

TASMANIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OVERTURES



SPRING 2017

“A BLISSFUL AND EXCITING EXPERIENCE”

Father-and-son team dazzle



IT CAN BE difficult to coax concert-goers from their homes in the middle of winter, but audiences flocked to two TSO concerts devoted to Rachmaninov's complete piano concertos in Hobart

on 13 and 15 July. Of course, in addition to Rachmaninov's magnificent music, the major drawcard was the father-and-son team of Howard and Alexander Shelley, the former as soloist, the latter as conductor. Howard's Rachmaninov credentials are well known – he has the unusual distinction of having recorded every note of Rachmaninov's piano music, all four piano concertos and the complete music for solo piano. That being the case, audience expectations were high and Howard did not disappoint!

In what can only be described as a mammoth undertaking, Howard performed the First and Second concertos in the first concert, and the Third and Fourth in the second. He allowed himself a single rest day in between. (Oh, and on that “rest day” Howard and Alexander appeared in *Conversation with Christopher Lawrence* in the TSO Studio.) As you can imagine, an undertaking such as this is physically and mentally taxing, and Howard rose to the occasion spectacularly. He dazzled as soloist and Alexander

was brilliant as conductor. Comments posted at the TSO's Facebook page included, “father and son thrilled us last night”, “a superb performance, unforgettable” and “a blissful and exciting experience”.

Howard Shelley has built up a special rapport with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra over the years, having first performed with the orchestra in 1985 and appeared as conductor and/or soloist almost every year since. Alexander is likewise no stranger to Tasmania and the TSO, having visited the island state during his childhood and making his debut as conductor of the orchestra in 2009. A maestro going places, Alexander is currently Music Director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa and Principal Associate Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London.

In a fortunate happenstance, Howard's 16th CD with the TSO in the *Romantic Piano Concerto* series on the British label Hyperion was released only days before his Rachmaninov appearances. Featuring two piano concertos by little-known 19th-century composer and pianist Cipriani Potter, the CD has been showered with praise in the international music press. Bouquets all round!



SECOND ECHO ENSEMBLE + TSO

The TSO commissioned young Tasmanian composers Rhys Gray and Thomas Misson to write short pieces of music for Second Echo Ensemble, a Hobart-based performance group comprising mostly of young adults who live with intellectual disabilities. Rhys and Thomas, who were selected in consultation with Maria Grenfell, were assigned their topics by Michael Fortescue, former TSO Double Bass and current music director of Second Echo Ensemble, and were mentored by Gary Wain. The two works, “Love Theme for Second Echo” and “The Contest”, were recorded on 24 May and performed in the TSO Studio before an audience made up of the composers, Second Echo members together with their families and friends, and TSO supporters. The day finished with afternoon tea in the Green Room, a perfect opportunity for everyone to become better acquainted.



BOWING OUT AFTER 31 YEARS

Brett Rutherford has retired from the TSO after more than three decades as Tutti Cello. Brett joined the orchestra in January 1986 following five years in Sydney with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra (where he met his wife Janet, TSO Principal Viola for 28 years) and a period of study in London. He cites national and international touring and the TSO’s rich recording legacy – particularly music by Australian composers – among the highlights of his many years with the orchestra. In addition, the camaraderie among the players was always a joy. Brett’s life in music continues post-TSO as a teacher and a member of the Kettering Piano Quartet and the early music group, Sequenza. He’s looking forward to having time to enjoy outdoor pursuits including diving, walking and kayaking.



GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH TSO FRIENDS

Members of TSO Friends were among those invited to a rehearsal of the Hobart Master Series concert, *Colours of the East*, on Friday 4 August. TSO Friends had the opportunity to hear the entire program, which was performed that evening. Conducted by Marko Letonja, it included Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* and Bartók’s Violin Concerto No 2 with brilliant soloist Alina Ibragimova. Following the rehearsal, TSO Friends were invited to lunch in the Green Room – which has recently been refurbished thanks, in part, to funds contributed by TSO Friends – where they had the opportunity to chat with musicians, staff and other like-minded music lovers. TSO Friends always welcomes new members. Annual memberships are \$35 (single) and \$48 (couple). Concessions are available. For more information visit tsofriends.com.au.





THE TASMANIAN Symphony Orchestra's acclaimed concert performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in November 2016, conducted by Marko Letonja and featuring Nina Stemme and Stuart Skelton in the title roles, was awarded "Best Symphony Orchestra Concert" at the 17th Annual Helpmann Awards, held in Sydney on 24 July.

The TSO saw off competition from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, nominated twice for different concerts, and the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra, to win the prestigious award, presented at a ceremony at the Capitol Theatre attended by a star-studded audience.

Nicholas Heyward, TSO Managing Director, accepted the award and paid tribute to Marko Letonja, Chief Conductor and Artistic Director, for his key role in attracting artists of the calibre of Nina Stemme and Stuart Skelton.

"I'm thrilled to see the TSO recognised for this remarkable concert," Mr Heyward said. "The combination of Marko, Stuart and Nina and our orchestra of 47 hugely talented musicians made for one of the best concerts in TSO history."

