



UNIVERSITY OF  
THE THIRD AGE

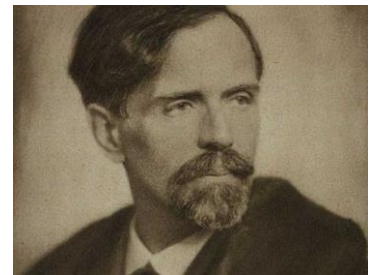
Benalla & District Inc.



**BTHVN**  
**2020**



*Cheetham*

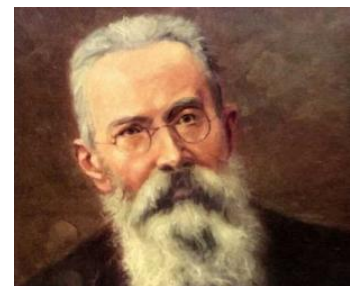


*Kodaly*

*Programme Notes*

*27th March*

*2020*



*Rimsky-Korsakov*



*Schumann*

## Beethoven – Symphony No. 7 in A major Opus 92.

Goethe called Beethoven enormously talented, but a “completely untamed personality.” Weber thought that the 7th Symphony showed that Beethoven was “ripe for the madhouse.” Beethoven’s contemporaries thought his music was as difficult, defiant, radical and as untamed as the man himself. Yet today the 7th Symphony has become an icon of classical music, as canonical as any symphony ever written.

One critic from even questioned Beethoven's sanity, writing, "What has happened to this once great man recently? His latest symphony bears testament to the fact that he has fallen into some kind of madness. The whole work is a quodlibet of tragic, comic, serious and trivial ideas whose unnecessary bursts of noise which almost explode the listener's eardrums and send him into the abyss of barbarism."

But was the composer finally mad? The music world of Vienna didn't think so. With the overwhelming power and exuberance of the symphony, Beethoven managed to tap into the zeitgeist of the time. The audience interpreted the work as a musical representation of the recent victory over Napoleon at Leipzig and saw it as mirroring their pleasure at having regained freedom and peace. For the premiere of this work, conducted by Beethoven himself, took place at a concert to benefit the soldiers who were wounded at Leipzig and the more recent battle of Hanau between the Austro-Bavarian army and the retreating forces of Napoleon.



[Horace Vernet's](#) painting "Battle of Hanau", held at the [National Gallery](#) in [London](#). This scene depicts the Austro-Bavarian cavalry charge on the French Grand Battery and the countercharge of [Nansouty's](#) French Guard cavalry.

After years of French occupation, the mood in the Austrian capital was jubilant. The Viennese were out to celebrate the freedom of Europe from Napoleon's tyranny. With proceeds from the ticket sales set to be donated to the wounded soldiers who fought in the Battles of Leipzig and Hanau, it's no wonder the biggest names in the city stormed the box office. Even the orchestra was filled with prominent musicians such as Antonio Salieri, Louis Spohr and Giacomo Meyerbeer. It was one of Beethoven's most successful concerts.

Not that Beethoven composed his Symphony No. 7 with these battles in mind – even though he held Napoleon in contempt. Many experts today, nevertheless, believe Beethoven – a revolutionary and committed humanist – expressed his own joy over the end of tyranny in the work.

The work dates from 1811, while Beethoven was staying in the Bohemian spa town of Teplice in the hope of improving his poor health. His health must have improved significantly as during the premiere it is said that Beethoven was so engaged with the music that he would jump in the air to introduce fortes.

Also, at its premiere, the audience was so overwhelmed by the second movement, with its rhythms suggestive of a funeral march, that it literally stopped the show, and the movement was encored immediately (you can imagine the outrage if that was done today!) interpreting it as a lament for the soldiers who fell at the Battle of Leipzig.



Thirst for power: Napoleon

This sombre second movement is probably the most well-known movement within the work. It has been featured in countless adverts, TV shows and movies. One example is the climactic scene from the 2010 Academy Award Best Picture winner, *The King's Speech*.

Tchaikovsky apparently described the finale as 'a whole series of images, full of unrestrained joy, full of bliss and pleasure of life'. While Wagner described it as 'the apotheosis of the dance. The sheer physical energy of the work – expressed in bracing, muscular rhythms – can, in some performances, border on the unnerving'.

