

2026 CONCERT SERIES 2 WINTER



‘THREE WORLDS: NATURE, RESONANCE, LOVE’

Saturday 27th June / 7.30pm
Sunday 28th June / 2.30pm

**Bowral Memorial Hall,
Bendooley St, Bowral**

Patrons:
Ann Carr-Boyd AM
Andrew Ford OAM

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



The SHSO reserves the right to amend the advertised repertoire and venue.

Welcome and opening remarks – Jenette Stiles

Acknowledgment of Country – Anne Donaldson

with music composed by John Corley

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

In Nature's Realm op. 91

ALFRED HILL

Concerto for Violoncello

Soloist William Howard

1. *Moderato*
2. *Andantino*
3. *Deciso*

INTERVAL

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Romeo and Juliet Suite No.2 op. 64 ter

1. *Montagues and Capulets*
2. *Juliet as a Young Girl*
3. *Friar Laurence*
4. *Dance*

PYTOR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Romeo and Juliet Overture - Fantasy TH 42



photograph by Steven Foster

THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

In mid-2014 musicians, led by Allan Stiles and Roma Dix OAM, embarked on a mission to assemble the most dedicated and accomplished musicians in the region and surrounding districts to form a symphony orchestra.

The Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra presented its first concert series in September 2014 and is now considered to be one of the finest regional orchestras in NSW and a significant feature of the cultural life of the Southern Highlands. Many of our musicians have been with the orchestra since its inception and have delighted the Highlands Community over the years.

ALLAN STILES

Artistic Director and Chief Conductor

Commencing in his late teens, Allan has regularly directed orchestras, bands, choirs, and theatre productions. He formed and conducted the Western Youth Orchestra (now Sydney Northern Youth Orchestra) and The Beecroft Orchestra. He conducted operas, musicals, and bands for several organisations. He has played in orchestras in Brisbane, Sydney, London, and the Highlands.

While teaching for the NSW Department of Education he pioneered primary school bands and formed the Secondary Schools Wind Ensemble. He later directed orchestras, bands, choirs and theatrical productions while teaching at The King's School Parramatta, Holy Cross College Ryde, and Pymble Ladies' College, making two European concert tours with the PLC orchestra, concert band, and choir.

Conducting studies were with Robert Miller from the SSO, as part of his MMus at UNSW, and at several workshops for music educators.

Allan's PhD thesis was a survey and thematic catalogue of the music of the Australian composer Alfred Hill. He lectured at the University of Oxford on his research and innovative catalogue. He has subsequently published many works by Hill and other Australian composers, promoting performances by making editions available.



WILLIAM HOWARD, CELLO

William Howard returns as soloist with the Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra, following his memorable performance of Bruch's *Kol Nidrei* in 2025. A distinguished cellist and dedicated educator, he has performed and recorded widely across Australia, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

As a Churchill Fellow, William studied string teaching in Finland, the UK and the USA, and later founded the Johns Hopkins Sinfonia at the University of Melbourne. He has held senior music roles in leading schools and performed with both the Adelaide and Queensland Symphony Orchestras.

William focuses on chamber music, supporting young cellists and composition. He performs regularly with The Highlands Collective, Berrima Singers and the Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra.

A prolific composer and arranger, he will publish his new tutor series *Cello Thumbs Up!* in 2026. In 2024, William celebrated 50 years as a professional cellist.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904) ***In Nature's Realm, Op. 91***

Dvořák was the pre-eminent Bohemian composer of the nineteenth century, and perhaps the most famous composer in the history of Czech music. He owed his initial recognition to Johannes Brahms, who encountered his music somewhat early in Dvořák's career, and saw to it that he spend time in Vienna for further study. While Dvořák's fundamental stylistic orientation is similar to the older composer in its classical restraint and dedication to traditional forms and procedures, his compositions are unmistakably Czech in very many subtle ways. Turns of harmony, melody, and

rhythm firmly establish Dvořák's ethnicity, even within the disciplined tradition of musical composition. Like Brahms, Dvořák composed in the genres of the string quartet, the sonata, and the symphony. But unlike Brahms, he also wrote tone poems, and was an active and successful opera composer, with *Rusalka* being his most famous. By the 1880s he had achieved widespread recognition as an important composer, with special success in England, where he made many triumphal visits during that decade.

