

BEETHOVEN'S
FIDELIO

Presented by West Australian Symphony Orchestra and Perth Festival in association with West Australian Opera

Friday 28 February 7pm & Sunday 1 March 2pm, 2020
Perth Concert Hall

WASO
West Australian
Symphony Orchestra

**PERTH
FESTIVAL**

**WEST
AUSTRALIAN
OPERA**


Wesfarmers Arts
Principal Partner



Wesfarmers Arts

West Australian
Symphony Orchestra
and Wesfarmers Arts,
creating the spark
that sets off a lifelong
love of music.



Shigeru Komatsu –
WASO Cello

The West Australian Symphony Orchestra respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Elders of the Indigenous Nations across Western Australia and on whose Lands we work.

Beethoven's Fidelio

Asher Fisch conductor
Christiane Libor Leonore/Fidelio
Tomislav Mužek Florestan
Adrian Tamburini Don Fernando
Felicitas Fuchs Marzelline
Andrew Goodwin Jaquino
Warwick Fyfe Don Pizarro
Jonathan Lemalu Rocco
Matthew Lester First Prisoner
David Dockery Second Prisoner

Eryn Jean Norvill narrator
Alison Croggon dramatic text
Clare Watson director

West Australian Symphony Orchestra
WASO Chorus
West Australian Opera Chorus
Allison Fyfe Surtitles Operator
Surtitles courtesy of Opera Australia
Translations by Brian Fitzgerald

Opera in concert sung in German with English surtitles. Narrated in English. A West Australian Symphony Orchestra and Perth Festival commission presented in association with West Australian Opera. Asher Fisch appears courtesy of Wesfarmers Arts. Clare Watson appears courtesy of Black Swan State Theatre Company.

Wesfarmers Arts Pre-concert Talk

Find out more about the music in the concert with this week's speaker, Cecilia Sun (see page 14 for her biography). The Pre-concert Talk will take place at 6.10pm on Friday and at 1.10pm on Sunday in the Terrace Level Foyer.

Listen to WASO

This performance is recorded for broadcast on ABC Classic. For further details visit abc.net.au/classic


Wesfarmers Arts
Principal Partner

Welcome



Beethoven's struggle with vocal music bothered him immensely throughout his creative life. He had challenged the reign of Mozart and Haydn in instrumental music with considerable success, and after the death of Haydn was widely considered the foremost composer of his time, admired in Vienna and all over Europe. But his conquest was not complete until he composed a great opera, and with *Fidelio*, this was the task.

Success with the opera proved elusive however, and Beethoven had to rework the opera time and again.

While it is true that dramaturgically *Fidelio* has weaknesses, at the same time it also contains some of the most beautiful moments Beethoven ever composed. The quartet of the first act, Leonore's scene and aria, the prisoner's chorus and Florestan's scene at the top of the second act are fine examples.

Most importantly, the opera gives us deeper insights into Beethoven's personality and creative mind. It is a work about tyranny and freedom, bravery and love. The way in which Beethoven puts these words and ideas into music guides us in interpreting many of his purely instrumental works, helping us decode his musical language, so to speak.

Asher Fisch
Principal Conductor & Artistic Adviser



Set in a prison, within locked doors, we are introduced to *Fidelio*, the new jailer. What we know (but the other characters don't) is *Fidelio* is actually a woman named Leonore, who has disguised herself as a man to get work in the prison and rescue her husband who she suspects has been imprisoned by the wicked governor.

It's interesting how relevant *Fidelio* still remains. One of the things that draws me to this opera is the woman doesn't die, something unusual for an opera of this era. Instead Leonore is the hero. Underneath that plot are themes of freedom, liberation and political persecution which all remain relevant today.

Writing this narration, I wanted to bring poetic and philosophical considerations to the forefront. I thought about the underlying meanings. What is freedom? What does it look and feel like?

I hope you come out of this production full of hope and joy. Beethoven is supremely capable of producing an extreme sense of joyousness, part of the reason why his popularity has stood the test of time, and the text is meant to amplify this.

Alison Croggon

Any concert presentation of Beethoven's only opera presents unique challenges. The music is sublime, but a creative solution for the spoken text needs to be found. This is because a back-to-back performance of the musical numbers leaves dramaturgical holes as well as abrupt musical gear changes. Hence Asher Fisch's suggestion of sewing a narrated text around the musical numbers, built around the moments where spoken text occurs in the original.

Our hope in commissioning this narrated text was not only to honour the philosophies and ideas at the heart of the original, but also to focus on more universal themes that can speak to a contemporary political landscape through a female prism that reflects and amplifies the central heroic role.

Liberty, Freedom, Imprisonment, both literal and metaphorical, speaking truth to power, love. These are the launching points for Alison Croggon's exquisite and poetic text, so ably delivered by Eryn Jean Norvill and directed by Black Swan's Clare Watson.



Perth Festival is thrilled to be partnering with West Australian Symphony Orchestra alongside West Australian Opera and Black Swan State Theatre Company to present this concert version of *Fidelio* – our flagship companies collaborating to close Perth Festival 2020, a celebration of our place and our time. We do hope you enjoy.

