

DARWIN  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA



# ISLAND SIGNAL ISLAND SONG

Let the tide of music carry you  
beyond the horizon

Saturday 9 May, 7.30pm | AANT Centre



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# WELCOME

This concert features music inspired by islands. The idea of an island as magic space removed from the world of the everyday - set apart, isolated by the barrier of water - has been a source of inspiration for many composers, as have islands themselves as destinations and locations for creative work.

This concert opens with a work for the Darwin Symphony's horn section, "Island Signal/ Island Song" - the composer references the inter-island callings from the Torres Strait as well as the different kind of callings from the islands of sound - the contrasting instrumental groups - which are found in the music from the Venetian Baroque, especially in the works composed for the Basilica of San Marco by the Gabrieli brothers. Our horns inherit the heritage of the early brass consorts with their sackbuts and cornetti - and travel to various locations in the hall with their French Horns - as part of the theatre of the piece, invoking the rich traditions of signalling by horns and conch shells in various cultures, as well as the great literature of the Venetian school of the late 1500's.

Venice was also the location of the composition of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony - the Hotel Londra in fact - still very much functioning today - just up the grand canal from Harry's Bar. Although the work was not directly inspired by anything specifically Venetian - it was conceived and executed in the heady atmosphere of this unique city. It is not too much to suggest that the creative energy seen everywhere in this city must have sustained Tchaikovsky during this particularly creative period of his working life.

Rautavaara's "Isle of Bliss" celebrates the magic quality of islands - something akin to Shakespeare's Prospero in "The Tempest":  
"Fear not, this full of noises, sounds that delight and hurt not,  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum about mine ears".

Mendelssohn's "Hebrides Overture" is a perfect island watercolour, capturing the mystery and grandeur of the wild islands off the west coast of Scotland. There is something about the idea of an island that is hard to put into words, music does that for us in this special program.

Welcome and enjoy.



Richard

DR RICHARD MILLS AO, FAHA  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHIEF CONDUCTOR

# MUSICIANS

## FIRST VIOLIN

Jo Beaumont#  
Tahli Elsner^  
Jeremy Chin  
Liz Latimer\*  
Oberon  
Katharina Fehringer  
Aruna Shivam  
Tara Murphy+  
Netanela Mizrahi+  
Daniel Lopez+

## SECOND VIOLIN

Lucy Vallentine^  
Marissa Loh  
Eloise Toohey  
Toby Koefoed  
Ben Koefoed  
Sonya Bree  
Sabine Gonelli  
Helen Humphreys  
Belinda Gehlert+

## VIOLA

Alix Hamilton+  
Annette Anderson\*  
Mary Wheaton  
Sally Boud+  
Georgie Price+  
Rachael McMinn

## CELLO

Stephanie Arnold^  
Maddison Sims  
Jude Grove-Jones  
Kate Stephens  
Greg Tuske+  
Eli Bastow  
Liz Clarkson

## DOUBLE BASS

Phillip Waldron^  
Andrea Sitas+  
Sally Cutter  
Kathy Campbell

## FLUTE

Rozanne Mentzel^  
Lucy Kennedy  
Clare Patterson

## OBOE

Alexandra King+  
Sarena Wegener

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Natalie Jacobs\*  
Laura Llewellyn  
David Chin

## BASSOON

Rob Llewellyn^  
Alana Bryett\*  
TJ Bird

## FRENCH HORN

Heath Parkinson^  
Noah Cass\*  
Jethro Llewellyn  
Joel Hoare

## TRUMPET

David Pye^  
Jessica Anderson\*

## TROMBONE

Kabir Khera^  
Marcus Dhu  
Oliver Locos

## TUBA

David Parkin

## HARP

Erna Jarvis

## PIANO

Hui-Min Leastman

## TIMPANI

Steven Bryer+

## PERCUSSION

Amy Zhao  
Anthony Sherwood  
Louise Devenish+

## LEGEND

#Guest Concertmaster  
^Principal  
\*Associate Principal  
+Guest Artist

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Darwin Symphony Orchestra acknowledges the Larrakia people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this performance is held and as the keepers of the first songs and stories of this Country. We pay our respects to their Elders - past, present, and emerging - and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# PROGRAM NOTES

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

## The Hebrides Overture, Op. 26 (“Fingal’s Cave”) (1830–32)

Felix Mendelssohn composed *The Hebrides Overture* following a visit to Scotland in 1829, where he was deeply inspired by the rugged coastline and the dramatic seascape of Fingal’s Cave in the Hebrides Islands. The striking natural acoustics and dark, echoing atmosphere of the cave left a vivid impression, which Mendelssohn sought to capture in music.

The overture opens with a gently undulating theme in the lower strings, evoking the swell of the sea and setting a mood of mystery and grandeur. Throughout the work, Mendelssohn develops this material with masterful orchestration, using shifting dynamics, flowing melodies, and surging crescendos to depict the movement of waves and the power of the ocean. Lyrical passages suggest moments of calm and reflection, while more dramatic sections convey the vastness and unpredictability of nature.

Rather than telling a specific story, *The Hebrides* is a musical landscape—an early example of a concert overture that vividly evokes place and atmosphere, transporting the listener to the wild beauty of the Scottish coast.

