

# Winter Dreams

## ***Message from the Musical Director***

Welcome to Mosman Orchestra's third concert program for 2010.

We are delighted to welcome back Mark Brown as guest conductor for these concerts. Mark is a highly respected figure in the Sydney music scene with enormous experience as a conductor, musician and educator: bringing these skills to the orchestra has paid off handsomely with some very exciting music making during rehearsals. We hope you enjoy our performances just as much!



We will be enjoying another guest conductor later in the year. Our children's' concert in late October will be directed by our principal clarinettist, Danika Allars. Danika currently directs the Inner West Concert Band and is finishing her studies in music education at the Sydney Conservatorium. For those with young children, or the young at heart, this will be a performance to be at!

Today's program, *Winter Dreams*, is a tour-de-force for the orchestra. Verdi's overture to the opera, *Nabucco* is a favourite in the concert repertoire. The opening brass chorale, plaintive wind solos quoting the Chorus of Hebrew Slaves and energetic finale serve to set the stage for what we hope will be a memorable performance.

Today's soloist, Bob Chen, has been a valued member of the orchestra for many years. His good natured humour is perfectly suited to Weber's *Bassoon Concerto* which, like so many solo works for low instruments contains not only virtuosic writing but also a degree of cheer that works for the more established solo instruments often lack. This concerto is really *fun*!

Tchaikovsky's first symphony is a work I have wanted to perform for a long time. I hope to see more of his symphonies in the years to come at Mosman. I only hope the chill his painting of winter scenes creates doesn't make you too cold during the second half of the concert! Please make sure you avail yourself of a warm drink in interval and stay after the concert to mingle with the orchestra, and enjoy a glass of champagne.

## *Notes on the Program*

### ***Overture to Nabucco - Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)***

*Nabucco* is an opera in four acts, depicting love and conflict among the ancient Hebrews and the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. First performed at La Scala in Milan on March 9, 1842, its success placed Verdi in the company of operatic masters Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti. While it is considered the best of his very early works, the opera is seldom performed today, having been over-shadowed by his later masterpieces such as *Aida*, *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*.

After a long apprenticeship in the provincial towns of Italy, the young Giuseppe Verdi finally reached Milan, experienced success in the production of his first opera, *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*, at La Scala in 1839, and with that success a commission for three more operas. Tragedy struck: added to the loss of his two children was the illness and death of his beloved wife, Margherita, in July 1840. Despite this, La Scala demanded that the commission of a comic opera for the fall season be fulfilled. The ensuing work was not a success and was withdrawn after only one performance and Verdi vowed to never compose music again. However, he was persuaded by La Scala's impresario to take home a libretto for *Nabucodonosor* (in English, Nebuchadnezzar).

Despite his vow, Verdi felt compelled to set to music the dramatic conflict of the Hebrew slaves and their Babylonian captors. The love story is taken from the Old Testament and is set in Jerusalem and Babylon in 586 B.C. Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar) is the King of Babylon, and his Assyrians are at war with the Hebrews, Levites, and Hebrew Virgins. The King's daughter, Fenena, is currently prisoner in Jerusalem, and is in love with Ismael, the son of Zedekia, King of Jerusalem. Love triangles, intrigue, near executions, and disguises ensue. The grand story ends in repentance for most of the main characters.

One of Verdi's great operatic innovations is the importance he gives the chorus, and one of his most famous choruses appears in *Nabucco* in Scene 2 of Act 3: "*Va, pensiero, sull' ali decorate*" where the Hebrew slaves bemoan "*Go my thought on golden wings; go, alight on the slopes, the hills, where, soft and warm, the sweet breezes of our native land are fragrant!*"

This overture, written at the last moment, is a dramatic assortment of themes taken from the opera, primarily choruses (including "*Va, pensiero*") and themes trumpeting military exercises to come. Verdi's stroke of genius, however, is the opening chorale on the lower brass, vividly symbolizing the steadfastness of the Hebrews in the face of Babylonian persecution.

## ***Bassoon Concerto in F major, Op.75 - Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)***

- 1. *Allegro ma non troppo***
- 2. *Adagio***
- 3. *Rondo – Allegro***

Weber was born in Lübeck, North Germany, and died in London in 1826 at the age of 40. He came from a theatrical family – his father was an actor-manager and his cousin was Mozart's wife Constanze. He made a favourable impression as a pianist and then as a music director, notably in the opera houses of Prague and Dresden. As a composer he won a lasting reputation with the first important Romantic German opera, *Der Freischütz* (1817-21). Here his skill in using instrumental colours to evoke atmosphere reached its peak, effectively creating the genre of German Romantic opera. His essays in conventional forms such as the symphony and sonata were less successful; however he wrote a string of minor masterpieces in the concerto form, where he was able to give his dramatic gift and feeling for instrumental character full rein.

