The ideal performance situation was probably four singers gathered around a household piano. The poems all derive from Central and Eastern European sources – Hungary, Poland and Russia – and the waltzes range from the gently lilting to the rather more animated. While originally sung, the Liebeslieder Waltzes are heard in this concert in an arrangement for string orchestra by Friedrich Hermann (1828-1907).

The Clarinet Concerto is one of the last works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), being composed only months before he died. Mozart had a special fondness for the clarinet, an instrument which held a slightly marginal position at the time; it was not, for instance, a standard member of the orchestra. The Clarinet Concerto was written for Vienna-based clarinet virtuoso Anton Stadler. Judging from the opening movement, *Allegro*, Mozart relished putting Stadler through his paces while simultaneously exhibiting the instrument's kaleidoscopic range. Of particular note is Mozart's tendency to commence a phrase in one register (either high or low) and abruptly jump to another for its continuation. There's something marvellous about the apparent ease with which the clarinet is able to carry this out. The second movement, *Adagio*, is a soulful aria for clarinet and orchestra. Here, silky legato playing comes to the fore. What is remarkable is the way in which Mozart creates such beautiful, song-like melodies from such plain and simple means: the rising notes of a chord and the falling notes of a scale. The very building blocks of music open a portal to the sublime. By contrast, the jaunty finale (*Rondo [Allegro]*), which is in 6/8, exhibits the clarinet's playful side. As before, the music leaps between registers. Mozart also has the soloist perform dazzling acrobatics, proving just how agile this novel instrument is.

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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