Musica Viva Australia

AUSTRALIAN STRING QUARTET & KONSTANTIN SHAMRAY

Tuesday 8 March, 7:30pm – Adelaide Town Hall

Wesfarmers Arts

MUSICA VIVA & WESFARMERS ARTS / MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

Paul Kildea, Artistic Director

Musica Viva Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we meet, work, and live, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present – people who have sung their songs, danced their dances and told their stories on these lands for thousands of generations, and who continue to do so.

PROGRAM

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57 (1940) — 32 min

I Prelude: Lento
II Fugue: Adagio
III Scherzo: Allegretto
IV Intermezzo: Lento
V Finale: Allegretto

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Quartet No. 9 in C major, Op. 59
No. 3 'Razumovsky' (1808) — 33 min

I Andante con moto – Allegro vivace
II Andante con moto quasi allegretto
III Menuetto (Grazioso)
IV Allegro molto

Dale Barltrop	*violin*
Francesca Hiew	*violin*
Chris Cartlidge	*viola*
Michael Dahlenburg	*cello*
Konstantin Shamray	*piano*

This concert is presented in association with Adelaide Festival.

With special thanks to the Producers' Circle and the Amadeus Society for their support of the 2022 Concert Season, and to our Concert Champions Joan and Ivan Blanchard.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Australian String Quartet

Since 1985, the Australian String Quartet (ASQ) has delivered unforgettable string quartet performances for audiences around the world.

From its home base at the University of Adelaide, Elder Conservatorium of Music, the ASQ reaches out across Australia and the world to engage people with an outstanding program of performances, workshops, commissions and digital, recording and education projects.

The ASQ's distinct sound is enhanced by a matched set of 18th-century Guadagnini instruments, handcrafted by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini between c.1743 and 1784 in Turin and Piacenza, Italy. These precious instruments are on loan to the ASQ for their exclusive use through the generosity of UKARIA.

Dale Barltrop plays a 1784 Guadagnini Violin, Turin

Francesca Hiew plays a 1748-49 Guadagnini Violin, Piacenza

Chris Cartlidge plays a 1783 Guadagnini Viola, Turin

Michael Dahlenburg plays a c.1743 Guadagnini Violoncello, Piacenza 'Ngeringa'

© Rohan Thomson

Konstantin Shamray *piano*

Praised as an exhilarating performer with faultless technique and fearless command of the piano, Australian-based pianist Konstantin Shamray enjoys performing with the world's leading orchestras and concert presenters.

Born in Novosibirsk, Konstantin commenced his studies at the age of six with Natalia Knobloch. He went on to study in Moscow at the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music with Tatiana Zelikman and Vladimir Tropp, and the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany with Tibor Szász.

In 2008, Konstantin burst onto the concert scene when he won First Prize at the Sydney International Piano Competition. He is the first and only competitor to date to win both the First and People's Choice Prizes, in addition to six other prizes. In 2011 he won First Prize at the Bad Kissingen Piano Olympics in Germany; in 2013, following chamber recitals with Alban Gerhardt and Feng Ning, he was awarded the Kissingen Summer Festival's coveted Luitpold Prize for 'outstanding musical achievements'.

Since then, Konstantin has performed extensively throughout the world. In Australia, highlights have included engagements with the Sydney, Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras, as well as with the Adelaide Symphony, with whom he enjoys a special relationship. Beyond these shores, he has performed with the Russian National Philharmonic, the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, Moscow Virtuosi, Orchestre National de Lyon, Prague Philharmonia, Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra and the Calgary Philharmonic.

Chamber music plays a strong role in Konstantin's musical career and collaborations have included tours with the Australian String Quartet, the Australian Piano Quartet, Kristóf Baráti, Andreas Brantelid, Li-Wei Qin and Leonard Elschenbroich. He has enjoyed critical acclaim at the Ruhr Piano Festival and the Bochum Festival in Germany, the Mariinsky International Piano Festival and the White Nights Festival in St Petersburg, the Huntington Estate Music Festival and the Musica Viva Festival; and appears with the Adelaide Festival, the International Piano Series in Adelaide, the Melbourne Recital Centre and UKARIA Cultural Centre. Konstantin has also recorded albums on the Naxos, ABC Classic and Fonoforum labels.

