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SYMPHONY A MOVING TRIUMPH

THE GALLIPOLI SYMPHONY

Queensland Symphony Orchestra
with guest artists

Venue: Concert Hall, QPAC

Reviewed: November 24

Reviewer: Suzannah Conway

CONCEIVED by Queenslander Des Power and music director Chris Latham, The Gallipoli Symphony was created as a tribute to the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign.

Over the past decade 10 Australian, New Zealand and Turkish composers were commissioned to each write a movement, these being presented, one a year, at Gallipoli since 2006.

The symphony had its world premiere in Istanbul in August, followed by this anticipated Australian premier.

The result was excellent and exceptionally moving, cementing a strong collaboration by those nations involved in the conflict 100 years ago.

Written by some of our most illustrious composers, each of the movements represent distinct historical moments showcasing a wide range of musical colours within the grand theme of war and peace.

Gareth Farr and Richard Nunn's poignant *New Zealand Farewell* and Graeme Koehne's Australian sense of foreboding in *The Voyage* led to Elena Kats-Chernin's spine-tingling *The Landing*. *The August Offensive* from Andrew Schultz was brutal and monotonous, followed by Ross Edwards' slow and mournful *The Trenches Are Empty Now*.

These Anzac themes were interwoven with excellent Turkish compositions – Omar Faruk Tekbilek's lament on the ravages of war, Kamaran Ince's terrifying rendition of the allied invasion and Demir Demirkan's hope for a peaceful world.

The addition of many indigenous instruments was welcome. William Barton's didgeridoo was exemplary, its plaintive sound perfect in the final Future movement.

Maori composer, Horomona Horo, played his taonga puoro, with its bittersweet resonance. Tekbilek's Turk-

ish wind instruments included the ney and zurna, while Bahidir Sener's dis-

tinctive kanun (zither) and Ozan Arslan's baglama added an exotic surreal quality to the eastern soundscape.

Despite differences in style from strongly individual composers, there was a deep connection between each of the pieces – an imaginary thread that held the work together, allowing each to logically flow into the next.

Not confining the instruments to

their ethnicity assisted this, with Demirkan's *Hope of the Higher Heart* proffering a multicultural and multi-instrumental world of the future. All credit to music director, Chris Latham.

Excellent pictorial representation on screens above the orchestra included film footage and photos of the period, often accompanied by extracts from letters that gave the score and narrative authenticity and poignancy.

The most moving section was perhaps that of the late Peter Sculthorpe composed in 2014. *Thoughts of Home* was ravishingly beautiful influenced by the *Last Post* and utilising the harmonica, exceptionally well-played by Julian Jackson.

The QSO played this diverse work consistently well and conductor Jessica Cottis was in firm control of her large musical resources including an 80-plus choir of local school students.

The Queensland Symphony Orchestra's 2016 season is now on sale promising a fine international program, building on the excellent musical groundwork undertaken by former Music Director, now Conductor Laureate, Johannes Fritzsche.

The year offers one of the world's great piano virtuosos, Chinese born Lang Lang, in concert in June.

Equally impressive, Nicolai Demidenko's appointment as soloist-in-residence will include his playing of all five Beethoven piano concertos in two cycles in May and October.

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BATTLE HYMNS: Turkish musician Omar Faruk Tekbilek (centre) joins the QSO for The Gallipoli Symphony.