

CAMERATA

QUEENSLAND'S CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



CAMERATA & QPAC PRESENT

Classic Alchemy

Johannes Brahms
arr. Kurt Atterberg

Sextet in G Major Op.36, No.2 (for string orchestra)
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Scherzo-Allegro non troppo-Presto giocoso
III. Adagio
IV. Poco Allegro

Ethel Smyth*

Suite for Strings Op.1a
III. Scherzo

*bass part adaptation by Anthony Scelba

Michael Patterson
Wild Card segment

Concertino for Double Bass and String Orchestra

Carl Vine

Smith's Alchemy

FEATURING

Marian Heckenberg, double bass

Toowoomba

Fri 20 Feb 7pm
Armitage Theatre, The Empire

Brisbane

Sat 21 Feb 7pm
Concert Hall, QPAC

85 minutes, no interval

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Camerata acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and First Peoples of the places where we work, create, and perform. We acknowledge that First Peoples are the first artists, storytellers, performers, musicians, and creatives of these lands. We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge their invaluable ongoing contribution to Australia's cultural landscape.

Our Musicians

Violin

Brendan Joyce*
Jonny Ng*
Ryoko Arai
Clare Cooney
David Dalseno^
Sally-Ann Djachenko
Anne Horton
Daniel Kowalik^
Claire Litwinowicz
Jason Tong
Allana Wales

Viola

Thomas Chawner^^
Molly Collier O'Boyle
Sophie Ellis
Elizabeth Lawrence

Cello

Katherine Philp*
Michael Gibson
Rory Smith
Alison Smith O'Connell

Double Bass

Marian Heckenberg*
Samuel Dickenson

*principal

^member of Camerata's quartet in residence Orava Quartet

Our Production Team

Program Curator

Brendan Joyce

Producer

Angela Loh

Lighting Designer

Richard "Zak" Harrison

Stage Manager

Courtney Symons

**We'd love to meet
you after the concert.
Please join us in the foyer
the bar will be open.**





From our Artistic Director

Hello everyone, and happy new Camerata year!

It doesn't feel all that long since our final concert of 2025 (*Celestial Choral Baroque* with One Equal Music) in which we had such a joyful gathering with you in the foyer to herald in the new season.

As Queensland's chamber orchestra it feels like a good thing to be able to share music tonight by a Queenslander and performed by Queenslanders – Michael Patterson's *Concertino for Bass and Strings* with our well loved and admired bassist, Marian Heckenberg in the solo role.

The last time we played Australian composer, Carl Vine's thrilling *Smith's Alchemy* was as part of our theatre-concert piece, *The White Mouse* (about the Australian spy, Nancy Wake). Actor, Veronica Neave was playing Nancy Wake and she performed Wake's death-defying bike ride across enemy lines with Carl's music adding to the thrill. We thought it was time we gave his music a proper concert airing.

It is a gift to get to play Brahms's Sextet in G Major, music so full of tenderness and imbued with his infatuation for the soprano, Agathe von Siebol. We are performing it in this thoughtful re-working for string orchestra by the Swedish composer and civil engineer, Kurt Atterberg (1887-1974).

I'm grateful to my colleagues who are not only a joy to play with but who contribute to our programming. It was cellist Michael Gibson who suggested the Atterburg arrangement of the Brahms, violinist Jonny Ng who suggested Carl Vine's work, and violist Sophie Ellis introduced us to the Ethel Smyth Quintet.

I hope the music and the performance brings you joy and inspiration tonight. Thank you for joining us!

Brendan Joyce
Artistic Director

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About The Music

Johannes Brahms arr. Kurt Atterberg String Sextet No. 2, in G Major, Op.36

Johannes Brahms wrote much of his chamber music early in his career. The String Sextet No.2 dates from the mid-1860s, when Brahms wasn't quite yet thirty. To look at the pieces that surround it is an exercise in controlling astonishment: after completing the String Sextet No.1 in 1861, Brahms wrote both of his orchestral serenades, three chamber pieces with piano, and the mammoth Piano Concerto No.1. And, by the time of the Second Sextet's premiere in Boston in 1866, he had completed all but the fifth movement of what became the German Requiem.

At the same time, Brahms had been romantically linked – or at least infatuated with – the soprano Agathe von Siebold, for whom he had also penned a number of songs. Though their relationship had broken off by the time Brahms completed the Sextet, Agathe's name is inscribed in the notation of the first movement's second theme and the entire work is imbued with a bittersweet tone that might fit a definition of love sickness.

The first movement begins with a gently murmuring viola figure that persists throughout much of the movement. The opening theme is simplicity itself: two rising perfect fifths sounding almost like horn calls across an open field. Brahms lets this opening material unfold for a while, echoing back and forth across the ensemble, before moving on and subtly eliding into the movement's second theme (the one that ultimately references Agathe – and one that is closely related to the first).

The development section is fairly extensive and leads to the recapitulation in which the opening section of the work is varied. The coda, too, is not slight – there's really no sense of hurry in this movement – but it features some wonderful little touches, such as the transformation of the movement's opening theme that goes from G major to the remote key of B major before finding its way back again.

Brahms placed the Scherzo as the second movement, rather than in the more traditional third section. Though it features a vigorous Trio section, this is as subdued a Scherzo as one is likely to find: rustic and expressive, for sure, but also strikingly nostalgic.

The slow third movement maintains this air of longing and sadness. As the music begins, it is filled with all sorts of gestures redolent of misery: descending chromatic scales, sighing turns, and the like. But an imitative section suddenly changes the mood and the music ultimately works its way from E minor to E major, a remarkable depiction of light overcoming darkness, but notably not one of joyful triumph.

