

# NZSQ BY CANDLELIGHT

## Programme Notes



### — SALINA FISHER (1993 -)

#### *Tōrino - echoes on pūtōrino improvisations by Rob Thorne* (2016)

Discovering the music of taonga pūoro artist Rob Thorne has been the most deeply moving listening experience in my recent memory. I was mesmerized by the many powerful and haunting voices that Thorne could produce through one instrument in particular, the pūtōrino, and felt compelled to explore further and respond musically.

The pūtōrino is a purely Māori instrument, and is unique in that it can function both as a 'trumpet' and 'flute'. This results in two distinct voices: the deeper, mournful *kōkiri o te tane* (male voice), and the eerie, more agile *waiata o te hine* (female voice). An elusive third voice can be achieved by blowing across the *māngai* (central opening). Thorne ventures further, finding a fourth 'humming' voice, as well as percussive sounds. The instrument's shape is based on the New Zealand case moth cocoon and embodies *Hine Raukatauri*, the *atua* (goddess) of music.

It became especially apparent when I had the chance to improvise alongside Thorne on violin, that the pūtōrino shares many musical elements with string playing, particularly in terms of registers, likeness to the human voice, breathy timbres, and flexibility in pitch. *Tōrino* (meaning 'spiral') is my exploration of this, based on transcriptions of recordings of a pūtōrino that Thorne himself had a hand in making.

My sincerest thanks, Rob, for your incredible openness, generosity, knowledge, support, and guidance through this beginning of a very special journey.

<b>Mā te rongō, ka mōhio</b>	<i>Through listening comes awareness</i>
<b>Mā te mōhio, ka mārama</b>	<i>Through awareness comes understanding</i>
<b>Mā te mārama, ka mātau</b>	<i>Through understanding comes knowledge</i>
<b>Mā te mātau, ka ora.</b>	<i>Through knowledge comes well-being.</i>

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### — FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732 - 1809)

#### **String Quartet Op. 20, No. 1 in Eb Major** from the 'Sun Quartets' (1772)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Minuetto: Allegretto
- III. Affettuoso e sostenuto
- IV. Finale: presto

Commonly known as the father of the symphony, Franz Joseph Haydn's contribution to the string quartet genre is equally impressive. He composed around seventy works in the genre, so it's no wonder a number of them have been affectionately nicknamed (or some might say burdened!) with titles of great variety. *The Frog*, *"How Do You Do?"*, *The Donkey*, and *The Joke* being some of the more memorable names bestowed, often by music enthusiasts rather than the composer himself.

The first movement is friendly, warm-hearted and generous with a brief moment of melodrama in the middle; four friends in jovial discussion of topics they are passionate about. The minuet continues confident and upbeat, with the trio more searching and 3 Program Notes uncertain. The surprising

and slightly confused return of the minuet music at the wrong time and place is a stroke of genius. The *affettuoso e sostenuto* third movement is a sublime yet simple testament to that genius. There is very little music that is at once so deeply felt and so effortless. The rondo finale is an exuberant exclamation of joy that begins with a whoop! and ends with a wink.

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## DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

### String Quartet No. 2 in A major, Op. 68 (1944)

- I. Overture: *Moderato con moto*
- II. Recitative and Romance: *Adagio*
- III. Valse: *Allegro*
- IV. Theme and Variations: *Adagio*

Dmitri Shostakovich wrote as many string quartets as symphonies – fifteen of each. His symphonies present emotional rawness and power on an immense scale, yet his quartets show he used the voicing and connection between each of the string instruments as a vehicle for more intimate utterances few symphonies could adequately capture. Born into a musical family in pre-revolutionary Russia, Shostakovich encountered political intrusion from the communist regime throughout his career that led to both setbacks and opportunities.

Shostakovich's artistic relationship with the Soviet Union was frequently uneasy – hardly surprising for a composer who lived through the 1917 Revolution, two world wars, and a succession of repressive state controls. A number of his quartets appeared at key points in European history. The Fourth, exhibited "Jewish" themes at a time of widespread anti-Semitism; the Eighth, written during a visit to the badly bombed city of Dresden, was dedicated "to the memory of the victims of facism and war".

Shostakovich's second string quartet was written in just nineteen days in 1944, during a Soviet era 'writers' retreat' about 300km north-east of Moscow, intended to inspire creativity for artists and writers of the time. By that stage, Shostakovich had already written eight symphonies, and the string quartet had become a relatively new interest. Most commentators find it hard to see the work as a response to the 'Great Patriotic War'. Rather, a letter to V. Y. Shebalin (the Quartet's dedicatee), then considered to be the Soviet Union's foremost composer of quartets, throws some light on the composer's intentions, the thematic connections with Shostakovich's second Piano Trio, and above all its allusions to Russian folk music, including the many Jewish inflections that permeate the piece, melodic as well as gestural. The work is one of Shostakovich's most extensive quartets and was dedicated to composer V.Y. Shebalin.

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