

MSO

EARS WIDE OPEN: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

30 JULY 2019

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Tianyi Lu conductor / presenter

Mendelssohn A Midsummer Night's Dream

TIANYI LU

CONDUCTOR / PRESENTER

Tianyi Lu is the Cybec Assistant Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Principal Conductor of the St. Woolos Sinfonia in the UK, Female-Conductor-in-Residence designate with the Welsh National Opera and recently a Dudamel Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

This season marked her debut with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Romanian National Radio Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and next season will include the Helsinki Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Seattle Symphony and Singapore Symphony. She has also worked with the Dallas Opera, Auckland Philharmonia, Gulbenkian Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Tianyi began conducting studies at the University of Auckland with Uwe Grodd and Karen Grylls where she completed her Bachelor of Music with First Class Honours, before studying with John Hopkins at the University of Melbourne. Tianyi was awarded Distinction for her MMus in Orchestral Conducting at the RWCMD studying with David Jones in 2015.

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FELIX MENDELSSOHN

(1809–1847)

Excerpts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Incidental Music, Op.61

Intermezzo

Nocturne

Wedding March

Shakespeare fell out of favour in the 18th century as the Enlightenment had little use for a poet of verbal ambiguity, supernatural visitations and occasionally unhappy endings. But with the rise of Romanticism in the 19th century, the Bard was back, combining as he does the 'gothic' world of *King Lear*, *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, the only momentarily required passion of Romeo and Juliet, the magical realms of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest*. In the 1820s, German poets Schlegel and Tieck began translating Shakespeare into German – a decade after the brothers Grimm had reignited interest in fairy tales – and their version of the 'Dream' inspired Mendelssohn to write his celebrated Overture in 1826.

Many years later one of the translators, Ludwig Tieck, suggested that the King of Prussia ask Mendelssohn to add incidental music for a production of the play at Potsdam in 1843. These days in concert we most commonly hear the Overture and four substantial extracts from Mendelssohn's incidental music (the *Scherzo*, *Intermezzo*, *Nocturne* and *Wedding March*), the last three of which are performed this evening.

The play begins in Athens (the seat of reason) where Theseus and Hippolyta are preparing for their wedding, and where four young nobles are caught up in various unrequited relationships. Hermia and Lysander elope to a nearby wood followed by Demetrius, who loves Hermia, and Helena who loves

Demetrius. Here Oberon, aided by the mischievous goblin Puck, is preparing revenge on Titania who won't give up her boy, and the fortuitous arrival of both the lovers and a bunch of tradesmen ('rude mechanicals') who are rehearsing a play for the ducal wedding sets off the subsequent comedy of magic and errors. This is ultimately resolved by the noble couples' finally being wed in Athens, where they watch the mechanicals' play, and, as they depart for bed, are blessed by the reunited Oberon and Titania.

The *Intermezzo*, at the end of Act II, depicts the human lovers lost in the wood, and the arrival of the mechanicals in another part of the forest. The lovely *Nocturne* represents Titania's fond solicitude for Bottom whom she has enticed to her bower. Like Benjamin Britten, in his opera of the 'Dream', Mendelssohn adds pathos to the scene by investing it with real sensuous beauty.

We return to the Athenian palace for a triple wedding and what is perhaps Mendelssohn's most famous and frequently performed piece, the much-loved *Wedding March*.

Adapted from a note by Gordon Kerry © 2011

The first performance of any of Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by the MSO was of the Overture, on 21 May 1938 under conductor Georg Szell. The Orchestra performed it most recently in June 2018 with Kolja Blacher.

**See these excerpts from
*A Midsummer Night's
Dream* performed as part
of *Symphonie Fantastique*
(22 & 24 August) at Arts
Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall**
