2019 CONCERT SERIES

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SATURDAY 23rd MARCH 7.30PM

SUNDAY 24th MARCH 2.30PM

BOWRAL MEMORIAL HALL

BENDOOLEY STREET

Patrons:

Ann Carr-Boyd AM and Dr. Andrew Ford OAM
Giuseppe Verdi  
*Overture to Nabucco*

Ann Carr-Boyd  
*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No.2*  
Soloist John Martin

I  Allegretto  
II  Poco adagio e espressivo  
III  Finale – Vivace e leggiero

**INTERVAL**

Refreshments will be available from the Supper Room.

Edward Elgar  
*Enigma Variations Op.36*

Please see the notes below for details of the movements.

**RECEPTION**

Following the Saturday performance there will be a reception to which all are invited. Enjoy the opportunity to meet the musicians.

**THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

The orchestra was formed in 2014 as a result of overwhelming interest in establishing a symphony orchestra in the region. Musicians from the Southern Highlands and surrounding districts rehearse on Sunday evenings. The SHSO has become a significant feature of the cultural life of the Southern Highlands.
ALLAN STILES

The orchestra will be conducted by Dr Allan Stiles, who has conducted orchestras, bands, choirs, and theatre productions over many years. He formed the Western Youth Orchestra and The Beecroft Orchestra. He has also conducted operas and musicals for the Hurstville Light Opera Company, the Hills Musical Society, the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, the Parramatta Musical Comedy Company and the Highlands Theatre Group. He enjoyed decades of conducting orchestras, bands, and theatrical productions while a teacher at The King’s School, Holy Cross College, and Pymble Ladies College. He was instrumental in pioneering and implementing bands in schools for the Department of Education. He has also played in orchestras both in Sydney and London. Conducting studies were with Robert Miller, then conductor of the ABC Training Orchestra, and later as part of his MMus at University of NSW. As a musicologist he has catalogued the works of Alfred Hill for his PhD thesis and has published many previously unavailable works by Australian composers.

GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813-1901) Overture to Nabucco

Giuseppe Verdi’s first major operatic success appeared just after the most difficult time in his life. In 1838 and 1839, he and his young wife Margherita lost both of their infant children in quick succession. Then, Margherita fell ill and tragically died in the summer of 1840. Verdi was deeply depressed and ready to give up on composing altogether, but Bartolomeo Merelli, his friend and manager of La Scala, the famed Milan opera house, prevailed upon him to write one more opera. The result was Nabucco, which was an instant triumph on its première in 1842.

The opera follows the story of Nabucodonosor (Nebuchadnezzar), King of Babylon and conqueror of the Hebrews. With the backdrop of Jewish captivity and impending massacre, a complicated story of love and madness unfolds. Characteristic betrayals, caprice and melodrama chart a circuitous course toward the glorious ending in which all remaining cast members praise the God of the Hebrews.

Like most of Verdi’s opera overtures, the one to Nabucco is a potpourri of themes, most of which reappear in the opera. It opens with a brass chorale which represents the steadfast faith of the Hebrews as King Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco) of Babylon and his forces defeat and enslave them. Then a contrasting triple forte declaration from the entire orchestra and a chromatic passage in the lower strings introduces the Allegro, which is characterized by a sinister, dark melody foreshadowing the opera’s central conflict. The ‘Va pensiero’ theme, first played by the oboe and the clarinet, is the core of the lyrical middle section. This Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves is a
poignant and nostalgic lament for their homeland. When the opera premiered in 1842, it struck a great chord in the hearts of the Italians who were then under Austrian rule and it became for the time the perfect expression of a people's longing for freedom. During the Italian Risorgimento, Verdi's name itself became a rallying cry – “Viva Verdi!” (a convenient acronym for Vittorio Emanuele, Re D'Italia) – in support of political unification of Italy calling for the liberal-minded King of Sardinia, Victor Emmanuel, II to become the King of Italy. The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves was so cherished by the Italians that the 100,000 mourners who attended Verdi’s funeral in 1901 spontaneously sang it in memory of their favourite opera composer.

ANN CARR-BOYD Piano Concerto No. 2

Ann Carr-Boyd grew up in Sydney in a family of professional musicians and carried on this tradition by gaining a B Mus and Master of Arts from the University of Sydney, and later, as recipient of the Sydney Moss Scholarship, continued her studies in composition and piano in London. On returning to Sydney she commenced life as a professional musician – composer, teacher and radio broadcaster – combining these activities with a busy family life. In 1996 she moved to the Southern Highlands where she has continued to work as composer, teacher and performer, at the same time enjoying and participating in the rich artistic life of this community. Ann is also a talented artist and regards composing an orchestral work to be much like painting a large canvas with the many rich and varied colours of the symphony orchestra.

