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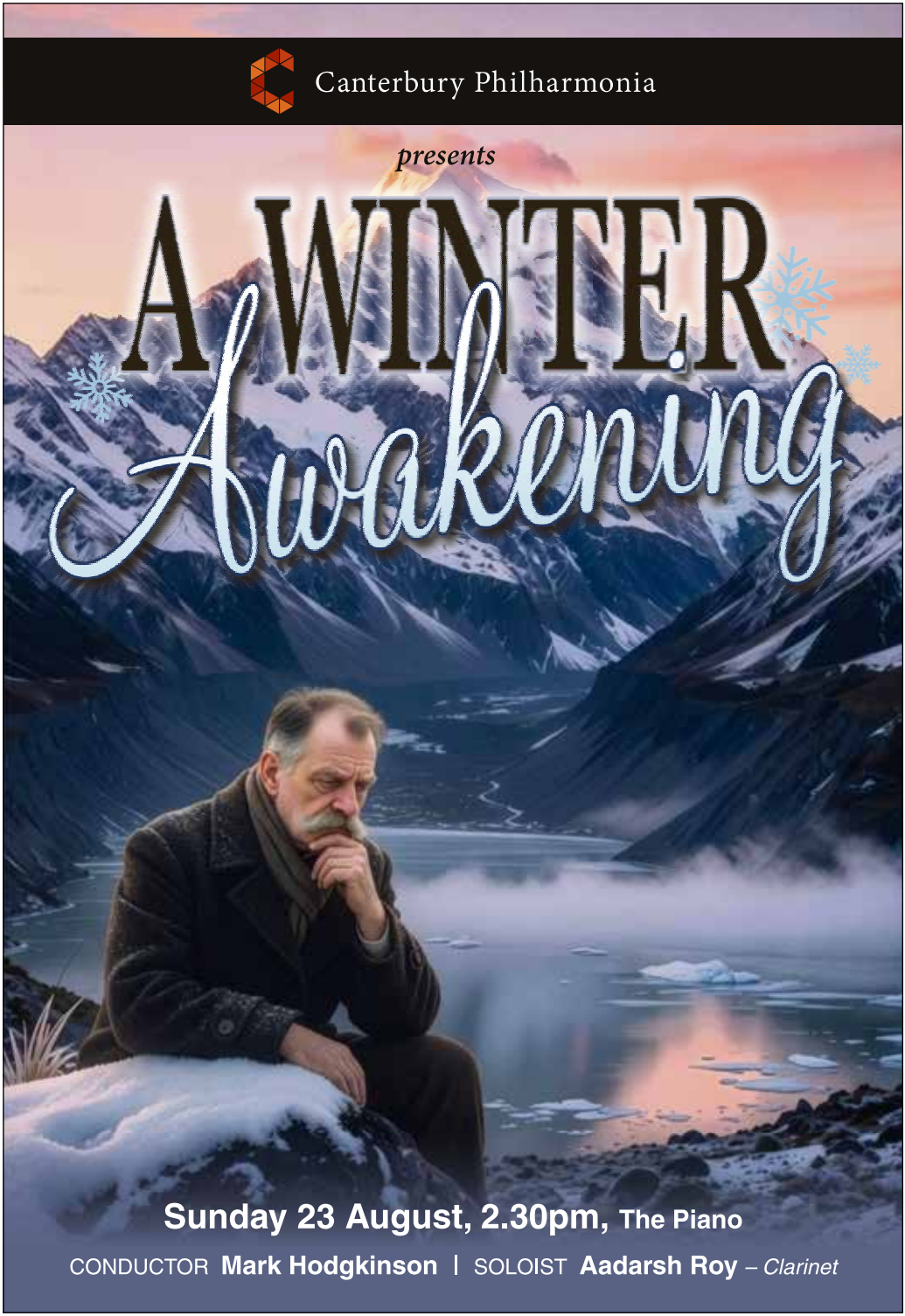

Sunday 23 August, 2.30pm, The Piano

CONDUCTOR **Mark Hodgkinson** | SOLOIST **Aadarsh Roy** – *Clarinet*

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Today's concert

Mark Hodgkinson conducts this afternoon's concert, which features a lively overture, an equally exciting clarinet concerto and Finnish composer Sibelius's first symphony.