Be all that as it may, perhaps as another commentator has stated: "We should let the music speak for itself. One critic in Leipzig had a tip, which still holds two centuries later". He said, "Simply listen to this latest work from the genius to appreciate all its beauties. Because the beauties of this splendid work, the spirit of the whole, can't be put into words".

Enough said, then. Let's hear the music. The recording is by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Christian Thielman. The link to YouTube is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiG31BRHWkA&t=1886s>

## Deborah Cheetham – Woven Song

The Australian Tapestry Workshop has nine tapestries on loan to Australian embassies around the world, each based on artworks by Indigenous Australian artists. Beginning in 2018 Australian aboriginal composer and soprano Deborah Cheetham plans to visit each one over the next two years, composing a suite of nine pieces of music responding to the tapestries, their original designs and where they are currently displayed.







The tapestries and the embassies in which they hang (L-R, Top to Bottom).

“Catching Breath”, Singapore;

“Kunawarritji to Wajaparni”, Holy See;

Ngarrgooroon”, Dublin;

“Ngayuku Ngura” (This is my country), Rome;

“Creek Bed”, Paris;

“Kimberley Under the Stars”, Washington;

“Untitled (detail from Kiwirrkurra Women’s Painting), Beijing;

“Pwoja Pukumani body paint design”, New Delhi;

“Lumpu Lumpu Country”, Tokyo.

‘Woven Song’ is a project which features nine new musical compositions by Cheetham in response to the nine tapestries. The tapestries were inspired by nine artworks, inspired by nine indigenous stories, painted by nine indigenous artists. Each of these musical works is to be premiered at the respective embassy. So far the first three works have been premiered at the Australian Embassies in Tokyo, New Delhi and Singapore. A Gala Concert of all nine compositions is planned for the Melbourne Recital Centre in 2021.

As each composition is completed Cheetham needs nine frocks glamorous enough to carry the gravity of each occasion and meaningful enough to carry its cultural weight.

In addition Cheetham has composed a song to relate to the The Dulka Warngiid tapestry which hangs in the Melbourne Recital Centre as a companion piece to this suite of nine international works.’

### About the Dulka Warngiid Tapestry



In 2007, The Hugh Williamson Foundation commissioned the vibrant tapestry *Dulka Warngiid* for the Melbourne Recital Centre and the Victorian community. Based on a large-scale collaborative work by seven women artists from Bentinck Island and held by the National Gallery of Victoria, the painting represents the country of each woman in a combined work of vibrancy and deep meaning.

“*Dulka Warngiid*” which translates as ‘Land for All’, offers a conceptual vision of Bentinck Island, Queensland, anchored in the contributing artists’ deep attachment to seven distinct story places on their tiny island. The Kaiadilt people lived on Bentinck Island until the early 1940s, when they made their first contact with Europeans and were subsequently moved to Mornington Island mission in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

‘We each painted our country area which was special for us. Our painting is all of our country. That’s what the title means – country, place, land – land of all.’

### **About the Composer**



*Deborah Cheetham AO*, is a Yorta Yorta woman, soprano, composer and educator has been a leader and pioneer in the Australian arts landscape for more than 25 years. In the 2014 Queen's Birthday Honours List, Cheetham was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO), for "distinguished service to the performing arts as an opera singer, composer and artistic director, to the development of Indigenous artists, and to innovation in performance".

In 2009, Deborah Cheetham established Short Black Opera as a national not-for-profit opera company devoted to the development of Indigenous singers. The following year she produced the premiere of her first opera *Pecan Summer*. This landmark work was Australia's first Indigenous opera and has been a vehicle for the development of a new generation of Indigenous opera singers.

In March 2015 she was inducted onto the Honour Roll of Women in Victoria and in April 2018 received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of South Australia for her pioneering work and achievements in the music.

Last year Cheetham received the Merlyn Myer Prize to create a new work for chamber ensemble. The Merlyn Myer Commission, presented in collaboration with Melbourne Recital Centre celebrates the work of Australian female composers. The prestigious music award is granted every three years to an outstanding Victorian musician of exceptional musicianship, skill and creativity and is worth \$60,000.

