



NZSSSO
IN CONCERT 2026
PROGRAMME

Reuben Brown – NZSSSO 2026 Guest Conductor



Hailing from the deep south of Aotearoa New Zealand, Reuben Brown (Ngā Tāmanuhiri, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine, Rongowhakaata) was the 2025 New Zealand Assistant Conductor-in-Residence with the Auckland Philharmonia. In this role, he debuted with the Philharmonia and Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, and assisted both visiting and resident conductors. In 2026, Reuben continues to assist Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) Chief Conductor, Simone Young, and conduct the SSO Fellows. Committed to the development of young musical talent in Aotearoa, he leads the 2026 NZ Secondary Schools' Symphony Orchestra to both fuel his own passion and encourage theirs.

Reuben debuted with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO) in 2023 with Christmas Brass at Te Papa Museum. Following this, he assisted NZSO Artistic Advisor and Principal Conductor Gemma New on multiple programmes. As a 2022 2024 NZSO Conducting Fellow, Reuben was mentored by Music

Director Emeritus James Judd and Principal Conductor-in-Residence Hamish McKeich, alongside international conductors André de Ridder and Miguel Harth-Bedoya. He recorded four Kiwi works for the NZSO/CANZ Composer Workshops, and has conducted the NZSO National Youth Orchestra, and the NZSO's Tamariki Time and Open Doors touring concerts. One of Aotearoa's emerging talents, Reuben was one of 12 artists selected to perform alongside international luminaries in the Michael Hill International Violin Competition's 2025 Whakatipu Music Festival. Here, Reuben received coaching from leading choral conductor, Dr. Karen Grylls, whilst working with choirs and small ensembles.

As a performer, Reuben plays euphonium with the Royal New Zealand Air Force Band and Wellington Brass Band - Aotearoa's premier brass band - where he is also Associate Musical Director. He recently conducted the band at the 2026 National Brass Band Championships to a podium finish. As a previous Musical Director for the National Secondary Schools' Development Brass Band, he is a proponent for young brass talent.

An honours graduate of Te Kōkī – New Zealand School of Music, Reuben co-founded Wellington's Gallery Orchestra, performing in unique collaborations. In 2023, he conducted the ensemble for a forthcoming album with Kiwi artist Arjuna Oakes. Other conducting engagements include the Auckland Symphony Orchestra, Manawatū Sinfonia, Virtuoso Strings Orchestra, St Kilda Brass Band, Te Kōkī ensembles, and numerous Wellington-based groups.

Matthew Seinafo

From Christchurch, Matthew began learning piano with Marnie Barrell in 2017 at Chisnallwood Intermediate and by 2022 achieved his ATCL diploma with Distinction. He attended Burnside High School, going through its specialist music programme (SMP). In 2024, he began a Bachelor of Music at the University of Auckland, studying with Stephen De Pledge, Rae de Lisle and the late Katherine Austin; mentors he is incredibly grateful to learn from.

In 2025, Matthew was selected as an emerging artist for the At The World's Edge Chamber Music Festival, held in October. From that festival, he was awarded the 2026 Pettman Royal Overseas League Scholarship, enabling an extensive European performance and professional development tour. Matthew is also fortunate enough to be a 2026 scholar of the Auckland Philharmonia through the Haydn Staples Auckland Philharmonia Piano Scholarship.

Matthew won joint first place in the University of Auckland Concerto Competition, earning the opportunity to perform a concerto with the Auckland Philharmonia. He has participated in masterclasses with distinguished artists including Paul Lewis, Inon Barnatan, as well as leading New Zealand musicians.

A passionate chamber musician, Matthew has performed in numerous ensembles ranging from duos to piano quintets. During his time at the University of Auckland, Matthew has frequently performed in a cello and piano duo, presenting works by Beethoven, Franck, Schubert, Shostakovich, and Britten. During his high school years, he reached the regional finals of the NZCT Chamber Music Contest three times, performing piano quintets by Schumann, Brahms, and Elgar. Matthew also plays viola and enjoys performing with the University of Auckland Orchestra.



