

2026 CONCERT
SERIES 3 SPRING



‘LA MUSIQUE MAGNIFIQUE’ A FRENCH GALA

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

Bowral Memorial Hall,
Bendooley St, Bowral

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

Welcome and opening remarks

Acknowledgment of Country – Anne Donaldson

with music composed by John Corley

JACQUES OFFENBACH

Overture to Orpheus in the Underworld

MAURICE RAVEL

Pavane for a Dead Princess

GEORGES BIZET

Carmen Suite No.2

1. *Marche des contrabandiers*
2. *Habañera*
3. *Nocturne*
4. *Chanson du Toréador*
5. *La Garde Montante*
6. *Danse Bohème*

INTERVAL

HECTOR BERLIOZ

***Harold in Italy* - soloist Tim Senior**

1. *Harold in the Mountains*
scenes of melancholy, happiness and joy
2. *Procession of the Pilgrims*
singing the evening hymn
3. *Serenade*
by an Abruzzi mountaineer to his sweetheart
4. *Orgy of the Brigands*
with reminiscences of the preceding sce

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.

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.

TIM SENIOR – VIOLA



Dr Tim Senior is principal viola with the Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra and has played with the orchestra for over a decade. He started learning violin then viola in the public school system in England and continued playing in orchestras throughout his time at medical school. He has taken the opportunity to play wherever he has lived, and so has played in orchestras in Sheffield, Darwin and Penrith before joining the SHSO. He has led the viola sections of the NSW Doctors Orchestra and the Australian Doctors Orchestra and has played locally with the Southern Highlands Music Collective and the Southern Highlands Theatre Group.

In his professional life he works as a doctor in Aboriginal Health and has completed a prestigious Churchill Fellowship looking at general practice care in disadvantaged communities. He plays a beautiful viola made by the Australian maker Hugh Withycombe.

JACQUES OFFENBACH (1819-1880)

Overture to Orpheus in the Underworld

The advent of musical theatre in the 19th century saw the rise of ‘popular’ music. Offenbach had a singular influence in implementing this new addition to the musical scene with his operettas. His devilish skill at skewering icons of culture with sparkling, witty and adroit caricatures was unparalleled in French comedic theatre at the middle of the century. The critics and moral guardians of the time were outraged by his broad and biting satires of “sacred” and dignified topics, as well as his unabashed appropriation of other composers’ tunes. Nonetheless, Offenbach quickly established himself as one of the most important creators of operetta.

Orféé aux enfers created a scandal at its premiere. The operetta parodies the story of Orpheus whose bride, Eurydice, dies on their wedding day. By means of his amazing musical talent Orpheus wins her back only to lose her again by looking back at her before leaving the underworld. It was typical of the composer’s approach in that it broadly satirised the ever-popular opera, *Orfeo*, by one of the most important composers of the eighteenth century, Gluck. The overture was added to the 1860 production in Vienna, cobbled together by a local composer and arranger, Carl Binder.

Opening with a dramatic fanfare, the overture soon moves to a virtuosic cadenza for the solo clarinet and other attractive solos gleaned from the show follow. Contrasting sections appear leading to an especially winsome and famous solo for the concertmaster in slow waltz time. Finally, the tune we have all been waiting for arrives – the Can-Can! At that time, the melody was not associated with the licentious dance of flouncing skirts at a place like the Moulin Rouge. Rather, it was simply called a ‘Galop infernal’. Later it served its famous dance perfectly.

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Pavane for a Dead Princess

From his student days until the years between the World Wars, Maurice Ravel habitually attended the elegant and stylish salon of Princess Edmond de Polignac (1865-1943). She was an American, whose maiden name was Winnaretta Singer. Heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune, she was also a noted patron of the arts. In 1899, when Ravel was studying with Fauré, she commissioned him to write this piece, originally for piano entitled *Pavane pour une infante défunte*.

