



#### TAHU MATHESON – PIANO

Tahu Matheson studied piano with Kalle Randalu in Germany, and with Oleg Stepanov and Natasha Vlassenko at the Queensland Conservatorium, where he completed his Master of Music.

He has performed as a soloist in the major concert venues throughout Australia and New Zealand, toured for Musica Viva and Chamber Music New Zealand, and been broadcast on New Zealand and Australian radio and television. At the end of 2005 he was invited to London to conduct a new opera *Nelson* for the Trafalgar Bicentenary. He has conducted many concerts and in 2008 conducted a performance of Beethoven's Ninth symphony for the 4MBS Festival in Brisbane.

Since 2007 he has been a member of the music staff at Opera Australia and is a frequent accompanist for international artists including Teddy Tahu Rhodes, Yvonne Kenny and Emma Matthews.

#### EMERALD HILL STRING QUARTET

The Emerald Hill String Quartet was formed at the beginning of 2010. Currently, they are undertaking study in the Australian National Academy of Music's (ANAM) Professional Performance Program. As a quartet, they receive tuition from William Hennessey, Adam Chalabi and Howard Penny. The members of the quartet are experienced chamber musicians and have previously been members of other established chamber music groups. The quartet was a finalist in the Melbourne Recital Centre's Great Romantics Competition, and has performed to acclaim in ANAM recitals. At the beginning of 2011, the quartet undertook a Winter Music Creative Residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Alberta, Canada. There they studied with musicians including Henk Guitart of the Schoenberg Quartet, and the cellist Colin Carr. The Emerald Hill Quartet's plans for the future include performing regularly in ANAM's concert series, community outreach and regional touring, and study abroad.

#### NEXT GREAT PERFORMERS RECITAL

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7.30pm – Friday 2 & Tuesday 6 September

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- For the comfort and enjoyment of all patrons, please ensure that you have switched off your mobile phone or pager and refrain from eating or drinking whilst in the auditorium.
- Please note that unauthorised photography or recording of any kind is strictly forbidden.
- For your convenience, a cloakroom is provided in the Audi Foyer (Ground Floor). We ask that large items be cloaked prior to entry into the auditorium.
- Please note, latecomers may not be admitted until a suitable break in the performance.
- In the event of an emergency please stay calm and follow the directions given by our staff. Your safety is of paramount importance to us and we ask for your cooperation.

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## GREAT PERFORMERS 2011 ANTHONY DEAN GRIFFEY

7.30pm—Elisabeth Murdoch Hall  
Tuesday 16 August 2011  
Presented by Melbourne Recital Centre

6.45pm pre-concert talk by Dr Jillian Graham, Salon

*This concert will be broadcast live-to-air on ABC Classic FM*

#### PROGRAMME

LEONARD BERNSTEIN – *A Simple Song from Mass*

NED ROEM – *Early in the Morning*

NED ROEM – *I am Rose*

SAMUEL BARBER – from *Three Songs Op 10*

*Sleep now*

*I hear an army*

CARLISLE FLOYD – *It must make the good Lord sad* from *Susannah*

AARON COPLAND – from *Old American Songs*

*The Boatmen's Dance*

*The Dodger*

*Long Time Ago*

*Simple Gifts*

#### INTERVAL

RALPH VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS – *On Wenlock Edge*

*On Wenlock Edge*

*From far, from eve and morning*

*Is my team ploughing*

*Oh, when I was in love with you*

*Bredon Hill*

*Clun*

Anthony Dean Griffey – tenor

Tahu Matheson – piano

Emerald Hill String Quartet:

Brigid Coleridge & Edwina George – violin

Douglas Coghill – viola

Jarrad Mathie – cello

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

The first half of this evening's programme is an engaging mix of American dramatic/operatic excerpts and art song that spans most of the 20th century, with the second half being dedicated to Ralph Vaughan Williams' quintessentially English song cycle, *On Wenlock Edge*.

American operatic works had appeared as early as the 1730s, but it was not until the early 20th century that composers like Jerome Kern and George Gershwin drew on American styles such as jazz, blues and ragtime to tell stories that would relate more to American people. Tonight we will hear one song each from American works *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers* by Leonard Bernstein, and the opera *Susannah* by Carlisle Floyd.