In addition to conducting the concert, Marko Letonja prepared the performing edition, which was not the full opera but a seamless abridgement that encapsulated the main thrust

of the drama and included key episodes, such as the Act I Prelude, the "Love Duet" in Act II and *Isolde's* "Liebestod" at the conclusion of Act III.

Stemme, Skelton, Tristan & Isolde was greeted with a resounding and spontaneous standing ovation and was lauded in the national arts press. It was also a major tourism event, attracting visitors from all over the country as well as overseas. More than 50% of single ticket buyers travelled to Hobart specifically for the concert and stayed a while to enjoy Tasmania's sights, food, wine, art and cultural heritage.

Established in 2001 by Live Performance Australia, the annual Helpmann Awards celebrate and promote the Australian live performance industry. Similar to the Tony Awards on Broadway and the Olivier Awards in London, the Helpmanns acknowledge distinguished artistic achievement and excellence in the many disciplines of Australia's vibrant live performance sector.

TSO concerts have won Helpmann Awards on two occasions in the past – the Hobart Baroque concert with Julia Lezhneva in 2014 and the Mofo Kate Miller-Heidke concert last year – but this was the first time that the TSO was the presenting organisation and therefore the sole recipient of the award.

TSO + DARK MOFO

From Viking metal to Silence

HOBART IN JUNE means Dark Mofo, and for the TSO Dark Mofo means a chance to collaborate on projects outside the main subscription season. This year, the TSO performed in three separate Dark Mofo events.

The first of these was Respighi's chamber opera *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Theatre Royal on 10 and 11 June. This Victorian Opera production was a feast for the eyes as well as the ears with larger-than-life puppets conjuring up a magical, otherworldly realm. Each puppet was shadowed by a singer, with voice and action melding into a single, utterly captivating character. Originally performed in Melbourne in March as part of Victorian Opera's subscription season, *The Sleeping Beauty* transferred beautifully to the jewel-like setting of the Theatre Royal. Significantly, these three sold-out performances were the first in a series of ongoing collaborations between the TSO and Victorian Opera. (The second was the concert performance of *Carmen* in Federation Concert Hall on 12 August – more on which in the next issue of *Overtures* – with further collaborations planned in coming years.)

The TSO's second Dark Mofo project, *Ulver + TSO* (pictured), paired the orchestra







The Sleeping Beauty

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with Norwegian metal band Ulver in a performance of the rarely heard *Messe I.X-VI.X*, in Federation Concert Hall on 15 June. Sold out within moments of going on sale, *Ulver + TSO* attracted Viking metal fans from all over the country. More than a concert, it embraced the cinematic in its combination of music and big-screen projections.

The third and final project, a concert called *Silence*, brought together the TSO and pianist Tamara-Anna Cislowska in Federation Concert Hall on 20 June. Curated by Rainer Jozeps and led by Emma McGrath, TSO Concertmaster, *Silence* was a meditation on sounds, non-sounds and the point at which sounds dissolve into silence. It offered contemplative music such as Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Elgar's *Sospiri* and Pärt's *Für Alina* culminating in a performance of Cage's infamous "silent work", *4'33"*. Audience members were invited *not* to applaud the performances but to allow the music to fade into oblivion. Cage's silent work, which ended the program, was met with still more silence as concert-goers filed out into the dark night.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Would you like to play your part in guaranteeing and shaping the future of the TSO? A bequest by the late Dr Louise Crossley helped to make possible the appointment earlier this year of Elena Schwarz, the TSO's first Assistant Conductor. In May, the TSO Foundation contributed over \$50,000 to the TSO's bottom line. This general budget support goes to where it is most needed, underpinning the excellence for which the TSO is renowned.

The TSO Foundation is an independent trust which raises funds to support the orchestra into the future. These funds are generated primarily through bequests and tax-deductible donations. The beauty of making a bequest in your will is that it doesn't affect you financially while you are alive and ensures that your cherished TSO is looked after long after you are gone.

Don Hempton, a member of the TSO Foundation Board, explains why he has made a bequest:

From my own experience, I can say that making a will is easy and gives me peace of mind. I decided to leave a percentage of my life assets to the TSO, knowing that this will make a great difference to the orchestra that has meant so much to me, preserve my musical legacy and still allow me to look after my loved ones. The journey to achieving your musical dream is not hard. I suggest contacting your financial or legal adviser to discuss your intentions and the best options to achieve them. If the TSO has played an important part in your life, I invite you to join me in playing a part in its future.

Should you be interested in following Don's example and leaving a bequest to the TSO, please contact Ed Benyon, Director Development, on 03 6232 4430 or benyone@tso.com.au.

Ed can also put you in touch with Don or other members of the Foundation Board should you wish to have a personal perspective to help you on your way. Please know that your enquiries are nonbinding and will be treated in confidence.



THE FIRST Chairman's Lunch for the year was held in the fine surrounds of the Henry Jones Art Hotel in Hobart on Friday 26 May.