The *Bassoon Concerto in F* dates from the spring of 1811. The 25-year old Weber was touring the German states and arrived in Bavaria's capital, Munich, in February 1811, and the King promptly commissioned him to write two clarinet concertos. These were premièred to general acclaim by the Court Orchestra and the musicians of the orchestra immediately besieged Weber with requests for concertos for their own instruments. However, the only member of the orchestra to receive his concerto was G.H. Brandt, the principal bassoonist.

The *Bassoon Concerto* is structurally similar to his earlier clarinet concertos, being in the standard three-movement classical concerto form. As with the clarinet concertos, the bulk of the musical drama takes place in the first movement. The dotted melody of the opening *tutti* is a characteristic feature of Weber's style, and the four beats on the timpani that announce the bassoon's solo entry are particularly imaginative. In the *Adagio*, a movement of great dignity and intensity, Weber uses the bassoon in an almost operatic manner. The beautiful passage in which the solo instrument is accompanied by the horns alone echoes an identically scored passage in the *F minor Clarinet Concerto* but is no less poetic for that. Weber's operatic gift for virtuoso writing comes to the fore in the *Finale*, a witty and high-spirited *Rondo* which closes the concerto with music that displays the bassoon at its most agile and entertaining

## INTERVAL

### ***Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op.13, Winter Daydreams - Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)***

1. ***Dreams of a Winter Journey: Allegro tranquillo***
2. ***Land of Desolation, Land of Mists: Adagio cantabile ma non tanto***
3. ***Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso***
4. ***Finale: Andante lugubre — Allegro maestoso***

Tchaikovsky wrote his *Symphony No. 1 in G minor* in 1866, just after he accepted a professorship at the Moscow Conservatory. It is the composer's earliest notable work. He dedicated the symphony to Nikolai Rubinstein.

Tchaikovsky started writing this symphony in March 1866. Work proved sluggish, despite the fact that he composed day and night. These and other factors strained Tchaikovsky's mental and physical health and he started suffering from insomnia and pains in his head which he thought to be strokes, and became convinced he would not live to finish the symphony. Tchaikovsky's brother Modest claimed this work cost Tchaikovsky more labour and suffering than any of his other works.

Tchaikovsky's former teachers, Anton Rubinstein and Nikolai Zarembo, were critical of his symphony and refused to perform any of it. After making the changes insisted upon by Rubinstein and Zarembo, they still disapproved of the symphony on the whole; however, the *adagio* and *scherzo* were included at a Russian Musical Society concert in St Petersburg in February 1867, with no success. Disillusioned with St Petersburg audiences and with the critical judgments of both his former teachers, he discarded nearly all the revisions they had demanded.

Back in Moscow, Anton's brother Nikolai was willing to perform the entire symphony, and conducted its premiere on February 15, 1868, to great acclaim.

In 1874 the composer carried out his long-standing intention to revise the symphony. The 1874 version was performed for the first time in November 1883 in Moscow, at a concert of the Russian Musical Society conducted by Max Erdmannsdörfer.

In spite of the difficulties that beset this symphony, it always remained one of Tchaikovsky's favourite works. In a letter to Petr Jurgenson in April 1886, Tchaikovsky wrote: "*I like this symphony very much, and deeply regret that it's had such an unhappy existence*". At the time of its performance in 1883,

Tchaikovsky wrote to Karl Albrecht that: “*Despite all its huge shortcomings, I still nourish a weakness for it, because it was a sin of my sweet youth*”.

Tchaikovsky himself nicknamed the symphony "*Winter Daydreams*" and even gave the subtitles "*Dreams Along a Wintry Wayside*" to the first movement and "*Land of Desolation, Land of Mists*" to the second. Marked *Allegro tranquillo*, the opening movement does have a dreamy quality about it, despite its generally lively manner and occasionally muscular sonorities.

The ensuing *Adagio cantabile ma non tanto* is mesmerizing in its gentleness and melodic flow, both of which invoke tranquil wintry images. The lovely main theme, first heard on oboe, is one of the composer's most attractive creations from his early career.

In the following *Scherzo (Allegro scherzando giocoso)*, Tchaikovsky used material from the *Scherzo* of his 1865 *Piano Sonata in C sharp minor*. The mood is subdued in this movement, but the music is upbeat, especially in the buoyant *trio*. Tchaikovsky actually foreshadows the night music of Mahler near the close of this *Scherzo*, when the solo cello wittily takes up the main theme.