Weber's overture to the opera *Abu Hassan* opens the programme with a lively selection of material in a classical style. The composer's wit and optimism are always present despite the opera's theme of money problems.

We continue with Weber's *Clarinet Concerto No. 1* and welcome **Aadarsh Roy** as soloist. This work is in three movements and once again provides energetic outer movements with a slow inner movement.

After the interval we present Sibelius's *Symphony No. 1*, a work in four movements which features many woodwind and string solos. The orchestra has enjoyed preparing this challenging piece with its unusual harmonies and technical difficulties. Listen out for the huge dynamic range, assisted by the brass and timpani, who are at times asked to deliver full volume.

Mark Hodgkinson Conductor

Mark Hodgkinson is a Christchurch freelance conductor and music teacher. He has been the conductor of the Canterbury Philharmonia since 1988.

Mark studied performance trumpet at the University of Canterbury and in Sweden, and played with the Auckland Philharmonia for three years before returning to Christchurch.

His conducting experience began with Christchurch School of Music ensembles and continued in Sweden with the Limhamns Brass Band. He gained further experience at the Aspen Music Festival and School in Colorado, USA.

Mark has conducted numerous orchestras, opera and theatre companies throughout New Zealand, including the New Zealand Doctors' Orchestra. In 2021 he was Music Director and conductor for Toi Toi Opera's inaugural production of Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and recently conducted their season of Vaughan Williams's *Riders to the Sea*.

Programme

WEBER

Abu Hassan Overture

J. 106

WEBER

Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor

Op 73

Soloist: **Aadarsh Roy**

1. Allegro
2. Adagio ma non troppo
3. Rondo: Allegretto

INTERVAL

SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 1 in E minor

Op 39

1. Andante – Allegro energico
2. Andante (ma non troppo lento)
3. Scherzo: Allegro
4. Finale: Andante – Allegro molto

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Programme notes by Nick Wogan

WEBER

Abu Hassan Overture, J. 106

Weber's ***Abu Hassan*** was a one act comic opera to a tale from the *1001 Nights*. The German libretto was by Franz Carl Heimer and it was essentially a singspiel in the then popular Turkish style. Weber worked on it from 1810 to 1811 when it was first produced at Munich's Residenz Theater on 4 June 1811, conducted by the composer. It was relatively successful and was given performances at other European venues including London.

There are five principal characters of whom two are spoken not sung. *Abu Hassan* is a tenor, his wife *Fatime* is a soprano, and *Omar* the moneylender is a bass. The *Caliph* and his wife are spoken parts.

The plot revolves around *Abu Hassan's* large financial indebtedness to which he applies *Desio Hotblack's** technique of having a year dead for tax purposes. Did I mention there are significant elements of farce to the story? Ultimately it's all's well that ends well; *Abu Hassan* and *Fatima* prevail over the wicked *Omar*.

The opera has fallen into disuse nowadays and is not part of the mainstream operatic pantheon although it does occasionally get a performance and has been recorded. The overture to ***Abu Hassan***, however, is a regular concert favourite and multiple recordings abound.

It opens the opera with lively, richly orchestrated energy and reflects Weber's gift for dramatic colour and rhythmic vitality. Sparkling woodwinds introduce playful motifs while bold brass punctuates the music's humorous twists. Rapid string passages and light, dance-like rhythms propel frequent dynamic contrasts and sudden shifts in mood, foreshadowing onstage farce.

Weber blends lyricism and wit: memorable themes recur in miniature, creating a compact, theatrically effective prelude in under ten minutes.

** See: The Restaurant At The End Of The Universe – Douglas Adams*

WEBER

Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op 73

Soloist: **Aadarsh Roy**

Weber's ***Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op 73*** (1811–13) is a landmark of early Romantic clarinet literature, written for Heinrich Baermann (1784–1847), a German clarinet virtuoso known for his significant influence on the Romantic clarinet repertoire and for being an outstanding performer of his time.

Baermann played in the court orchestra of Munich and was a key figure in the development of clarinet playing techniques during his era. The concerto balances virtuosic display and lyrical singing lines, merging Classical clarity with early Romantic expression.

