

Amateur Chamber Music Society

<http://www.acms-australia.org/concerts/>

— CONCERT —

4pm Sunday 1 March 2020

Kirribilli Centre, 16 Fitzroy St Kirribilli

www.thekirribillicentre.org tel: 9922 4428

— PROGRAM —

SHOSTAKOVICH *Five Pieces for Two Violins and Piano*

(1) *Prelude* (2) *Gavotte*  
(3) *Elegy* (4) *Waltz* (5) *Polka*

Violin Steve Harvey Violin Jenny Mee  
Piano Stewart Wallace

BORODIN *String Quartet No.2 in D major*

(1) *Allegro moderato* (2) *Scherzo* (3) *Nocturne* (4) *Finale*

Violin Sheila Fitzpatrick Violin Marian Arnold  
Viola Daniel Morris Cello Nicole McVicar

— INTERVAL —

BRAHMS *Piano Quintet in F minor Opus 34*

(1) *Allegro non troppo* (2) *Andante, up poco adagio* (3) *Scherzo*  
(4) *Finale*

Violin Steve Harvey Violin Jenny Mee  
Viola Adrian McDonald  
Cello Nicole McVicar  
Piano Stewart Wallace

— REFRESHMENTS —

SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975) *Five Pieces for Two Violins and Piano*

These five pieces were collected and arranged for two violins and piano by a friend and assistant of Shostakovitch (Lev Atovmyan) with the composers permission. The pieces were assembled by 1970. The parts can also be played by two violas.

The Prelude is derived from Shostakovich's music for the film *The Gadfly*. The Gavotte (a French courtly dance) and Elegy (melancholy song) are both taken from Shostakovich's incidental music the play *The Human Comedy*. The source of the Waltz remains a mystery. The final movement the Polka originated in the 1935 comedy-ballet called *The Limpid Stream*.

BORODIN (1833-1877) *String Quartet No.2 in D major (1881)*

Although most well known as a Romantic composer, Borodin was a doctor and chemist by profession, composing music only in his spare time. He also played the cello and was a keen chamber music player. Borodin was one of the *Mighty Handful* – a group of prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century composers who often collaborated together to create a distinct Russian sound. The other four included Balakirev, Cui, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Borodin's second string quartet was dedicated to his wife Ekaterina – it is thought to be 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary gift. The quartet has long melodic lines with a richness of colours and rhythms. The first movement opens with a melodic line on the cello and highlights Borodin's songfulness – all the thematic material is lyrical and a wonderful sense of affection permeates the movement.

The Scherzo alternates between an excitable, playful descending motive and a lyrical dance. Borodin explained the movement as an attempt '*to conjure up an impression of a light hearted evening spent in one of the suburban pleasure gardens of St Petersburg*'.

The Nocturne is the most well known of the four movements. The movement opens with a beautiful cello melody over a syncopated accompaniment which is then passed to the first violin. The faster middle section contains playful dialoguing on rising scales, which enlivens the relaxed mood, before returning to the mood of the first theme.

The Finale opens with a dialogue between the two violins, answered by the cello and viola. The music soon flourishes into a bright and vivacious canon, demonstrating Borodin's mastery of counterpoint (two independent voices moving together).

BRAHMS (1833-1897) *Piano Quintet in F minor Opus 34*

The Piano Quintet is in fact the third version of this work. It started out in 1862 as a string quintet (with two cellos) but Brahms was never entirely happy with it and it was never published. In 1864, he re-worked it as a version for two pianos that clearly gave him some satisfaction and he performed it a number of times. It seems to be around this time that the idea of a further revision started to form. After Clara Schumann played the piece Clara wrote to Brahms - "*[the sonata] is masterly from every point of view, but - it is not a sonata, but a work whose ideas you might - you must - scatter over an entire orchestra.....Levi.....said the same thing, very decidedly, without my having said a word....Please, for this once take my advice and recast it*". Despite Clara's deprecatory "for this once", Brahms was more than likely to take her advice and, although resisting the request to employ an orchestra, he re-wrote the work one more

time as a piano quintet - the form in which it is most often heard and a piece regarded by some as the culmination of Brahms's early chamber music.

The opening movement begins sternly and a little portentously and soon explodes in a flurry of broken chords on the piano. The first theme is a variation on the opening bars. After some development, it is followed by the first of a number of startling key changes. The development begins quietly but builds to a vociferous statement. The recapitulation is signalled by the piano's broken chords from the opening. A more serene mood is explored before the broken chords return again in a brief and thunderous coda.

The second movement is a complete contrast to the first movement – a lilting melody that seems able to perpetuate itself almost indefinitely but it eventually gives way to a slightly more agitated passage. The opening melody returns but this time builds steadily to a passionate climax which subsides in slow stages to the movement's *pianissimo* close.

The Scherzo (literally means 'jest') is surely one of the most exhilarating movements in the chamber music repertoire. The syncopated opening is pregnant with possibilities but the bold theme which follows this remains a surprising masterstroke. The syncopated material returns, and builds to a climax followed by an ingenious fugato (in the style of a fugue) passage, before the return of the main theme. The music builds to an even more dramatic peak, followed by the trio. The trio is quintessential Brahms - with a surging theme in 6/8 timing. It ends quietly and with increasingly ambiguous rhythm that leads back to the opening bars and the repeat of the Scherzo.

The final movement opens darkly and threateningly - the almost jolly theme that follows is a surprise when it arrives. A fiery passage follows leading to material which pokes rhythmic and melodic fun at the main theme before it returns in its original form. The music then moves to a Presto in 6/8 introducing a coda so long that it feels like an entire additional section. A downward-rushing unison scale brings the music back the f minor and, in a manner of which Brahms was a peerless master, continues to build and vary until the work ends almost abruptly as if from sheer creative exhaustion.

concert organiser Nicole McVicar

light refreshments (wine juice and savouries)

\$15 entry donation (\$10 concession/seniors) to cover costs

To get information on future concerts, go to the website

[www.acms-australia.org](http://www.acms-australia.org)

All chamber music players are welcome to join the

Amateur Chamber Music Society. If interested, go to the website and click on "Join Us", or email [membership.secretary@acms-australia.org](mailto:membership.secretary@acms-australia.org), or write to ACMS Membership Secretary, PO

Box 584, Balgowlah NSW 2093

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