

**Critic:** Barry Lenny

**Title:** Adelaide Youth Orchestra: Maestro Series 3, Mastersinger

**Publication:** GLAM Adelaide

**Date:** 28 September 2011

**URL:** <http://www.glamadelaide.com.au/main/adelaide-youth-orchestra-maestro-series-3-mastersinger/>



**Venue:** Elder Hall, University of Adelaide, North Terrace, Adelaide  
**Season:** One performance only  
**Duration:** 2hrs 30min incl interval

This is the tenth year of the Adelaide Youth Orchestras, something of which all past and present members, and all who have taught them, can be justly proud. This concert featured only the senior of the three orchestras, and all of the works were conducted by Associate Professor Keith Crellin OAM, the Artistic Director of the Orchestras.

The ever popular overture from Gioacchino Antonio Rossini's (1792-1868) opera buffa, **The Barber of Seville**, (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, 1816), served equally well as an overture for this concert. The overture was actually recycled and had been written some years prior to the rest of the opera, so does not set up what is to follow by any thematic references. It is a piece that even people who claim to know nothing about opera or orchestral music would be surprised to find that they recognise many of the tuneful themes that appear in this work. There are many lively passages and a degree of humour in this music and the orchestra, as well as playing superbly, injected some of that fun into the work.

The remainder of the first half of the concert was given over to the music of Dr. Calvin Bowman (b. 1972), beginning with the **Divertimento for Strings** (2008) and the world première of his song cycle, **The Purple of Heaven**, for tenor and string orchestra. Consequently, there was a short pause while the other orchestra members left the stage, leaving only the strings.

The **Divertimento for Strings** was in two movements, *Overture* and *Serenade*, and Bowman uses the resources well in these two contrasting movements. His writing for the strings is highly melodic and harmonically rich, including dividing the various sections, and rhythmically interesting, giving the strings a fine chance to show their skills. They performed wonderfully, bringing out all of the nuances, under Keith Crellin's acute guidance, with good balance between the various parts of the ensemble.

**The Purple of Heaven** introduced popular Adelaide tenor, Robert Macfarlane, to sing the three short art songs in the cycle, settings of poems by Shaw Neilson: *Prayer for a Change*, *Her Eyes* and *Under a Currajong*. These are low in the tenor range and so have a warm feel to them, but demanding careful control of the orchestra to ensure they never drown the voice. Keith Crellin has that control and the strings responded to his leadership with some excellent accompaniment to Robert Macfarlane's sensitive rendition of these charming songs. Sadly, this was all that we had from him but, considering that he is also performing

in *The Magic Flute* at the State Opera Studio and had been there earlier in the day, we were fortunate to have him there at all.

After the interval came one major work, the **Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47** (1937) of Russian composer, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). This is a huge challenge for any orchestra, let alone one whose members range from 10 to 22 years of age. They not only rose to the challenge, but presented a performance of which any orchestra could be justly proud. This work was written under the restrictive and dangerous Communist regime, and this is reflected in the music. Keith Crellin has helped the members of the orchestra to understand what this meant to Shostakovich, and how he has expressed his feeling in his writing. This came through marvellously in this moving and powerful performance.

This was another highly enjoyable, and beautifully played, concert by this orchestra of talented and enthusiastic young performers. The large audience were most appreciative, calling for more and applauding long after the music had ended. Look at the web site for information on future concerts and auditions for membership of the various orchestras and ensembles.