

**MEDIA RELEASE**

# Hello cello!

## Leading European duo take on young Aussie premiere

11-30 September 2017



Nicolas Altstaedt



Aleksandar Madžar

*"The real fireworks began with  
Nicolas Altstaedt."*  
**The Boston Globe**

*"An absolute revelation."*  
**Huffington Post (Altstaedt)**

*"A performance as perceptive as  
it was brilliant."*  
**The Washington Post (Madžar)**

From Carnegie Hall to the Concertgebouw, audiences are raving about cellist **Nicolas Altstaedt**. The young German-French maestro is the must-have artist on everyone's playlist, recently adding a BBC Music Magazine Award to his vast swag of prizes. From **11 to 30 September 2017**, he tours Australia for **Musica Viva**, joining acclaimed pianist **Aleksandar Madžar** in a history of the great cello sonatas, from Brahms and Debussy through to a **world premiere by young Adelaide composer, Jakub Jankowski**.

Nicolas Altstaedt is one of the most sought-after and versatile artists today. Born in Heidelberg to a German father and French mother, his accolades are too numerous to list in full. A recipient of the Borletti Buitoni Trust Fellowship in 2009, he won the Credit Suisse Young Artist Award in 2010, was a BBC New Generation Artist from 2010-2012 and has performed under conductors from Sir Roger Norrington and Vladimir Ashkenazy to Sir Neville Marriner and Joshua Weilerstein.

The brand new **Elbphilharmonie Hamburg** chose him as Artist in Residence for 2018-19, and he is also 'Artist in Spotlight' at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam. He is equally in demand as a conductor. In 2014, Adam Fischer asked him to follow in his footsteps as Artistic Director of the Haydn Philharmonie and in 2011, he took over from Gidon Kramer as Artistic Director of the Lockenhaus Festival. His recent recording of CPE Bach Concertos won the **BBC Music Magazine Concerto Award 2017**.

His touring partner, the acclaimed Serbian pianist Aleksandar 'Sasha' Madžar, is just as impressive and a much-loved visitor to our shores. He holds professorships at the Royal Conservatoire, Brussels and the Hochschule für Musik in Bern, is a popular soloist with orchestras such as the Royal and BBC Philharmonics, and has given recitals around the globe.

The pair were such a **hit at the 2015 Musica Viva Festival** that they were immediately asked to return for a national tour. "It's a luxury to work with Sasha," says Nicolas. "He's a really genuine artist: all his energy flows into the piano. He also speaks something like eight languages fluently. He's simply one of the brightest, most modest people I've encountered."

They are bringing two virtuosic programs to Australia. Both feature Debussy's fantastical late Cello Sonata alongside **Three Pieces by Nadia Boulanger**, and a **new work by Adelaide rising star, Jakub Jankowski**. "Jakub was suggested by Carl Vine," says Nicolas, "and I very much like what I've heard of his music. I think it's a fantastic idea that if we do an Australian tour, there has to be an Australian piece in it. This is how a society is created and how a culture develops."

A cellist himself, Jankowski's recent Octet was a resounding success at the 2017 Musica Viva Festival. His new work was commissioned especially for this tour with the support of the Australian Executor Trustees Community Program and the Adelaide Commissioning Circle.



Jakub Jankowski

“My piece is titled *Aspects of Return*,” says Jakub. “Our lives are full of attempts at returning to the past, or to previous states of being. This virtually always proves to be an impossibility, either because what we are returning to has changed, or we ourselves have changed along with our perceptions.”

Program One also includes two grand-scale 20<sup>th</sup>-century sonatas, respectively by Barber and Shostakovich. Program Two adds the Britten Cello Sonata and the Sonata No.2 in F major by Brahms.

“I wanted to bring some pieces I know well,” says Altstaedt, “which are the Debussy and Shostakovich Sonatas. Shostakovich was the first music I fell in love with. I heard it when I was five years old, so the sonatas are very natural for me.”

“I’ve always loved the *Three Pieces* by Nadia Boulanger, which were composed at the time of the First World War. I’ve never understood why they’re not mainstream cello repertoire. To me, it’s music on the same level as Debussy and Franck.”