“I wanted to write a romantic work which would feature the piano in the way in which so many of us enjoy the memorable concertos that are popular world-wide – i.e. featuring lots of melodies, brilliant runs up and down the keyboard and some of the percussive effects for which the piano is famous.”
I wrote these words for the premiere performance of this concerto in July, 2008 and I think they still sum up my thoughts when writing this work. I grew up in a family steeped in the romantic traditions of music, where I heard the works of Beethoven, Brahms and many others being played by my father and uncle (Norbert and Charles Wentzel) on piano and violin. So it seemed natural to visit this era again.

The Concerto was commissioned by Dr Arthur Bridge AM on behalf of Ars Musica Australis, for my 70th birthday. It is in the traditional three movements – fast, slow, fast. The first movement is based on two main themes, the first of which is introduced by the piano alone and then developed by piano and orchestra. The second theme appears in a new key and in a departure from the traditional lyrical style of a second theme, is actually livelier than the first. The rest of the movement follows with development of these themes and a recapitulation.

In the second movement I was thinking about some of my favourite music from the early 20th century by composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Poulenc, Milhaud and Satie, who began to use chords in a way that was different to classical music – they introduced chords which floated and swirled. Such chords were taken up by composers like Gershwin and mixed in with the emerging sounds of jazz, to create new rhythms and new ‘scrunchy’ sounds. In this movement I have attempted to melt the chords into each other and create what I could call a ‘schmalzy’ sound, backed up by similar chords and sounds in the orchestra, including some solo sections for the cor anglais.

In the third movement the piano has a cross-hands pattern which came about when I was trying out different hand patterns at the piano. The orchestra contributes many colours in this movement in moods that range from sparkling patterns created by the piano together with piccolo, flute, oboe and harp (in which I was again exploring new textures) to a fanfare motive played by horns and trumpets which reappears through the movement. In a complete change of mood, which the SHSO has christened the ‘burlesque’ section, there is a boisterous waltz in which the brass section plays a prominent role. There is a ‘ghost’ section too, in the nature of an echo, and then a reprise of the ‘cross hands’ theme and the concerto draws to an energetic close.

It is a great honour for me to have the Concerto performed by the Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra conducted by Dr Allan Stiles, who has done so much to promote orchestral music in the Highlands as well as Australian music. Also, to have my dear friend and wonderful pianist John Martin as the soloist is a special honour for me, as he has created and recorded so much of my music in the past twenty years. Not forgetting the hard-working orchestra, who have tackled this and many other works new to them in the past four years. Notes by the composer.
In a colourful career of great variety, John Martin has become very well-known and celebrated as a sensitive and entertaining performer. He has recently gained a lot of notice for a cameo as the department store pianist in Bruce Beresford’s movie, *Ladies In Black*.

As pianist and Music Director John has worked with many stars of the Australian and international concert and theatre scenes, including such singers as Peter Cousens, David Hobson, Marina Prior, Mark Vincent, The Australian Tenors, The Ten Sopranos, Teddy Tahu Rhodes, Amelia Farrugia, Julie Lea Goodwin, Jacqueline Porter, Greta Bradman, and Geoffrey Chard. He has worked with many of the best instrumentalists and also toured China in June with frequent collaborator, flautist Jane Rutter. Next year they will be doing a local tour along with Peter Cousens.

He has also worked regularly with theatrical luminaries such as Miriam Margolyes, Amanda Muggleton, Meredith O’Reilly and Stuart Maunder, as well as many up-and-coming young performers in both the classical and cabaret genres.

John is frequently to be heard on radio, especially ABC Classic FM, both as soloist and accompanist. He has championed the work of many fine Australian composers, including Ann Carr-Boyd, Miriam Hyde, Elena Kats-Chernin and Ross Edwards.