Salina Fisher

Salina Fisher (b.1993) is an award-winning New Zealand composer whose works are frequently performed worldwide. Drawing from her background as a multi-instrumentalist of mixed Japanese heritage, her highly evocative music often involves collaborations, notably with taonga pūoro practitioners. Her works have been programmed by New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, Tanglewood Music Festival, Helsinki Philharmonic, A Far Cry, Brodsky Quartet, and Symphony Orchestras of Seattle, Atlanta, Dallas, Melbourne, and Shanghai, including with conductors Gemma New and Tianyi Lu. She became the youngest-ever recipient of the SOUNZ Contemporary Award in 2016 and 2017, and has received awards from Fulbright, The Arts Foundation, Creative NZ, and CANZ. She is a graduate of Manhattan School of Music, New York, and New Zealand School of Music – Te Kōkī, Victoria University of Wellington, where she was appointed Composer-in-Residence (2019-2020) and Teaching Fellow in Composition.



2026 Orchestra. (* = Guest Player)

First Violin

Concertmaster: Catherine Harrison
Associate Concertmaster: Hayley Jiang
Assistant Concertmaster: Vivienne Lim
Cheryl Teng
Hamish Harrison
Olivia Zhou
Hatsumi Yuge
Ariel Tsai
Alice Carter
Annie Srichantra
Samuel Yuan
Renee Jiang
Michael Fei
Eunie Park
Emma Chen
Yu Shan Lee
Selena Zhang

Viola

Principal: Dalton Ma
Associate Principal: Ary Son
Kiani Christie
Lily Adams
Alicia Chen
Samuel Zhang
Michaela Arlidge
Donna Qiu
Theo McNeill
Siyuan Wang

Double Bass

Co-Principal: Ava Palmer
Co-Principal: Mila Yin
James Parker
Guy Herrick
Tabea Brookland

Second Violin

Principal: Fengyao Liu
Associate Principal: Asher Robertson
Nurie Choi
Yicheng Wang
Gabriella Schuitemaker
Alexander Dy
Sierra Sharma
Rebecca Chen
Pragnya Mooji
Felix Huang
Tony Baizhen Chen
Yichen Hu
Claudia Noble
Yuxing Yang

Cello

Principal: Elise Tian
Associate Principal: Harriet Panckhurst
Ryan Koo
Otilie Faloon-Cavander
Elvies Hu
Jago Wallace
Imogen Waldron
Henry Wang
Richie Tu
Liam Whatman
Oscar Zhao
Sarah Zhou
Veeraj Sidhu
Luke Chen

Piano

Minori Naoi

Flute

Principal: Louise Shen

Minori Naoi (Piccolo)
HaoBo (Terence) Yang (& 2nd Piccolo)
Yuvn Cho

Clarinet

Co-Principal: Aadarsh Rayhan Roy

Co-Principal: Dennis Liu (& Bass Clt)

Jenny Petegem Thach
Jonah Liu

Alto Saxophone

Quinn Sullivan
HaoBo (Terence) Yang

French Horn

Principal: Jessica Drury

Seiji Yoneda-Dimitrov
Ben Blaikie
Ethan Waines
Ryan McIlwrick

Trombone

Principal: Jonny Croker

Duncan Blennerhassett
Mika Muraji-Green
Tianna Chen
Hugo Gozdzikowski

Tuba

Willy Keith

Oboe

Principal: Grace Kim

Associate Principal: Sophia Yang

Senna Muraji-Green
Leo Gore (& Cor Anglais)

Bassoon

Principal: Hamish Dark

Louis Harman
Cynthia Lan
Edward Cheng

Tenor Saxophone

Andrew McLauchlan

Trumpet

Principal: Oscar Stove

Alice Chen
Jonathan Zhou
Marcello Ferguson

Percussion/Timpani

Principal: Vin Marsden

Hannah Kagawa*
Derek Wu
Franklin Chesney
Raphael Wu

Harp

Principal: Sherry Zhang

Associate Principal: Erica Du

NZSSSO 2026 PROGRAMME

New Zealand Secondary Schools' Symphony Orchestra

Guest Conductor: Reuben Brown

Piano Soloist: Matthew Seinafo

Concertmaster & Solo Violin: Catherine Harrison

Salina Fisher – Murmuring Light (2019)

George Gershwin – Rhapsody in Blue (1924; 1942 arrangement by Ferde Grofé)

