

## Gift of Music – BOP Symphonia

Despite the restrictions of Covid, Tauranga was able to enjoy an afternoon of live orchestral music at Baycourt. The BOP Symphonia under the baton of guest conductor, Michael Joel, presented a varied programme of music spanning nearly 150 years.

The standout feature of this concert was Chopin's *Piano Concerto No 2*, played by Shan Liu aged 12. He began studying piano when he was 7. This was a wonderful performance, made even more remarkable when the age of the performer is taken into consideration. Liu's was totally absorbed throughout the concerto with some very nimble, seemingly effortless, runs. The ornamentation in the second movement was delicately played, achieving both clarity and sonority. Following Chopin's Mazurka Op 24 No 2 Liu received a well-deserved standing ovation.

It is a thrill for pianists to have the opportunity to play a concerto with a live orchestra and BOP Symphonia excelled themselves today. Beethoven's Overture *The creatures of Prometheus* was first up on the programme, giving all sections of the orchestra a chance to shine. Dynamics and precision from the strings along with excellent tone from the woodwinds was the ideal entrée for the Chopin Concerto.

Schumann's *Overture, Scherzo and Finale* gave us another opportunity to enjoy the woodwinds ensemble sound in the Overture. The rhythmic Scherzo with good dynamics was followed by a well-balanced sound in the Finale and a dramatic conclusion.

Stravinsky's *Dances Concertantes* required relatively small resources and as such didn't require the full orchestra. The 5 Dances had their rhythmic and harmonic challenges and concluded an afternoon of delightful music-making.

**Jeremy Whimster**