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**MORNING
MASTERS**
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Christopher Moore & Caroline Almonte



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Program

Tuesday, 16 November 2021, 11am

Elisabeth Murdoch Hall
Melbourne Recital Centre

Rebecca CLARKE (1886-1979)

Morpheus (1917)

8 min

Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Viola Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 120 No. 2 (1894)

20 min

I *Allegro amabile*

II *Allegro appassionato*

III *Andante con moto - Allegro*

Alice HUMPHRIES (b. 1986)

Joy Gleams (2021)

5 min

World Premiere performance

Commissioned for Musica Viva Australia by Geoff Stearn

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Lachrymae: Reflections on a song of Dowland, Op. 48 (1950)

14 min

Christopher Moore *viola*
Caroline Almonte *piano*

Meet the Artists



Christopher Moore

Principal Viola of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Christopher Moore spent nine years travelling the globe as Principal Viola of Australian Chamber Orchestra. As romantic as that sounds, he missed his old chums Mahler, Schoenberg and Adès, and so has returned to these and other old friends at the MSO.

Not surprisingly, Christopher's wife and two daughters are pleased that Papa has hung up his rock star garb and come home to roost like their pet chickens. If you're lucky, he may hand you a bona fide free-range egg; if you're unlucky, you'll be stuck hearing about how much he loves brewing beer and riding his bike into town from the suburbs, in an attempt to prevent his waistline expanding to the size of his chickens' coop.

Christopher plays on a 1937 Arthur E. Smith viola affectionately known as 'Martha'.



Caroline Almonte

Australian pianist, producer and presenter Caroline Almonte has a reputation as a gifted, versatile and sensitive artist. She studied with Stephen McIntyre at the Victorian College of the Arts and with Oxana Yablonskaya at the Juilliard School, New York, and has won numerous awards, including the ABC Young Performer's Award and the Italian international chamber music competition Trio di Trieste.

Her many musical collaborators include members of the Australia Ensemble, the Australian String Quartet, the Escher and Flinders String Quartets, Yvonne Kenny, Ian Munro, Pieter Wispelwey, Daniel Hope, Miki Tsunoda (as Duo Sol), and the Sutherland Trio, which she co-founded in 2011. Her recording career for ABC Classics includes Peggy Glanville-Hicks' Etruscan Concerto with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, a disc of English songs with Yvonne Kenny (The Salley Gardens), and the Duo Sol album Infinite Heartbeat.

Caroline has recently returned from residencies at universities in New Zealand and China, including performances with the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra. She teaches piano and chamber music at the University of Melbourne.

About the Music

The self-styled 'viola player and composer' **Rebecca Clarke** spent periods of the First World War in the United States or on tour with her long-time chamber music partner, the cellist May Mukle. Clarke's father was from the United States and her mother was German—Mr Clarke had come to London to set up the first Kodak factory in the United Kingdom. In her memoir, Rebecca Clarke writes movingly of her turbulent relationship with a physically abusive father. He was, however, a lover of music and encouraged all four of his children to learn musical instruments. His daughter took up the violin and when she turned sixteen, Clarke enrolled at the Royal Academy of Music as her finishing school, as it were. She had also begun to compose, and in 1907 her short *Danse bizarre* for two violins and piano won her a scholarship to study with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music: she was the great teacher's first female composition student. However, after two years she was forced to leave. Clarke's stormy relationship with her father had reached breaking point because of his affairs with young women who stayed in the family home. Her father cut her off. Clarke left home and was compelled to find a way of supporting herself at a time when young women were only just beginning to break through into the professional classical music scene in London. Stanford's advice that she should take up the viola proved pivotal, and in 1912 Clarke became only the sixth female member of Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra. She became one of the most sought-after viola players of her generation, especially in chamber music.

Rebecca Clarke composed a number of short 'salon' pieces for herself and May

Mukle to play, including three lullabies (1909 and 1917 for viola, 1918 for violin), *Grotesque* for viola (1917), *Epilogue* for cello (1918) and the more extended, impressionistic *Morpheus* for viola (1918) to be performed in this morning's recital.

Morpheus was first performed in a recital at Carnegie Hall in New York in 1918 and drew immediate acclaim from critics. As female composers were seldom performed or commissioned at this time, and were generally regarded with great contempt and suspicion, the manuscript of this piece was signed with the pseudonym 'Anthony Trent'. The piece is almost impressionistic in style – Clarke was greatly influenced by the music of Claude Debussy – with its shimmering harmonies and wistful mood perfectly evoking Morpheus, the Greek God of dreams.