In 1891, the year before he left Prague to take up a post in America, he composed a trilogy of what may be called concert overtures, or even modest tone poems. Conceived with the working title of "Nature, Life, and Love," they collectively were conscious depictions by the composer of the three essential experiences of life. He soon rethought that approach, and gave them three separate titles, *In Nature's Realm*, *Carnival*, and *Othello*.

An essential element of Dvořák's being was his love and reverence of nature, in all its diversity. It sustained him, and surfaced in so many nuanced ways in his art. When he finally achieved a degree of financial success, he purchased a rural property, Vysoká, where the quiet beauties of nature informed his music, and gave him a peaceful forest retreat. *In Nature's Realm* is a perfect reflection of his love of Vysoká and the renowned natural beauty of Bohemia. A bucolic and pastoral cheerfulness pervades the whole composition. It opens with a gentle murmuring in the strings, out of which emerges a prominent nature theme, which makes use of Moravian folk yodelling, (*halekačka*), echoing melodies called out across valleys. A secondary theme is derived from an old Czech hymn, "*Let Us Sing Joyfully, Praise God the Father*," reinforcing Dvořák's view of the close relationship between nature and God. The work builds in a subtle arch form, ending just as it began, with a gentle murmuring sustaining the familiar nature theme.

Notes by Elizabeth Dalton

ALFRED HILL (1869-1960)

Concerto for Violoncello

Soloist – William Howard

In his lifetime Alfred Hill was one of the foremost Australian composers, whose music was frequently performed, broadcast and recorded. Having studied with great success in Leipzig, his influence for the foundation of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music was substantial and he was the professor of composition and a conductor there from its opening till his retirement.

Sometimes composers have made adaptations of their works for different media, an example being that Handel's *The Messiah* was largely recycled from earlier compositions. My cataloguing of Alfred Hill's music identified many works that were similarly rescored and his *Concerto for Violoncello* is one, initially being his *Concerto for Viola*, composed in 1940 and among his most frequently admired, performed and recorded compositions.

When a New Zealand cellist asked Hill for a concerto he was sent the undated manuscript of the soloist's part that I discovered while researching in Wellington. This adaptation was otherwise unknown and no evidence of a previous performance has been found. William Howard, who further edited the soloist's part for the instrument and composed the showy cadenza that will be heard in the final movement, will perform the premiere of this challenging work.

Note by Allan Stiles

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Suite No.2 from *Romeo and Juliet*, op. 64ter

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has been the inspiration for numerous works in several genres, including art, music, opera, ballet, musical theatre, and film. The most successful ballet is by Sergei Prokofiev, although his version was nearly destined for failure due to several circumstances – some within Prokofiev's control and some not. To understand the tortured route that his *Romeo and Juliet* underwent, it is important to understand the political climate of the time and the composer's struggle for compositional independence in the Communist Soviet Union.

Prokofiev's life was varied and interesting. He began formal education at the age of eleven with the composer Glière. Then at the urging of the composer Alexander Glazunov, Prokofiev enrolled in the Saint Petersburg Conservatory at the age of twelve. His early style of composition was considered radical, atonal, and avant-garde, as he experimented with polytonality, dissonance, high chromaticism, and irregular time signatures. He graduated with relatively average marks, but despite this, Prokofiev had made a name for himself as a composer of the future before he was twenty years old.

