

Preston Symphony Orchestra



Press release

13th May 2010

Schnittke in the Suburbs

Music lovers have an opportunity later this month to hear the extraordinary viola concerto by Alfred Schnittke in its first Melbourne concert performance.

The work has been a highpoint of viola repertoire since it was composed in 1985 and is sometimes considered Schnittke's most famous work. But it poses challenges to the soloist for its impressive technical demands, and to the orchestra for its unusual scoring.

The concerto offers the audience an unconventional sight- an orchestra without violins. Alongside generous wind and brass sections, it calls for eight viola players each with an individual part, cellos, basses, three keyboards, two harps, and a battery of 8 different percussion instruments.

Schnittke was commissioned to write the concerto by Russian violist Yuri Bashmet, and the opening motive of the first movement spells out the virtuoso's name. The work follows a journey through throaty despair interspersed with theatrical parody.

The Melbourne premiere by the Preston Symphony Orchestra later this month features soloist Michael Trauer, a fellow of the Australian National Academy of Music and later this year headed to London for further studies at the Guildhall school of Music. The conductor Mario Dobernig began his professional career as a percussionist in Finland and Austria, and has recently graduated from Melbourne University's prestigious Master in Performance (Conducting) programme under John Hopkins.

The Preston Symphony is one of the longest running metropolitan orchestras in Melbourne. For this work, its regular line up of over 40 players will be increased by a team of specialist guests (harp, keyboards, saxophone, percussion, violas).

Schnittke's viola concerto will be performed at 2.30 on Sunday 30th May at the Preston Town Hall, in the second of the Preston Symphony Orchestra's 2010 season of concerts. The program also includes Gershwin's An American in Paris, Ravel's Bolero and Beethoven's Ah, Perfido with soloist Tanya Small

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