

## BEETHOVEN'S THIRD, EROICA

Friday 20 August, 7.30pm

Saturday 21 August, 7.30pm

Federation Concert Hall, Hobart

**Eivind Aadland** conductor

**Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra**

**DOWLAND (arr. Warlock) (3')**

Lachrimae antiquae No 1

**BEETHOVEN** Symphony No 3 in E-flat, Op 55, 'Eroica' (47')

Allegro con brio

Marcia funebre (Adagio assai)

Scherzo (Allegro vivace)

Finale (Allegro molto – Presto)

The Lachrimae antiquae No 1 is a reworking of the most familiar piece of music by lutenist and composer John Dowland (?1563-1626). Originally titled Lachrimae and written as a pavan (a slow dance) for solo lute, the piece was subsequently reworked as the lute song Flow my Tears and later arranged for lute and string consort as the first movement (Lachrimae antiquae No 1) of Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares. It is heard in this concert in an arrangement for string orchestra by Peter Warlock, the nom de plume of Philip Heseltine. As befitting the word 'Lachrimae' ('tears', 'weeping'), the Lachrimae antiquae No 1 is in a minor key and commences with an evocative falling phrase. It has a tripartite structure (A-B-C) with the first two parts (A and B) repeated. A well-travelled Englishman, Dowland spent slightly more than six years as court lutenist to King Christian IV of Denmark. The Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares, which was published in 1604, is dedicated to Anne of Denmark, sister of King Christian and wife of King James VI of England.

Audiences hearing the Symphony No 3, Eroica, by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) for the first time must have been puzzled. Never before had there been a symphony as long as this, nor one so intense and dramatic. Beethoven dispenses with a slow introduction à la Haydn and, instead, offers two, sharp, stabbing chords before launching with gusto into a principal subject (introduced by the cellos) that is less a fixed theme than an idea that is continually in flux (as it happens, it is still being varied and transformed in the long coda towards the end of the movement). The second movement is a long, slow and solemn funeral march. Again, nothing like this had been heard in a symphony before, although Beethoven was most likely influenced by military music swirling around in the wake of the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon. A high-spirited Scherzo follows and the symphony ends with a theme-and-variations Finale. The Finale's theme, incidentally, is from Beethoven's ballet score of 1801, The Creatures of Prometheus, and it would seem that his earliest ideas for the symphony started with this, the closing movement. Beethoven's original title for the Eroica was 'Bonaparte Symphony', a title he jettisoned following Napoleon's coronation as French emperor. In fact, 'jettisoned' is too weak a word. Beethoven had been an early admirer of Napoleon and his reformist agenda but was so appalled by the Frenchman assuming the mantle of Emperor, he scratched out the word 'Bonaparte' on the title page of his score with such vigour it made a hole in the paper. Composed in 1803 and performed privately in 1804, the Symphony No 3 was given its first public performance on 7 April 1805 and published the following year. The title Eroica Symphony (i.e. Heroic Symphony) replaced Bonaparte Symphony and Beethoven added a telling further sentence: 'Composed to celebrate the memory of a great man.'

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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