The composition we are to hear is “*Dulka Warngiid*”. In its premiere performance as part of a concert given in the Melbourne Recital Centre on 27 May 2019. Deborah Cheetham is accompanied by the Syzygy Ensemble.

The Youtube link is for the whole concert is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ck3dKbG9kYo>

“*Dulka Warngiid*” begins at 45 minutes and 21 seconds in the recording

## Zoltán Kodály - Dances of Galánta



Galánta is a small Hungarian market-town known to the travellers on the rail journey from Vienna to Budapest. Kodály's father was the Galánta station-master. Here Kodály spent seven years of his childhood during which time he would have heard the music of a famous gypsy band (now no more) whose forbears had been known to exist for more than one hundred years.

Somewhere around the year 1800 the music of these gypsies came to be written down and published, so preserving an old Hungarian music tradition. Kodály, a traditionalist at heart, has used some of the material from these scores to produce his "Dances of Galánta" and so do his part in helping to preserve the tradition.

It wasn't only in "Dances of Galánta" that Kodály took this approach to his music. His most celebrated work - *Háry Janós* - a folk opera about an Austrian army veteran of the 19th century who sits in the village inn regaling his listeners with fantastic tales of heroism (most, if not all, completely untrue) - is full of music that are arrangements of Hungarian folk songs.

So it's no surprise that the beguiling *Dances of Galánta* - a much shorter work - are likewise arrangements of existing material, music of a sort that the composer may first have encountered as a child in the Hungarian town of Galánta (which by the way today is located in Slovakia). One critic was tempted to describe it as taking folk music and putting it into fancy concert-hall dress, although he was quick to add that this would be to minimise his genius as an orchestrator.

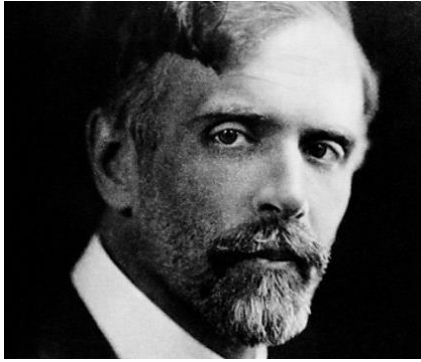
In 1933, when commissioned to create a work for the 80th anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic Society, Kodály took these specific melodies from a volume of Hungarian dances published in Vienna a century earlier.

These old eighteenth-century dances that Kodály has chosen are known as *verbunkos* music, the "recruiting dances" (from the German word *Werbung*, meaning recruiting) from the method of enlisting recruits during that century's imperial wars.

The dances were performed by a group of hussars led by their sergeant to the accompaniment of a gypsy band. The dances consisted of slow figures alternating with lively ones. The impressive display was apparently designed to arouse enthusiasm among the spectators and encourage some of them to join up: the message being that the life of a soldier was endless fun. (No doubt a certain amount of alcoholic intake encouraged them as well).

While the *verbunkos* traditionally consists of two sections, the *lassú* (literally, "slow") and the *friss* ("fresh"), the structure of Kodály's "Dances of Galánta" consists of a three-part *lassú* (an orchestral introduction, a clarinet cadenza, and subsequent *andante maestoso* section ('*andante maestoso*' meaning 'relatively slow with dignity') followed by a *friss* that begins *allegro moderato* and then erupts into four different fast dances, separated by brief references to the *andante maestoso*.





Born in Hungary, on December 16, 1882, Kodály died in Budapest on March 6, 1967. Like his friend and compatriot Béla Bartók, Kodály devoted much of his energy to the study of Hungarian folk song. Few composers of the twentieth century were so vocally oriented; even his purely instrumental works are imbued with the character of song, the song of the people.

Late in his life, Kodály wrote, “Our age of mechanization leads along a road ending with man himself as a machine; only the spirit of singing can save him from this fate.” To project this spirit, Kodály wrote songs and choral works in greater number than perhaps any other twentieth-century composer, and many of them were intended for school use. Indeed, Kodály was one of the great music educators of all time, and the Kodály system is still at the core of Hungary’s strong and almost universal program of music education.

Today, Kodály’s legacy is a world-wide network of organisations which promote a musical teaching method, that bears his name.

