



Geelong Chamber
Music Society

presents

Woven Threads

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra

Sophie Rowell

Director & Violin

Bach

Mendelssohn

Mozart and more

Friday 3 March 7.30pm

McAuley Hall Sacred Heart College

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Geelong Chamber Music Society

presents

Sophie Rowell (violin / director)
Melbourne Chamber Orchestra

Program

J.S. Bach Ricercar à 6 from *The Musical Offering*

Eötvös Meraki

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in D minor

Mozart Adagio and Fugue in C minor K 546

Arensky Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky Op. 35a

Perkinson Allegro furioso from Sinfonietta No. 1

Artists

Violin I

Sophie Rowell
Erica Kennedy #
Rochelle Ughetti
Karla Hanna
Matthew Rigby

Cello

Blair Harris
Anna Pokorny

Double Bass

Emma Sullivan*

Violin II

Elizabeth Sellars
Lucy Warren #
Madeleine Jevons
Rebecca Wang

Appears courtesy of Orchestra Victoria

* *Appears courtesy of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra*

Viola

Merewyn Bramble
Katharine Brockman *
Matt Laing



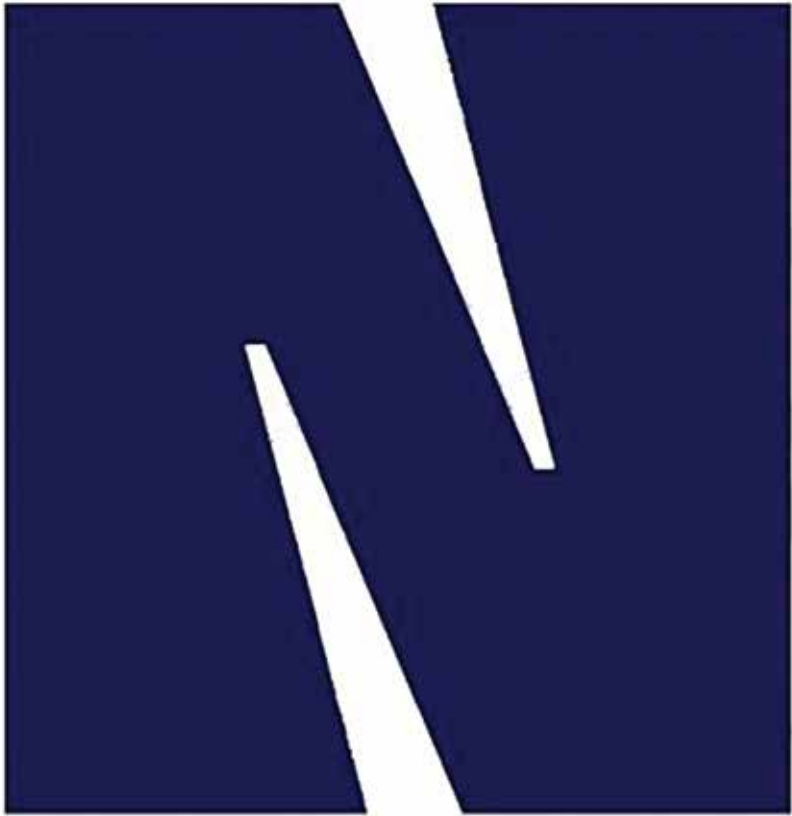
Sophie Rowell

Currently Concertmaster with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, violinist Sophie Rowell has had an extensive performing career as a soloist, chamber musician and principal orchestral violinist both in Australia and abroad.

After winning the ABC Young Performer's Award in 2000 which resulted in solo performances with all major Australian symphony orchestras, Sophie founded the Tankstream Quartet which won string quartet competitions in Cremona and Osaka. Having studied in Germany with the Alban Berg Quartet the quartet moved back to Australia in 2006 when they were appointed to the Australian String Quartet. For six years she toured, recorded, participated in chamber music festivals and enjoyed performing that wonderful repertoire all over the globe. Special highlights included playing in the QuartetFest Bonn as part of the Beethoven Festival and giving performances for remote communities on Cape York in Far North Queensland.

Since 2012 Sophie has travelled the world playing in principal violin positions with orchestras including the Scottish and Mahler Chamber Orchestras and the Vancouver, Sydney and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, as well as participating in many chamber music festivals in Australia.

