

Christopher's Classics - Series XXVIII 2023

# Arvida Quartet



Isaac Shatford (violin), Sharon Baylis (viola), Jay Lee (cello), Arna Morton (violin)

## **Nordania: a celebration of music from Nordic lands**

Presented by  
Sunday Classics Inc

Elizabeth Ball Trust

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Thursday, June 1st, 2023, 7:30 PM  
**The Piano**, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch

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*The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.*

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# Programme

**Selections from Last Leaf** arr. by the Danish String Quartet

Shore

Polska from Dorotea

Æ Rømeser

Drømte Mig En Drøm

Intermezzo

Shine You Know More

**Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen (1932-2016)** - *String Quartet No. 2*  
*'Quartetto Facile'*

*Interval*

**Grieg (1843-1907)** - *String Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 27*

When the **Arvida Quartet** began performing for Christchurch audiences in early 2022, one of the signature inclusions in their programming was movements from the *Danish String Quartet's* innovative *Wood Works* album: a collection of Nordic folk melodies masterfully arranged for string quartet by members of the Danish String Quartet themselves during a week-long retreat in the Danish countryside in 2013. Folk music has an incredible ability to connect with and speak to individuals from all walks of life, and *Arvida Quartet's* 2022 performances of these special miniatures in intimate settings such as bars and retirement villages quickly garnered the ensemble a favourable reputation for presenting a unique and accessible concert experience.

**'Nordania'** is *Arvida Quartet's* celebration of music from Nordic lands, featuring movements of the *Danish String Quartet's* 2017 follow-up Nordic folk album, *Last Leaf*, alongside the New Zealand premiere of Danish composer Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's *String Quartet No. 2 'Quartetto Facile'* and Norwegian Edvard Grieg's mighty *String Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 27*.

One of Ōtautahi's most exciting new ensembles, **Arvida Quartet** brings joy and vibrancy to the stage, delivering fresh programmes and passionate artistry to Canterbury audiences since February 2022.

Originally formed through Christchurch Symphony Orchestra's *In the Community Ki the Hapori* programme, Arvida Quartet features CSO musicians Arna Morton, Isaac Shatford, Sharon Baylis, and Jay Lee.

Newly appointed as Principal 2nd Violin of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, **Dr. Arna Morton** is thrilled to be home performing for New Zealand audiences after completing her PhD in Violin Performance at the University of Melbourne, following the completion of both Bachelor and Master of Musical Arts degrees at the New Zealand School of Music under the tutelage of Associate Professor and NZSQ first violin, Helene Pohl.

Alongside her roles in the CSO and as first violin of Arvida Quartet, Arna is a founding member of the internationally-acclaimed Morton Trio, performing regularly alongside her husband and horn player, Alex Morton, and fellow-Kiwi pianist, Liam Wooding. In 2019, The Morton Trio toured the United Kingdom with the Royal-Overseas League, performing at esteemed venues such as St Martin's in the Fields and St James Piccadilly, as well as a New Zealand tour with Chamber Music New Zealand.

**Isaac Shatford** is a Christchurch-based composer and violinist, receiving his Bachelor of Music with First-Class Honours in Performance Violin and Composition from Otago University. Isaac currently holds the position of permanent Section Violin with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and was a semi-finalist in the 2018-2019 National Concerto Competition, and awarded a Riccardo Bergonzi violin by the Michael Hill Competition between 2017 and 2019.

As a composer, Isaac was a winner of NZTrio's inaugural composition competition, and a finalist in the Todd Young Composer's Award, in which his work "A Fleeting Fanfare" was workshopped and performed by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. His musical *Ruth* was selected by Stephen Schwartz as Music Theatre Melbourne's "COVID: The Musical", and is currently being workshopped and recorded in New Zealand and Australia by the Te Manu Tioriori Trust.

**Sharon Baylis** began her professional playing career as a freelance violinist for various regional orchestras while studying towards her Bachelors Degree at Victoria University in Wellington. Following her graduation, she moved to Holland to complete her Masters studies, performing regularly with such prestigious orchestras as the Rotterdam Philharmonisch Orkest, with whom she toured North America and Canada, as well as performing in halls throughout Europe including the Solistes Européens in Luxembourg. During this time she also developed her interest in the viola, and was the founding violist of the Florestan Kwintet, performing many highly successful concerts in such renowned halls as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and De Doelen in Rotterdam.

In mid-2010 Sharon moved to Colombia to take up the position of Principal Second Violin with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Caldas, before being appointed Principal Viola of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Cali in 2012. Alongside her orchestral work, Sharon taught viola at the Conservatorio Antonio Maria Valencia and the Universidad del Valle.

Following her return to New Zealand in 2013, Sharon spent a busy couple of years as a freelance musician in Auckland before making the move to Christchurch in 2016 to take up the position of Associate Principal Viola with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra where she currently enjoys a rewarding balance of orchestral playing, chamber work with the newly formed Arvida Quartet, and the occasional foray into solo performance.

Following the completion of his studies with renowned cello tutor, Edith Salzmann, **Jay Lee** joined the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra cello section in 2018. Alongside his work with the CSO, Jay performs regularly with the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra and has participated in several masterclasses with highly esteemed performers, including NZSQ cellist Rolf Gjelsten, international soloist Gautier Capuçon, and pedagogue Frans Helmerson.

# Programme Notes

## **Last Leaf (2017)**

**Last Leaf** explores both modern and traditional folk tunes, with several of the original melodies written by members of the Danish String Quartet themselves. Overall, the *Last Leaf* arrangements have a more introspective quality compared to *Wood Works*, with the idiosyncrasies of the folk tunes blended even more seamlessly within the traditional sound of the string quartet medium, whilst still retaining the simplicity and humility that made *Wood Works* such a breakthrough hit with audiences globally.

## **Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen String Quartet No. 2 'Quartetto Facile' (1959)**

- I. *Andantino*
- II. *Allegretto*
- III. *Andante*
- IV. *Allegro*

Inspired by Nielsen, Bartók and Stravinsky, Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen has been described as "the Contrary Mary of Danish music," part in due to the dualities and irony present in many of his works, including his fourteen string quartets, which he often described as indecisive in nature. "Honesty meets schoolboy pranks, obstinacy meets doubt, yes meets no... never fusty, often entertaining, always adamant" (prestomusic.com), Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's work is filled with juxtapositions and musings of repeated motifs that both say a lot and very little all within the same breath.

## **Grieg String Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 27 (1877-78)**

- I. *Un poco andante - Allegro molto ed agitato*
- II. *Romanze: Andantino*
- III. *Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato - Più vivo e scherzando*
- IV. *Finale: Lento - Presto al saltarello*

A piece of great immensity, Grieg described his String Quartet in G minor as "striving towards breadth, soaring flight, and, above all, resonance for the instruments for which it is written." Grieg's decadent use of double, triple, and quadruple stopping contrasted against lyrical, interweaving melodies and nimble, dance-like figures – likely inspired by traditional Norwegian folk music – creates a work of symphonic proportions.

**Christopher's Classics Next Concert:**

# **Serenity, David & Sarah**



performing **Clarke, Mozart** and **Bruch**

**Thursday 27th July** 2023, 7:30 PM

at **The Piano** 156 Armagh St.

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