He rates the Britten Sonata as one of the century’s finest. “I’m a huge fan of Britten and I also love his personality as a performer.” Next, he wanted to play a work he had never tackled before, and selected the Barber as a repertoire addition.

The Brahms F major Sonata is no less challenging: “I played it a lot at one point, then less and less because you see how big the piece is and how small you are!” he acknowledges. “But now I want to reach out to a piece that is so high it automatically makes you grow.”

Besides Sasha, Nicolas has another vital performance partner: his 1750s Giulio Cesare Gigli cello, which he has played since 2013. “I had to return the beautiful Nicolas Lupot cello that I had had on loan,” he says, “because it was from a foundation for young musicians and I turned 30. So I was without an instrument. The auction house Tarisio asked if they could help and soon called me saying I should see this Gigli in London. I’m normally very picky, but it was love at first sight!”

“It’s a typical Roman school instrument,” he continues. “The form is very individual and when you put it down on its side it shakes all the time because the sides are not square or symmetrical at all.”

And so Sasha, Nicolas and the Gigli are setting off for several weeks of music-making “down under”. “Australia is a place I love to go back to,” he concludes. “It has always been a place where I feel musically at home.”

**Nicolas Altstaedt and Aleksandar Madžar will tour to Sydney, Coffs Harbour, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Brisbane, Newcastle and Perth. For bookings and further details, please visit <https://musicaviva.com.au/altstaedt-madzar>. They will also mentor talented young students at masterclasses in Brisbane, Newcastle and Perth. For details, please see <https://musicaviva.com.au/about-us/concerts/masterclasses/>.<sup>1</sup>**

### TOUR DATES

Sydney **11 Sep 2017 7:00 PM**  
Coffs Harbour **12 Sep 2017 8:00 PM**  
Canberra **14 Sep 2017 7:00 PM**  
Sydney **16 Sep 2017 2:00 PM**  
Melbourne **19 Sep 2017 7:00 PM<sup>2</sup>**  
Adelaide **21 Sep 2017 7:30 PM**  
Melbourne **23 Sep 2017 7:00 PM**  
Hobart **25 Sep 2017 8:00 PM**  
Brisbane **27 Sep 2017 7:00 PM<sup>3</sup>**  
Newcastle **28 Sep 2017 7:30 PM**  
Perth **30 Sep 2017 7:30 PM**

### PROGRAM ONE

(Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne Weekday, Perth, Sydney Weekday)

**DEBUSSY** Cello Sonata

**BOULANGER** Three Pieces for cello and piano

**BARBER** Cello Sonata, op 6

**JANKOWSKI** *Aspects of Return* (World Premiere)<sup>4</sup>

**SHOSTAKOVICH** Cello Sonata, op 40

### VENUES

Adelaide: **Adelaide Town Hall**

Brisbane: **Queensland Conservatorium**

Canberra: **Llewellyn Hall**

Coffs Harbour: **Coffs Harbour Education Campus**

Melbourne: **Melbourne Recital Centre**

Newcastle: **Newcastle Conservatorium of Music**

Perth: **Perth Concert Hall**

Sydney: **City Recital Hall**

### PROGRAM TWO

(Brisbane, Canberra, Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Melbourne Weekend, Sydney Weekend)

**DEBUSSY** Cello Sonata

**BOULANGER** Three Pieces for Cello and Piano

**BRITTEN** Cello Sonata, op 65

**JANKOWSKI** *Aspects of Return* (World Premiere)<sup>4</sup>

**BRAHMS** Cello Sonata no 2, op 99

<sup>1</sup>Musica Viva's Masterclass program is supported by principal patrons Stephen Johns & Michele Bender, the Sydney Conservatorium Association (NSW), Lyn Hamill & Ian Dover (Queensland), Wesfarmers Arts (Western Australia), Anonymous Donor (South Australia), and Mary Turner OAM (Newcastle).

<sup>2</sup>Melbourne Weekday Concert: Graeme Watson Tribute Concert; <sup>3</sup>Brisbane Concert presented in association with Brisbane Festival

<sup>4</sup>This commission is supported by the Australian Executor Trustees Community Program and Adelaide Commissioning Circle.