

Thomas Nikora and his All Star Orchestra feature on Matariki programme

Rupert Watson and Marisa King

Visitors to Featherston's Matariki Festival later this month will have the opportunity to enjoy a performance by one of the Wellington region's most accomplished pianists, Thomas Nikora. Thomas is teaming up with the Wellington Chamber Orchestra to play a special Matariki concert on Sunday 26 June at Anzac Hall that will feature Great Tunes from the Golden Age of the Movies, arranged by talented conductor Michael Vinten. Names such as Gershwin, Shostakovich, Walton and Korngold will be to the fore, and Thomas will play what are really mini-concertos on pieces like *Warsaw Concerto* and *New York Rhapsody*.

Given the cosmic significance of Matariki and New Zealand's new public holiday, the Orchestra will also perform a piece by one of New Zealand's first musicians to make a career overseas – Warwick Braithwaite. From Dunedin, Braithwaite lived in the United Kingdom after serving in World War 1 and conducted major orchestras, especially in Wales and Scotland. His piece, *Aue! A Maori Tone Picture*, will have its first performance for quite some time (the work is thought to have been composed as far back as the 1930s).

Thomas, who is Masterton born and bred, completed his Bachelor of Music at the New Zealand School of Music in 2016 after leaving Makoura College.

Thomas has performed all over New Zealand and in the US. He has been a soloist with the Nelson Symphony Orchestra and Masterton Community Orchestra.

Not just a pianist, he is an accomplished choir director, and has held the role of Music Director at Wellington's Cantoris Choir since 2016. He has long wanted to be involved with the Wellington Chamber Orchestra, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and is looking forward to playing on his home ground.



Thomas Nikora, who performs at Anzac Hall on 29 June.

"Featherston is great. There's a fantastic piano at Anzac Hall and the whole place is deeply historic."

The concert is the brainchild of Featherston resident and Feldenkrais practitioner, Rupert Watson, who has played clarinet with the Wellington Chamber Orchestra since the 1990s. Keen to bring the 50-strong Orchestra to Featherston, he discovered that the weekend he wanted to book the Anzac Hall clashed with the Matariki Festival.

"I said, 'I know the people running that – I'll talk to them.' And so we became part of the programme."

Not surprisingly, he's excited about the upcoming event.

"It's an opportunity for Thomas to show what he can do and for people who have never heard the Orchestra to come along.

"It will be very informal. We're hoping families and kids will come and fill the hall."

Tickets for the concert, which starts at 2pm, are available from Eventfinda (search for 'WCO Matariki'). It costs \$20 (adults) or \$15 (concession), with no charge for children.

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