

## PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Friday 26 March, 5.30pm and 8.30pm  
Federation Concert Hall, Hobart

**Elena Schwarz** conductor  
**Dinah Woods** cor anglais  
**Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra**

**WILLIAMS** Canticum Novi Mundi (16') World première  
**MUSSORGSKY (arr. Yu)** Pictures at an Exhibition (32')  
Promenade; Gnomus; Promenade; Il vecchio castello; Promenade; Les Tuileries (Dispute d'enfants après jeux); Bydło; Promenade; Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens; Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuyle; Promenade; Limoges. Le marché (La grand nouvelle); Catacombae (Sepulcrum romanum); Cum mortuis in lingua mortua; The Hut on Chicken's Legs (Baba-Yaga); The Great Gate of Kiev

Canticum Novi Mundi is by Australian composer Chris Williams, a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and the University of Oxford. Of this new concerto for cor anglais, strings, harp and percussion, the composer writes:

Woven through the music of Canticum Novi Mundi ('Song/Chant/Incantation for the New World') is a much older work of vocal music, Léonin's *Viderunt Omnes*, from 12th-century France. That work, too, was written over the top of yet older music, so Canticum becomes a musical palimpsest with a history that traces back more than a thousand years. Author Arundhati Roy's observation about humanity in times of major crisis is imbued with this same sense of long history, of writing over the old: 'historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew' and it is this thought that led to the title of the piece. More than just a poetic association, Canticum Novi Mundi expresses this idea literally. Each new section of the piece takes some musical fragment of the previous section and reimagines it, building and rebuilding on its own past until, at last, we return in the end to hear the beginning of the piece 'anew'. Of the current crisis, Roy noted that we can 'choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice... Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.' Canticum is my hope that we imagine another world. The piece is dedicated to Dinah Woods, with much thanks and admiration.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) composed *Pictures at an Exhibition* in 1874. He wrote the work for solo piano and it remained largely unknown until Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) orchestrated it in 1922. Other orchestrations exist too, including versions by Leopold Stokowski, Sergei Gorchakov and Vladimir Ashkenazy. (As an aside, the great Soviet pianist Sviatoslav Richter popularised Mussorgsky's original with a legendary performance – which was recorded – in Sofia in 1958.) Mussorgsky's work was inspired by an exhibition of paintings, drawings and architectural studies by Viktor Hartmann (1834-1873). Each title in Mussorgsky's suite (see movement list above) is borrowed from a picture by Hartmann. The images range from outdoor scenes (*Il vecchio castello*/*The Old Castle* and *Limoges. Le marché*/*The Market*) to portraits (*Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuyle*) to the fantastic (*Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens* and *The Hut on Chicken's Legs* or *Baba-Yaga*, the latter being a witch in Slavic folklore). The monumental closing movement, *The Great Gate of Kiev*, takes its inspiration from one of Hartmann's fanciful architectural studies. In this concert, *Pictures at an Exhibition* is heard in an arrangement by Melbourne-based composer Julian Yu (born 1957). Originally made in 2001 and revised in 2007, Julian Yu's arrangement has found admirers all around the world. Japan's Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa with conductor Hiroyuki Iwaki released a recording of it in 2011. The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra has performed Yu's arrangement once before, as part of *Synaesthesia: Music of Colour and Mind* at Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art (Mona) in November 2012.

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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