Konstantin is a Lecturer in Piano at the University of Adelaide's Elder Conservatorium of Music.

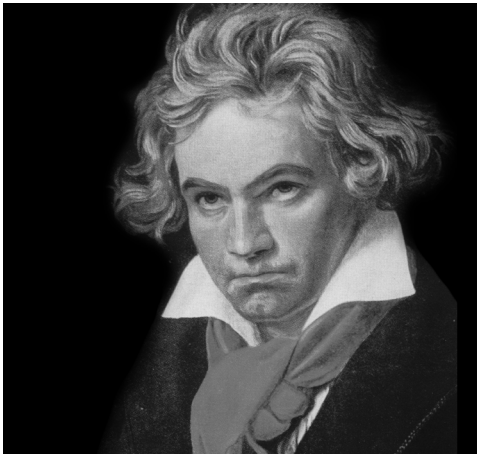
ABOUT THE MUSIC

After the crisis provoked by the official denunciation of his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* in 1936, **Shostakovich** turned his attention towards chamber music as a relatively safe vehicle for his musical thought. In 1938 he composed the first of his 15 string quartets, and in 1940 premiered his one and only quintet for piano and strings. The following year, it was awarded a Stalin Prize: a sure sign of Shostakovich's return to official favour, at least for the time being.

The Quintet is one of Shostakovich's most 'classical' works: which is not to say that it is without passionate expression, but that (as far as we can judge such obviously subjective matters) it lacks the autobiographical references and the touches of irony which can be identified in many of his other pieces. There is, too, a classical clarity about the textures which the composer achieves. The piano and the string quartet are treated as separate entities: the piano, for example, starts the whole work unaccompanied, as if the strings were not there, making their first entry a telling moment: and later the strings lead off the *Fugue* movement on their own, highlighting the piano's long-delayed entry. When the piano and the strings do play together, it is without doubling: if the strings are in full four-part harmony or counterpoint, the piano usually adds only one line (sometimes in octaves); or if the piano has fuller harmony, the strings are usually in octaves, or reduced to one or two instruments. The piano writing itself is kept unusually clear by the same concentration on extreme high and low registers that marks Shostakovich's orchestral writing. The use of the whole ensemble in full harmony with the middle register filled in, is reserved for a single passage, the climax of the *Intermezzo*.

The five-movement layout of the work is an uncommonly original and satisfying one. It owes nothing to the arch forms employed by Bartók in the 1920s and '30s; instead, it is based on a plan of two linked pairs of movements surrounding a central, pivotal *Scherzo*. The first paired movements, both in G minor, make up a prelude and fugue. The *Prelude* relaxes its initial intensity in a lightly scored middle section, and then redoubles it at the end of the movement. The *Fugue*, by contrast, is intense and concentrated throughout. After these two slow movements, an effective contrast is provided by the brittle high spirits and bright B major tonality of the rondo-form *Scherzo*. The last paired movements are an *Intermezzo* in D minor and a G major *Finale*. The *Intermezzo* is an outpouring of sustained melodic writing. The *Finale* is an engagingly relaxed affair, based on a couple of catchy but never quite predictable tunes; though a note of greater seriousness is struck at the end of the development section, in a string passage which quotes a figure from the climax of the *Fugue*. One of the most attractive features of this extremely attractive movement is its manner of arrival and departure: sidling in in a gradual *accelerando* at the beginning; disappearing into thin air at the end.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE



At the outset of his engagement with the 'Razumovsky' quartets, **Beethoven** enthusiastically wrote to his publisher Breitkopf: 'I am thinking of devoting myself almost entirely to this type of composition'. But by the end of 1806 he had clearly changed his mind: he was working on the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Fourth Symphony and the Violin Concerto. It would be too much to say that he had lost interest in the quartet medium; still, this C major quartet, the last of the three, does appear to have been written a great deal more quickly than the others, and is probably the least substantial of them (though 'least substantial', in this context, is a very relative term). Certainly the emotional world, and indeed the musical structure, of the quartet is more conventional than that of its fellows; perhaps that is why it was the only one to enjoy a certain measure of immediate success with the public.

