

ANAM RECITAL: LILI STEPHENS (VIOLIN) Tying Knots

WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 11AM
ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

Peter SCULTHORPE (1929-2014) *Irkanda I* (1955) 10'

Carl NIELSEN (1865-1931) Violin Concerto, op. 33 (1911) 15'
ii. Poco adagio
ii. Rondo. Allegretto scherzando

Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897) Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108 (1878-88) 20'
i. Allegro
ii. Adagio
iii. Un poco presto e con sentimento
iv. Presto agitato

Lili Stephens (QLD) violin
Aidan Boase (ANAM Associate Faculty) piano

Approximate duration: 50 minutes

ABOUT LILI STEPHENS

Lili is a passionate violinist undertaking her first year at ANAM, under the tutelage of Adam Chalabi. Beginning her musical journey at the age of four, Lili's love and enthusiasm for music continued to flourish. As a young musician, Lili was a member of the Queensland Youth Symphony from 2016 to 2017 under John Curro and was incredibly fortunate to be a part of the 2017 International tour to China and Germany. In 2018, Lili was a recitalist in the National Youth Concerto Competition and in 2022, became a member of the Amogus Trio which won first prize in the Musica Viva Strike a Chord. She began her tertiary studies at the University of Queensland (UQ) in 2021 studying for a Bachelor of Music (Honours) where she received the Kinnane Music Scholarship. She has been learning with Adam Chalabi since the commencement of her degree. Find out more at anam.com.au/musicians

Lili is supported by ANAM Syndicate donors Olga Abrahams, Peter and Jane Phillips.



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PROGRAM NOTES

Today's program shall start with **Peter Sculthorpe's** *Irkanda I* for solo violin. Inspired by the unique Australian landscape and native wildlife, Sculthorpe famously explores and recreates these surroundings in a unique sound world. The word 'Irkanda' is a First Nations word meaning a remote and lonely place, and this work is the first of a series of four pieces bearing this title. *Irkanda I* is a single movement, and in it, long, melodic lines and bird-sounds are contrasted with brittle, rhythmic sections. The opening melody follows the entire contour of the hills around Canberra, where most of the work was written and I believe that in the starkness in which it starts and ends, a sense of peace and tranquillity can be found. *Irkanda I* is truly atmospheric and possesses such incredible contrasts particularly within the realm of texture and density and utilises a variety of extended techniques including artificial harmonics and left hand pizzicato. Though there are moments that are violent in nature developed through the dissonant harmonies and changing sounding points, it ultimately returns to a single-line texture and draws to a close peacefully. This piece has been a particularly interesting learn for me as I have never performed a modern Australian piece in a recital program before. It has both inspired and challenged me to further explore this incredible sound world that is inherently Australian.

Composed in Norway while he was visiting Edvard Grieg's widow, Nina, in Troldhaugen in the summer of 1911, the Violin Concerto, op. 33, is **Carl Nielsen's** one and only violin concerto. Nielsen found this work difficult to compose and later mused on the dilemma inherent in composing a concerto: "It has to be good music and yet always show regard for the development of the solo instrument, putting it in the best possible light. The piece must have substance and be popular and showy without being superficial. These conflicting elements must and shall meet and form a higher unity." Working slowly, and electing to use a neoclassical approach, Nielsen believed that the work should sound effective and accessible without being superficial. Despite this challenge, he ultimately found it satisfying to compose. The work was first premiered in 1912 by Danish violinist Peder Møller and the Royal Danish Orchestra alongside Nielsen's third symphony, *Espansiva*, with Nielsen himself conducting. The concerto was performed several times in the following years, always with Møller as soloist. Divided into two parts as opposed to the commonly found three-part concerto, Nielsen's concerto challenges the soloist technically as well as through its more unique structural context. The second movement, *Adagio*, begins with a selection of woodwind solos (today played in piano reduction by my incredible associate artist Aidan Boase) before the solo joins this beautiful lyrical line. Nielsen wrote to his wife from Troldhaugen about the pastoral character of the movement: "*In the evening the mountains around are clear with the blue sky as a background.*" The last rondo is incredibly cheeky, a stark contrast to the preceding *Adagio*. Upbeat and lively in nature, the rondo possesses a folky charm filled with excitement. Though it remains a lesser known and performed work among the expansive catalogue of violin repertoire, I am thrilled to be performing it for you today.

The D minor Sonata is the last of **Johannes Brahms'** three violin and piano duos and represents the composer at the height of his powers. Compared to the more cheerful preceding sonatas in G major and A major, the D minor sonata takes a more serious turn, and is the culmination of several years' work from the intensely self-critical composer. Just as Nielsen subverted the regular three movement structure, Brahms has written four movements. Beginning with an urgent Allegro, the sonata's opening motif is repeated throughout the first movement: an ascending fourth, a figure of descending quavers and a long-held note followed by a quick note. This motif is developed and changed with slight variations in each repetition, thus creating a variety of compositional and emotional transformations. The concise Adagio that follows has a rapt quality, and is seemingly a song that manages to express a great deal without any need for words. The third movement (Un poco presto e con sentimento) is an example of Brahms steadfastly refusing to write a real scherzo when an intermezzo will do. The middle section is more emphatic, but the requested sentiment soon returns us to a lyrical mood reminiscent of the earlier violin sonatas. The climax of this work, though, is clearly the finale. The stormy Presto agitato gallops relentlessly, occasionally yielding to reflective interludes offering welcome (but only temporary) contrast.

I would like to thank my teacher, Adam Chalabi for all his guidance, words of wisdom and encouragement over the last four years. It has been an incredible journey so far and one that has been so wonderfully enhanced by my time here at ANAM. To all my friends and colleagues, I dearly treasure and admire you all. And finally, I would like to thank my parents for all their love and support, I wouldn't be here without you.

Written by Lili Stephens