We listen to Kodály’s “Dances of Galanta” as played by a Spanish Orchestra: – Sinfónica de Galicia. The conductor is Dima Slobodeniouk and the link to the YouTube recording is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HqNTiDUjpg>

### **Rimsky-Korsakov – Scheherazade, Opus 35:**

**An exhilarating journey of love, intrigue and adventure.**

Many years ago, the Persian King Shahryar was betrayed by his wife. In anger, he vowed to marry a new woman each day and have the previous one beheaded, so that she would have no chance of being unfaithful to him. A man of his word, he executed 1,000 women before being visited by the young Scheherazade.



A well-read and witty woman, Scheherazade devised a plan to keep her life. On her first evening spent with the King, she began telling him a gripping story. She weaved the tale all through the night, stopping with a cliffhanger.

When the king asked her to finish the story, Scheherazade said there was no time, as dawn was breaking. The king decided to spare her life for one day to finish the story the next night. That evening, Scheherazade finished the story and then began a second, even more exciting tale, which she again stopped halfway through at dawn. The king spared her life once more.

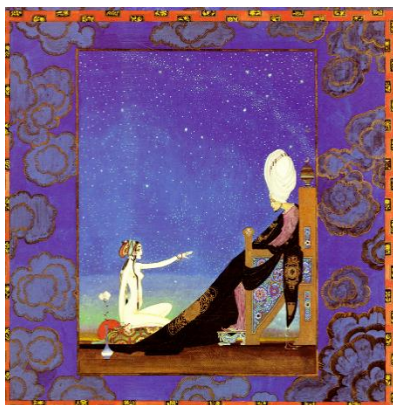
And so the king kept Scheherazade alive day by day, as he eagerly anticipated the finishing of the previous night's story. At the end of 1,001 nights, and 1,000 stories, Scheherazade told the king that she had no more tales to tell him. During these 1,001 nights, the king had fallen in love with Scheherazade. By this time the Sultan has fallen in love with Scheherazade, spares her life and crowns her as his Queen. A wider peace also falls on the land as the realm is safe from losing any more of its young women – to the relief of all. The legend says that her tales are the origin of the stories of the *Arabian Nights*.

## THE MUSIC

In his symphonic suite Rimsky-Korsakov, represents the Sultan with trombones and tubas. Scheherazade is heard as a solo violin, weaving her tales that mesmerize the Sultan. Rimsky-Korsakov rarely writes either theme the same, making changes as the story unfolds.

In the closing moments of the suite, the two themes are heard together for the first (and only) time, as the Sultan realizes he's fallen in love with Scheherazade, and will spare her life.

Rimsky-Korsakov is able to 'tell' us these stories through his evocative music, creating distinct melodies for the characters that recur through the work.



Scheherazade telling the tales  
Painting by Kay Nielsen

The work has four movements, each of which originally was labelled with one of Scheherazade's tales, and is unified by two primary themes heard at the very outset. The first suggests the Sultan, brusque in unison brass and strings at the outset (perhaps suggesting the stern Sultan) but then constantly transformed to reflect his growing enchantment. The other is a gorgeous refrain consistently heard in the high register of a solo violin, often with harp accompaniment, which Rimsky identified with Scheherazade narrating each of her fanciful tales to conquer the Sultan with her sweet guile:

1. **The Sea and Sinbad's Ship** – According to the *1,001 Nights*, this tale finds the seafaring adventurer Sinbad meeting many strange folk, birds, fish and other rarities after landing on an island that turns out to be the back of a giant fish. Scheherazade spins her tales, from a print by Kay Nielsen. After the gruff opening cedes to the irresistible sweetness of the Scheherazade refrain, it softens into the primary theme, which then, together with its fragments and echoes, modulates over arpeggiated strings that conjure the undulations and changing moods of the ocean. Built wholly upon repetitions of the simplest materials, the movement sustains interest through the wonder of Rimsky's dexterous handling.

2. **The Story of the Kalendar Prince** – The Kalendar were a type of fakir, roving monks who turned up at Eastern courts and bazaars. The Prince in this story is tired of living his routine life and goes looking for adventure. He disguises himself as a mysterious old Kalendar who can do magic tricks and tell fortunes. He is introduced by the bassoon and the tune is repeated many times with differing instruments as his story unfolds.