Iain Grandage
Perth Festival Artistic Director

Perth Festival

Founded in 1953 by The University of Western Australia, Perth Festival is Australia's longest running international arts festival and Western Australia's premier cultural event. The Festival has developed a worldwide reputation for international excellence, commissioning major new works, celebrating the unique qualities of Perth and engaging diverse audiences with the highest quality artistic experiences. For 67 years the Festival has welcomed to Perth some of the world's greatest living artists and now connects with hundreds of thousands of people each year.

Iain Grandage is Perth Festival Artistic Director 2020 – 23.

WASO On Stage

VIOLIN

Laurence Jackson
Concertmaster

Semra Lee-Smith
A/Assoc Concertmaster

Rebecca Glorie
A/Principal 1st Violin

Zak Rowntree*
Principal 2nd Violin

Kylie Liang
Assoc Principal 2nd Violin

Kate Sullivan
*Assistant Principal
2nd Violin*

Fleur Challen

Stephanie Dean
• Marc & Nadia Geary

Amy Furfaro^

Beth Hebert

Alexandra Isted

Jane Johnston^

Sunmi Jung

Christina Katsimbardis

Ellie Lawrence

Andrea Mendham^

Jasmine Middleton^

Akiko Miyazawa

Lucas O'Brien

Melanie Pearn

Louise Sandercock

Jolanta Schenk

Jane Serrangeli

Kathryn Shinnick

Cerys Tooby

Teresa Vinci^

VIOLA

Daniel Schmitt

Alex Brogan

Kierstan Arkleysmith

Nik Babic

Benjamin Caddy

Alison Hall

Rachael Kirk

Allan McLean

Elliot O'Brien

Helen Tuckey

CELLO

Eve Silver*

Melinda Forsythe°

Shigeru Komatsu

Sacha McCulloch^

Nicholas Metcalfe

Anna Sarcich^

Tim South

DOUBLE BASS

Andrew Sinclair*

John Keene

Elizabeth Browning^

Christine Reitzenstein

Andrew Tait

Mark Tooby

FLUTE

Andrew Nicholson

• Anonymous

Mary-Anne Blades

• Anonymous

PICCOLO

Michael Waye

• Pamela & Josh Pitt

OBOE

Rachael Clegg^

Guest Principal Oboe

Leanne Glover

Principal Cor Anglais

• Sam & Leanne Walsh

CLARINET

Allan Meyer

Lorna Cook

BASSOON

Jane Kircher-Lindner

Adam Mikulicz

CONTRABASSOON

Chloe Turner

• Stelios Jewellers

HORN

★ Section partnered by
Margaret & Rod Marston

David Evans

Robert Gladstones

Principal 3rd Horn

Julia Brooke

Francesco Lo Surdo

TRUMPET

Brent Grapes

• Anonymous

Jenna Smith

Peter Miller

TROMBONE

Joshua Davis

• Dr Ken Evans and
Dr Glenda Campbell-Evans

BASS TROMBONE

Philip Holdsworth

TIMPANI

Alex Timcke

★ Section partnered by
●Chair partnered by
*Instruments used by these
musicians are on loan from
Janet Holmes à Court AC.

Principal
Associate Principal
Assistant Principal
Contract Musician°
Guest Musician^

About The Artists

Asher Fisch Principal Conductor & Artistic Adviser

A renowned conductor in both the operatic and symphonic worlds, Asher Fisch is especially celebrated for his interpretative command of core German and Italian repertoire of the Romantic and post-Romantic era. He conducts a wide variety of repertoire from Gluck to contemporary works by living composers. Since 2014, Asher Fisch has been the Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO). His former posts include Principal Guest Conductor of the Seattle Opera (2007-2013), Music Director of the New Israeli Opera (1998-2008), and Music Director of the Wiener Volksoper (1995-2000). In 2019, Fisch won Helpmann Awards for Best Individual Classical Performance and Best Symphony Orchestra Concert for WASO's production of *Tristan und Isolde*.¹

After returning to conduct the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood and the Cleveland Orchestra at the Blossom Festival in August, highlights of Asher Fisch's 2019-20 season include concerts with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the orchestra of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna. Guest opera engagements include *Fidelio* and *Adriana Lecouvreur* at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, *Carmen*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and *Parsifal* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Bayerische Staatsoper at the Hong Kong Arts Festival, and *Pagliacci* and *Schitz* at the Israeli Opera.

Highlights of Asher Fisch's 2018-19 season included guest engagements with the Düsseldorf Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, Teatro Massimo Orchestra in Palermo. Guest opera engagements included *Il Trovatore*, *Otello*, *Die Fliegende Holländer*, and *Andrea Chénier* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, *Arabella* and *Hansel und Gretel* at the Semperoper Dresden, *Tannhäuser* at the Tokyo National Theater, and Cristof Loy's new production of *Capriccio* at the Teatro Real in Madrid.

Born in Israel, Fisch began his conducting career as Daniel Barenboim's assistant and kappellmeister at the Berlin Staatsoper. He



Photo: Chris Gonz

has built his versatile repertoire at the major opera houses such as the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, and Semperoper Dresden. Fisch is also a regular guest conductor at leading American symphony orchestras including those of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and Philadelphia. In Europe he has appeared at the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the Orchestre National de France, among others.

