

IMMORTAL BEETHOVEN

Saturday 13 October 2007, Melbourne Town Hall.

Mass in C; Piano Concerto No. 4; Choral Fantasia; Concert aria "Ah! Perfido"

Royal Melbourne Philharmonic presents *Immortal Beethoven* on October 13 celebrating 200 years of the composer's great *Mass in C*, and featuring his Fourth Piano Concerto, to be performed by acclaimed Melbourne pianist Jonathan Bradley

Under the baton of Music Director Andrew Wailes, Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir, Melbourne University Choral Society (250 voices) and RMP Orchestra (50 pieces), with four outstanding vocal soloists and a superb piano soloist, will perform four major compositions, re-creating concerts from Vienna in September 1807 & 1808.

RMP has invited pianist, **Jonathan Bradley**, to perform the *Piano Concerto No. 4*, written when Beethoven was becoming aware of his impending deafness. Music Director Andrew Wailes says "Jonathan is a brilliant musician and we are thrilled that he'll bring his virtuosic talents to this emotionally charged Piano Concerto."

Jonathan is well known to RMP as principal accompanist, and is widely respected in Melbourne as a piano and organ recitalist. He has given piano recitals throughout Asia and Europe and performed on many of the great European organs, in St Paul's Cathedral, London, Salzburg, Manchester and Liverpool Cathedrals. Jonathan is Senior Organ Scholar at Trinity College, Melbourne, and will be travelling with the RMP Orchestra to China at the end of the year.

Concert soloists will be leading New Zealand soprano Patricia Wright, and beloved stars of Opera Australia, Suzanne Johnston (mezzo soprano), Stephen Smith (tenor) and Richard Alexander (bass).

Two hundred years ago (September 1807) Beethoven conducted the first, private, performance of his *Mass in C*, composed in honour of the birthday of Princess Maria, wife of Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy. A year later, in Vienna, the Mass formed part of a four-hour-long concert, which included the *Choral Fantasia*, the *Fourth Piano Concerto* and the concert aria *Ah Perfido*. Wailes comments: "In 1857 the Melbourne Philharmonic gave the Melbourne première of the *Mass in C* and I'm delighted RMP is returning to this work again."

Beethoven had little experience in writing sacred music and had never set the words of the Mass. The 1807 performance had not been a success with the Prince, who was used to Haydn's music, and who let Beethoven know his opinion in no uncertain terms. The piano concerto had already been privately performed by Beethoven in March of 1808 in the presence of his patron, Prince Lobkowitz. For the 1808 concert Beethoven was not able to find another soloist so he took the stage to play the concerto himself. The *Choral Fantasia*, composed in a matter of weeks before the concert, proved to be the forerunner of the fourth movement of the massive Ninth Symphony which Beethoven composed sixteen years later. Both the *Fantasia* and the Ninth are hymns to joy and contain instrumental variations on a theme sung by the chorus.

RMP (founded in 1853) is Australia's oldest existing cultural organisation. It gave the Melbourne Melbourne première of the *Mass in C* in 1857, and of the *Choral Fantasia* in 1872.

IMMORTAL BEETHOVEN is at 8pm on Saturday 13 October 2007 in Melbourne Town Hall. Door prices: Adult: \$45; Concession \$35; Junior (16 & under) \$20. Premium (Pre-purchase only) \$65.

For tickets call Ticketmaster on 136 100, book online at ticketmaster.com.au (booking fees apply), or purchase directly through RMP on 03 9419 1582, or at rmp.org.au.

For media interviews please call Joanna Stanley on 0425 735 715 or email Joanna on joanna_stanley@iprimus.com.au.