

The Te Ata Festival A Festival within the New Zealand Festival

Jonathan Lemalu with the Virtuosos Strings Orchestra and the Sinfonia for Hope Orchestra

Remarks by Sir Roderick Deane at the Te Rauparaha Arena in Porirua

22 February 2020

The Honorable Minister Kris Faafoi, the Honorable Dame Winnie Laban, Her Worship the Mayor, Anita Baker, our special guests Foalima and Tasi Lemalu, Jonathan parents here from Dunedin, Professor Donald Maurice, the Trustees of Virtuoso Strings, James and Paul and Liz and Craig, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am Roderick Deane and it is my huge pleasure to warmly welcome you all here this afternoon to a special performance by Jonathan Lemalu with the Virtuoso Strings Orchestra, the first time this special youth orchestra has performed at the Te Ata Festival, a Festival within the NZ Festival.

But there is more. We have also the New Zealand Sinfonia for Hope with us this afternoon, a leading orchestra drawn from musicians of the NZ School of Music, Orchestra Wellington and the NZ Symphony Orchestra to help us celebrate the arts and creativity in Porirua. Their Music Director is the outstanding Professor Donald Maurice and their concertmaster is Martin Riseley.

The first International Festival of the Arts was held in 1986 so Wellington has now been blessed with 17 amazing Festivals. It is a biennial highlight of the arts in New Zealand, reminding us of the great depth and diversity of the arts world and the splendid array of talent in New Zealand. The Te Ata Festival is an innovative “festival within a festival”, designed to bring together artists from Aotearoa and around the world to participate with young New Zealanders to help shape the culture of the places where they live. This year it is centred on Porirua, a city which has one of the youngest populations in NZ.

We are hugely appreciative of the vital role of Creative New Zealand and other supporters in sponsoring and supporting the Festival.

This afternoon we are doubly blessed by music specially created for us by Craig Utting QSM who along with his wife Liz Sneyd QSM and their fellow trustees

are the driving forces underpinning the Virtuoso Strings, an Orchestra devoted to exploring and enhancing the talents of young New Zealanders, drawn particularly from the Porirua Basin. Well over 200 students each year get the exciting opportunity to experience the music programmes run by the Virtuoso Strings Charitable Trust. The Orchestra is fortunate to have as major sponsors Creative New Zealand, the Tindall Foundation and the Wright Family Foundation. We extend our warmest appreciation to them and to all the other generous sponsors and donors. And huge thanks to Helene Pohl and Gillian Ansell of the NZ String Quartet for their help with splendid tuition.

Liz and Craig are the most amazing people, totally devoted to enhancing the world for numerous youngsters and thus for us all. They were honoured by Queen Elizabeth in 2015 with the Queen's Service Medal for their services to music education; Honours which were richly deserved. Liz was named as New Zealand Music Teacher of the Year in 2018. Craig is a wonderful composer and we will be enjoying the product of his creativity today on what happens to be 55th birthday. Happy birthday Craig !!

Not only do they teach young people about music and musical instruments, but they provide them with opportunities to learn about working with each other in an orchestra and training them for fuller and more rewarding lives. For the Virtuosos Strings to win the People's Choice Award at the Chamber Music 2019 National Competition was a truly outstanding achievement.

Jonathan Lemalu is an exemplar to and Patron of Virtuoso Strings. He is a Grammy Award winning Bass Baritone. But of more importance, he is a wonderful example of how a New Zealander with great talent and much determination can come to command the world stage. Jonathan has performed in numerous operas and given many concerts in some of the world's most prominent opera houses. Along with his wonderful parents Tasi and Foalima Lemalu from Dunedin who are here with us this afternoon, Gillian and I have seen him graduate as the top student at the Royal College of Music in London, perform at Covent Garden and Glyndebourne, in Sydney and Wellington, and been ultra proud of him when he became a distinguished Professor of Music at the world famous Guildhall in London.

And he is Patron of Virtuoso Strings. But more than that, he gives back to others with a generosity of spirit which is illustrated today by him having spent a week teaching Masterclasses at Victoria University and now here he is in

Porirua to sing with this young and dynamic orchestra. He is one of the world's special people.

How fortunate are we to have the greatly esteemed Sinfonia for Hope Orchestra performing for us today. This talented group draws upon fine musicians from the NZ School of Music, Orchestra Wellington and the world class NZSO. They are contributing their time today to encourage support for Virtuoso Strings, their 2020 special project, one designed to enrich the lives of these children and the communities in which they live.

This concert has come to pass as a result of marvelous contributions also from others who are devoted to music and this community. Our conductor will be the talented Andrew Atkins; the exceptionally gifted Toloa Faraimo is the Concertmaster of Virtuoso Strings; and Glenview School and Tawa College have singers in one of the pieces.

So here we are in the special city of Porirua to enjoy a special concert. May I thank you all for joining us and we hope you will feel able to support Virtuoso Strings for many years to come.

On one small logistics point, could I ask you please not to clap until the end of the first half as there are 8 pieces in the first half which will be played continuously.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much ... and now to our keenly anticipated concert.

And here is Toloa, the Leader of Virtuoso Strings

And we welcome Andrew our conductor