Asher Fisch's recent recordings include Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* recorded with WASO, which won *Limelight Magazine's* Opera Recording of the Year in 2019, Bruckner Symphony No.8 recorded with WASO and released in 2019, tenor Stuart Skelton's first solo album, recorded with WASO and released on ABC Classic in 2018, and a recording of Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* with the Munich Radio Orchestra, which won *Limelight Magazine's* Opera Recording of the Year in 2017. In 2016, he recorded the complete Brahms symphonies with WASO, released on ABC Classics to great acclaim. His recording of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* with the Seattle Opera was released on the Avie label in 2014. His first complete *Ring*, with State Opera of South Australia, won ten Helpmann Awards, including best opera and best music direction. Fisch is also an accomplished pianist and has recorded a solo disc of Wagner piano transcriptions for the Melba label.

Asher Fisch appears courtesy of Wesfarmers Arts.



Christiane Libor

Leonore/Fidelio

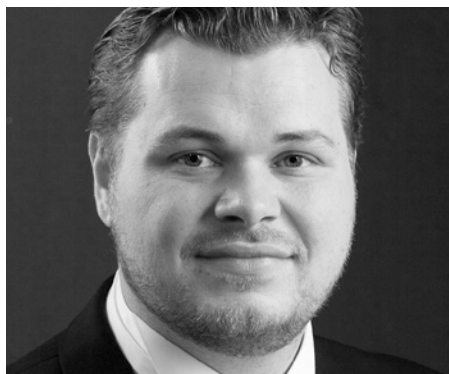
Christiane Libor was born in Berlin and studied at the 'Musikhochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler.' She complemented her conservatory education training with Dietrich Fisher-Dieskau, Julia Varady, Hans Hotter, and Brigitte Fassbaender.

Ms. Libor has made great music together with many of the world's most respected conductors including Philippe Auguin, Philippe Jordan, Kurt Masur, Ingo Metzmacher, Marc Minkowski, Helmuth Rilling, Sebastian Weigle, Simone Young, and Jaap van Zweden.

Performances of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 seasons include *Fidelio* conducted by Marc Minkowski at the Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg, *The Flying Dutchman* with Oper Leipzig in a new production, and *Die Walküre* with Oper Frankfurt under the baton of Sebastian Weigle and in concert with the BBC Philharmonic conducted by Omer Meir Wellber.

In the past season, Christiane Libor bowed in *Die Walküre* conducted by Jaap van Zweden in a production directed by Vera Nemirova with the Salzburg Easter Festival on tour at the Beijing Poly Theatre, and she sang the three Brünnhildes in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, in the span of just four days, at Oper Leipzig led by Ulf Schirmer.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut



Tomislav Mužek

Florestan

Tomislav Mužek was at first engaged at the Bremen opera house in 2000.

Since then, the tenor has been a welcome guest at all the great opera houses and festivals, as Bayerische Staatsoper, Staatsoper Berlin, Hamburgische Staatsoper, Semperoper Dresden, Volksoper in Vienna, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Malmö Opera, Opera House in Daegu (Korea), Teatro Comunale Florence, Croatian National Theatre Zagreb, the Théâtre du Capitole Toulouse and the Opéra National Paris to sing parts such as Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ferrando (*Così fan Tutte*), Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), Alfredo (*La Traviata*), Don Carlos (*Don Carlos*), Nemorino (*L'elisir D'amore*) Florestan (*Fidelio*), Lenski (*Eugen Onegin*) and Erik (*The Flying Dutchman*).

In June 2020 he will sing Stolzing (*Die Meistersinger Von Nürnberg*) at the New National Theatre Tokyo – it's a role debut.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut

About The Artists



Adrian Tamburini

Don Fernando

After singing as a boy chorister for many years, Adrian commenced vocal lessons with Bettine McCaughan at the age of 15. Between 1996 and 2011 he achieved great success winning awards in many vocal eisteddfods and competitions throughout Victoria including two international singing competitions. In 2017, Adrian was the winner of Australia's prestigious singing award, the Australian Opera Awards (YMF, MOST). His singing has featured on cinema releases of opera, DVD, international recordings, motion picture soundtracks, radio, television (Woolworths Carols in the Domain) and Australian dramas including the soundtrack to "After the Deluge". His Operatic debut was in 1997 and ever since has had a varied career as an operatic soloist, a concert performer, musical director and producer. His work, both on and off the stage, has been nominated for awards and his performances have received critical acclaim. In 2020, Adrian will make his debut with Pinchgut Opera, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Australian Discovery Orchestra and perform in a series of concerts with the Inventi Ensemble.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut



Felicitas Fuchs

Marzelline

Felicitas Fuchs studied at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with Ian Kennedy and Rudolf Piernay and was later accepted to the Young Artist Programme in Switzerland with Kurt Widmer. During her studies, she also benefitted from masterclasses with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Graham Johnson before winning the 2006 "La Voce" Lied-Competition, held by the Bavarian Broadcasting Association in Bad Kissingen.

A versatile concert artist and committed recitalist, Felicitas has performed at such renowned venues as Philharmonie Warschau, Herkulessaal and Philharmonie in Munich, the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, UNESCO Hall in Paris, the National Centre for the Arts in Beijing and the Royal Albert Hall, London, and has been a welcome guest at national and international festivals including Kissingen Sommer, Mozart Festival in Augsburg/Wurzburg, Immling Opera Festival and Cape Classics (South Africa).