The mysterious slow introduction is rather reminiscent of the start of Mozart's famous 'Dissonance' Quartet (also in C major). The first violin and the cello slowly fan out to the top and bottom of their respective registers, scrupulously avoiding any trace of C major, and when a cadenza-like flourish for the first violin gets the *Allegro* under way, it still takes a few bars for the main key to be fully established. The development section begins with the initial violin figure wandering through further keys and ends with a florid variation of it; the rest of the movement proceeds in a more or less orthodox way, but has a surprise ending in store.

Unlike its predecessors in Op. 59, the C major quartet does not quote an actual Russian theme [in homage to Count Razumovsky, who commissioned them] but the slow movement is clearly intended as a piece in the Slavic manner. Or at least, that is the character of the first theme, which pervades the whole movement; the second theme, in C major, is altogether more at home in Beethoven's Vienna. The *Andante* is a huge, sombre structure, lying somewhere between ternary and sonata form, but not satisfactorily accounted for by either. Since the finale is going to be a brilliant *Allegro molto*, there is no particular point in having a rapid scherzo as the third movement. Instead, somewhat unusually for his middle period, Beethoven writes a minuet which seems to be an invocation of a graceful bygone era, though it has a trio section which is somewhat more robust. After the minuet has returned, a coda leads to the finale which is a high-powered combination of fugue and sonata; not one of Beethoven's most searching finales, perhaps, but certainly one of the most brilliant.

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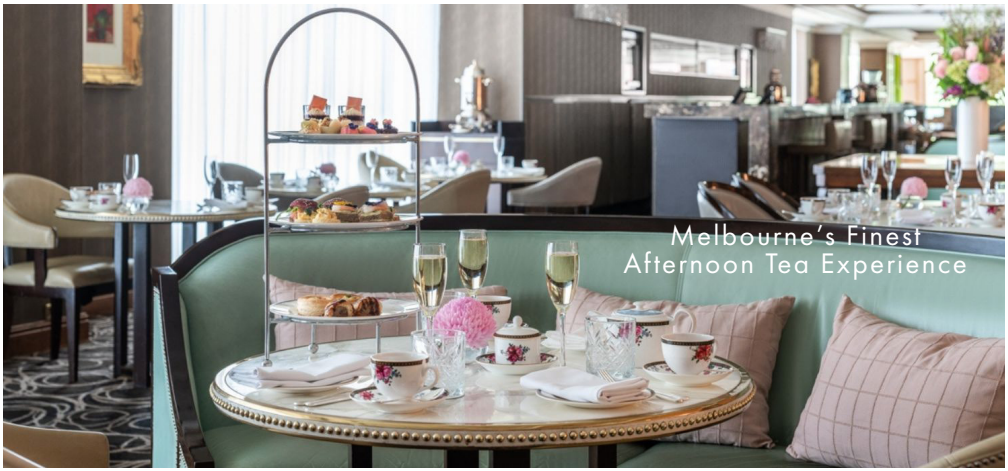

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In loving memory of Jennifer Bates; Julian Burnside AO QC & Kate Durham; The Barry Jones Birthday Commission; Michael & Fréderique Katz, in honour of Cecily Katz; Graham Lovelock & Steve Singer; DR & KM Magarey; Vicki Olsson; Tribe family in honour of Doug Tribe's 75th birthday

Musica Viva Australia also thanks the **Silo Collective**, *the* **Ken Tribe Fund for Australian Composition**, *and the* **Hildegard Project** *for their support in bringing new Australian works to life.*

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We thank all our audience members who donated the value of their cancelled tickets towards the **Artists' Fund**.

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