ADAPTED FROM A PROGRAM NOTE
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The sonatas for clarinet or viola were written when **Brahms** was experiencing simultaneously the highs and lows of creative life. On the one hand he was in the final years of his life, a period when legend has it that he spent most of his time contemplating the prospect of death. The creative results of this preoccupation are works such as the *Four Serious Songs* and the *Chorale Preludes*. Yet on the other hand, the sonatas were written when Brahms was at the height of his powers and living in his summer retreat at Bad Ischl, a congenial location which always seemed to bring out the best in him. Perhaps these contradictory states of mind are reflected in the two works, with the former in the minor key being

darker and more impassioned, and the latter in the major being on the whole a more optimistic work. This latter sonata in E-flat major Op. 120 No. 2 begins *Allegro amabile* and maintains that mood throughout the first movement. In contrast, the second movement is an audacious scherzo marked *Allegro appassionato* with an heroic main theme, a noble melody in the trio, and a final section of almost regal splendour. The work has only three movements, meaning that, oddly, this scherzo forms both the physical and emotional core of the work. The third and last movement is a lyrical *Andante con moto* with five variations, a typical device in Brahms' chamber works.

© MARTIN BUZACOTT

Alice Humphries is a highly versatile composer working across and in-between the contemporary classical, jazz and experimental worlds. With a background in jazz and improvised music before moving into the composition world, Alice's interests and influences are eclectic and widespread and her work operates across genre boundaries. Alice's creative output includes electro-acoustic, chamber and orchestral music, as well as music for dance, documentary and film, and has been described as 'bursting with life and fun, as well as great, great beauty' and 'deeply thought-provoking...offering both moments of incredible intensity and sublime serenity.' Her music has been performed across Australia and internationally by artists including the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, The University of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Syzygy Ensemble, Blair Harris and Caroline Almonte, and the Letter String Quartet. Also in demand as an arranger and orchestrator, Alice has collaborated with some of Australia's

major orchestras and contemporary music artists including Josh Pyke, Kate Miller-Heidke, Katie Noonan, Meow Meow and Missy Higgins.

The composer writes:

Taking loose inspiration from Hildegard von Bingen's *Ave Generosa*, this duet for viola and piano inhabits a similar modal language to that of the Medieval Benedictine abbess. *Joy Gleams* filters that language through a contemporary lens, revelling in the interplay between the viola and piano.

© ALICE HUMPRIES

Benjamin Britten wrote *Lachrymae* for William Primrose, as a reward for the violist agreeing to come to the third Aldeburgh Festival in June 1950. Primrose, at that time the world's leading violist, had originally studied the violin until Ysaÿe encouraged him to take up the viola instead. He found great success on the instrument, playing in the NBC symphony Orchestra under Arturo Toscanini and touring Europe and America as a soloist from the 1930s onwards. He commissioned a number of works, including concertos from Bartók, Milhaud and Rubbra. Primrose and Britten had met in 1949 when the composer and Peter Pears were on their debut recital tour of the United States.

As a performer, Britten is primarily known as a pianist, but he was an accomplished violist as well (like his teacher Frank Bridge). While he may not have pursued playing the instrument much in later years, his knowledge of and affection for the instrument is reflected in his viola writing. Like all his solo chamber works, *Lachrymae* is a great virtuosic challenge for the violist as well as being a dialogue



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and knowing exchange of ideas between the composer, the performer and, in this work, the source material of John Dowland.

Dowland wrote *Lachrimae*, his collection of pieces for viol consort and lute, in 1603-4, using as source material his own songs for voice and lute or lute only. Britten uses the first phrase of the song 'If my complaints could passions move' (which Dowland called *Captaine Digorie Piper in his Galiard* in the *Lachrimae*) as his base material, and not

only the melodic material but also the harmonic language. The haunting work is not so much a set of variations as a series of twelve contrasting reflections on Dowland's theme, which is only heard in its entirety in the final section. *Lachrymae* shares the same world of veiled, fantastic and nocturnal images as its companion work the *Nocturnal* after John Dowland for guitar, written by Britten for Julian Bream in 1963.

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