Orchestral performances have included appearances with Münchner Symphonikern und Philharmonikern, Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Bamberger Symphoniker and Camerata Salzburg.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut



Andrew Goodwin

Jaquino

Andrew Goodwin's opera engagements have seen him appear at the Bolshoi Opera, Gran Theatre Liceu Barcelona, Teatro Real Madrid, La Scala Milan, Opera Australia, State Opera South Australia, Pinchgut Opera and Sydney Chamber Opera.

He has performed with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, all the Australian and New Zealand Symphony orchestras, Moscow and Melbourne Chamber Orchestras, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Melbourne Bach Choir, at Huntington Estate Music Festival, recorded with Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and appeared in recitals with pianist Daniel de Borah throughout Australia, at Wigmore Hall and the Oxford Lieder Festival.

In 2020 Andrew's engagements include his debut with West Australian Symphony, *Creation* (Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra), Queensland Symphony's Opera Gala, Verdi *Requiem* (Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Ensemble Apex), *Elijah* (Sydney University Graduate Choir), and *Messiah* with Sydney Chamber Choir and the Queensland, Adelaide and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut



Warwick Fyfe

Don Pizarro

Warwick Fyfe is a Helpmann Award-winning singer and is considered one of Australia's finest baritones. Recent appearances include Wotan (*Die Walküre*) in Singapore, Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Alberich (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), Sancho Panza (*Don Quichotte*), Amonasro (*Aida*), Geronio (*Il turco in Italia*) and Klingsor (*Parsifal*) for Opera Australia, Alberich (*Das Rheingold*) for the Japan Philharmonic and Tianjin Symphony Orchestras and Peter (*Hansel and Gretel*) in Singapore.

2019 appearances included Athanaël (*Thaïs*) and Amonasro for Finnish National Opera, Barone di Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*) for Opera Australia and Bartolo (*The Barber of Seville*) for Victorian Opera; in 2020, Warwick sings Alberich and Amonasro for Opera Australia, Pizarro (*Fidelio*) in Melbourne and Perth and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 for the Melbourne Symphony.

Warwick was the recipient of a Helpmann Award for his 2013 performance as Alberich in the Melbourne Ring Cycle; he became a Churchill Fellow in 2015.

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Most recent WASO performance: 29-30 November 2019, VERDI Requiem

About The Artists



Photo: Susie Ahlburg

Jonathan Lemalu

Rocco

Jonathan Lemalu, a New Zealand born Samoan, is a joint winner of the 2002 Kathleen Ferrier award and the recipient of the 2002 Royal Philharmonic Society's Award for Young Artist of the Year.

His roles include Leporello, Rocco, Colline, Basilio, Osmin, Neptune, Saul. He has worked at houses including the Royal Opera; The Metropolitan Opera; Opera de Lyon; Opera Australia; Cincinnati Opera; San Francisco Opera; Dallas Opera, Seattle and The Chicago Lyric.

Recent and future engagements his first Sarastro *The Magic Flute* for English National Opera, Sacristan *Tosca* for the Royal Opera House, Voice of Neptune *Idomeneo* at the Salzburg Festival, Publio *Clemenza di Tito* for the Theater an der Wien, Don Fernando *Fidelio* with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, King Sharyaati *Sukanya* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, *Missa Solemnis* with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Bottom *Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Grange Festival, and returns to English National Opera and Covent Garden.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut



Eryn Jean Norvill

Narrator

Eryn Jean Norvill is a graduate of VCA and has also studied at L'Ecole Philippe Gaulier in France and The Groundlings School in Los Angeles. She has worked extensively in Australian professional theatre for the last ten years.

Selected credits include: Malthouse Theatre Company; *Melancholia*, Sydney Theatre Company; *Three Sisters*, *All My Sons*, *King Lear*, *Suddenly. Last Summer*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*, *Romeo and Juliet*. For Belvoir; *The Government Inspector*. For Melbourne Theatre Company; *Hamlet* and *Top Girls*. For Griffin Theatre Company; *The Boys*.

She has received several theatre awards including Sydney Theatre Awards for *Suddenly Last Summer* (2015), *The Boys* (2012), *Truckstop* (2012). Green Room Awards for *Government Inspector* (2014), *Top Girls* (2012) and Melbourne Fringe Festival People's Choice Award: *A Tiny Chorus* (2009).

Eryn Jean is also a writer, dramaturg and theatre maker. She has co-created many works, selected credits include: *A Tiny Chorus* (2009), *Remake* to the REPETITIONS: Performance Art and Philosophy Festival in Ljubljana, Slovenia (2016) and *NICHE* (2017).

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut



Alison Croggon

Dramatic Text

Alison Croggon is an award-winning novelist, poet, theatre writer and critic. She has written extensively for theatre and opera, with libretti including *The Riders* (score Iain Grandage), the Choral/Vocal Work of the Year in the 2015 Art Music Awards and *Mayakovsky* (score Michael Smetanin), shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards Drama prize. Last year her play for The Rabble, *My Dearworthy Darling*, premiered to acclaim at the Malthouse Theatre.