Its three movements: *Allegro con fuoco, Adagio ma non troppo, and Rondo: Allegretto* – blend operatic lyricism with dazzling virtuosity. The opening movement contrasts fiery, dramatic gestures with graceful clarinet lines; the *Adagio* showcases the clarinet's singing, cantabile quality through long, expressive phrases; Weber exploits the clarinet's range and timbral flexibility; some passages were conceived for Baermann's basset clarinet, offering extended low notes. The *Rondo* returns to brighter, playful energy with rapid passagework and folk-like themes. Orchestration remains transparent, supporting the soloist with spirited woodwind dialogues and warm strings.

At roughly 18-22 minutes, the concerto set some new standards in style and thus influenced later clarinet repertoire. It has become, and remains, a staple in the solo repertoire for its expressive range and technical demands. The concerto is frequently performed and recorded, prized for its melodic inventiveness, technical challenges, and enduring emotional immediacy.

It remains a favourite of clarinetists and audiences worldwide today.

Aadarsh Roy Clarinet

Aadarsh Rayhan Roy is a year 13 student at Burnside High School and plays clarinet in the school's orchestra.

Recently he performed with the New Zealand Secondary Schools' Symphony Orchestra, playing demanding solo parts as principal clarinet in ***Scheherazade*** and ***Rhapsody in Blue***.

Aadarsh also plays saxophone in the Christchurch Youth Jazz Orchestra and Sideline Swing, recently competing in the Big Band category in Tauranga for the National Youth Jazz Competition.

When he's not playing, Aadarsh enjoys cycling, and plans to study civil engineering at university.

SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op 39

Sibelius's ***Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op 39*** premiered in 1899. Sibelius, however, was not happy with it. He immediately withdrew the score and no evidence of the original remains. He kept revising it until 1902 when he produced the version we know today; In spite of this the ***Symphony No 1*** marks the arrival of a singular symphonic voice that fuses late-Romantic breadth with Nordic restraint. It is set in four movements that, although distinctly separated, share most of the thematic material and affect it by propelling it toward the Finale.

1. Andante, ma non troppo – Allegro energico

The first movement opens with a long clarinet solo (over a quiet but active timpani roll) that actually contains most (if not all) of the thematic germ material of the entire symphony. Sibelius had discovered Bruckner during his studies in Europe and held him in high regard. Sibelius and his wife, Aino, had attended a performance of Bruckner's Symphony No 2 in Turku and it is interesting to compare the opening of the Bruckner to the Sibelius at the Allegro energico where the movement proper gets underway. The presence of Sibelius' characteristic cross-hatch writing (bass lines move down while upper voices move up) and numerous chromatic scales is apparent throughout this movement and indeed the whole symphony. His habit of starting melodies from a long static note is also present. The second subject brings to our attention Sibelius' interest in modal scales and melodies and strengthens the "Finnishness" of the music. The end of this movement foreshadows the end of the last movement.

2. Andante (ma non troppo lento)

Quiet sustained chords support a theme that suggests weariness, longing and large distance. One is reminded of Tchaikovsky to some extent but the longing here is definitely not urban Slavic. There are interludes revealing Sibelius' mastery of woodwind orchestration and the settled peace gives way to strident arctic winds and wild empty landscapes as well as sunny forest glades full of fauna. The plodding journey theme returns several times until it finally seems to start running (polar bears? Wolves? Tapio's sprites?) and builds to a loud chaotic climax and sudden silence. The peace returns and the theme disappears into the distance.

3. Scherzo: Allegro

A study of Sibelius' and Bruckner's symphonic output needs to pay special attention to the scherzo. While Bruckner produced great sonorous galumphing elephantine movements, Sibelius went in a different direction exploring natural landscapes and even integrating it within one or two movement symphonies as well as solitary examples like ***The Oceanides***.

In this symphony we hear echoes of Tchaikovsky but with some very odd, almost comical harmonies and orchestrations. From the strumming violas and cellos, to the theme's opening statement on crackling timpani and ghostlike hidden themes drifting through the middle texture. This scherzo, though clearly unique, offers no real clue to where Sibelius would take this form.