A pavane is a slow processional dance which was popular in the courts of Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ravel often had to explain the title which he said did not refer to a specific child or an event. “It is not a funeral lament for a dead child, but rather an evocation of the pavane [a stately, 16th-century

Spanish court dance] which could have been danced by such a little princess as painted by Velázquez.” So rather than the English translation that suggests a dead child, this is a slow dance for a princess from a bygone era. Following the first public performance in 1902, the work became very popular and Ravel then orchestrated it in 1910, with a beauty and restraint that resembles his teacher Fauré.

GEORGES BIZET (1838-1875)

Carmen Suite No. 2

The music from *Carmen* has everything going for it – excitement, colour and best of all instantly recognisable tunes. When it was first performed in March 1875, the audience seemed outraged at the idea of a loose woman and murder onstage at the Opéra-Comique. Bizet died three months later at age 37, never knowing that his only opera would go on to enjoy enormous success. It was common practice in the nineteenth century for composers to produce orchestral suites from their operas. This was for a few reasons. One being that it helped with the promotion of the opera, as well as reaching out to audiences who may not have the money to be able to see the opera in full. Opera was a very expensive entertainment, and it was only the rich who were able to afford to see full productions. These orchestral suites made it more accessible for composers to promote their music further afield, and concert hall programs were now being filled with orchestral suites, overtures and arias. Often these orchestral suites did not attempt to follow the story of the opera at all, but instead conveyed some of the atmosphere created in the opera and introduced some of the main characters, without the plot being spoilt. After Bizet’s death, his publisher, Choudens, felt that the music of the opera was too good to lose, so he commissioned the French composer, Ernest Guiraud, to arrange excerpts from *Carmen* into two orchestral suites.

The *Carmen Suite No. 2* is in 6 movements and contains some of the most famous music from the opera.

Marche des Contrabandiers opens Act 3. It is set in the smugglers’ camp in “a wild spot in the mountains”. The smugglers are on their walk back to camp with their booty.

Habañera is an aria in Act 1 with the full name “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle” (“Love is a rebellious bird”). As the soldiers wait to be released from guard duties, the cigarette factory girls break from work. Carmen appears for the first time and sings this aria while flirting with the young men in the square and teasing José, Corporal of Dragoons. The Habañera is a Cuban dance form that Bizet draws on for its distinctive and captivating rhythm.

Nocturne is an aria in Act 3 with the full name “Je dis que rien ne m’épouvante” (“I say that nothing frightens me”). It is sung by Micaëla who is seeking José, determined to rescue him from Carmen so that he will marry her in accordance with his mother’s wishes.

Chanson du Toréador is the famous Toreador’s Song sung by Escamillo when he arrives in town in Act 2 ahead of the bullfight. It tells of various situations in

the bullring, the cheering of the crowds and the fame that comes with victory.

La Garde Montante, “The new guard” march, comes from Act 1 and accompanies the fresh soldiers as they arrive to take over guard duties in the square outside the cigarette factory.

Danse Bohème is the Gypsy Dance which opens the second act with Carmen and her friends entertaining the officers in the local inn. The scene captures the exciting, free, and rebellious spirit of gypsy life. The music starts with a steady pulsing beat and grows louder and wilder ending in a frenzied climax bringing the Suite to a thrilling finish.

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803-1869)

Harold in Italy, op. 16

1. ***Harold in the mountains***. Scenes of melancholy, happiness and joy.
2. ***March of the Pilgrims*** singing the evening prayer.
3. ***Serenade*** of a mountaineer from the Abruzzi to his mistress.
4. ***Orgy of the Brigands*** - including memories of earlier scenes.

The nineteenth century French composer, Hector Berlioz, was intense and impassioned in his creation of music that reflected his literary interests, his interaction with his physical surroundings, and his deeply-felt emotions. He was not a virtuoso performer (playing the flute and the guitar only passably), his early musical training derived largely from the study of harmony books. A man of literature, he read widely and with sophistication from a young age, and later become one of the most important music critics and general authors in music of all time. His early career was driven to some degree by his frustrating quest to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, which he finally won in 1830. He delayed actually moving to Rome for the required residency there as he loathed the city and Italian art and music. He did, however, love the Italian countryside, the sunshine, and the evocative legends and characters. Hence, some of his most inspired music stemmed from his time there.