RICHARD MILLS (b. 1949)

## Island Signal / Island Song (2018)

Richard Mills’s *Island Signal / Island Song* is a concerto for four horns, commissioned by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 2018. The work draws inspiration from the call of the Torres Strait conch shell, alongside the resonant echoes of Venetian canals, creating a sound world shaped by distance and communication.

While the horn has long been associated with heroic expression, Mills reimagines its role here: the four soloists function as a unified ensemble, their combined voice more powerful and expressive than any individual line. The surrounding strings and percussion create shimmering, water-like textures from which the horns emerge and recede.

Cast in a single movement, the work unfolds in a series of dynamic waves, beginning and ending in stillness. *Island Signal / Island Song* evokes both isolation and connection, suggesting calls that travel across space and time.

EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA (1928–2016)

## Lintukoto (“Isle of Bliss”) (2000)

Einojuhani Rautavaara was one of Finland’s most prominent contemporary composers, known for a distinctive style that blends modern techniques with rich tonality, mysticism, and influences from nature and spirituality. A student of the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and later in the United States, his music often explores themes of transcendence, myth, and the unseen.

*Lintukoto* draws on a myth from Finnish folklore describing a distant, unattainable paradise, the “Isle of Bliss” where migrating birds are said to spend the winter. This imagined place represents both a physical and spiritual refuge.

Composed in 2000, the work unfolds in a continuous, atmospheric arc. Shimmering strings, luminous brass, and delicate woodwind writing create a sense of vast space and quiet wonder. Rautavaara’s fluid harmonic language and glowing climaxes suggest both the beauty and elusiveness of this mythical island, inviting the listener into a serene, contemplative sound world.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

## Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 (1877–78)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky composed his Fourth Symphony during a time of personal crisis in 1877–78, marked by his brief, unhappy marriage and the beginning of his patronage by Nadezhda von Meck, to whom the work is dedicated as “my best friend.”

The symphony reflects his idea of fate, introduced by the forceful brass fanfare that opens the first movement. This movement is turbulent and expansive, contrasting urgent, driving rhythms with a more lyrical second theme, yet repeatedly disrupted by the return of the fate motif. The second movement, marked *Andantino in modo di canzona*, unfolds as a melancholic, song-like meditation, rich in expressive woodwind and string writing. In the third movement, Tchaikovsky creates a playful, scherzo-like texture using pizzicato strings throughout, interwoven with light woodwind figures and more robust brass interjections. The finale (*Allegro con fuoco*) is energetic and triumphant in character, drawing on Russian folk material, though the sudden reappearance of the fate motif tempers its exuberance with a sense of inevitability.

Ultimately, Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony captures the tension between human joy and the inescapable force of fate. While moments of brilliance and lyricism emerge, the recurring fate motif reminds us of life’s struggles, leaving a powerful impression of both conflict and resilience.

# GUEST ARTIST

## FABIAN RUSSELL GUEST CONDUCTOR

Fabian Russell is a multi-award-winning conductor, artistic director, pedagogue, orchestral musician and solo performer.

Orchestras he has conducted include the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Victorian Opera, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestra Victoria. Fabian has also served as Associate Conductor of the Australian Youth Orchestra for twenty-six seasons and is currently Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of The Orchestra Project that he founded in 2002

Fabian has a particular interest in commissioning new music and has conducted the Australian premieres of more than thirty works by composers such as Gordon Kerry, Brett Dean, James Ledger, Mary Finsterer, Harry Sdraulig and Kate Moore.

Born in Sydney, Fabian had a twenty-year career as an orchestral musician including Guest Principal Tuba of the Sydney Symphony for three years from the age of nineteen. In 1993 he was appointed to the MSO where he remained until the end of its 2006 season, as well as performing as a soloist across Australia. He was awarded the Elton John Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Scholarship in 1999.

In 2012 Fabian was the recipient of a Sir Winston Churchill Fellowship to research international orchestral training programs. In 2014 he received a Helpmann Award nomination and a Green Room Award for Outstanding Conductor for his critically acclaimed performances of *Nixon in China* for Victorian Opera. Later this year Fabian will conduct Franz Schubert's Singspiel *Friends of Salamanca* also for Victorian Opera, as well as engagements with the SSO, ASO, AYO and The Orchestra Project.



# SOLOISTS

## HEATH PARKINSON SOLOIST

Heath Parkinson is a leading Australian horn player with over two decades of orchestral and theatrical experience. He has held principal roles with major orchestras, performed internationally with *Les Misérables*, and is a respected educator and ANAM alumnus based in Adelaide.



## JETHRO LLEWELLYN SOLOIST

Jethro Llewellyn is an orchestral and solo horn player in his final year of high school. He performs with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra and Arafura Music Collective, and has taken part in national programs including the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Australian Classical & Romantic Orchestra.



## NOAH CASS SOLOIST

Noah Cass has performed with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra since moving to Darwin in 2024, serving as Principal Horn in 2024 and Associate Principal Horn from 2025–2026. He is a doctor at Royal Darwin Hospital and has previously played with several Sydney-based orchestras.



## JOEL HOARE SOLOIST

Joel holds a Bachelor of Music (Performance) from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. He has performed with leading ensembles including the Queensland Youth Symphony, Australian Youth Orchestra, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, and the Australian International Symphony Orchestra Institute (AISOI).



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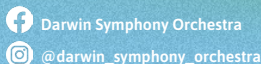
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