NORTHERN TERRITORY
of AUSTRALIA

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Member for Fong Lim

HANSARD EXTRACT

DARWIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & DARWIN BEACH CHOIR

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The Northern Territory is one of Australia's most multicultural places. It is wonderful to walk down any street of any major town or city in the Territory and hear languages that are spoken from thousands of years ago—languages that have come across the seas with our new Australians. They are celebrated and embraced.

While I talk about this, it is an important reminder to stand up for our fellow Australians when we see racism and discrimination and to call out bad behaviour and ensure we are not setting the standard of letting people be vilified. That is what we should continue to do.

I encourage people to participate in the Harmony events this week from 16 to 22 March and acknowledge 21 March, which is Harmony Day. It is an amazing festival to showcase who we are as a multicultural country.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, I recognise the Darwin Symphony Orchestra's season opening concert, From Common Ground, which happened last Saturday 14 March. It was built as a concert of virtuosity, imagination and transformation. As someone who has been going to these things for 30-odd years, I can say it was breathtaking. It was one of the best concerts I have ever seen the orchestra do. There was a spontaneous standing ovation at the end because it was a phenomenal night, and a real credit to everyone involved.

The concert program was all about the idea of growth—which is serendipitous for the government—specifically based around a single idea and linking together by variation and transformation. Each of the composers involved had existing material, whether it was a single theme or a familiar form or melody from the past, reshaped in a highly personal way.

The concert opened with a wonderful work by the DSO's Composer in Residence, Netanela Mizrahi. Netanela is such an asset to the orchestra and Darwin musical community. Her work across Indigenous communities, immigration detention centres and palliative care led her to get a Churchill Fellowship in 2017. Some of her recent projects include *Gurrulwa Guligi*, an orchestral work commemorating the Cyclone Tracy 50th anniversary with Aunty Bilawara Lee, and last year *Wuyal's Journey* which was created with Banula Marika. That, I think, was the best thing I have seen the orchestra do—up until I saw this thing on Saturday, which was a different concept but one that blew everyone's minds.

Netanela's first work in the program was a clever composition. It was a palindrome—something that works backwards and forwards, such as a word like Parap. Musically, as someone who knows how difficult it is to compose and orchestrate music, it was amazing to hear the work she premiered that night. It was amazing stuff.

The concert went on with a showstopping Shostakovich *Theme and Variations in B-Flat Major*, which was performed by a visiting guest pianist, which I will come to in a second. In the second half there was another huge explosion of talent in four movements of Hindemith's 1943 *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*.

You just cannot put on these things without having a whole lot of people who are super talented and who come together and give up their time and talent to provide something for hundreds of Territorians. All those people in the orchestra work in the public service, healthcare system and education. They are here because that orchestra exists to help keep them here. Never forget that.

I draw attention to, above and beyond those first few things, the fact that the concert finished with Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43*, which was written in 1934 and is a set of 24 variations on a single idea based on the *24 Caprices for Solo Violin* by Niccolo Paganini, the violin virtuoso. The best-known section, variation 18, features an inversion which is super clever and famously well known beyond the concert hall. All of you would recognise it if you heard it. It is in films and video games—I think it is in Gran Turismo 6 at some point. It is piano concerto, though, in all but name.

It was an exhilarating showcase of virtuosity. The fireworks and pyrotechnics of Stefan Cassomenos, who was brought in as the piano soloist, was mind blowing. It is the kind of thing we are lucky to see live in Darwin to a packed house. Securing his talents is a great credit to the DSO board and artistic director, and we had Stefan Cassomenos back for a second time.

His work as virtuosity, and amazing as it was, was the icing. No matter how good it is, if you just eat icing in isolation it makes you a bit nauseous and sick. You need a cake to put it on. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you will appreciate the metaphor. The importance of the cake cannot be underestimated. The cake is the Darwin Symphony Orchestra.

Mrs Zio: St Patrick's Day cake.

Dr RAHMAN: Yes, the St Patrick's cake next door—thank you, Member for Fannie Bay.

I recognise the musicians. By and large, they are all local musicians who are not necessarily all pro. They have day jobs and they give up their time and talents to provide this orchestra for all of us. I want to call out to them tonight because I have given many speeches about the orchestra and always name the people at the head of the organisation without actually specifying all the people. You will recognise a lot of these names as people in your community:

- First violin—Monica Curro; Tahli Elsner; Wan-Ling Chang; Fia Walsh; Aruna Shivam; Lachlan Spargo-Peattie; Zeke Llewellyn; Katharina Fehringer; Oberon; and Tara Murphy
- Second violin—Lucy Vallentine; Marissa Loh; Anna Ralph; Helen Humphreys; Sabine Gonelli; Sonya Bree; Toby Koeford; Belinda Gehlert; and Ben Koefoed
- Viola—Annette Anderson; Georgina Price; Mary Wheaton; Bridget McCullough; Cathy Shilton; and Rachael McMinn
- Cello—Stephanie Arnold; Amelia Noble; Maddison Sims; Greg Tuske; Jude Grove-Jones; Cathy Applegate; Richard Grainger; and Liz Clarkson
- Double bass—Phillip Waldron; Andrea Sitas; Sally Cutter; and Kathy Campbell
- Flute—Rozanne Mentzel; Kylie Simpson; and Clare Patterson
- Oboe—Jasper Ly; Alex Tsang; and Sarena Wegener
- Clarinet—Stephen Pevely; Natalie Chin; Nicholas Yates; and David Chin
- Bassoon—Rob Llewellyn; Alana Bryett; and Madeline Nickelson
- French horn—Noah Cass; Jethro Llewellyn; Jessie Spargo-Peattie; and Helen List
- Trumpet—David Pye; Jessica Anderson; and Angela Titmuss
- Trombone—Kabir Khera; Marcus Dhu; and Oliver Locos
- Tuba—David Parkin
- Harp—Erna Jarvis
- Percussion—Ingrid Purich; Amy Zhao; David Smith; and Anthony Sherwood.