The celebrated violin virtuoso, Niccolò Paganini, in the early 1830s, had acquired a fine Stradivarius viola, and commissioned Berlioz to write a concerto for him that would serve as a showcase for his prodigious talents. Berlioz began "by writing a solo for viola, but one which involved the orchestra in such a way as not to reduce the effectiveness of the orchestral contribution". When Paganini saw the sketch of the first movement, with all the rests in the viola part, he told Berlioz it would not do, and that he expected to be playing continuously. Their respective values in musical composition were obviously so different that Paganini rejected the piece. Berlioz, however, was not one to waste ideas and recast the work to suit himself.

My idea was to write a series of orchestral scenes in which the solo viola would be involved, to a greater or lesser extent, like an actual person, retaining the same character throughout. I decided to give it as a setting the poetic impressions recollected from my wanderings in the Abruzzi, and to

make it a kind of melancholy dreamer in the style of Byron's 'Childe Harold'. Hence the title of the symphony, 'Harold in Italy'.

The work is a perfect example of Berlioz's individualistic approach to all of his compositions, combining the three most important genres for symphony orchestra – concerto, symphony and tone poem.

The viola is a curious choice for a solo instrument. Once Paganini had made the invitation to write for his 'Strad', Berlioz became intent on delivering. In its orchestral setting the viola has an ambiguous place and is rarely heard on its own. It is an 'inside' instrument in that its muted tonal qualities lend themselves to being part of a chord cluster rather than the most noticeable instruments at the top or bottom of the ensemble. Its role in support of the harmonic and rhythmic structures within symphonies means that it is only rarely noticed.

Berlioz takes this most reserved instrument and places it centre stage, requiring it to play the main recurring melody. The symphony begins with a very soft murmuring figure in the lower strings, and soon the main theme is heard from the woodwind section. When the viola enters it repeats this woodwind melody on its lower strings where it is difficult to project the sound. Furthermore, on the repeat of the 8-bar symmetrical melody, Berlioz notates (ppp), adding in written text for extra reinforcement that the soloist should play 'as softly as possible – scarcely audible'. There is no blazing, dramatic statement by either the orchestra or the soloist: the ideas are suggestive and muted. Paganini's presumption would have been to first get people's attention with a flashy opening. But Berlioz was writing a work that develops musical ideas through a series of stages ('movements' in musical language), not a concerto that is primarily designed to show off the talents of the soloist. The nuances in sound and tone quality are delicate and restrained. The subtleties and softness of the viola's tones and the supportive accompaniment and interjections by the harp and woodwind form an *idée fixe* representing Harold, a melancholy young man who wanders about Italy in search of the meaning of life — a true Byronic hero. The first movement alludes to Harold tramping around in the Abruzzi mountains that Berlioz, himself, loved.

The second movement is probably the most famous part of *Harold in Italy*, a "Procession of pilgrims singing the evening hymn." It has a steady walking bass line, interrupted only by the recurring church bell. The solo viola represents Harold's contemplation of the scene from the sidelines, with the Adagio theme from the first movement as a memory guide. The middle section, marked "Canto religioso," is one of Berlioz's finest inspirations; the *ostinato* bass walks on steadily while the winds and strings alternate in sustained, chorale-like chords, and the solo viola bows arpeggios back and forth *sul ponticello* (near the bridge) – the melancholy wanderer observing as the pilgrims approach and then pass on.

The third movement, entitled 'Serenade of a mountaineer of the Abruzzi to his mistress' contains a direct echo of Berlioz's Italian experiences: it imitates the music-making of the '*pifferari*'. In his memoirs, Berlioz wrote:

The only music that struck me in Rome is a form of popular instrumental music which I am rather inclined to think is a survival from antiquity – I mean the pifferari. That is the name they give to wandering musicians who as Christmas approaches come down from the mountains in groups of four or five. Equipped with bagpipes and pifferi (a kind of oboe), they come to perform devout concerts in front of images of the Madonna.... while I had found them remarkable in Rome, once in the wild Abruzzi mountains, where my wandering fancy had taken me, I was moved by them even more.

