

MSO

EARS WIDE OPEN: RAVEL'S MOTHER GOOSE

8 APRIL 2019

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Brett Kelly conductor

Nicholas Bochner presenter

Ravel *Ma mère l'Oye* (Mother Goose)

BRETT KELLY CONDUCTOR

Brett Kelly has been Principal Trombone of the MSO since 1981. He has conducted all the major Australian orchestras as well as New Zealand's Auckland Sinfonia and the Dunedin Symphony. Between 1989 and 2004 he was Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of The Academy of Melbourne, a chamber orchestra he formed from among colleagues at the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

He was a core member of three influential Australian contemporary music ensembles – Flederman, The Seymour Group and Elision – and has conducted the premiere of more than 200 Australian works. Brett has conducted over 60 film soundtracks, including *Knowing*, *Australia*, *Happy Feet 2* and *The Dressmaker*.

NICHOLAS BOCHNER PRESENTER

Nicholas Bochner has held the position of MSO Assistant Principal Cello since 1998. Nicholas began studying piano at age seven, taking up the cello two years later. After exploring different musical styles including jazz piano and electric guitar, he completed a Bachelor of Music with Honours at the University of Adelaide, where he studied cello with Janis Laurs. He subsequently spent two years at the Guildhall School of Music in London under Stefan Popov. Nicholas returned to Australia to take up the position of Artist in Residence at Queensland University with contemporary music ensemble Perihelion before joining the MSO. In 2009, Nicholas was awarded the Dame Roma Mitchell Churchill Fellowship to travel to the UK to study the use of improvisation in teaching classical musicians.

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MAURICE RAVEL

(1875–1937)

Mother Goose Suite (1910) excerpts:

I. *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty*

III. *Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas*

V. *The Fairy Garden*

Like Tchaikovsky, Ravel saw a strong connection between childhood and enchantment. In his opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, for instance, a destructive child learns the value of compassion when furniture, trees and animals in the garden all come magically to life. The evocation of 'the poetry of childhood' in the original piano duo version of *Mother Goose* led Ravel to 'simplify my style and refine my means of expression' – or so he said. Certainly we can hear echoes of the deceptively simple piano music of Erik Satie, whose music Ravel championed.

Mother Goose began life as *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* for piano, four hands. Ravel composed it for Mimie and Jean Godebski (aged six and seven respectively), to whose parents he had dedicated his *Sonatine* for piano. Ravel then composed four more *pièces enfantines*, depicting characters from the fairy-tales anthologised by three authors: Charles Perrault (*Sleeping Beauty* and *Tom Thumb*), the Comtesse d'Aulnoy (*Laideronnette*) and Marie Leprince de Beaumont (*Beauty and the Beast*). *The Fairy Garden* was an original inspiration.

Mimie later recalled:

Ravel wanted us to give the first public performance but the idea filled me with a cold terror. My brother, being less timid and more gifted on the piano, coped quite well. But despite lessons from Ravel I used to freeze to such an extent that the idea had to be abandoned.

Nevertheless, the work's premiere in 1910 was given by two children, Jeanne Leleu (later a professor at the Paris Conservatoire) and Geneviève Durony. In 1911 Ravel made this orchestral version of the suite.

The 'Pavane' is a slow and stately Renaissance dance (which Ravel also used for *Pavane pour une infante défunte*) with gently repeated motifs and modal harmony that establishes Ravel's characteristic use of pungent dissonances on the strong beats of the bar. *Laideronette* ('little ugly girl') is represented in music where glinting pentatonic ('black-note') figures give the piece its 'oriental' flavour. *The Fairy Garden* is depicted in music that gathers power through simple repetition until an ecstatic, rippling climax.

Having completed his major ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* in 1912, Ravel revisited *Mother Goose* to make it the basis for a ballet score in which the movements, in rearranged order and with a new prelude and interludes, represent the *Sleeping Beauty's* enchantment, dreams, and her awakening by Prince Charming.

Abridged from a note by Gordon Kerry © 2010

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra first performed Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* on 3 May 1954 under conductor Sir Bernard Heinze, and most recently in May 2014 with Nicholas Carter.

See Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* performed as part of Mozart's Requiem (20 & 22 June) at Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall.