The finale, marked *Andante lugubre -- Allegro maestoso*, has much of the winter about its glacial pacing and barren writing in the opening. The main *Allegro* section brings the most vigorous and colourful music in the symphony. The energetic main theme is one of the composer's most joyous creations and the orchestration throughout this movement is brilliantly realized. The first movement and the finale, as in several symphonies from the German tradition, show thematic links.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Please join us after the concert for refreshments*

**Don't miss Mosman Orchestra's next concerts!**

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September 8.00pm & Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2.30pm

Weber – Overture to Oberon

Tchaikovsky – Rococo Variations for Cello and Orchestra

featuring Daniel Morris, Cello

Schubert – Symphony #9 “The Great”

### ***Mark Brown – guest conductor***

Mark is a double graduate of the NSW State Conservatorium of Music, having gained both a Bachelor of Music (Honours) in Trombone Performance and a Certificate of Piano Tuning and Technology. He studied trombone with Arthur Hubbard and Ron Prussing and conducting with Henryk Pisarek.

His professional trombone credits include Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, English National Ballet, Sydney Philharmonia, Sydney Seasons of Phantom of the Opera, Les Miserables, Beauty and the Beast, Miss Saigon, Crazy for You, My Fair Lady, the Merry Widow, the Mikado, & Michael Crawford Australian Tour.

In 1994 Mark was awarded the Bellhouse Memorial Conducting Scholarship and in 1995 was selected for the Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra Conductor in Training program under Maestro Henryk Pisarek. During this time he was also assistant conductor to Steve Williams with the Conservatorium Wind Orchestra. He later travelled to the Czech Republic and attended the International School for Conducting studying under Maestros Kirk Trevor, Tsung Ye and Johannes Schafli.

Mark has been director of bands at St Patrick's College Sutherland, Sydney Technical High School, Sutherland Shire Brass and Port Hacking High School. He is currently Director of Ensembles at Manly Selective Campus, Musical Director of Bands at SCEGGS Darlinghurst and Musical Director of the Lane Cove Youth Orchestra. He is also the conductor of the Conservatorium High School Wind Sinfonia and the Education Department's Performing Arts Unit Symphonic Wind Orchestra.

### ***Bob Chen***

As a child in China, Bob heard that the bassoon was difficult to learn, so he decided to take up the challenge. He has now been playing bassoon for over 30 years. He studied with Guan Ying Xian, 1st bassoon with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and played bassoon with the Shanghai Radio Broadcast Orchestra for 13 years.

Bob came to Australia in 1990 to study English. He was a popular chef at Noodle Inn in Mosman for 13 years. His friendly personality & remarkable memory for his customers' favourite dishes gained him a Community Service award from Mosman Rotary in 1998.

Bob says that since arriving in Australia work, study & family commitments have taken up much of his time, but his first love is music and he is

determined to continue to play. He has performed with the East West Orchestra, and has been a well loved member of Mosman Orchestra for over 5 years.

Bob loves the bassoon for its versatility. "It can be warm and lyrical, quirky and funny, but always interesting". Bob is looking forward to his first solo appearance in Australia playing the Weber Concerto in F with Mosman Orchestra.

### ***Mosman Orchestra***

***First Violin:*** Cameron Hough (concertmaster), Geoff Allars, Mathieu Faliu, Dominique Guerbois, Mana Gharun, Beres Lindsay, Calvin Ng, Sarah Sellars

***Second Violin:*** Chris Gleeson, Denis Brown, Julian Dresser, Kate Howse, Julia Jenkins, Alison Meades, Heeji Song, Brett Richards, Bridget Wilcken

***Viola:*** Marjorie Hystek, Mark Berriman, Bob Clampett, Samuel Loukas, Vicki Sifniotis

***Cello:*** Megan Corlette, Rufina Ismail

***Double Bass:*** Trevor Dalziell, Mark Szeto

***Flute:*** Linda Entwistle, Jacqueline Kent

***Piccolo:*** Carolyn Thornely, Linda Entwistle

***Oboe:*** Val Densmore, Cate Trebeck

***Clarinet:*** Danika Allars, Kate Sweeny

***Bassoon:*** Bob Chen, Graham Cormack

***French Horn:*** Claire Cameron, Louisa Long, Rana Wood

***Trumpet:*** Jarrah Coleman-Hughes, Kate Wilson

***Trombone:*** Greg Hanna, Hanno Klaehn, Lauren Smith

***Tuba:*** Paul Touyz

***Percussion:*** Graham Ball, Andrew Del Riccio, Kit Shepherd

#### ***Visit Mosman Orchestra in Cyberspace!***

Our website has lots of information about the orchestra and upcoming concerts, but did you know that you can also have fun with it too? Have a look at our Children's Corner for activities such as colouring in and a quiz, a link to us on YouTube, and photos taken of us by members of the Mosman Camera Club.

[www.mosmanorchestra.org.au](http://www.mosmanorchestra.org.au)

Go to the Contact Us menu to send us an email, or make a comment on our new Facebook page.