John is also a composer, with nearly forty works in print courtesy of Wirripang Publications.
EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)
Variations on an Original Theme, ‘Enigma’, Op.36

In 1891, after a short and unhappy period in London, Elgar and his wife returned home to Malvern. They settled into a comfortable pattern of life among friends and the next decade was one of Elgar’s most creative periods, with lots of new compositions that culminated in the work commonly referred to as the Enigma Variations, written in 1898-1899. Perhaps his best known large-scale composition, it takes the form of a theme and fourteen variations. Elgar wrote, in the original programme notes, “The enigma I will not explain – its dark saying must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connection between the variations and the theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set, another and larger theme “goes” but is not played”. Elgar never divulged the secret of the unplayed theme (the “enigma”) but he did write descriptive notes for the variations. He dedicated the work to “my friends pictured within”, each variation being an affectionate portrayal of one of his circle of close acquaintances and marked with their initials or allusions to their names.

The theme, on which all the variations are based, is a simple three-part design, in G minor with a central contrasting passage in the major, before a return of the opening. Elgar himself pointed out that the rhythm of the theme’s first bar – two short notes followed by two long ones – is immediately reversed and that ‘references to this grouping are almost continuous.’

Variation I (C.A.E.) is a loving and dignified tribute to the Elgar’s wife, Caroline Alice who was a constant source of encouragement. Her death in 1920 brought the composer’s creative life to a halt for twelve years until he began work on his Third Symphony toward the end of 1932. In Elgar’s words, “the variation is really a prolongation of the theme with what I wished to be romantic and delicate additions; those who knew C.A.E. will understand this reference to one whose life was a romantic and delicate inspiration.”

Variation II (H.D.S-P.) introduces Hew David Stewart-Powell, a pianist with whom Elgar, a violinist, played chamber music. His characteristic warm-up routines are gently parodied in a manner Elgar described as “chromatic beyond H. D. S.-P.’s liking.”

Variation III (R.B.T.) depicts Richard Baxter Townshend, a friend and amateur thespian with a gift for mimicry, whose low voice was apt to jump an octave unexpectedly. Townshend was a classicist at Oxford and rode through the town on his bicycle, constantly ringing its bell. The violins’ plucked strings and their woodwind doublings represent the bicycle bell.
**Variation IV** (W.M.B.) immediately evokes William Meath Baker, described by Elgar as “a country squire, gentleman and scholar”. In the days of horses and carriages it was more difficult than in these days of petrol to arrange the carriages for the day to suit a large number of guests. This variation was written after the host had, with a slip of paper in his hand, forcibly read out the arrangements for the day and hurriedly left the music-room with an inadvertent bang of the door.”

**Variation V** (R.P.A.) portrays Richard Penrose Arnold, son of the literary critic and poet Matthew Arnold. Elgar notes he was “a great lover of music which he played (on the pianoforte) in a self-taught manner, evading difficulties but suggesting in a mysterious way the real feeling. His serious conversation was continually broken up by whimsical and witty remarks.” The strings, in one of Elgar’s most expansive and inspired melodies, represent Arnold’s nobility of mind and his deeply truthful way of playing music.

**Variation VI** (Ysobel) has the title that was Elgar’s nickname for Isabel Fitton, who studied violin with him. She switched to viola – hence the prominence of that instrument in this variation. Elgar described the opening as “an ‘exercise’ for crossing the string – a difficulty for beginners.” The composer was fully aware of Ysobel’s charms and quite taken with her beauty, so the variation is “pensive and, for a moment, romantic.”

**Variation VII** (Troyte) presents Arthur Troyte Griffith, an architect, and one of Elgar’s most intimate friends. “The uncouth rhythm of the drums and lower strings was really suggested by some maladroit essays to play the pianoforte; later the strong rhythm suggests the attempts of the instructor (E.E.) to make something like order out of chaos, and the final despairing ‘slam’ records that the effort proved to be in vain.”

**Variation VIII** (W.N.) is named for Winifred Norbury, but is more a portrait of ‘Sherridge’, the eighteenth-century house where she lived with her sister, Florence, and where Elgar and friends enjoyed many musical gatherings. The gracious personalities of the ladies are sedately shown – especially Winifred's characteristic laugh. As the variation draws to a close, only the first violins hold their note until the other strings re-enter with a magical harmonic shift to slide into the most loved of the Variations.