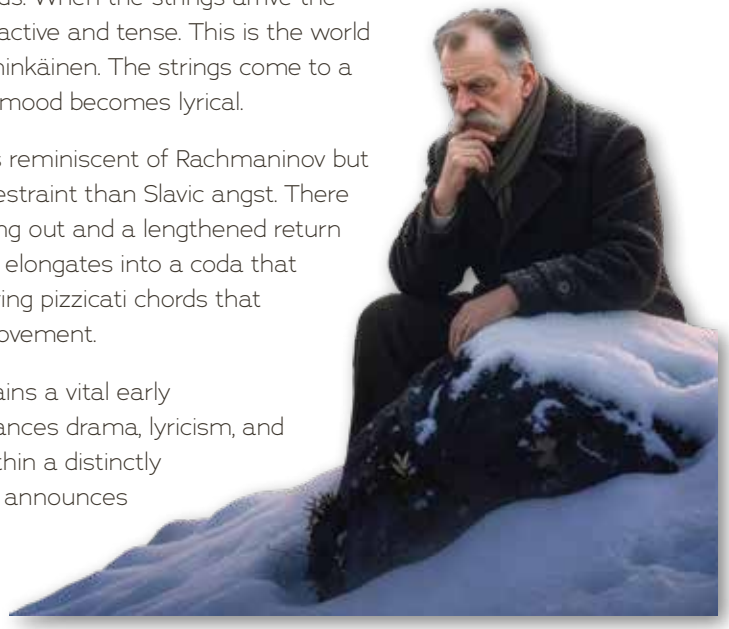
4. Finale (Quasi una Fantasia): Andante – Allegro molto

We immediately and instinctively know we have reached the major point of the music so far. Although a restatement of the symphony's opening clarinet solo, it is now loudly orchestrated in the strings punctuated by granite chords in the brass.

There is a breath of sweet pathos from the woodwinds but the strings keep pushing and accelerating to the Allegro molto which starts surprisingly quietly in the lower woodwinds. When the strings arrive the music becomes very active and tense. This is the world of Kullervo and Lemminkäinen. The strings come to a sudden stop and the mood becomes lyrical.

The second subject is reminiscent of Rachmaninov but again, more Finnish restraint than Slavic angst. There is contrapuntal working out and a lengthened return to the big tune which elongates into a coda that ends with the two string pizzicati chords that concluded the first movement.

Symphony No. 1 remains a vital early masterpiece that balances drama, lyricism, and architectural unity within a distinctly Finnish aesthetic and announces Sibelius's arrival.



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Performing in this concert

Violin I

Alastair Sands††
Justine Bradley
Marlys Donaldson
Alison Griffith-Collins
Lorraine Horton
Victoria Lee
Margaret Noble
Georgina Wood

Violin II

Carol Frost†
Beth Garvey
Mary Kerridge
Sally Langley
Lynette Murdoch
Olivia Murray

Viola

Katherine Trought†
Robyn-Jane Chernishov
Alex Hurrell
Kaylene Murdoch
Nick Wogan

Cello

Katy Brett†
Katharina Cairns
Amy Isbister
Morag Macpherson*

Double Bass

John Blunt
Bryan Isbister
Gerald Oliver*

Flute

Bryony Bedggood†
Natasha Chernousova
Sarah Coulter
Karin Oswin

Oboe

Malcolm McCulloch†
Alison Macklan
Ian Thorpe

Clarinet

Kate Fleming†
Iris Brookland
Jennifer Tubb

Bassoon

Milja Albers-Pearce†
Reina Dornan

French Horn

Jenny Bartley
Sally Botur
Elizabeth Christensen
Angeline Dew

Trumpet

Lucy Page-Dalton†
Mike Bickers
James Upton

Trombone

Carol Crowther†
Margaret van Ginkle*
Geoffrey Wheeler

Tuba

David Pearce†

Timpani

Stephen Weir†

Percussion

Stephen Weir†
David Pearce

Keyboard

Abigail Fleming*

†† *Concertmaster*
† *Section principal*
* *Guest*

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Committee: Sarah Coulter
Committee: Stephen Weir
Ex officio: Mark Hodgkinson