His first big break came when the music publisher Boris P. Jurgenson signed a contract with the young composer in 1911. The contract allowed him to tour internationally, and in 1913 he travelled to Paris and London where he was introduced to Sergei Diaghilev and the famed Ballets Russes. He wrote several short ballets for Diaghilev, with varying degrees of success, but the experience of working with the ballet master would have a profound impact years later on his *Romeo and Juliet*.

In 1918 Prokofiev left Russia, partially due to his fear of the Russian Revolution and Russian Civil War and their implications, and partially because he felt his music was too experimental to have lasting success in an increasingly stifling political climate. Life in America was not all Prokofiev had hoped for. He found brief, initial success, possibly due to people's curiosity more than anything else, but he seemed to be compared constantly to, and in the shadow of, other Russian exiles, most notably Sergei Rachmaninoff. Prokofiev decided living in America full-time was not for him and he then spent a period of going between Europe and America, until 1922 when he moved back to Europe.

Prokofiev was reunited with Diaghilev in Paris and spent the years 1922 – 1936 composing and living throughout Europe. All the while he was composing and

succeeding in Western Europe, he continued to maintain ties to the Soviet Union and eventually returned there in 1936.

In 1934 while Prokofiev was still splitting his time between Moscow and Paris, he received a commission for a full-length ballet from the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad. He decided he would choose a lyrical subject matter, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. For reasons unknown the Kirov cancelled its contract. In 1935 the Bolshoi ballet picked up the contract, but later backed out, claiming the music was impossible to dance to.

With the future of his *Romeo and Juliet* uncertain, Prokofiev created two orchestral suites and ten piano works from the score. (A third orchestral suite was later extracted.). Our program includes selections from the Suite no. 2.

The opening movement, *Montagues and Capulets* (Dance of the Knights) begins with terrifying and massively dissonant chords representing the Prince of Verona's anger at the bloodshed caused by the rivalry between the Montagues and Capulets. The march that follows depicts the arrogance of the Capulets at their ball. The heavy, menacing lower brass bassline, is in contrast to the middle section in which Juliet unwillingly dances with Paris.

Juliet the Young Girl captures the playfulness of a girl at the outset of the story. There are bouncy pizzicato notes in the strings, and a short rest in the ascending and descending scales creates a youthful skip. The movement suddenly ends with Juliet's death theme: a lonely, melancholy melody passed through solo woodwind instruments, perhaps a premonition of doom.

In *Friar Lawrence*, Romeo and Juliet visit the Friar to be secretly married. He is represented by low pitched instruments in their lower registers (the main theme is in the bassoon), which paints the gloom of his cell. We can also hear bare, parallel fifths in the strings which evoke monastic chant.

The *Dance* movement has a boisterous energy. The scene is a market place, the town is awake and the people are going about their lives. But in Verona, conflict is always close to the surface and the frequent changes of mood and interruptions in the music depict the tension.

The ballet saw its Russian premiere at the Kirov Theatre on January 11, 1940. The production was fraught with difficulty. The Bolshoi programmed the work in 1946, and it has remained one of the most popular ballets in the repertoire, and one of Prokofiev's most enduring successes. But around the time of the Bolshoi premiere, things got much worse for Prokofiev. The Zhdanov Doctrine was introduced which outlined strict policies for Soviet artists. The doctrine, censorship, and scrutiny seemed to break Prokofiev's spirit, and many say he never recovered. He died on March 5, 1953, just an hour before the death of Joseph Stalin. Prokofiev's death was mentioned only briefly, overshadowed by the vast coverage of Stalin. It took three days to remove his body for burial because the streets were lined with Stalin's mourners – a sad and tragic end to the life of one of the 20th century's most gifted and visionary composers.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy

It was in 1868 in St. Petersburg that Tchaikovsky first made contact with The Russian Five, a group of composers who sought to create a nationalistic music specifically Russian in style. The group was not entirely sympathetic to Tchaikovsky's musical outlook, which was too international for their liking. Nonetheless, it was Balakirev, the group's leader, who suggested to Tchaikovsky that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* would be a suitable subject for musical interpretation.