**Variation IX** (Nimrod) is a tribute to Alfred Jaeger, who was Elgar’s musical editor and closest friend. In German his name means ‘hunter’ and, in the Old Testament, Nimrod is the patriarch described in Genesis as "a mighty hunter before the Lord". Jaeger was a German-born musician of frail health
and deep sensitivity who worked for the London music publishing house of Novello and who, more than anyone apart from Alice Elgar, sustained the composer through his frequent and severe periods of depression. The music of this variation encapsulates the depth of human feeling and the strength of their bond. It is not so much a character study as the record of a discussion which Elgar describes as “a long summer evening talk, when my friend discoursed eloquently on the slow movements of Beethoven and said that no one could approach Beethoven at his best in this field, a view with which I cordially concurred. It will be noticed that the opening bars are made to suggest the slow movement of the Eighth Sonata (Pathétique).” The shared love of Beethoven is enshrined in this profound Adagio, the most celebrated of all the Variations. Often programmed on its own, it has come to mean a great deal to many people, and is most notably used in funerals and memorial services. In England it is always played on Remembrance Sunday, a ceremony acknowledging the sacrifices of British servicemen and women in both World Wars and subsequent conflicts. In the United States, it has often been used for 9/11 tributes.

**Variation X (Dorabella – Intermezzo)** This variation refers to Dora Penny, a cheerful and music-loving woman whom Elgar was very close to. He took the nickname for her from Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*. The whimsical nature of this variation reflects their flirtatious relationship and the gently halting rhythm alludes to her slight stutter.

**Variation XI (G.R.S.)** The initials belong to George Robertson Sinclair, organist of Hereford Cathedral, but the music belongs to Dr. Sinclair’s dog. In Elgar’s words, “The first few bars were suggested by [the] great bulldog Dan (a well-known character) falling down the steep bank into the River Wye (bar 1); his paddling up stream to find a landing place (bars 2 and 3); and his rejoicing bark on landing (second half of bar 5). G.R.S. said ‘set that to music’. I did; here it is.”

**Variation XII (B.G.N.)** refers to Basil G. Nevinson, a fine cellist who regularly joined Elgar and Hew David Stewart-Powell (Variation II) in chamber music. The soaring cello melody is "a tribute to a very dear friend whose scientific and artistic attainments, and the whole-hearted way they were put at the disposal of his friends, particularly endeared him to the writer."

**Variation XIII * * * (Romanza)** The identity of the friend concealed behind the three asterisks remains the subject of speculation. Some think she was Lady Mary Lygon, a society lady who was on a voyage to Australia around the time the Variations were composed. Others identify her as Helen
Jessie Weaver, Elgar’s first love, to whom he was engaged as a young man. She later emigrated to New Zealand, where she died. The drums suggest the distant throb of the engines of a liner, over which the clarinet quotes a phrase from Mendelssohn’s *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. The subject’s identity may be a mystery but the music is suitably poetic and conveys a poignant sense of longing for someone far away.

**Variation XIV (Finale: E.D.U.)** The initials attached to this variation when run together sound out ‘Edoo’ the nickname Alice Elgar gave her husband. Thus the work ends with a self-portrait “bold and vigorous in general style”. Elgar wrote to his biographer, “this variation is mainly to show what ‘E.D.U.’, (a paraphrase of a fond name) intended to do. References made to the first variation (C.A.E.) and the ninth (Nimrod), two great influences on the life and art of the composer, are entirely fitting to the intention of the piece. The whole of the work is summed up in a triumphal, broad presentation of the theme in the major.”

Notes by Elizabeth Dalton for Verdi and Elgar.

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**ENCORE SOCIETY**

The Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra wishes to acknowledge the following members of its Encore Society. Each one of the following has made a tax-deductible donation to ensure that the SHSO is able to maintain its artistic and community vision. We thank you.

Jan and Frank Conroy
Alexandra Dowling
Dr. Penny Knowlden
R and D McAllery
Maureen McCutcheon
Moss Vale Community Pharmacy
Michelle and Michael Phillips
Cheryl Tucker
Vic Vilas

We also thank those music lovers who have donated anonymously.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Support from the following is gratefully acknowledged: Southern Highlands Concert Band, The Highlands Sinfonia, Robert Crowe, Flowers by Van Til, Artemis Wines, Destination Southern Highlands, Highlands FM, ABC Illawarra, 2ST, LOCALlure, Stiles Music Publications, Southern Highlands News, Audible Hearing, Wingecarribee Shire Council, the many businesses that displayed our flyers, and the volunteers who assisted with setting up the hall, front of house, and refreshments at the interval and the reception.

Concert grand piano lent by John and Liz Uliana.
Photographs by Christopher Donaldson.
Pianos tuned by David Ricketts.

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Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra

2019 concert series

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