

CASTLEMAINE STATE FESTIVAL

2021



19 MARCH-4 APRIL



Mandolin Magic

The Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra (MMO) is delighted to be performing once again at the Castlemaine State Festival to show off the magic of mandolins. It first performed with the second Castlemaine Festival way back in 1978 and has featured in the programs of several Festivals since.

The MMO celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2018 with a Gala performance in Melbourne's wonderful Deakin Edge auditorium, the release of its latest CD, "Sailing Into The Wind" (which features a newly commissioned work by Australia's most performed composer, Elena Kats-Chernin), and a successful concert tour in Europe culminating with two performances at the world's largest festival of plucked string music, the Bundes Deutsche Zupfmusik, held once every four years. During this concert tour the MMO performed a repertoire of music composed by contemporary Australian musicians, some of whose works we will be performing for the 2021 Castlemaine State Festival.

Mandolin orchestras originated in Europe and became incredibly popular with people of all walks of life. Originally the mandolins featured a rounded body (bowl-back) which tended to slip off one's lap unless a leather or more recently a synthetic cloth was placed under the body of the instrument. As the mandolin orchestra became very popular in America a new type of mandolin was created, the flat-back, which was cheaper to make and much louder and more "strident". Mandolin orchestras became very popular in Japan and eventually with the migration of Europeans after WWII a small number of mandolin orchestras were started in Australia, the first in Sydney and a few years later, in Melbourne.

Mandolin orchestras are modelled on the structure of the classical string quartet with first and second mandolin sections, mandola (larger bodied instruments with a lower register similar to violas in string quartets), mandocellos (larger again than mandolas with an even lower register). Classical guitars and either cellos or double basses were added to increase the complexity and sonority of the sound of the mandolin orchestra.

The repertoire for mandolin orchestras is quite extensive and composers all over the world continue to be commissioned to write for this type of orchestra. The MMO and several of its players have commissioned music as you will hear during this concert.

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Conductor, Soloist & Players



Kent Ross commenced his new role of Conductor/Musical Director of the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra in August 2019 and has quickly developed a fantastic rapport with the players. Highly qualified and experienced as a conductor, pianist and composer/arranger with numerous degrees including a Master of Music (Conducting) he also teaches piano and music theory at Peninsula Grammar School and conducts the Casey Philharmonic Orchestra.



Wendy Rowland is a hugely popular professional musician and resident of Castlemaine. She graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1982 and her teachers and mentors included Andre Hedges, Don Scott, Bob Sedergreen and Tony Gould. Her freelance professional musical life included playing violin in orchestras such as the Australian Pops Orchestra and the Elizabethan Trust Orchestra; accompanying on piano and as répétiteur for choirs, concerts, theatre and auditions for MSO, VCA and AMEB; as well as playing in multiple performance bands. Wendy is the musical director of Castlemaine's Corker Orchestra and teaches piano and violin. She is also a talented accordionist and loves performing Piazzolla's tango music.

MMO Players

1st Mandolins: Andrew Russo (orchestra leader), Stephen Morey, Joan Harris, Jill Johnson, Roberta Condie and Kai Windle.

2nd Mandolin: Takashi Nakatani (section leader) Shirley Watson, Dennis Payne, Mia Silver Lorraine le Plastrier and Tim Adams.

Mandolas: Michelle Wright (section leader) and Ray Kerslake.

Guitars: Donna Kerslake (section leader), Anthony McGarrigle, Tony Wheldale, Kostas Balalas, Wei Yuan and Barbara Gartner.

Mandocello: Adam Tate

Double Bass: Danny Silver

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Program

Tres Piezas Sudamerica - Markus Kugler

- Tango Infernal
- Lettre D'Adieu
- Samba Sudaméricana

Oblivion - Astor Piazzolla

Two Guitars - Valdo Preema

Libertango - Astor Piazzolla (soloist: Wendy Rowlands, accordion)

Blankanvas - Werner Ruecker

Ave Maria - Astor Piazzolla

She Who Sails Into The Wind - Elena Kats-Chernin

Orbit - Stephen Lalor

Song Of The Japanese Autumn - Yasua Kuwahara

Rhumba - Dieter Kreidler

Composers and their Music

Markus Kugler (born 1971) is a German composer whose work, "Tres Piezas de Sudamérica" (Three South American Pieces) easily conveys the energy and rhythms of Latin American music.

Astor Piazzolla (1921 - 1992) was an Argentinian composer and bandoneón (accordion) player who revolutionized tango music. He introduced counterpoints, fugues and new harmonies into tango music. This year is the 100th anniversary of his birth and we will perform three of his most famous pieces, two beautiful slow melancholic works - Oblivion and Ave Maria and the energetic "Libertango" featuring Wendy Rowlands on accordion.

Valdo Preema graduated from the Tallin State Music School (Estonia) as a percussionist and performs with a number of jazz and rock bands. He also manages a music publishing company, edition 49. He arranged "Two Guitars", a Russian Gypsy Song for edition 49.

Werner Ruecker began learning classical guitar at the age of ten from his father Josef and played in the orchestra which his father founded in 1967 - the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra. From 1979 to 1984 and from 2013 until 2019 he conducted the MMO and now resides in Sydney where he continues to teach classical guitar and now conducts the Sydney Mandolin Orchestra. He created the arrangements of Astor Piazzolla's "Oblivion" and "Ave Maria" which we will perform today and wrote "Blankanvas" in 2018.

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Elena Kats-Chernin is currently Australia's foremost composer and was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Early in her life she was recognised to be a prodigy both on piano and in composing and trained in Russia. She moved to Australia at the age of 18 and continued her musical training gaining a degree in piano performance, composition and teaching. She moved to Germany where she worked for 13 years before moving back to Australia and contributing enormously to musical life here both as a composer and a performer. After attending an amazing performance by Elena and her pianist colleague, Tamara-Ann Cislowska, at the Castlemaine State Festival in 2017, one of the MMO's players offered Elena a commission to write a work for the MMO and she accepted this offer with great enthusiasm. "She Who Sails Into The Wind" is the result of this commission!

Stephen Lalor is a Sydney-born composer and plucked-string instrument specialist. He studied domra (Russian mandolin), composition and conducting at the Tchaikovsky Conservatorium Kiev, in 1984/5 and 1988/9 on scholarships. He is the mandolin and related-instruments player for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) and in 2008 he was mandolin soloist in 30 performances of Opera Australia's Don Giovanni and Othello. He has composed many works for mandolin orchestras as well as string quartets and works for solo mandolin.

Yasua Kuwahara (1946 - 2003) was a Japanese mandolinist and composer whose gift to the MMO of a handwritten draft of the "Song of the Japanese Autumn" eventually became published and become famous world wide. This beautiful work has become the MMO's "theme song" or "musical mascot"! We love to play it and we hope you enjoy listening to it!

Dieter Kreidler (b. 1943) is a German classical guitarist, teacher, conductor and composer. He was Professor of Guitar at Cologne University of Music for many years and composed many works including the "Rhumba" which is a lot of fun to play!

