

MUSICA VIVA AUSTRALIA



Darlington Quartet & Graeme Gilling





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Program

Sunday, 3 October 2021, 6.30pm
Perth Concert Hall

Semra Lee-Smith *violin*
Zak Rowntree *violin*
Sally Boud *viola*
Jon Tooby *cello*
Graeme Gilling *piano*

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

String Quartet no. 14 in G major, K387 (1782) 30 min

- I *Allegro vivace assai*
- II *Menuetto*
- III *Andante cantabile*
- IV *Molto allegro*

Emma JAYAKUMAR (b. 1978)

Lento sognando from *Bell Birds* (2020) 5 min

Amy BEACH (1867-1944)

Piano Quintet, Op. 67 (1907) 27 min

- I *Adagio – Allegro moderato*
- II *Adagio espressivo*
- III *Allegro agitato – Adagio come prima - Presto*

With special thanks to our Ensemble Patron the Berg Family Foundation
for its support of this concert. And to our Concert Champions Valerie and Michael Wishart.

About the Music

The six string quartets which **Mozart** dedicated to Haydn are a testament to a profound musical and personal relationship. In 1781 the twenty-six-year-old Mozart arrived in Vienna keen to make his mark in one of Europe's great musical centres. He quickly made the acquaintance of Haydn, and the two composers became friends, often meeting to play string quartets together. At the same time, Mozart discovered Haydn's newly published op. 33 quartets. Mozart had already composed quartets before moving to Vienna, but the invention and innovation of these works inspired him to see the genre in a new way. Mozart's love and respect for the older composer can be seen in his dedication, in which he entrusts these 'six children of mine' to a 'great Man and dearest Friend.' Haydn's response after hearing the quartets for the first time was equally generous. He famously wrote to Mozart's father, Leopold: 'Before God and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name.'

The G major Quartet, K387, is the first in the set. Like all these quartets, it demonstrates the richness and detail of what Mozart described as a 'long and laborious endeavour.' But despite the seriousness of his ambition, this is a work full of joy and playfulness, as well as Mozart's deeply human balance of pathos and consolation.

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*From composer **Emma Jayakumar**:*

The Bell Birds Suite for string quartet is inspired by Henry Kendall's poem Bell Birds, first published in 1869, in a book of collected poems entitled Leaves from Australian Forests, and was commissioned by the ABC as part of the Fresh Start Fund initiative in 2020 for recording by members of the WA based Darlington Quartet. Each movement of the work is loosely programmed around the five stanzas of Kendall's poem, and although the work itself contains compositional elements that mimic Australian birdsong (Bell Birds, Golden Whip Birds, Djidi Djidi or Willy Wagtails, Currawongs and Bar shouldered doves) the intention of the piece is that this is the poet's experience of the bush, an emotional and profound expression of their love for the Australian bush and its animals, and as such the focus of the piece should be the expression of the rich melodies that underpin the poet's feelings portrayed in the text.

I had wanted to write a string quartet for some time, and after experimenting with some extended string techniques and bird calls in my opera Beyond the Wall, I was interested in particularly trying to write something that evoked the birds of Australia. I grew up Lesmurdie and have just recently moved back to the Hills after living in outer suburbia, and in big cities Sydney and London for spells of time. A piece dedicated to Australian flora and fauna appealed to me as I have always been struck at how profoundly homesick I became for these things (the sounds of the birds, the trees, the smells of the earth, the gums, the flowers) when I lived away. Australian animals are so raucous and audacious.

The poem *Bell Birds* I discovered quite by accident, and loved it instantly as it reminded me of the kind of poem my Grandmother would have known and loved. Grandma lived in Blaxland in the Blue Mountains for many years, and I have very fond memories of visiting both my grandparents in Blaxland —both as a child and when I was studying at the Sydney Conservatorium —and being immersed in the mountains scenery. They would often drive me around the mountains on my visits, up to Katoomba and the Three Sisters. They also took me on a special trip past Bell, where we got out of the car so I could hear the Bell Birds. I'd like to think of this piece as my expression of love for Australia, and how lucky I feel to be a part of this place.

Celebrated during her lifetime, the music of **Amy Beach** fell into neglect after her death. In recent years performers and audiences have rediscovered this remarkable composer who was a trailblazer in so many ways. As well as being the first female composer to have a symphony performed by a major orchestra, she was one of the first American composers to achieve recognition in Europe.

Born in a small town in New Hampshire, Amy demonstrated extraordinary musical talent as a child and made her debut as a concert pianist at the age of sixteen. As a composer, she was largely self-taught, apart from a year of instruction in harmony when she was only fourteen years old.

She married a surgeon in 1885. Dr Beach encouraged her composing and indeed spent a fortune promoting her music.

But he disapproved of his wife earning a living from performing as not befitting their social status. She was to limit public performances to once a year, with proceeds donated to charity - a condition she kept until after her husband's death.

One of these appearances was a performance of the Piano Quintet by Johannes Brahms with the Kneisel Quartet in 1900. Five years later, she began writing her own beautifully crafted piano quintet. The spirit of the earlier work hovers over this piece; even the main melody of the first movement is a transformed version of a theme from the finale of Brahms' quintet. But Beach's quintet has its own compelling and unique voice. Often dramatic - even explosive - this is music that simmers with intensity even at its most subdued.

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Meet the Artists

Semra Lee-Smith was born in Malaysia and commenced violin lessons aged three with her mother, Hooi Tong Lee. She gained her Bachelor of Music degree at the WA Conservatorium of Music and a Postgraduate Diploma from the Sweelinck Conservatorium, studying with Istvan Parkanyi. She undertook string quartet studies with the Halcyon String Quartet at the Australian National Academy of Music and at the Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada.

