

Esther Wu: Conductor

Esther began her music studies at the age of six after hearing, sobbing, and concurrently interpretive dancing to Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata. She has since graduated as a Senior Scholar in the Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries with her Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Auckland in 2021, where she studied conducting with Dr Karen Grylls and piano with Dr Rae de Lisle. She won the 2021 University of Auckland School of Music Concerto Competition and enjoys teaching the piano and music theory.

Esther is now in her final year of medical school at the University of Auckland and has dreams of one day being in charge of the music playlist in the operating theatre. She is incredibly grateful to all her amazing teachers throughout her musical and academic journey as she continually strives to become a well-rounded, skilled, and compassionate musician-doctor.

ORCHESTRA

Violins I	Helen Lewis, Michael Hunter, Selena Sun, Nicola Couch, Charlotte Lamb, Tenwei Liu, Jerry Lam,
Violins II	Heidi Bowmast, Tsui-Wen Chen, Averil Griffin, Arthur Ranford, David Kayrouz, Lawrence Yang
Violas	Judith Gust, Neil Shepherd, Stephanie Thomas, Charlotte van Asch, Daniel Poloha, Iona McDonald, Kim Rapson
Cellos	Claire Postlethwaite, John Early, Graham Falla, Emily Giles, Andrea McCracken, Mary Greig-Clayton, Michelle Caldicott
Basses	Ted Malan, Andrew Kincaid

Acknowledgements and thanks to:

The Vicar and parish of Holy Trinity Church who always make us welcome.

Next Concert: 2:30pm Sunday, 31st May, The Pumphouse, Takapuna. For further information or to be on our mailing list, visit our website: <https://dco.net.nz/>

ASB Account: Devonport Chamber Orchestra 12-3015-0630092-00

Devonport Chamber Orchestra



2pm, Sunday 3rd May, 2026
Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport
Adults: \$20, Seniors/Students \$15,
Children under 12 free

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750): Violin Concerto in D minor BWV 1052R

(Allegro, Adagio, Allegro)

The violin concerto in D minor (BWV 1052R) stands out from Bach's better-known violin concertos - the A minor (BWV 1041) and E major (BWV 1042) - due to the virtuosity required of the soloist and the dark, dramatic character of the work as a whole. While the E major and A minor concertos are cherished mainstays of the violin repertoire, the D minor concerto is more edgy and often described as one of Bach's most outrageous and technically demanding works. Unfortunately there is no surviving original manuscript for the D minor violin concerto and it is known primarily through Bach's own transcription for keyboard, the harpsichord concerto in D minor (BWV 1052) prepared late 1730s for the Leipzig Collegium Musicum. Musicologists consider that the harpsichord concerto was originally written for violin because of its highly idiomatic figurations characteristic of the violin. Bach clearly valued this music as he also recycled the first two movements as the sinfonia and opening chorus of Cantata BWV 146 and the final movement as an organ solo in Cantata BWV 188.

This concerto demonstrates Bach's intensive study of Antonio Vivaldi's music and it incorporates some of Vivaldi's stylistic traits such as its driving 'ritornello' structure (where a main theme, played by the full orchestra returns repeatedly, alternating with contrasting episodes played by soloist) and its aggressive, unharmonised unison themes.

The first movement erupts with a bold, jagged ritornello played by the entire orchestra in unharmonised octaves. The soloist enters with a stream of running semiquavers, weaving through ferocious dissonances and shifting minor tonalities. It also features a 'perfidia' - a technical episode where the soloist plays rapid arpeggiated figures over a growling orchestral pedal note.

The second movement is set in G minor and is built on a ground bass of thirteen bars. While the orchestra maintains a sombre, unyielding pulse, the violin weaves highly ornamented and hauntingly melancholic passages over it. Unlike many of Bach's slow movements, this one doesn't shift to a major key at any time, but maintains a sense of subdued introspection throughout.

The finale returns to the driving intensity of the opening movement. It is famous for its virtuosic fireworks and ghostly drama. The movement is a structural marvel, using a rhythmic motive that pervades the entire texture. It reaches its peak in a 37-bar virtuosic episode for the soloist, providing a final display of technical prowess before the concluding orchestral ritornello.

There have been several recent reconstructions of this violin concerto based on the harpsichord concerto and the two cantatas. Today's edition was constructed by Benjamin Shute in 2016 and is noted for its scholarly and professional rigour.

Programme notes by Roger Booth from sources including William E. Runyan, Patrick Castillo, Denver Philharmonic Orchestra notes, Jessica Getman, Google Gemini AI

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907): Holberg Suite

(1. Prelude, 2. Sarabande, 3. Gavotte, 4. Air, 5. Rigaudon)

Norwegian Edvard Grieg ranks as the preeminent Scandinavian composer of the late 19th century. He had a gift for lyricism and a keen ear for folk song, and was a prolific composer of songs and piano pieces, as well as a large number of choral works, many of them for unaccompanied male voices.

In 1884, for the 200th anniversary of the birth of Danish-Norwegian playwright Ludvig Holberg (nicknamed "*the Molière of the North*"), Holberg's hometown Bergen, planned a grand celebration and commissioned a cantata for male voices from Grieg to be performed outdoors beside a new monument to the playwright. About the commission, Grieg wrote to a friend, "*I can see it all before me, snow, hail, storm and every kind of foul weather, huge male choir with open mouths, the rain streaming into them, myself conducting with waterproof cape, winter coat, galoshes, and umbrella! And a cold afterward, of course, or goodness knows what kind of illness! Oh well, it's one way of dying for one's country!*" His weather forecast turned out to be correct and, although the cantata was performed, it didn't persist in the repertoire and is rarely heard today.

However in 1884, Grieg composed a second work in Holberg's honour, "*Fra Holbergs tid*" ("*From Holberg's Time: Suite in Olden Style*"), a five-movement French baroque dance suite originally written for solo piano and arranged for string orchestra a year later. Alongside his piano concerto and his incidental music to the play "*Peer Gynt*", the Holberg suite has become one of Grieg's most popular and beloved works.

The opening Prelude creates a mood of excited anticipation with agitated rhythms accompanying a lyrical series of melodies. The Sarabande which follows is a slow, reflective interlude featuring solo passages for cellos. A sparkling Gavotte and its contrasting Musette feature a bagpipe-like drone in the lower strings. The melancholy Air, the only movement in a minor key, combines a baroque style and poignant cello solos with Grieg's love of wistful melodies. In the closing Rigaudon, solo violin and viola evoke the rowdy folk sonorities of the Hardanger fiddle, a traditional stringed instrument considered to be the national instrument of Norway.

Harris Leung: Violin Soloist

Harris Leung plays professionally in orchestras throughout the country, often as section leader or associate concertmaster. He is a graduate of the University of Waikato studying under Lara Hall. During his studies there, he was also an Auckland Philharmonia Fellow and qualified as a semifinalist at the National String Competition. Harris has been featured as a soloist with Auckland groups including the Handel Consort and Quire, Philharmonic Society Orchestra, and Sunday Club. He is a member of the recently formed Salut String Quartet which aims to provide regular concerts in addition to playing for corporate events. Harris also enjoys teaching and is an experienced chamber music coach. He taught at the 2026 Auckland String Quartet Summer School and has prepared school groups for the Chamber Music Contest in Auckland and Hamilton.