Acknowledgements

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Front-of-house: Katherine Broughton, Bruce Graham, Pete Graham
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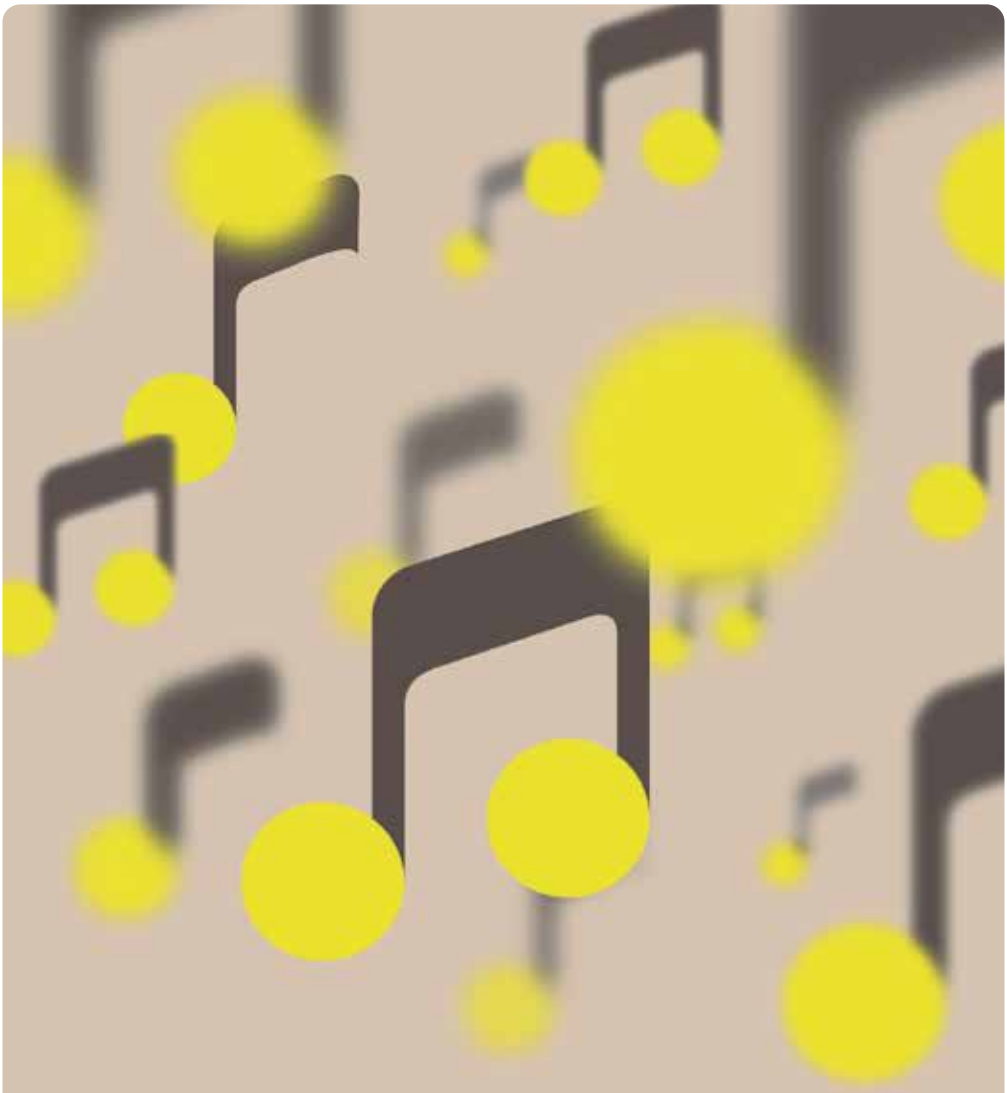
Photography: Bryan Isbister

About the orchestra

Established in 1952, *Canterbury Philharmonia Inc.* is the longest-running recreational orchestra in Ōtautahi Christchurch. Its players rehearse in the centre of the city every Monday evening, presenting three concerts each year.

How to find out more

Visit our website: **www.canterburyphilharmonia.org.nz**
Find us on Facebook: **canterburyphilharmoniaorchestra**
Email: **chair@canterburyphilharmonia.org.nz**



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