Composed in 1869, and sandwiched between his Symphonies No. 1 and No. 2, *Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy* was arguably Tchaikovsky's first true masterpiece. Rather than composing a programmatic tone-poem attempting to outline the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, Tchaikovsky chose to capture the play's spirit with all its turbulence, romance and pathos by presenting a variety of characters and moods in a carefully constructed sonata form, with introduction and coda. The slow introduction, in chorale style, depicts Friar Lawrence. The exposition (*Allegro giusto*) begins with a vigorous, syncopated theme depicting the conflict between the feuding Montagues and Capulets. The contrapuntal interweaving and the rising intensity of the theme in this section suggest the fury and confusion of a fight. The battle subsides and the second subject is announced, the well-known love theme played by the cor anglais and violas to represent Romeo's passion. A tender, sighing phrase for muted violins suggests Juliet's response. A stormy development section utilising the driving main theme and the theme from the introduction denotes the feud between the families and Friar Lawrence's urgent pleas for peace. In the recapitulation the thematic material from the exposition is considerably compressed. Juliet's sighs again ignite the ardour of Romeo, whose motif is here given a grand, emotional setting marking the high point of the work. The tempo slows, the mood darkens, and the coda emerges with a sense of impending doom. The themes of the conflict and of Friar Lawrence's entreaties sound again, but a funereal drum beat presages the lovers' fatal pact. Romeo's theme appears for a final time in a poignant transformation with the closing woodwind chords giving the music a sense of radiant transfiguration.

Notes by Elizabeth Dalton

VALE GRAHAM ESTALL

Graham, who died this month after a long illness, was a violist in the SHSO for many years and greatly enjoyed his music-making. His enthusiastic participation and friendly manner will be missed. His love for playing music was demonstrated by his involvement in the orchestra until his final weeks. Our sympathies are expressed to his wife, Wendy, his family, and friends.



BENEFACTORS

The Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra wishes to acknowledge the following, who have made tax-deductible donations to ensure that the SHSO is able to maintain its artistic and community vision. Thank you. We also thank those music lovers who have donated anonymously.

Daria Ball, Jan and Frank Conroy, Dr. Penny Knowlden,
Roderick and Diane McAllery

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HOLD THE DATE 1ST August

Joint SHSO Friends and Bowral Art Gallery Members event

For more information: www.shso.org.au/friends

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Support from the following is gratefully acknowledged:

Southern Highlands Concert Band,

Proudly supported by Wingecarribee Shire Council,

Veolia Mulwaree Trust, BDCU The Collective Impact, Highland FM,

James Marko, Luminous Entertainment, Destination Southern Highlands,

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David McFarlane at Mittagong Print and Design, The Fold,

Melanie Van Til, Stiles Music Publications,

Bowral Uniting Church, Kennards Hire, and others that displayed flyers and banners,

volunteers who assisted with setting up the hall, front of house, and back-stage,

photography by Steven Foster

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Violist – Xanthe Herps

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Howard Lesslie

Players are listed alphabetically after principals

2026 CONCERT SERIES 3 SPRING



Southern
Highlands
Symphony
Orchestra

‘LA MUSIQUE MAGNIFIQUE’ - A FRENCH GALA

Saturday 19th September / 7.30pm
Sunday 20th September / 2.30pm

Bowral Memorial Hall,
Bendooley St, Bowral



FEATURED
SOLOIST

Tim Senior
(Viola)

SPRING REPERTOIRE

Jacques Offenbach | *Overture to Orpheus in the Underworld*

Maurice Ravel | *Pavane for a Dead Princess*

Georges Bizet | *Carmen Suite No.2.*

Hector Berlioz | *Harold in Italy* (Soloist Tim Senior)

CONDUCTOR: Dr Allan Stiles

PATRONS:

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