Sophie studied with Beryl Kimber in her hometown of Adelaide then with Alice Waten in Sydney and participated in numerous masterclasses with incredible musicians such as Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Norbert Brainin (Amadeus Quartet) and Walter Levin (LaSalle Quartet.)



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I am delighted to welcome you to this opening concert of the Geelong Chamber Music Society's 2023 season. It feels like my first concert as Artistic Director of this outstanding ensemble has been long in the making, but I'm very excited that the time has finally come!

As programmers, we have the chance to create stories – to re-tell old stories, to tell old stories in new ways and to create new stories - but the most exciting part is the freedom to weave these stories together in a new way that offers audiences performance experiences that are comfortable and challenging, thrilling and calming, and most of all, unforgettable. It's a privilege to have been given the opportunity to tell you my story today, one that touches on what it means to me to be a musician. Central to the program is Melbourne composer Melody Eötvös' Meraki - a tribute to 'putting something of oneself into what you are doing and to do it with love and creativity.' That is exactly what I have done here. From sparkling youthful Mendelssohn, to the depth of emotion with which Arensky imbues his tribute to Tchaikovsky, from master to apprentice of the Fugue, JS Bach to Mozart, this program celebrates all that I love about making music.

I am thrilled to be part of MCO, and am so looking forward to sharing this concert and the rest of our 2023 musical offerings with you all, both musicians and audiences alike.

I think we all have a wonderful path to explore and I can't wait to see where it takes us...

Sophie Rowell
Artistic Director

photo: Laura Manariti

NOTES

J.S. Bach Ricercar à 6 from *The Musical Offering*

Bach published *The Musical Offering* in 1747 - a collection of fugues and canons for keyboard based solely on one theme. The theme was given to Bach by King Frederick II, who at the time employed Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel. The son wished to show off the court's new acquisition, a Silbermann fortepiano. The elder Bach was aware of this new instrument but had never composed specifically for it. The previous and more well known *The Well Tempered Clavier* was composed for a variety of keyboard instruments (harpsichord, clavichord, even organ) and celebrated the system of equal temperament tuning, where all 12 major and 12 minor keys sounded in tune. *The Musical Offering* was Bach's first and only composition for the fortepiano.

Titled **Regis Iussu Cantio Et Reliqua Canonica Arte Resoluta**, (theme given by the King, with additions, resolved in the canonic style), the first letters of the title words spell "ricercar", which became the accepted term for the fugal or canonic pieces. Originally the King requested a fugue in 3 voices, which Bach of course could accomplish easily. Later the King requested (or challenged) Bach to produce a 3 voice fugue on the same theme. This took a little more time but was completed

in September 1747 as the now famous Ricercar à 6.

This Ricercar has been arranged for ensembles many times, even by Webern in a 12-tone treatment! This arrangement for strings by Rosie O'Reilly is among the more common treatments of the piece.

Melody Eötvös *Meraki*

Australian composer Melody Eötvös was born in 1984 and raised in the southern NSW highlands. Her musical inspiration and experience draws from a variety of places, people and idioms. Fearing the career of a concert pianist ('and probably the world's most nervous, mousey one at that!') Melody turned to composing; she found her niche.

Meraki is a word that modern Greeks often use to describe doing something with soul, creativity, or love when you put "something of yourself" into what you're doing, whatever it may be. This work for string orchestra premiered in 2021 at the TarraWarra Festival and has since been recorded by musicians from the Australian National Academy of Music. The one movement is evocative and exciting, with an uplifting quality that the title aims to convey.

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy *Violin Concerto in D minor*

Mendelssohn was 13 years old when he penned this concerto for violin and strings. During the same period he also composed 12 string symphonies, which are still performed today. At age 11, he had already written a trio for strings, a violin and piano sonata, two piano sonatas and the beginning of a third, three more for four hands, four for organ, three songs (lieder), and a cantata. Precocious? At the time, he was labelled as a "wunderkind" in the tradition of Mozart, and growing up in a household of art, literature, music, science and philosophy provided the perfect atmosphere. A friend once remarked "all of

Europe came to the Mendelssohn's living room." Add to this, the family was wealthy... very, employing their own orchestra. The young Mendelssohn not only composed voraciously, but had a ready made outlet for his music, all encouraged by his parents.

