



Bernadette Harvey, Harry Bennetts & Miles Mullin-Chivers



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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

Wednesday, 1 December 2021, 11am

Concert Hall - The Concourse, Chatswood

Edvard GRIEG (1843-1907)

Lento doloroso from Violin Sonata No. 2 in G major, Op. 13 (1867) 9 min

Donald HOLLIER (b 1934)

A Little Sea Music (2021)

12 min

World Premiere performance

Commissioned with the support of Create NSW

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in D major, Op. 70 No. 1 'Ghost' (1809)

30 min

I *Allegro vivace e con brio*

II *Largo assai ed espressivo*

III *Presto*

Bernadette Harvey *piano*

Harry Bennetts *violin*

Miles Mullin-Chivers *cello*



Meet the Artists

Bernadette Harvey is Senior Lecturer in Piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. An acclaimed international performer and teacher, she was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2000 by then Prime Minister, John Howard, for her contribution to Australian music. Dr Harvey has won many accolades since her first medal in a Sydney Eisteddfod at the age of two and a half, including the ABC Young Performer of the Year in 1987.

As guest artist for the past 11 years at the Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival in Arizona, she has worked with such artists as Ani Kavafian, Joseph Lin, Antonio Lysy, Paul Coletti, Alan Vogel and David Schifrin. She presented the world premiere there of a piano quintet by Pierre Jalbert, and performed with the Tokyo Quartet in Carl Vine's Piano Quintet, *Fantasia* (premiered in 2013 with the Shanghai Quartet in Tucson and again in Australia for the Melbourne Festival in October 2013). She and the Shanghai Quartet presented the Australian premiere of the Bright Sheng Piano Quintet, *Dance Capriccio*. More recently she has released a CD, *Alchemy*, with the acclaimed Jupiter Quartet, recorded in 2019 for the Canadian label *Marquis*, which was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Bernadette Harvey performs regularly with Musica Viva Australia and with the ABC. She has had several new piano works written for her, including *Rubia* by Melbourne composer Tim Dargaville which she premiered in Melbourne with the Academy of Melbourne Orchestra, and by Ross Edwards, and Donald Hollier. She recently gave the Australian premiere of *Night*, the first piano concerto by her American colleague Kevin Puts, performed with the Llewellyn Sinfonia, conducted by her sister Rowan Harvey-Martin in Canberra.

Sydney-born violinist **Harry Bennetts** began lessons in the Suzuki method at the age of four; and spent his final years of study with Dr. Robin Wilson at the Australian National Academy of Music, and then with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's concertmaster Noah Bendix-Balgley at the Karajan Academy in Berlin. He has appeared as soloist with the Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmanian and Canberra Symphony Orchestras and has performed in recital at Ukaria (SA), Melbourne Recital Centre, and Sydney Opera House Utzon Room, as well as a number of regional centres. His love of chamber music has taken him across the world performing in the Berlin Philharmonie Kammermusiksaal, Cologne Philharmonie, London Southbank Centre, Prussia Cove and back home at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music in Townsville as well as regular performances in Sydney and Melbourne. Harry is Associate Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Miles Mullin-Chivers began playing the cello when he was four years old. At age 19, Miles completed his Bachelor of Music Performance with First-Class Honours at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, having studied under Julian Smiles. He has also been taught by Fred Sherry, Tamás Varga, Timothy Walden, Hannu Kiiski, Howard Penny, Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt, Phillippe Muller and Kasia Hans, with whom he continues to study. Miles performed as a soloist at the Canberra International Music Festival in 2018 and 2019 and won the 2019 Gisborne International Music Competition. Miles has performed as a guest musician with the Sydney Symphony and Opera Australia orchestras.

About the Music

Grieg's Second Violin Sonata, written at age 23 when he was on his honeymoon, was one of the first identifiably 'Norwegian' works of his career.

Pointedly, it was dedicated to Norwegian composer and violinist Johan Svendsen. Far from the 'sunny' disposition of its predecessor, it was described by composer Gerhard Schjelderup as 'the gift to the world of a man who has also shivered in the cold mists of night'. Grieg himself said it was explicitly a Norwegian piece, and that 'a Norway without tragedy is not a complete Norway.'

For Grieg's Danish composition teacher Niels Gade, it was 'too Norwegian', and he demanded that his student's next sonata should be less so. 'On the contrary, Professor,' Grieg answered, 'the next one will be even more so.' Soon they would part ways; in Grieg's case, toward international stardom.

This sonata was premiered by Gudbrand Böhn (who'd also played Grieg's First Sonata), with the composer at the piano, in the autumn of 1867. This morning's concert will feature the first of the sonata's three movements; its longest, and perhaps most unruly, as Grieg by his own admission struggled to confine his inspiration within the restrictions of traditional structure. In it, the spirit of peasant folk dances is never far away.