That is not an insignificant number of musicians who give up their time and talent to provide the cake for all of us to eat on a regular basis in this town. I think it is absolutely worth commending them for all their efforts.

The orchestra has reached new heights under the new artistic director, Richard Mills. In addition to the orchestra's usual work on education and outreach in taking music to the Territory people and young artist programs working in coordination with CDU, there are moves afoot at the moment to rebuild the Darwin Youth Orchestra, which is a real gem that has been lost over years of government failing to look after it.

I will advocate vehemently for this over the next few months because the value of reinvigorating the historic strength of our public music education offering cannot be underestimated. There is literature and evidence that correlates and tells you that kids who learn music do better with teamwork, academic performance in STEM subjects, school attendance and social cohesion. It is comparable to the community value you get by investing in supporting sporting programs. It is a practical, high-impact investment in NT cultural and educational futures. Music education matters. The Darwin Youth Orchestra was a proven model all through the 1990s. That really needs renewal now to help us to help ourselves in the Territory.

My sincere gratitude to DSO Chair Claire Kilgariff and Vice Chair Heather Brown for helping to facilitate my participation. I eagerly anticipate the orchestra's next concert at the AANT Centre, where it will be doing

Island Song, which is all about French horns, on 9 May. Then it will have the movie hits concert, which is huge, for thousands of people in the Gardens amphitheatre on 27 June. I encourage you all to come to that.

I now draw attention to a different ensemble which also does phenomenal work that everybody should be paying attention to: the Darwin Beach Choir. On 6 March, they bill themselves—I love this—as a 'choir for the musical and tone deaf alike'. No sheet music, no judgement, no commitment, no preparation needed, just a fun and relaxing meeting. I met them most recently in Nightcliff at Flora's Temper. It was the most joyous event I have been to in months.

Not for nothing, I point out that it happened the day before the recent Nightcliff by-election. The room was packed with people in red shirts, blue shirts, green shirts and orange shirts; it was a real sign of social cohesion. I cannot say how moving it was to hang out with all those people and learn to sing a couple of Crowded House songs together as a group, as Territorians, as friends and as people who all share and care about this place.

My huge congratulations to Thalia Hewitt, who runs the Darwin Beach Choir, and her band of dedicated volunteers. The work that they do is a real demonstration of commitment to community and enhancing social cohesion in the Territory. I encourage everyone here to put aside your politics from time to time and join in with the Darwin Beach Choir when they next get together. It will fill your cup and make you feel proud to be Territorian. Remember, whatever our differences are politically, we are all human and here to try to make the Territory a better place.

Mr YAN (Namatjira): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is St Paddy's day, so I will bring a little light, laughter and humour into the Chamber this evening. Tonight is what I suspect to be the most enthusiastically observed cultural celebration on the Darwin calendar.

While St Patrick may have never set foot in the Territory, I have no doubt that if he did, he would have found himself comfortable in Darwin, particularly on 17 March. In Darwin, you do not just mark St Paddy's day; you embrace it. I am proud to be a part of that today.

Nowhere is it more evident than Shenannigans Irish Pub which, as many in this Chamber would know, has become something of a spiritual home for Territorians of all backgrounds on this day. Shenannigans is one of those great Darwin institutions. It is the kind of place where on St Paddy's day you will find people from every corner of the Territory and, indeed, the world coming together in a sea of green shirts, questionable Irish accents and an overwhelming sense of good humour. It is great to see such a good sense of humour in the times we are facing in the Territory.

Of course, no St Patrick's Day celebration would be complete without a few pints of Guinness—or perhaps more than a few, depending on how enthusiastic the celebrations become. I reference this morning's condolence motion for Ted Egan. He wrote that great song saying that Territorians are bloody good drinkers. That is probably on display at Shenannigans this evening.

What makes St Patrick's Day in Darwin so special is not just the celebration, but the way that it brings people together. You do not need to have Irish heritage to take part; on this day everyone is a little Irish. That is very much in the spirit of Darwin—inclusive, relaxed and always ready to celebrate.

Darwin has a long history of embarrassing—sorry, embracing. I would not say that the Irish were embarrassing, but they may embarrass themselves on the odd occasion, not that I have ever seen that. We embrace different cultures. St Paddy's day is a perfect example of that. It is a day when we see live music, laughter, dancing and a genuine sense of connection between people. It is also a day when the Territory's hospitality industry shines, with venues across Darwin putting on events, supporting local musos and creating the kind of atmosphere that keeps locals and visitors coming back year after year.

Of course, while there is plenty of fun to be had, it is also worth remembering that St Patrick's Day is a celebration of Irish heritage and the contributions of Irish people around the world, including in the Northern Territory. Irish Territorians past and present have contributed across many sectors, from construction and infrastructure to health, education, tourism and hospitality. While today might be a day for celebration, it is also an opportunity to acknowledge that contribution.

Let me be honest, you mob up here can celebrate it in your unique way, a little different from us Central Australians. It is perhaps less about solemn reflection and more about enjoying the moment. There is certainly nothing wrong with that; we need a little light in the world at the moment.