A fakir tells Sinbad his macabre account of being buffeted between visions of veiled women and a monstrous genie. A pastoral theme of sinuous melody and jagged rhythm is torn between lyrical temptation and vigorous threats until transfixed and lulled by a reappearance of the Scheherazade theme.

### 3. The Young Prince and the Young Princess –

Another tale told to Sinbad, of Ibrahim who falls in love with a portrait of Jemilah, seeks her out and wins her love when she realizes that her fierce hatred of men was kindled all along by jealousy of his reported goodness. Rimsky-Korsakov fashions a lilting, playful love song, extended by shimmering winds and string scalar runs, offset by a jaunty up-tempo variant spiced by gentle percussion (mostly a triangle and tambourine), until the Scheherazade theme wistfully unites them.



### 4. The Festival at Bagdad – The Sea – The Ship Goes to Pieces on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior – Conclusion –

As the compound title suggests, the work ends with an expansion of the complex emotions of the second movement, as Sinbad returns from his voyages to festivities in Baghdad, yearns for yet more adventure and heads out to uncharted waters, where he loses his ship in a storm. Yet "his life, like the stories of Scheherazade, leads ever onward toward the next adventure, full of the wonder of what is yet to come."



After depicting the joyous celebration and a rousing storm, the music culminates in a broad restatement of the unadorned main theme, as if to wipe away the Sultan's pretension and leave him to confront himself. The exquisite ending belongs to Scheherazade. Having won her victory over the Sultan's cruel power through astute charm and allure, his opening motif slinks into the deep bass while her captivating theme soars higher and finally alights on a barely audible harmonic two octaves above the treble staff, drawing us with her toward ever new reaches of infinite imagination.

(Acknowledgement for the story of the music: [classicalnotes.net](http://classicalnotes.net))

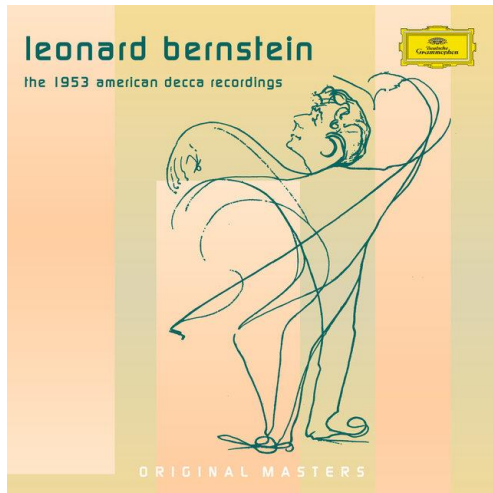


We listen to the final movement of a performance given by the Sinfonica de Galicia conducted by Leif Segerstam. The link to YouTube for the complete work is:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY4w4\\_W30aQ&t=114s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY4w4_W30aQ&t=114s)

The final movement begins 37 minutes and 20 seconds into the recording.

## Robert Schumann – Symphony No.2 in C major Opus 61



*“Schumann is one of those special tastes that can send casual shipboard acquaintances rushing into each other’s arms or it can make enemies of otherwise loving friends. But nobody will deny Schumann’s great gifts: the inspired lyricism that soars out of his best works, the uncanny stream of newnesses that succeed each other in such profusion, the warmth, the singing tides, the rhythmic ingenuities and the daring experimentalism”.*

So said Leonard Bernstein in 1953 in an analysis of Schumann’s 2nd symphony.

The Guardian music critic commented in that publication a few years ago that “If you were writing a symphony in the 1830s or 1840s, you were faced with a pretty mighty challenge.

Beethoven’s symphonies were still being digested by a variously admiring, comprehending and baffled world, but there was something monstrous about the gauntlet the ninth symphony had thrown down. Who could go further? How could you take the ninth’s structural grandiosity and metaphysical, choral power to greater heights than those Ludwig had already scaled? The truth is, you couldn’t: not Mendelssohn, not Berlioz, not Spohr, not even Schubert (whose own ninth symphony was brought to the public for the first time by Schumann and Mendelssohn in 1839) attempted anything like the ninth. What you had to do was to find a different approach to the symphony, a way of renewing the form without having to emulate Beethoven’s cosmic crankiness.