ADAPTED FROM A PROGRAM NOTE
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Donald Hollier writes:

Late in 2019 and shortly after the appointment of Paul Kildea as Artistic Director of Musica Viva Australia, I was approached with the suggestion to write a trio.

I was somewhat hesitant at first.

Although I had written a great deal of chamber music during my early years, the medium I found generally rather limiting. This was particularly apparent after I began to receive invitations and commissions to write large-scale works for orchestras and operas. Although I have continued to write songs and other smaller works for voices, instrumental chamber music was more or less abandoned. Consequently, I had written nothing for small instrumental groups for at least 40 years.

After much thought, I decided it might do me some good to concentrate my musical ideas into this very concise form.

When I think of chamber music, it is to recall the great period of its composition in the Classical period of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. These masters produced works of incredible structure and precision. They can never be imitated.

Chamber music in the following centuries represented the broadening of the medium with Romantic, Impressionistic and Expressionistic colours. The upshot of all this thought determined me to attempt to reduce the scale of my work and accept the offer.

As I was in the concluding stages of two operas, I put the commission aside for a number of months. I completed operas 15 and 16 during the holiday period of 2020-2021. The year 2020 was the first year of COVID-19 lockdowns which for a composer meant long days alone with little to do but compose, particularly as I am now in my 86th year with few social activities.

I began work on the trio in January 2021. Paul Kildea is a world authority on the

music of Benjamin Britten and I thought it might be a nice gesture to write a theme and variations on a theme of Britten, as a tribute to his academic standing.

But which theme? Britten has written so much famous music with many possible themes. I had already in my youth written a theme and variations on the famous dodecaphonic theme in *Cantata Academica* written for the 500th Anniversary of Basel University. This is a brilliant work with an abundance of harmonic and contrapuntal devices.

I considered this theme again but rejected the idea. Eventually I decided on the beautiful opening of Act 1, Scene 1 of Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*. It flowed not only as a theme but as a beautiful 'Aubade' in its own right.

After transcribing this theme, I realised that the theme I had chosen was really unsuitable for 'normal' variation form. The melody, while marvellously serene, is without any rhythmic or harmonic variation. What should I do? Begin again?

The idea sprang upon me that I should use the theme to bounce onto other poems about the sea. I was fortunate to have one of Australia's finest pianists, Bernadette Harvey, as the keyboard lead. In early discussions, she had expressed a wish for some 'water music'. I certainly could not use the title 'Water Music' after Handel had written such famous music under that name. I therefore decided to call the work *Small Sea Songs*. They turned into a work like Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words' except that mine should really be 'Songs with Words', but the actual words of each poem *not* used. The words, however, were the impetus for each song.

There were of course now multiple choices available for sea poems. I decided on four of my favourites:

1. Break, break, break
On thy cold grey stones, O sea
(Alfred, Lord Tennyson)
2. Dead seamen, from *Beach Burial*
(Kenneth Slessor)
3. Many waters cannot quench love.
Neither can floods drown it.
(Song of Songs Ch. 8 Verse 7)
4. I must go down to the sea again,
To the vagrant gypsy life
(from *Sea Fever* – John Masefield)

Somehow from that decision, the trio flourished boldly and within two or three weeks, the work was completed with a fair copy made.

© DONALD HOLLIER

Composed in the same year as the 'Emperor' piano concerto, 1809, **Beethoven's** D major Piano Trio is quite unlike it in character, the first two movements of the Trio displaying unrest and anxiety. The first movement — *Allegro vivace e con brio* — opens with a theme played in octaves by the three instruments, and is quickly followed by a lyrical theme on the cello. This is the material from which the movement is mainly constructed. The development is lengthy, and contrasts are achieved by extreme changes of texture. A driving passage in unison or octaves gives way to contrapuntal imitations: a brief lyric interlude is interrupted by a vehement outburst of sound.

The uneasy atmosphere manifest throughout the first movement continues to be felt in the splendid slow movement, which begins with the violin and cello in octaves. An eerie figure, repeated without cessation throughout the



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movement is, according to musicologist Gustav Nottebohm, to be found in Beethoven's sketches for the opening scene of *Macbeth*, a project which came to nothing. The weird effect is heightened in the Trio by the introduction of light tremolo chords in the piano. It is the desolation of this music which suggested the nickname of 'Geister' (Ghost) for the work. Several despairing climaxes are developed and die away in long descending scales. Like the opening movement, the slow movement is constructed from a minimum of material, but its overall effect is awe-inspiring.

The finale, *Presto*, is in sonata form, and does not attain the heights of inspiration reached by the preceding movements. It is neither so concentrated nor so intense. Despite this however, throughout it there is the same compulsion to make much of little, the development principle taking possession of the entire movement. It is this characteristic which makes the D major Trio one of Beethoven's most passionate utterances in the sphere of his chamber music.

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