Her novels for young people are published internationally. Prizes include the Wilderness Society's Prize for Environmental Writing for Children and shortlistings for the NSW and WA Premiers Literary Awards. Her first middle grade novel, *The Threads of Magic*, will be released in the UK and Australia in March 2020. Her poetry won the Anne Elder and Dame Mary Gilmore Prizes, and was shortlisted for Victorian and NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut



Photo: Sam Harris

Clare Watson

Director

Clare is the Artistic Director of Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA and has directed *The Torrents* (a co-production with Sydney Theatre Company), *Our Town*, *Xenides*, *The Events*, *You Know We Belong Together* and *Let The Right One In*. Previously, Clare was Artistic Director at St Martins where her credits include *I saw the second one hit*, *Gonzo* (Malthouse Theatre) and *FITTER. FASTER. BETTER.* (Dance Massive, Junction Arts Festival). She directed the critically acclaimed *What Rhymes with Cars and Girls* for Melbourne Theatre Company in 2015, which received four Helpmann nominations including Best Director and recently enjoyed a national tour. Clare was a Female Director-in-Residence and Education Manager at Malthouse and is a MTC Women Directors Program alumna. She is a graduate of Directing at the Victorian College of the Arts and a trained teacher having worked in high schools in Victoria for 15 years.

Most recent WASO performance: WASO debut

WASO Chorus

The WASO Chorus was formed in 1988 and consists of around 100 volunteer choristers who represent the finest form of community music making, bringing together singers from all walks of life. They regularly feature in the WASO annual concert season, and are directed by Andrew Foote.

The Chorus has built an international reputation for its high standards and diverse range of repertoire. While its main role is to perform with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra the Chorus also maintains a profile of solo concerts, tours and community engagements.

The Chorus sings with the finest conductors and soloists including Asher Fisch, Simone Young, Stephen Layton and Paul Daniel. Recent highlights have included Poulenc's *Stabat Mater*, Mahler's Second Symphony and Mozart's Requiem. This year the Chorus performed at the Denmark Festival of Voice and in 2018 toured China with performances of Orff's *Carmina burana*. In 2020 they will perform in Melbourne with Sir Andrew Davis and the MSO in a performance of Mahler's Eighth Symphony.

Andrew Foote
Chorus Director

Lea Hayward
Accompanist

SOPRANO

Valerie Bannan
Alinta Carroll
Charmaine de Witt
Fay Edwards
Kath Goodman
Lesley Goodwin
Sheila Price
Nike Titilola Etim

ALTO

Lisa Barz
Janet Baxter
Catherine Dunn
Kaye Fairbairn
Jenny Fay
Deborah Piesse
Jacquie Wright

TENOR

Matthew Flood
Allan Griffiths
Jay Reso
Chris Ryland
Simon Taylor
Arthur Tideswell
Stephen Turley

BASS

Justin Audcent
Charlie Bond
Bertel Bulten
Mark Gummer
Benjamin Lee
Tony Marrion
Peter Ormond
Matthew Purvis
Jim Rhoads
Chris Smith
Robert Turnbull
Andrew Wong

West Australian Opera Chorus

SOPRANO

Chelsea Burns
Leilah Fox
Brianna Louwen
Lucy Mervik
Xiaojia Zhang
Prudence Sanders

MEZZO

Belinda Cox
Morgan Halket
Brigitte Heuser
Chelsea Kluga
Courtney Pitman
Elizabeth Vale

TENOR

Jonathan Brain
Tom Buckmaster
Ry Charleson
David Jones
Jason Kroll
Matthew Lester
Stephen Matthews
Timothy
Schoenmakers
Samuel
Thomas-Holland

T2/BASS

Laurence Westrip

BASS

Christopher-Jack
Andrew
Kristin Bowtell
Callen Dellar
Matthew Dixon
David Dockery
Oliver Freyne
Theodore
Murphy-Jelley
Lachlann Lawton
David Penco
Stephen Sherwood

About The Speaker

Cecilia Sun

Pre-concert Speaker

Dr. Cecilia Sun is a lecturer at the University of Western Australia Conservatorium of Music. A pianist as well as a musicologist, she holds doctoral degrees in both from the Eastman School of Music and UCLA. As a performer, she specializes in historical pianos and the performance practices

of the 18th and 19th centuries. She is currently co-artistic director of UWA's Irwin Street Collective, which is focused on the research and performance of historically informed repertoire. Other areas of scholarly interest include experimental music, women in music, and music and politics.

West Australian Symphony Orchestra

From the centre of Perth to the furthest corners of our state, every year since 1928, we set hearts racing with extraordinary music and exhilarating performances for all West Australians to share.

To learn more about WASO musicians, visit waso.com.au or connect with WASO.



About The Music

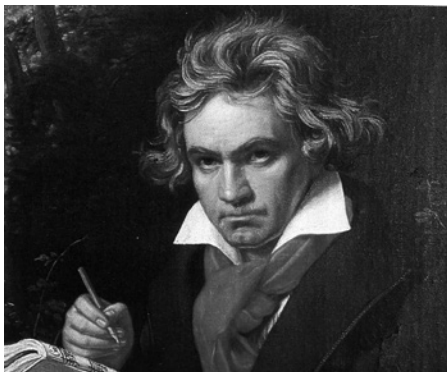
Ludwig Van Beethoven

(1770 – 1827)

Beethoven's *Fidelio*

It wasn't entirely Beethoven's fault that *Fidelio* flopped on its first outing in 1805. There had been several delays. Beethoven had hoped to finish the piece in time for a performance in mid-1804. For various reasons, the composition was not completed until mid-1805. Then, the opera's premiere, scheduled for October 1805, was delayed by problems with the censor, who objected to the contemporary setting of the piece. A month later it finally hit the stage – now set in the 16th century – as Napoleon's armies reached Vienna. While the occupation was relatively benign, many of Beethoven's potential audience had either fled the city or decided to remain at home. *Fidelio*'s opening night crowd was not, therefore, the aristocratic Viennese A-list, but a bunch of French officers, and on the two subsequent nights the remaining Viennese population stayed away in droves.

