

## **MELBOURNE YOUTH ORCHESTRA PRESENTS MESSIAEN'S 'TURANGALÎLA SYMPHONY'**

The Melbourne Youth Orchestra (MYO), in association with Presenting Partner Freemasons Victoria, will present the second program of its 2011 Concert Season on Saturday 2 July, 7:00pm and Sunday 3 July, 2:30pm at the South Melbourne Town Hall (Australian National Academy of Music).

After performing for standing-room-only audiences for over a year, this is the first time MYO will give a repeat performance of a program, and marks an exciting new chapter in the development of this young ensemble. The repertoire chosen is fittingly celebratory: Melbourne composer David Chisholm's *Pierre Boulez à la discothèque* will open the concerts before the orchestra embarks upon Messiaen's epic masterpiece, *Turangalîla Symphony*.

The *Turangalîla Symphony* was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and premiered by them in 1949 with Leonard Bernstein conducting. It is a work of massive proportions, making extensive use of complex rhythms and intricate harmonies throughout its 10 movements. This work, which Messiaen described simply as a love song, calls for a large symphony orchestra including an augmented percussion section and two featured keyboard instruments. Peter de Jager, recent winner of the Australian International 2011 Chopin Piano Competition, will perform the fiendishly difficult Piano solo, and Jacob Abela, a young Sydney pianist, will play the exotic *ondes Martenot*.

The sheer scale of the work means that performances of it by professional orchestras are rare, and performances by youth orchestras are almost unheard of. **Melbourne Youth Music Artistic Director and MYO Principal Conductor Fabian Russell** relishes this challenge, commenting: "*There are few major works in the repertoire of twentieth century fine music as magnificent as Olivier Messiaen's testament to Love. The Turangalîla Symphony is at once exotic, grandiose, serene and decadent – an extravagant statement of beauty and an orchestral tour de force. These concerts will be one of the highlights of the 2011 Melbourne concert calendar, being only the third performance of this masterpiece ever in this city.*"

The *ondes Martenot*, invented in 1928 by French cellist Maurice Martenot, is an electronic keyboard instrument comprised of a keyboard console connected to three different diffusers. The keyboard is played by the right hand only, with the left hand operating several buttons which determine timbre, dynamics and note length. A string also runs the length of the keyboard, allowing for smooth glissandi across the range of the instrument, giving the instrument a ghost-like quality.

There were fewer than 500 *ondes Martenot* made before production ceased in 1988 and MYO has been fortunate to procure for this program the use of the only one in Australia. Jacob Abela has been travelling from Sydney to Melbourne to learn the instrument, of which there are very few specialists in the world.

"*It has an incredible expressive range. This is exciting for me as a pianist, as I am usually not able to control a sound after I have struck the key. With the ondes Martenot, I am able to manipulate sound in so many different ways – this is simultaneously the greatest challenge and the most rewarding aspect of the instrument,*" **Jacob Abela** said.

Melbourne Youth Music's most senior ensemble, the Melbourne Youth Orchestra is recognised as one of Australia's finest orchestral training programs, providing its members with weekly rehearsals and tutorials from experienced professional musicians as well as offering many performance opportunities throughout the year.

Tickets for both concerts are available at the door (South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music, 210 Bank Street, South Melbourne 3205) or by calling Melbourne Youth Music on 9376 8988. Further information is available at [www.mym.org.au](http://www.mym.org.au).

### **Enquiries**

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