This D minor concerto remained unknown for years, being "discovered" and championed by Yehudi Menuhin in 1952. Reviewers relished the gypsy flavoured work by the young Mendelssohn and the concerto has remained in the repertoire ever since. It's 3 movements are classical in style and show the composer's understanding of the instrument; Mendelssohn was an exceptional pianist but understood the orchestra (particularly strings) very well, as his composing and orchestration shows.

W.A. Mozart *Adagio and Fugue in C minor K.546*

'A short Adagio for two violins, viola and bass, for a fugue which I wrote some time ago for two Pianos.' Mozart's own description of this work for string quartet which dates from about 1788. The original Fugue for 2 pianos (K.426) was written five years earlier. Little is known about this piece, either details about it's composition or any mention of a commission. The same year produced his last symphony (K.551) which contains the famous 5-voice fugue of the final movement. Also around this time, it is rumoured that Mozart had been "investigating" works by J.S. Bach, purportedly saying (of fugues) 'I could try that!'

This is not one of Mozart's popular pieces nor is it really typical of his style; he wasn't 'known' for fugues the way Bach was. Mozart's gift was melody and fugues are sometimes more mathematical than melodic. Yet this piece appears often enough to capture the imagination of audiences, either in its original form or performed (as here) by a larger string ensemble. The opening Adagio is severe

and unsettling but Mozart still weaves in a beautiful melodic theme, which steps aside to make way for the Fugue. It's not thrilling Mozart (as is the fugue at the end of the "Jupiter" symphony!) but it meant enough to the composer to enter into his personal catalogue of works.

Anton Arensky *Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky Op. 35a*

Arensky is remembered more as a pianist than a composer and the bulk of his music has been forgotten. He was championed by such luminaries as Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky, teacher at the Moscow Conservatorium to some famous names, Scriabin and Rachmaninoff, to name just two, yet scholars remember his chamber compositions as his only real contribution. Famously, Rimsky-Korsakov noted "more influence from Tchaikovsky than me!... he will quickly be forgotten."

The theme is from a song titled "Legend" from ***Sixteen Children's Songs Op.54***. Originally the slow third movement from Arensky's second string quartet, written as a tribute after Tchaikovsky's death, it proved so popular that the composer arranged it as a separate piece for string orchestra (hence Op.35a). The melody is pure Tchaikovsky and a perfect vehicle for variations. The structure is the theme followed by seven variations and ending with a coda.

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson *Allegro furioso from Sinfonietta No. 1*

A piece that has become more famous than the work it is part of. Perkinson was an American composer with interests in jazz, dance, pop, film, television, and classical music. A well respected and influential musician in many fields, Wikipedia describes his music as "a blend of Baroque counterpoint; American Romanticism; elements of the blues, spirituals, and black folk music; and rhythmic ingenuity." *Sinfonietta No.1* was composed in 1953

and the third movement, *Allegro furioso*, is simply seven minutes of excitement which often prompts "I've heard this before?" from listeners. It is writing (the entire Sinfonietta) that draws on many influences and has influenced many others. (Think of the modern group Bond and their hit "Explosive".) Perkinson is not a household name, but his hand has been on the music of many, from Marvin Gaye to Harry Belafonte, in films and TV shows (Room 222) and in his spare time, he was absorbing conducting lessons at the Salzburg Mozarteum. Perkinson was also director of Jerome Robbins's *American Theater Lab* and the *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*. He even found time to compose a ballet based on the music of Charlie Parker.

For more background information please refer to the excellent interview with Sophie Rowell in ***Cut Common*** magazine.

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MEMBERSHIP

We invite Geelong’s chamber music lovers to join our Society. Membership supports the Committee’s work: presenting our annual series of five concerts, providing funds for music education in local schools and music master classes in our region. Annual subscription is just \$20; membership forms are available on our website (www.geelongchamber.org).

DONATIONS

Tax-deductible donations to the Society are welcomed as contributions towards attracting outstanding musicians, supporting music education in disadvantaged schools through a Musica Viva program, and encouraging young local performers through the annual Australian Youth Classical Music Competition. Information about making a donation is available on our website (geelongchamber.org) or at any of our concerts.

We’d love to hear your thoughts...

To ensure we are providing the best possible concert experience for our audiences, a survey has been written to collect your thoughts, ideas and preferences.

If you would like to take part, it’s and free and you may contribute as little or as much as you like.

Have a look on our website.

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