Given that the first-night audience was largely French, it is quite likely that some of those present were aware of the story. The **libretto**, by Joseph Sonnleithner, was based on a libretto by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly; it dramatises an incident in which Bouilly was involved, in the 'Don Fernando' role, just over a decade earlier during the post-revolutionary Reign of Terror. Bouilly's libretto, *Léonore ou L'amour conjugal* had been set to music by Pierre Gaveaux and the opera produced in Paris in 1798. The setting was transposed to Spain, but the show was billed as a 'fait historique'.



Moreover, Bouilly's story had inspired several operas in addition to Gaveaux's and Beethoven's: Ferdinando Paer composed a version to an Italian libretto for Dresden in 1804, and Simon Mayr also used an Italian text, though with the action set in Poland, for Padua in 1805. (It was because those works went by the title of *Léonore* or *Leonora* that the theatre management in Vienna insisted on calling Beethoven's opera – against his wishes – *Fidelio*.) While Paer and Mayr both worked within the traditions of Italian opera, in *Fidelio* Beethoven (ironically given the first-night audience) produced a work whose musical and dramatic patrimony was far more French.

In Paris, in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, a vogue developed for what later came to be known as 'rescue opera'. Broadly speaking, these pieces tended to cultivate 'realistic' settings, with a recurrent theme of the heroic release of an innocent hero from unjust imprisonment – one needn't labour the point that this offered a metaphor of revolutionary liberation from tyranny.

About The Music

The most successful composer of 'rescue opera' was the Italian-born Luigi Cherubini, whose *comédie-héroïque*, *Lodoïska* took Paris by storm in 1791 and in many respects set the template: set in Poland (like Paer's later version of the Leonore story), we have a heroine imprisoned by an evil Count and a hero who enters the Count's castle disguised but is himself captured. A horde of Tartars obligingly destroys the castle in revenge for the Count's cruelty, thus allowing the hero to rescue the heroine from the burning tower in which she has been imprisoned.

Lodoïska enjoyed some 200 performances in its first season, and toured widely. In 1805, it was performed in Vienna as part of what Winton Dean has described as an 'avalanche of French operas' that buried Vienna in the first decade of the 19th century. Among these were works by Méhul and Boieldieu and, later, Gaspare Spontini, who like Cherubini was Italian but made his name in Paris.

Beethoven was drawn to both the musical style and subject matter of such works, which harmonised perfectly with his own musical and ethical preoccupations. The year 1802 ushers in what is commonly referred to as Beethoven's 'heroic' period, and in several pieces from this time he examines a concept of heroism outlined by poet Friedrich Schiller in his 1793 essay, *On the Nature of Pathos*. Schiller, in scholar William Kinderman's summation, argued that, 'Pathos or tragedy arises when unblinking awareness of suffering is counterbalanced by the capacity of reason to resist these feelings. In such resistance to the inevitability of pain or despair is lodged the principle of freedom.'

Fidelio's Florestan is, of course, just such a hero, but Beethoven had already explored this idea in the 1801 ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* – Prometheus being a Titan in Greek mythology who stole fire from the Gods to comfort his creation, mankind. For this he was punished by being chained to a mountain where an eagle came and tore out his liver. (Being immortal, Prometheus' liver grew back each day, so the agony was repeated until Hercules rescued him many years later.)

In Beethoven's ballet version Prometheus is put to death, but is brought back to life. Not surprisingly, Beethoven also composed his oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* early in his 'heroic' period. This work presents Christ as facing His impending suffering and death with stoic fortitude, and it is His courage that calls forth the triumphant final chorus. In the *Eroica* Symphony, Beethoven translates these ideas into abstract symphonic music, though his slow movement is explicitly a hero's death march, and the triumphant **finale** takes its theme from the *Prometheus* ballet, suggesting again a scheme of suffering and death borne and overcome. It is hard not to see a certain degree of self-identification here: 1802 was also the year in which Beethoven accepted that his deafness was permanent and likely to get worse. The document known as the 'Heiligenstadt Testament', written in 1802 but only discovered after his death, describes how in his despair Beethoven contemplated suicide, but resolved to live for his art. As he wrote to a friend in Promethean sentiments, if not words, 'I will take fate by the throat.'

But what Beethoven also got from the music of Cherubini (whom he once described as the greatest living composer – after himself of course), Méhul and others was a kind of musical expression quite removed from the elegant intricacies of late-classicism. It is telling that in later life Beethoven praised Spontini for knowing how to evoke the ‘noises of war’ in his music: what the ‘rescue operas’ showed was that it was possible to create massive effects with minimal means. Haydn, in late works like the ‘Nelson’ Mass, also shows an interest in heroic or martial music, but it was Beethoven who took this to its logical conclusion. The *Eroica*’s first movement alone is as long as many classical symphonies, and it displays Beethoven’s new rhetoric based on the repetition of simple ideas and what can only be described as brute force, as against subtle or rigorous argument.