The *Serenade* is an ingenious exercise in creating atmosphere while at the same time combining different rhythms. A more languorous melody on the English horn is unperturbed by the jaunty piping of the highlander or the stately span of Harold's theme.

Berlioz gives the title *Orgy of the Brigands* to the last movement. While he was in Italy, he had romanticised about the lifestyle of brigands – renegades who had liberated themselves from the shackles of society and behaved with riotous abandon in an attempt to find an antidote to the repressions of conventional life. Grinding dissonances and dislocated rhythms evoke the fury of the brigands but are counter balanced by passages of great delicacy and there are also nostalgic reminiscences from earlier movements. Here Berlioz borrows the device of reprising previous themes in the manner of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* to draw the work together and to pay tribute to the masterpiece which he had recently heard for the first time. Following these restatements, Harold's theme becomes gradually more indistinct and the viola leaves centre stage as though he is overwhelmed by the brigands. The symphony finishes with the entire interest being on the orchestra with its full brass section blasting across frenetic strings. The pace gradually increases with duple and triple rhythms crossing each other, until it spectacularly resolves in a dramatic race to the end, interrupted only once by distant memories of the pilgrims' march.

Paganini did not hear the piece that his abortive commission morphed into until a few years later when he attended a concert, which included the *Symphonie Fantastique* and *Harold in Italy* conducted by Berlioz. He was so impressed with it that he sent Berlioz 20,000 francs and a note: "Beethoven being dead only a Berlioz could reincarnate him."

Notes by Elizabeth Dalton

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Dianne Arthurson, Graeme J Bailey, Marion and Robert Bearup,
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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

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,
Country Hearing Care, Artemis Wines, Anne Donaldson, Peter Morris,

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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.

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Anonymous	Horn – Elizabeth Dalton
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Ann Carr-Boyd AM	Viola – Xanthe Herps
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The SHSO is grateful to the following people and businesses for the donations to the Gala Raffle.

Judi O'Brien OAM



A concert poster for the Southern Highlands Concert Band. The background is a map of Australia. On the left is the Southern Highlands Concert Band logo, which features a lyre and the text "SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS CONCERT BAND". In the center, text reads: "FROM TOTO'S AFRICA, ELLERBY'S PARIS, LAU'S GUILIN, SCULTHORPE'S SMALL TOWN TO NEW YORK, NEW YORK...". Below this, it says "ONE CONCERT ONLY - JOIN US FOR A MUSICAL JOURNEY TO". The main text, in large bold letters, reads "A SPECIAL PLACE 2 PM SUNDAY 8TH NOVEMBER". At the bottom left, it says "Supported By" with the Wingecarribee Shire Council logo. In the center bottom, it says "VENUE: BOWRAL MEMORIAL HALL". At the bottom right, it says "INFO & BOOKINGS SHCB.ORG.AU". On the right side, there is a compass rose and a QR code.

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David Ricketts – Principal

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Liam Bracht
Fay Craig
Oscar Dunn-Luck

ORCHESTRA MANAGER

Howard Lesslie

Players are listed alphabetically after principals

2026 CONCERT SERIES 4 SUMMER



‘PIANO AND PASSION’

Saturday 28th November / 7.30pm
Sunday 29th November / 2.30pm

Bowral Memorial Hall,
Bendooley St, Bowral



FEATURED
SOLOIST

Luke Bowen
(Piano)

SUMMER REPERTOIRE

Giuseppe Verdi | *Overture to Nabucco*
Pyotr Tchaikovsky | *Piano Concerto No.1* (Soloist Luke Bowen)
John Williams | *Jurassic Park Theme*
Edvard Grieg | *Wedding Day at Troldhaugen*
Oscar Dunn-Luck | *Waltz Fantasia*
Antonin Dvořák | *Slavonic Dance No. 8*
John Corley | *Christmas Crackers*

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