A diverse range of guests attended, including TSO Patrons and leading members of the business community. Geoff Willis, TSO Chairman 2006-2013, welcomed guest of honour, Sir Jonathan Mills AO. Sir Jonathan, Chief Executive of the Edinburgh International Festival 2006-2014, delivered an inspiring address in which he presented the case for Tasmania as an arts festival destination. He drew parallels between Edinburgh and Hobart and provided irrefutable

evidence of the economic benefits, among many others, of arts tourism. His speech made a strong impression on guests, who were left pondering how they could contribute, both as individuals and as businesses, to this exciting vision.

As always, the Chairman's Lunch was an opportunity for business leaders to mix and mingle, savour the wise words of an honoured guest and enjoy superb food and wine. The TSO would like to thank the event sponsors, Henry Jones Art Hotel and Fine Drop Wines.

Proceeds from the Chairman's Lunch go towards the TSO Fund.



NEW CHAIR PATRONS

THE TSO is delighted to welcome Rob and Tricia Greenwell as sponsors of the Concertmaster chair, held by Emma McGrath. “Music has always been an important part of my life,” explains Tricia. Rob adds that, “Music touches people – old and young – and we would all feel the loss if it were not there.” Believing that the TSO plays an important role in the health of the community, Rob and Tricia have made a personal investment in the orchestra by becoming Chair Patrons. “We are at a stage in life

where we have the ability to contribute, and we consider the TSO a community asset that deserves our encouragement and support.” Rob and Tricia invite others to join them as members of the Conductor’s Circle and Chair Patrons. “We enjoy meeting the musicians, other music lovers and sharing our TSO experiences.” If you would like to join Rob and Tricia in supporting the TSO, please contact Ed Benyon, Director Development.

NEW FACES IN DEVELOPMENT

Meet the TSO’s new Development team: Ed Benyon, Cath Adams and Brooke Everingham.

Ed was appointed Development Director in October last year. He comes to the TSO from Houston, USA, where he helped lead not-for-profits in the arts, human services, education and health sectors for over 20 years. Married to Jenny Owen, TSO Principal First Violin, Ed is excited to help Tasmanians enhance their experience of the TSO and its music through philanthropy.

Cath took up the post of Development Executive in May. With a background in stakeholder management, events and marketing, Cath works closely with the TSO’s Corporate Partners to underwrite the TSO’s mission while highlighting the good work of Tasmania’s finest businesses. Brooke, who joined the TSO in May in the part-time position of Development Coordinator, has a strong background in the visual and performing arts. TSO supporters know Brooke as the friendly person on the phone or

in emails who manages administrative and event-related activities.

Whether you’re an individual, business, government or private institution, the Development team is here for you! Should you have questions about what you’d like to do, please phone them on 03 6232 4430 or email development@tso.com.au.

(L-R) Cath Adams, Ed Benyon and Brooke Everingham



in brief...

GISELLE ON TOUR

Back in January 2015 the TSO recorded Adolphe Adam's *Giselle*, the quintessential Romantic ballet, with conductor Nicolette Fraillon. What is noteworthy about this recording is that in addition to the complete ballet, it includes bonus tracks of key episodes performed at different tempi, thus accommodating (as far as possible) the physicality and technique of different dancers. It seemed particularly fitting, therefore, that the recording came "home" when it was used by The Australian Ballet for performances of *Giselle* in Launceston's Princess Theatre and Hobart's Theatre Royal in late June. The CD has proved to be invaluable for The Australian Ballet. In addition to the Tasmanian performances, the TSO's *Giselle* has travelled with The Australian Ballet on its tour of regional Victoria and New South Wales and will continue to be used on further tours. The TSO's double CD of *Giselle* is for sale at the Box Office for \$25 (\$22.50 for TSO subscribers).

RECENT BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Two new Directors have been elected to the TSO Board, Harvey Lennon and Judith Tudball. Harvey Lennon is the Group Chief Executive of the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania (RACT). He is a Director of RACT Travel Pty Ltd and RACT Insurance Pty Ltd, and a Board Member of the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania. Judith Tudball is Principal of St Michael's Collegiate School. Recognised as a leader in single-sex girls' education, she is currently on the executive committees of the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia and Anglican Schools Australia. Meanwhile, the TSO Foundation Board has seen the appointment of Janice Foster. One of Australia's leading fundraising professionals, she has worked in a variety of fundraising roles in secondary and higher education and in arts and cultural organisations. She has twice been awarded state finalist in the Telstra Business Women of the Year Awards.

RAISING THE ROOF IN BERLIN

Nearly 30 members of the TSO Chorus travelled to Berlin in May for Mitsingkonzert, an annual choral fest hosted by the Berlin Radio Choir and Orchestra. Mitsingkonzert is a colossal event, with 1,300 choristers from all around the world coming together to form a single choir. The combined choir rehearses and performs a major work. This year it was the Requiem by French composer Maurice Duruflé. In addition to the thrill of singing in a massed choir and performing in one of classical music's most hallowed venues – the Berlin Philharmonie no less! – members of the TSO Chorus had the honour of working with renowned choral director and conductor Simon Halsey CBE. Members of the TSO Chorus will once again go on the road when they join Sydney Philharmonia Choirs for two performances of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* at the Sydney Opera House in late November.

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The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and through Arts Tasmania by the Minister for the Arts, and the Tasmanian Icon Program.

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