Hand in hand with Beethoven’s Schillerian view of heroism was his hatred of tyranny. This is not to say that he was a democrat in any modern sense of the term: he allowed Viennese society to assume that the ‘van’ in his surname meant he was of noble birth (and railed against being lumped with other commoners like ‘innkeepers, cobblers and tailors’ when this was exposed as false during a messy court case involving custody of his nephew in 1818), and had what biographer Maynard Solomon describes as an ‘irreconcilable tension...between obedience and rebellion’ in his character. In Beethoven’s ideal polity, justice and personal freedom would be guaranteed by the enlightened authority of a noble ruler. Fitting this template, more or less, was the Emperor Joseph II, whose reign (1780-90) saw a raft of anti-feudal and anti-clerical reforms, and Beethoven flirted with the idea of Napoleon as such a ruler, though in later life conceded that ‘with that bastard I made a mistake’.

It is no accident that *Fidelio*’s Schillerian heroes, Leonore and her husband Florestan, are nobles (and are contrasted in the comic opera sub-plot with the commoners Rocco the jailer, his daughter Marzelline and her suitor Jaquino) or that while Leonore’s bravery staves off Florestan’s execution by his enemy Don Pizarro, it is with the arrival, announced by the famous trumpet call, of the benign Minister Don Fernando that Florestan and his fellow prisoners are released.

Bouilly’s story, then, offered Beethoven a chance to develop his new musical rhetoric in a story that embodied his notions of heroism and the political ideal of the *bon prince*. And there was one further element irresistible to him: the notion of what librettist Sonnleithner called ‘the heroism of womanly virtue’. Two things need to be noted here. First of all, that Beethoven, contrary to received wisdom, was by no means uninformed about opera and indeed, *Fidelio* is not his own first attempt in the medium. Parts of that opera are actually recycled sections of an unfinished sword-and-sandal epic, *Vesta’s Fire*, on which he began work in 1803 with Emanuel Schikaneder, librettist of *The Magic Flute*. But more to the point, in Bonn, for four successive seasons before his move to Vienna, the composer had played viola in the court orchestra and therefore knew the current Italo-Austrian repertoire quite literally from the inside. That, needless to say, included works of Mozart, which Beethoven decried as frivolous and, in the case of *Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*, immoral. This leads to the second point: Beethoven was a prude, and this aspect of his character only became more pronounced as he grew older and, thanks to his increasing ill-health and general eccentricity, more isolated.

About The Music

Where Mozart understood that the flesh is weak, confirmed bachelor Beethoven was uncompromising when it came to conjugal virtue. Director Peter Hall perhaps overstated it when, preparing a 1979 Glyndebourne production, he wrote in his diary: 'Poor Beethoven, locked in a world of deafness, yearned for a wife to release him from the prison of his own skull, of his own deafness – there you have *Fidelio*.' But there is no question that Beethoven held most women to an impossible ideal, and in the person of Leonore he was able to embody that ideal.

With all these elements it should, by rights, have been a smash hit, but, as we know, the first season was a fiasco. The presence of French soldiers and the absence of Viennese public didn't help of course, but the fact is that the original version was far too long and essentially undramatic. A review of the 1805 season, comparing *Fidelio* unfavourably with the works of both Mozart and Cherubini, noted that it 'did not find favour'. It conceded that it had 'some attractive passages' but in general 'the music falls far below the expectations to which connoisseurs and music-lovers consider themselves entitled'.

As Donald Tovey once observed, Beethoven 'was too much in revolt against the eighteenth century... This unfortunately meant that the one supreme master of opera from whom he could have learned exactly what he needed was the one whose libretti scandalised him': Mozart. As Tovey goes on to point out, 'Cherubini lacked precisely that quality of dramatic movement which Mozart had both by instinct and experience.' The **key** expression here is 'dramatic *movement*'.

Beethoven, as we have noted, uses the rhetorical language of 'rescue opera' to expand the scale of his musical utterance, and in the *Eroica* that works supremely well; on stage, however, Beethoven – to quote Peter Hall again – simply 'goes on just a little too long for the drama'.

That, too, was the verdict of those of Beethoven's friends who were at the 1805 premiere, and who gathered at the home of Prince Lichnowsky with a view to persuading Beethoven to revise – and substantially cut – the piece. Joseph August Röckel, who would sing Florestan in the 1806 version, was there, and left an entertaining account of a meeting that lasted from seven in the evening until one the next morning. As Röckel notes, 'Although Beethoven's friends were fully prepared for the coming battle they had never before seen him in *such* a fury.' But six hours later, when the composer finally agreed to cut three of the opera's numbers and they all sat down to supper, 'no one was in a happier or merrier mood than Beethoven!'

As Beethoven understood, more revision was needed, and unbeknown to Sonnleithner, engaged Stephan von Breuning who 'remodelled the whole book...quickenning and enlivening the action'. Perhaps to avoid unpleasantness with Sonnleithner, Beethoven claimed to have done the remodelling himself 'to make the opera move more swiftly', explaining that he had 'shortened everything as much as possible, the prisoners' chorus and chiefly numbers of that kind'. This was not quite true, as he and Breuning did more than cut words and music.

The new version, cut from three to two acts, was performed in April 1806 – woefully under-rehearsed owing to the late delivery of the revised score – and Beethoven's operatic idol Cherubini hated it. Röckel claimed optimistically that it was received well by 'a select group' in the audience, but the general feeling was expressed in a review whose author failed to understand 'how the composer could be willing to bring this vapid pot-boiler to life with beautiful music'. This view, of course, well predates *Tosca*; more pertinent is the remark that 'the inanity of the spoken parts wipes out the beautiful effect of the sung parts'. Here we approach the basic problem that Beethoven would not solve until 1814.

