

PEER GYNT

Saturday 13 November, 7.30pm
Federation Concert Hall, Hobart

Eivind Aadland conductor
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

DVOŘÁK Slavonic Dances, Op 46 No 8 and Op 72 No 2 (9')

CHINDAMO Concerto for Orchestra (21')

GRIEG Peer Gynt (selections) (21')

It was the Slavonic Dances that made Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) famous. Published by Berlin-based firm Simrock in 1878, the first collection of Slavonic Dances, Op 46, was a colossal success. Dvořák followed up with a second collection, Op 72, in 1886. They were not written for orchestra in the first instance but, rather, piano duet (bear in mind that the market for domestic music-making in the 19th century was huge). The word 'Slavonic' in the title brought a touch of the exotic to the collection, which further enhanced their popularity. The first dance heard in this concert, Op 46 No 8, is lively and robust; while the second, Op 72 No 2, is rather more elusive, contrasting a haunting and wistful melody with a cheerfully upbeat episode.

The middle work in the concert is a TSO commission and world première: the Concerto for Orchestra by Melbourne-based composer and pianist Joe Chindamo (born 1961). The work is in five interconnected movements. The composer writes:

Owing much to its Baroque ancestry, the concerto for orchestra is nevertheless a singularly 20th-century idea. Its urbanity, spontaneity and democratic nature are the embodiment of modernity – the Ferrari to the symphony's stately Rolls Royce. Guided by this aesthetic, I envisaged creating a work whose evolutionary clock is aligned with that of the modern world; moreover, to a thriving metropolis. Great cities have always moved me: their romanticism is palpable as is their idealised view of reality. My Concerto for Orchestra is an ode to an imagined city, an 'urban pastoral', where instead of conjuring fantasies about rural freedom, we celebrate aspects of city life and engage with its complexities – all reflected through the unprecedented virtuosity of the modern orchestra.

When Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) decided to turn his dramatic poem Peer Gynt into a stage play, he approached Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) to compose the incidental music. Grieg responded with 26 disparate pieces. The play, with Grieg's music, which was premièred in 1876, was tremendously successful, and Grieg's music reached an even wider audience when the composer created two orchestra suites (Op 46 and Op 55) drawn from the complete stage music. This concert includes numbers from those suites as well as lesser-known excerpts from the complete work. The first excerpt is the Vorspiel (or Prelude) which sets the scene for the wedding day – listen out for the off-stage viola imitating the sound of a rustic fiddle. Morning Mood follows. Heard at the start of Act IV, Morning Mood evokes a sunrise over the Sahara desert (Peer's wanderings have taken him far from Norway). The third excerpt, Dance of the Mountain King's Daughter, features rustic drones and some wonderful writing for percussion. Peer Gynt's Homecoming paints a storm at sea – Peer's ship runs aground on rocks – while Solveig's Song, the fifth excerpt, mixes melancholy and longing with the occasional glimmer of hope. Finally, the selection ends with In the Hall of the Mountain King, evoking Peer's lucky escape from a band of marauding trolls.

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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