The finale marries the kind of brilliant, light textures reminiscent of Mendelssohn's music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the rich, warm character of Brahms's mature style. The gloomy nature of the earlier movements is largely absent from the finale, especially its first half, but recollections crop up in the development section as the music turns to the minor mode. Low spirits, though, are swept away easily now: geniality reigns supreme, as the return of imitative textures – last heard in the context of the third movement's heartbreak – usher in a brilliant, sunny coda.

Jonathan Blumhofer ®

The version you hear tonight is an arrangement for string orchestra by the Swedish composer and civil engineer, Kurt Atterberg. Atterberg was a composer in his own right, having written nine symphonies, orchestral suites, concertos, five operas and two ballets. He also won a competition in which applicants wrote works inspired by Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" to mark the centenary of Schubert's death. The prize money was US\$10 000 which is quite something in 1928!

Brendan Joyce



About The Music

Ethel Smyth

Suite for Strings Op.1a

The first work that Ethel Smyth (1858–1944) allowed to be published, was her String Quintet in E Major. Though designated as Opus 1, it was hardly her first composition. It's concise in form, has convincing, tuneful melodies, and reveals a composer who is not only talented but also understands how to write for string instruments. As you'll hear in the magnificent and beautifully crafted Scherzo movement played tonight, with its humour and lyricism this quintet is clearly the work of a tremendously gifted and relatively unknown composer. The famous chamber music critic, Wilhelm Altmann wrote of the quintet:

"Ethel Smyth overcame the constraints of her middle class English background by open rebellion. Taught piano and theory as lady-like accomplishments, she became so concentrated in her studies that her family deemed them unsuitably intense and stopped her lessons. The teenaged Ethel went on a protracted and progressively more severe strike, finally confining herself to her room and refusing to attend meals, church, or social functions unless her father would send her to Leipzig to study composition."

"After two years the embattled Mr. Smyth gave in, and Ethel went to Leipzig where she studied with Heinrich von Herzogenberg and got to know Brahms, whom she admired greatly, as well as Grieg among others. Back in England, she obtained recognition mostly for her public works such as her Mass in D and her opera The Wreckers. Eventually she was raised to the rank of Dame, not only for her musical work but also for her political activities; she was one of Britain's leading suffragettes during the first part of the 20th century."

Courtesy of Edition Silvertrust
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Michael Patterson

Concertino for Double Bass and String Orchestra

During a year's sojourn in Tasmania in 2011 I met violist (the late) Jo St Leon and double bassist Stuart Thomson who performed as a duo called the "Elane Ensemble". I was impressed by the richness and depth of sound possible with just these two instruments. After writing a duo for that ensemble, I continued to be captivated by the challenge of writing for double bass.

There have been relatively few concertos written for the instrument largely due to inherent challenges with projection and agility, and the difficulty to balancing it against an orchestra. For me, these challenges only made the idea of writing a concertino for double bass and string orchestra more tantalising. I embarked on the task with no specific soloist or ensemble in mind,

completing the first draft in 2013. In 2017 Marian Heckenberg and Camerata championed the piece on a regional tour. With the technical prowess of Marian in mind it was possible to add further virtuosic elements and the version performed today was born.

Michael Patterson

Carl Vine *Smith's Alchemy*

My third string quartet was commissioned by the Smith Quartet (London) and first performed by them in 1994 at the Brighton Festival. The work more or less disappeared from view until 2000, when the Goldner String Quartet played it at the opening of the Angel Place Recital Hall in Sydney. It was this performance that caught the ear of Richard Tognetti, Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and he asked whether it could be arranged for his band.

The intention of the original work was to transform four stringed instruments into a single "super" instrument while capitalising on their natural singing qualities. A kind of aural alchemy. I honour the commissioners of the original quartet in renaming the arrangement *Smith's Alchemy*.

Although the very structure of the original work was predicated on the techniques used to create certain effects,

this remains much the same in the new version for string orchestra, and some parts required little amendment. The potential to "share" difficult techniques across more than one instrument has in many ways liberated the music, allowing greater emphasis on its lyrical qualities.

Carl Vine

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What people are saying about us



The interesting combination of the choir with Camerata. I have attended other events in which Camerata have incorporated other artists into their concerts and each has been a wonderful creative collaboration. I was sure this would also be a wonderful night out.

Bronwen Howson, 2025 Celestial Choral Baroque



I love that the ensemble is so animated and expressive. They look like they enjoy playing together. I love that different members introduce different pieces and say interesting things about the music. There is always a wonderful human or personal quality to how people speak and what they say. I love that the ensemble is so accessible.

Bronwen Bailey, 2025 Schumann



Camerata is the best combination of impeccable playing, both solo and ensemble, and heart which envelopes the audience.

Elaine Coates, 2025 Regional Tour



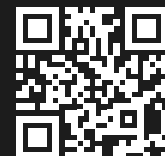
The performance was a beautiful and emotive musical narrative of our eternal memories. Camerata excelled in this production. Kate Miller-Heidke was beautiful. Karol Kowalik was superb. Barbara Lowing was compelling. The recording of the late Therese Joyce accompanied by the beautiful setting by Camerata was perfection.

Michael Doherty, 2025 Your Eternal Memories



Everything! The baroque music including the bonus encore, the modern music, some ethereal, some quirky; the inclusion of the excellent choir, and the always high standard of Camerata.

Marie Cameron, 2025 Celestial Choral Baroque



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Eden Annesley, Laura Boon, Lydia Hwang, Oliver Murphy

EMERGING COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE (2026)

Imogen Ferdinando

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