In 2000, Semra won a position with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. She started in a tutti position with WASO in 2003 and was appointed Associate Principal 2nd Violin in 2004. In 2009, she won the Assistant Concertmaster job and has been the Acting Associate Concertmaster since 2014. Semra appeared as Guest Concertmaster with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in concerts for the 2019 MONA FOMA. She is sought after as a chamber musician and is a founding member of the Darlington Piano Trio and Darlington String Quartet, core ensembles for Darlington Concerts, created in 2003. Collectively, they form the Darlington Ensemble and are Ensemble in Residence at UWA's Conservatorium of Music. The trio commissioned James Ledger's *Inscriptions* and recorded Roger Smalley's piano trio for UWA's centenary celebrations 'Luminosity' CD. Other notable chamber music partners have included Brett Dean, Ashley Smith and Myron Romanul. She has featured regularly in the Soft Soft Loud chamber music series and as the leader of the new music ensemble, Etica. In 2020, she premiered Simon Kruit's *Disconnects* with the Darlington String Quartet and recorded Emma Jayakumar's Bell Birds Suite, a new commission from the ABC. In addition, she is a lecturer in violin at UWA and is also an AMEB examiner.

Zak Rowntree was born in England and started the violin at the age of 9. He won a scholarship to study at the prestigious Chethams School of Music with Nannie Jamieson a year later. At the age of 13 he won the Open section at the Cheltenham International Competitive Festival of Music. He studied music at the University of York where he led the University Orchestra on a tour of Greece, performed concertos under Christopher Adey and formed a piano trio with his future wife Lisa during the Pablo Casals chamber music course.

He gave a strong commitment to the Contemporary Music Ensemble and gave the world premieres of several works. He then accepted a place at the Royal Northern College of Music on the Advanced Performance post-graduate course, where his teacher was Maciej Rakowski. During his time in Manchester, Zak developed a love of chamber music whilst also gaining valuable orchestral experience with the BBC Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and English Northern Philharmonia.

Since moving to Perth in 1997, Zak has enjoyed being a member of WASO. He was appointed Associate Principal 2nd Violin in 2009, and Principal 2nd Violin in 2014. In addition to his orchestral work he is a member of the Darlington String Quartet, and enjoys teaching several students at home.

Sally Boud was born in Perth and studied viola performance with Berian Evans at UWA. After graduating with first class honours she continued her studies overseas, most formatively with Gertrude Rossbacher in Berlin. Upon her return to Australia in 1999 Sally became a founding member of the Tankstream Quartet. The Quartet toured worldwide and was a prizewinner in many international competitions, including first prize at the Osaka International Competition in 2002, second prize at the Premio Paolo

Borciani in 2005 and first prize at the Cremona International Competition, also in 2005. From 2004 to 2005 the quartet was based in Berlin and studied with the Alban Berg Quartet in Cologne. In 2006 the quartet was invited to take on the name and role of the Australian String Quartet, performing nationally and internationally and premiering works by many Australian composers, including Brett Dean, James Ledger and Elena Kats-Chernin. Sally left the quartet at the end of their 2011 season to pursue a busy and varied freelance career. In addition to her chamber music activities Sally has played with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and nearly every state Symphony Orchestra, and as Guest Associate Principal with the New Zealand Symphony. She has appeared as a soloist with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, the Fremantle Chamber Orchestra, the Perth Symphony and Ensemble 1685.

Jonathan Tooby is currently Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of Darwin Symphony Orchestra, a position he has held since 2018. He has conducted the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Australian Youth Orchestra, WA Youth Orchestras, WA Ballet and WA Opera. Jonathan is particularly interested in partnering with other artists and performance groups to create new works and performance experiences. In 2021 Jonathan will conduct Darwin Symphony Orchestra at Barunga Festival, one of the Northern Territory's most iconic indigenous cultural events featuring art, music and sport. DSO will perform with numerous different Indigenous singers from across the Territory. In September he will direct *Olive Pink*, a new Opera by Anne Boyd, which will premiere in Alice Springs at the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens as part of the Desert Song Festival. This significant event will combine a variety of artistic elements and will feature local artists including Riley Lee

performing the Shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute), and the Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir.

2021 will also see Jonathan conduct many more concerts with Darwin Symphony Orchestra, including 'DISCO' in the Botanic Gardens, 'Wavelengths' and 'Bunggul' in the Darwin Festival.

In addition to his busy conducting schedule, Jonathan is in demand as a cellist and continues to perform and tour with numerous groups, most notably the Darlington Ensemble, I Cellisti, Arafura Collective, Whistling Kite, and more recently the Rococonuts.

Graeme Gilling is an accomplished solo pianist, Assistant Professor and Chair of Keyboard Studies at the UWA Conservatorium of Music. Originally from New Zealand, Assistant Professor Gilling studied composition at the University of Canterbury before settling in Perth in 1983. Here, he completed his master's degree in collaborative piano and began a highly successful career as a soloist, recitalist and teacher.

Since 1986, Assistant Professor Gilling has been a pianist with the WA Symphony Orchestra (WASO), performing in the WASO Chamber Music Series and with the WASO New Music Ensemble. In this role, he maintains an association with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, having performed with them in several orchestral seasons, as well as in their Chamber Series in March 2007.

Assistant Professor Gilling has worked with the prestigious WA Opera, WA Arts Orchestra, and WA Ballet, as well as beside many distinguished international artists such as Gerald English, Raphael Wallfisch, Bonita Boyd, Michel Debost, Jane Rutter, Gordon Hunt, Sara MacLiver and Caitlin Hulcup. He also toured Asia with the University Collegium Musicum choir in 1991.



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