Music and poetry have aptly been defined as sister arts, exemplifying 'the shaped flow of time'. The art songs on this evening's programme are fine examples of the successful blending of these arts, with their faithful declamation of text, and their capacity to express aspects of human experience so compellingly. Art song was central to the compositional output of all four composers: Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem, Aaron Copland and Ralph Vaughan Williams. To the latter three in particular, so too was the intention to develop a vernacular sound as opposed to mere imitation of the traditional European musical style.

**Leonard Bernstein** (1918-1990), the American composer, conductor, pianist and pedagogue, who managed successfully to bridge the worlds of the concert hall and musical theatre, needs little introduction. His Harvard undergraduate thesis entitled *The Absorption of Race Elements into American Music* (1939), demonstrated his early dedication to creating a distinctively American musical idiom.

*Mass*, to which Bernstein gave the subtitle 'Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers', was commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis for the opening of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC in 1971. The timing was auspicious, since Bernstein had retired after 11 years as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic in 1969, and was struggling to regain his interrupted compositional career, and indulge essential elements of his creative self. The work elicited both censure for its irreverence, pretentiousness and vulgarity, and accolades for its display of Bernstein's brilliant grasp of all aspects of culture, music and theatre. While Bernstein was a Jew descended from a line of rabbis, he had always been fascinated by the dramatic and theatrical qualities of Catholic ritual, and wanted to compose an ecumenical service that would combine elements from various religious and ancient tribal beliefs. The result was a work that required over 200 performers, including choirs, soloists, rock combos, bands, orchestra and a dance troupe. *A Simple Song* is the work's most well-known number, a beautiful, folksong-like ballad.

The live sound of the Celebrant's acoustic guitar serves to silence the opening *Kyrie* of the *Mass*, which has reached a peak of complexity and cacophony. At this point in the drama, the Celebrant is an innocent, unfettered being with a joyous and trusting faith in God.

American composer and writer **Ned Rorem** (b 1923) studied at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, but found the teaching too rigid and conservative. He soon left to become secretary and copyist to Virgil Thomson in New York, and for a while he studied with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood (summers of 1946 & 1947). Rorem was also well known for his writing, especially diaries, where he recorded witty and elegant observations on people, culture, music and more. He was an incisive music critic, and a keen observer of the vicissitudes of his times. Rorem's nearly 400 songs are his greatest musical legacy. They are characterised by polyphony, complex tonality, intensity, wit and transparency, and by his obvious efforts to write powerful piano parts that equal the singer's in importance. Features of jazz colour his songs and emphasise their American sensibility, as do influences from his early association with Virgil Thomson. *I am Rose* and *Early in the Morning* are charming songs, less intense than many others Rorem composed. The former is an economical, charming and witty setting of the brief poem by American expatriate writer, poet and art collector Gertrude Stein (1874-1946). The latter was composed to the words of a poem by the American Robert Hillyer (1895-1961), and evokes images of Paris, where Rorem was living and studying when he wrote these works in 1955. Chords borrowed from the jazz idiom can be heard in this song.

**Samuel Barber** (1910-1981) was one of the most well-known and frequently-performed American composers in the USA and Europe during the middle years of the 20th century. Following his graduation from the Curtis Institute, he had a brief career as a baritone, which explains the vocally-inspired lyricism that marks his music, and the fact that songs made up two-thirds of his compositional output. In 1935, Barber won the Prix de Rome, which enabled him to study for two years at the American Academy in Rome. It was here that he composed the *Three Songs*, Op 10, settings of poems from *Chamber Music* (1907) by the Irish modernist novelist and poet James Joyce (1882-1941). We will hear two of these this evening, *Sleep now* and *I hear an army*. The *Three Songs* are evidence of Barber's gift for choosing intelligent texts. He appreciated the rhythmic flow of the words, and would shift meters in his music to accommodate this natural rhythm. This can be heard in the two songs on the programme this evening, as will the composer's mastery in expression of the texts' meaning in the piano accompaniment. The songs each describe experiences of love, and are evidence that, while Barber was such a distinguished melodist, his harmonies are often complex, and he did not shy away from dissonance.