By the mid 1840s, Robert Schumann, in his 30s, was on the cusp of a new kind of composition. The inspirations for what would become known as Schumann’s second symphony, composed over 1845 and 1846, sidestepped symphonic grandiosity. Instead, Schumann found in Bach’s counterpoint the bracing intellectual challenge he felt he needed after years living on his compositional instincts.

But as well as paying homage to Bach and to Beethoven, the C major second symphony is also rooted in the crisis in Schumann’s personal life. He had started to feel the first effects of the syphilitic infection that would eventually kill him; he wrote that his illness – hearing problems, depression, dizziness, rheumatism – is inscribed in the fabric of the piece. ‘I would say that my resistant spirit had a visible influence on it and it is through that that I sought to fight my condition. The first movement is full of this combativeness, is very moody and rebellious in character’.

Yet what you hear at the start of the symphony seems superficially serene: a quiet, long-breathed fanfare in the brass, an endlessly meandering string line, like a far-off vision of prayer at some mist-shrouded gothic cathedral – a combination of a Bachian choral prelude and a possible quotation from Haydn (that simple fanfare is a version of the music Haydn uses at the start of his last symphony, number 104; but if it's a conscious reference, Schumann replaces Haydn's assurance with shadows, ambiguities, and doubts)".

Schumann begins the first movement with an introduction in moderate tempo. Its initial measures present two ideas set against each other in counterpoint: a flowing line for the strings and a solemn fanfare in the brass. The latter figure will prove a "motto" theme, one that recurs at important junctures throughout the symphony. (Listeners familiar with Haydn's last symphony, the "London," will note a resemblance between its opening fanfare and the one Schumann uses here.)



Soon the music grows more active, its rhythms more animated, and the motto figure sounds again before the tempo accelerates into the Allegro that forms the main body of the movement. There Schumann fashions his themes using the buoyant rhythms established in the latter part of the introduction, and he revisits the motto idea again during the accelerated coda that brings this first portion of the symphony to a close.

The second movement seems an attempt to write a scherzo after Mendelssohn's style, with light, running passagework in the violins. Yet the result is still distinctly Schumannesque, thanks chiefly to the restless harmonies the violin lines trace.

Balancing this fleet music are two contrasting episodes, the second very like a hymn. The final statement of the scherzo music includes another recollection of the motto idea.

Schumann builds the ensuing Adagio on a wide-stepping melody that seems more operatic than symphonic in character. This theme engenders the most beautiful slow movement among his orchestral compositions, a romance intimating deep poetic reverie.

From the rocketing scale of its initial measure, the finale strikes a triumphal note, and Schumann maintains this for practically the full length of the movement. Eventually we hear recollections of the aria-like melody of the slow movement, as well as the motto theme". (Paul Shiavo: Programme Notes in 2015 for the Seattle Symphony Orchestra).

Schumann said that he had started to feel better by the time he wrote the finale, but the whole of the second symphony bears witness to an astonishing creative vigour and strength that Schumann found at one of the most difficult times of his life. He didn't just reinvent his own compositional language, he created an alternative way of thinking about the symphony – and produced one of the richest, most compelling pieces he would ever write.



We listen only to the second movement – in which the fiendishly difficult first-violin part is a rite of passage for every aspiring violinist, an excerpt that is heard in almost every orchestral audition. It is a brilliant, inventive movement with two very different trios; one spry and witty, and the other soulful and rarified. The second trio begins with a beautifully crafted four-part chorale, the theme of which is then made the subject of a brief contrapuntal episode. Throughout this Trio, the spirit of Bach is felt in every bar, especially once we realize that the second part of the theme is a quotation of the musical B-A-C-H motive (Bb-A-C-B natural). The movement reaches its joyous culmination in a return of the Haydn fanfare.

The Orchestra is the Chamber Orchestra of Europe conducted by Vladimir Ashkenasky and the first violinist is Lorenza Borrani in her debut performance as first violinist.

The YouTube link to the complete symphony is:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjXKJndgu\\_s&t=835s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjXKJndgu_s&t=835s)



The 2<sup>nd</sup> movement begins 12 minutes and 13 seconds into the recording.