In 1806, however, Beethoven – possibly to cover his embarrassment at the work's repeated failure – accused the management of the theatre of cheating him of his royalties (he pulled the same stunt at the premiere of the Ninth Symphony some years later) and withdrew the score, snarling 'I don't write for the galleries!' And there it would almost certainly have rested had not three singers (who would play Pizarro, Rocco and Fernando) asked Beethoven if they could perform the work for their benefit in 1814.

By then Beethoven was writing for the galleries in a big way. After a period of personal crisis and creative silence, Beethoven had begun composing again with *Wellington's Victory*, a frankly populist and meretricious response to the final defeat of Napoleon. Over the next years, as the map of Europe was redrawn by the Congress of Vienna, Beethoven churned out various noisy patriotic works, reaching the height of his popularity but, in Maynard Solomon's view, 'the nadir of his artistic career'.

In this climate the revival of *Fidelio* was, as Solomon goes on to say, greeted 'as a celebration of victory over the Napoleonic forces by the Allies, and as an allegory of the liberation of Europe from the aggressions of the tyrant/usurper'.

And the work had, again, been significantly reworked. This time with Sonnleithner's permission, Beethoven approached a third librettist, Georg Friedrich Treitschke, who revised the libretto to make it as 'succinct and clear as possible'. The revision of the score was hard going for Beethoven, who protested that it would have been easier to write something new from scratch, rather than rethinking the whole piece: 'This opera' he famously said, 'will win for me the martyr's crown.' Opinions vary as to whether the final version is an unequivocal improvement on that of 1806. Winton Dean reflects a consensus when he writes that 'Treitschke's treatment of Act I merits unstinted applause', before detailing numerous ways in which the 1814 Act II is weaker: Florestan's delirium replaces a conscious, and therefore more heroic, address to Leonore's portrait, 'Rocco's character is sentimentalised', and the final scene 'fails to achieve one of the most resounding anticlimaxes in the history of opera only because Beethoven capped it with a hymn to freedom of surpassing nobility'.

But that, paradoxically, points to the strengths of the final version, which are, first and foremost, musical strengths. Whereas in 1805 and 1806 Beethoven's tendency was towards ever larger-scale utterances, which led, on stage, to dramatic stasis, the final version of *Fidelio* has an inexorable trajectory (despite Beethoven's recycling material from his early *Cantata on the death of Joseph II* and bits of *Vesta's Fire*).

About The Music

Specific keys stand for certain characters: Don Pizarro sings in a demonic D minor; Florestan is associated with F minor and Leonore with E major, keys that look close on a keyboard but in terms of sound and classical 'grammar' are worlds apart. The characters are archetypes: the jailer Rocco, for instance, is not intrinsically evil, but is morally weak – the essential collaborator. Leonore, the hero, is accompanied by the three horns which feature in the *Eroica* Symphony.

The 1814 version resolves some of the difficulties of the work, caused first and foremost by the Marzelline-Jaquino subplot. One of Beethoven's problems, while in the heat of the 'heroic' style of 1805-6, was caused by his instinct to begin the work with a powerful **overture** that outlined the drama as a whole. The *Leonore* overtures No.2 and, especially, No.3 (the first and second to be written) 'annihilate', to use Tovey's word, the first Act. What he means is that after the *Sturm und Drang* of these mighty pieces, and the enactment of the drama in abstract musical terms, the **sub-Mozartian buffo** scene between Marzelline and Jaquino seems inconsequential – and in the early version went on too long. In the 1814 version the first scene, after a more appropriate overture, functions to put us off the scent of the ensuing tragedy.

An apparently anodyne pastoral comedy, complete with a woman disguised as a boy, passes from light into the darkness of reality. In Act II, this pattern is reversed, underlined by key-relationships, as in a symphony, defined by the 'gravitational laws' of classical music. Each key change feels inevitable, particularly when the G major of the couple's ecstatic reunion duet, 'O nameless joy', leads into the blazing C major of the work's finale when Florestan and the other prisoners are released. The effect is like the release of rising C major figures in the finale of the Fifth Symphony. Beethoven may be saying that good will inevitably triumph over tyranny, or be constructing an ideal world which alleviates his loneliness, or both. As Hildegard Behrens has noted, 'Directors with very different political backgrounds and from opposite regimes...use the message of *Fidelio* to advance their own views and ideologies.' We can argue about the message, but the music takes no prisoners.

Gordon Kerry © 2009

First WASO performance: This is the first complete opera performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio* by the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

Instrumentation: solos voices and chorus; two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, two trombones; timpani; strings.

Glossary

Buffo – of or typical of Italian comic opera.

Finale – the last movement of a piece.

Key – the tonal centre of a piece or section of a piece.

Libretto – the words of an opera or oratorio.

Mozartian – in the style of classical composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Overture – this term has two quite distinct meanings. It refers to an instrumental composition acting as an introduction to an opera or oratorio; it also refers to a stand-alone orchestral work with a descriptive title which the music illustrates in some way.

Tosca – one of the most well-known Italian operas, written by Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini and premiered in 1900.

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