INTERVAL (15 MINUTES)

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov – Scheherazade op.35 (1888)

- I. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
- II. The Story of the Kalendar Prince
- III. The Young Prince and the Young Princess
- IV. Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Shipwreck

Programme Notes

Salina Fisher – Murmuring Light

'In Studio Drift's interactive light installation Flylight, many delicate glass tubes light up in unpredictable swarm-like patterns. These patterns are based on the flock behaviour of birds, and are responsive to the viewer's movement. While birds can symbolize individual freedom, in a murmuration they find safety in numbers, sensing each other's direction and moving collectively. In Murmuring Light, I explore this delicate balance between the individual and the group. Through various musical parameters, the distinction between 'individual' and 'group' is heightened and blurred, in a continuous shift of light'.

Murmuring Light won Manhattan School of Music's Carl Kanter Award for Excellence in Orchestral Composition in May 2019. Its New Zealand premiere was given by Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and Music Director Giordano Bellincampi at 'Conflict and Triumph' on November 14th 2019.

George Gershwin (1898-1937) – Rhapsody in Blue (1924) (orchestrated 1942 by Ferde Grofé)

Rhapsody in Blue was originally commissioned by 'King of Jazz' bandleader Paul Whiteman for his 'An Experiment in Modern Music' concert, premiering on February 12, 1924 in New York City. Gershwin wrote the piece in just a few weeks; he told biographer Isaac Goldberg in 1931 that the conception came to him on a train journey to Boston. *"It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer ... I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise.....I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness"*.

The original composition was scored for solo piano and jazz band, with Gershwin himself playing the piano at the premiere and improvising parts of the piano solo. The piece was later re-orchestrated in various forms by Whiteman's pianist and chief arranger Ferde Grofé, culminating in the most commonly performed 1942 arrangement for full symphony orchestra.

The opening clarinet solo is one of the most iconic and recognisable moments in all of music, but it was initially created by chance. Clarinetist Ross Gorman played the opening measure with a noticeable glissando and jazzy inflection as something of a joke, but Gershwin instantly seized upon this and asked him to add as much of a 'wail' as possible in performance, thus creating the standard performance practice.

Written as one extended movement, *Rhapsody in Blue* takes the listener through a series of contrasting episodes, often interpreted as capturing various aspects of the vibrant spirit of New York City in the 1920s. The piano plays a central role, both as a virtuosic solo instrument and as a collaborator with the orchestra. Gershwin weaves together jazz idioms and rhythms, bluesy melodies, memorable motifs and symphonic structure to create a work that simultaneously feels both improvisatory and carefully crafted.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) - *Scheherazade* Op. 35 (1888)

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov based *Scheherazade* on the Arabic collection of fairy tales *The Thousand and One Nights*, which tells of a Sultan who, deeming all women faithless after being betrayed by his most trusted wife, has one member of his harem brought to him each evening and executed the following morning. The Sultana Scheherazade, however, hatches a plot whereby her life will be spared; telling the Sultan a new story each night for a thousand and one nights, never revealing the story's conclusion until the following evening and thus delaying her fate. Over time, the Sultan falls in love with Scheherazade and abandons the plan. In his autobiography, *My Musical Life* (1909), Rimsky-Korsakov wrote: "the titles for the four individual sections...were intended only as hints to direct but slightly the individual listener.... All I had desired was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, should carry away the impression that it is an oriental narrative of some numerous fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on themes common to all four movements.

"Why then, if that be the case, does the suite bear the name of Scheherazade? Because this name and the title *The Arabian Nights* connote in everybody's mind the East and fairy-tale wonders; besides, certain details of the musical exposition hint at the fact that all of these are various tales of some one person (who happens to be Scheherazade) entertaining therewith her stern husband."

There are two major recurring musical motifs in the suite, both introduced in its opening measures: the menacing theme of the Sultan – utilizing low brass and woodwinds, supported by the strings—and the seductively sinuous theme of Scheherazade, portrayed by the solo violin. The work ends not with the shipwreck, but with a gentle solo violin epilogue: a vision of *Scheherazade* herself, who had many more tales to tell.