**Carlisle Floyd** (b 1926) was primarily a pianist until 1955, when he started to take an interest in composition while studying at Syracuse University in New York. He has written predominantly song cycles and operatic works, the latter drawing on his skills and experience as a playwright. His background living in towns in South Carolina has also served as inspiration, with most of his operas having southern, rural or colonial settings. *Susannah*, Floyd's tremendously successful third opera completed in 1955, is no exception. This modernisation of the apocryphal, biblical tale of Susannah and the Elders is set in New Hope Valley, Tennessee, and portrays and critiques the fundamentalist Christianity that is so strong in this area. Floyd's operatic style is short and spare, and his music easily accessible. The song to be performed this evening, *It must make the good Lord sad*, is sung by Susannah's drunken but perceptive, wise and gentle brother Sam. He is trying to explain to her the persecution she is about to experience at the hands of the church Elders, including an itinerant preacher, The Reverend Olin Blitch, who is attempting to conduct a revival in New Hope Valley.

**Aaron Copland** (1900-1990) is credited with raising American music to an equal position with contemporary developments in European modernism, though he strove to find a serious style that sounded American rather than the European. From 1921-1924, he studied with highly sought-after teacher Nadia Boulanger in Paris, the first American to do so. Copland's output can be roughly divided into four periods. The *Old American Songs* (1950: first set; 1952: second set) are a product of the third, more populist 'Americana' period. Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears had asked Copland to arrange a set of American folk songs, which they premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in England in 1950. We will hear four of this first set of five songs this evening. The songs are based on traditional 19th century tunes that Copland gathered from various sources, and the melodic material remains intact, showing his deference towards the folk cultures from which they emanated. The matching accompaniments are skilfully written, displaying Copland's considerable expertise as an arranger. For example, in *The Boatmen's Dance* (1843), a minstrel tune written by Daniel Decatur Emmett (composer of *Dixie* and *Polly Wolly Doodle*), the accompaniment imitates a minstrel banjo. The *Dodger* emerged during the 1884 presidential campaigns, and satirises a number of professions, three of which remain in Copland's setting: the political candidate, the preacher and the lover. *Long Time Ago* is another minstrel tune, an anonymous one to which words and music were added in 1837. In this version, the lyrics, which reminisce about a beloved maid who died long ago, are set against Copland's gentle counterpoint. *Simple Gifts* (1848) is a Shaker hymn tune, first used by Copland in *Appalachian Spring* (1944).

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958) played piano, viola and organ, but was drawn to composition from an early age. Vaughan Williams aimed consciously for an English identity in his music, having realised that his creative salvation would be found in the use of native resources

rather than in the imitation of foreign models. This led him to collect English folksongs, elements of which imbue much of his music without dominating it. The song cycle *On Wenlock Edge* for voice, piano and string quartet was written in 1908-1909, at a crucial point in Vaughan Williams' career, marked by the full emergence of the composer's personal voice. He had just returned from three months in Paris studying with Ravel, and although a French influence can sometimes be heard in the songs, characteristics of his developing individual style are strongly evident, such as melismata (ornaments around one syllable), consecutive triads and a new chromaticism. Vaughan Williams selected six poems from *A Shropshire Lad* by English poet A.E. Housman (1859-1936) to set, believing that this poetry particularly invited music. The poems evoke the English countryside in Shropshire, human disquietude, unrequited and lost love, and death. Piano and string quartet contribute equally with the voice to the expression of the many atmospheric effects invoked by the text.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### ANTHONY DEAN GRIFFEY – TENOR

Four-time Grammy Award Winning American tenor Anthony Dean Griffey has captured critical and popular acclaim on opera, concert and recital stages around the world. The combination of his beautiful and powerful lyric tenor voice, gift of dramatic interpretation and superb musicianship have earned him the highest praise from critics and audiences alike.

He has performed leading roles at the great international opera houses including The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Glyndebourne, the Opera National de Paris, and the Teatro Comunale di Firenze and many more. He is a regular guest of the world's greatest orchestras with a who's-who of eminent conductors. Celebrated the world over for his powerful portrayal of the title role of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Mr Griffey brought his signature role to seasons with the West Australian Opera and the Houston Grand Opera. He also will perform the role of Lennie in *Of Mice and Men* with Opera Australia in late 2011.

On compact disc, Anthony Dean Griffey's latest releases are *Peter Grimes* at Glyndebourne Opera with Mark Wigglesworth conducting as well as Deems Taylor's *Peter Ibbetson* with the Seattle Symphony on Naxos with Gerard Schwarz conducting. Mr Griffey's latest concert release is Mahler's Symphony No 8 (SFO) with the San Francisco Symphony and Michael Tilson Thomas also now on iTunes with the New York Philharmonic and Lorin Maazel.

For more visit [anthonydeanriffey.com](http://anthonydeanriffey.com)

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