Rimsky-Korsakov is renowned as a master of orchestral colour; this suite shines a light on many members of the orchestra with numerous solos interspersed with thrilling orchestra passages, and vivid storytelling throughout. It is a perfect vehicle for these young musicians to showcase their talent and hard work.

The NZSSSO Team would like to acknowledge and thank:

Te Puna Wai O Waipapa Hagley College: Principal, Finance Department & Forte Itinerant Music Teachers, Cashmere High School: Principal, Grant Bartley, Kahu Service, & Paul Walker, The Ministry of Education, Ian Thorpe, Marco Rijnberg (Stage Management) , Sue & George Patterson (Catering), Spectrum Sound, Freddie Gash (Video Recording), Rachael Cox (Social Activity).

All the parents and volunteers - without whom the course would not be possible.

NZSSSO Tutors

Violin 1	Sarah McCracken	CSO
Violin 2	Grace Stainthorpe	Forte/CSO
Viola	Philippa Lodge	Forte/CSO
Cello/Strings	Naomi Hnat	CSO
Double Bass	Annabella Zilber	CSO
Flute	Susan Dollin	CSO
Oboe	Susan McKeich	CSO
Clarinet/Woodwind	Georgina Rees-Stevenson	Forte/CSO
Bassoon	Melanie Chua	CSO
French Horn/Brass	Antonio Dmitrov	Forte/CSO
Trumpet	Thomas Eves	CSO
Trombone/Tuba	Joe Thomas	CSO
Percussion	Roanna Funcke	CSO
Harp	Helen Webby	CSO

NZSSSO Management Team

Course Director:	Nicola Fogden-Smith
Systems Administrator	Georgina Rees-Stevenson
Artistic Advisor	Philippa Lodge

NZSSSO 2027 Orchestral Course Dates: 19th - 24th April 2027 at Cashmere High School
Check the NZSSSO website for details www.nzssso.com

*Ko taku waiata ohooho, ko taku waiata mapihi mauria
'My music is awakening, my music is the window to my soul'.*

NZSSSO - New Zealand Secondary Schools' Symphony Orchestra

Background to the Course

The New Zealand Secondary Schools' Orchestral Course is an annual event run by Forte, the Itinerant Music Unit attached to Te Puna Wai O Waipapa Hagley College. Some of New Zealand's top secondary school orchestral instrumentalists are selected by audition to participate. Students are tutored by the Forte Itinerant Music Team and players from the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.

The course is funded by a small annual vacation grant from the Ministry of Education and a registration fee levied on the students. It has run every year since 1960 with only three exceptions - one being 2011 due to the earthquakes in Christchurch, and the other two due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Each year the standard remains high, enabling the orchestra to tackle significant works from the orchestral repertoire. The NZSSSO is widely regarded as a valuable training ground for young players aspiring to membership of the NZSO National Youth Orchestra and possibly to a career as a professional musician. Parents and supporters make an enormous contribution to the course and for this we would like to extend our thanks and appreciation.

In 2026, NZSSSO students come from 39 schools around Aotearoa including:

Aidanfield Christian School, Burnside High School, Cashmere High School, Chilton Saint James School, Christ's College, Christchurch Boys' High School, Crimson Global Academy, Epsom Girls' Grammar School, Hamilton Boys' High School, HIBS Hutt International Boys' School, Hillcrest High School, Hillmorton High School, Lincoln High School, Lindisfarne College, Macleans College, Marlborough Boys' College, Newlands College, Palmerston North Girls' High School, Papanui High School, Pinehurst School, Queen Margaret College, Rangi Ruru Girls' School, Richmond View School, Rongotai College, Rototuna Senior High School, Sacred Heart College (Auckland), Saint Peters College (Epsom), Scots College, Shirley Boys' High School, St. Andrew's College, St. Margaret's College, St. Oran's College, St. Paul's Collegiate School, Taieri College, Te Aho O Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School, Te Aratai College, Waikato Diocesan School for Girls, Wellington College, Whitby Collegiate.

42% North Island, 58% South Island, 9 urban centres

Congratulations to our 4 year badge recipients for 2026!

Lily Adams (Viola), Hayley Jiang (Violin), Vivienne Lim (Violin), Harriet Panckhurst (Cello), Ary Son (Viola), Gabrielle Schuitemaker (Violin)

5 years - Jessica Drury (French Horn).



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