

CATHERINE KWAK



Born in South Korea and raised in New Zealand, Catherine Kwak is a committed cellist and soon to be medical doctor. Her love of music from an early age led to cello lessons at the age of 7, and she gained ABRSM Grade 8 with the High Achievers' Cup at the age of 9.

While under the tutelage of CSO Cello Principal Galyna Zelinska, she was accepted into the Pettman National Junior Academy of Music, and then at the age of 12, became a part time student at the University of Canterbury under Edith Salzmänn.

At the age of 18, Catherine went on to complete her Bachelor of Music, at the University of Waikato as a Sir Edmund Hillary Scholar, with James Tennant.

Over her musical career, she has made numerous performances around NZ, USA, the UK, and Europe as soloist and chamber musician. Her main competition successes include prize-winner at the 18th International Brahms Competition (Austria), 2nd Prize 2013 National Young performer Competition, semi-finalist 2015 Johansen International Competition for Young Musicians (Washington DC), winner ROSL/Pettman Chamber Music Scholarship, and 2nd Prize 2013 and 2020 Gisborne International Music Competition. She has performed as an artist in the Euro Arts Festival (Germany), International Summer Academy Biel (Switzerland) where she was chosen by Prof. Wen-Sinn Yang to perform as a soloist with the Budweis Philharmonic, solo recitals organised by the Abegg Trio in Köln and Weimar, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, St-Martin-in-the-Fields and more.

Catherine became a casual member of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra in 2017 without audition. She has also appeared as soloist with the APO several times, with the most recent one being soloist in 2019 for the BBC Planet Earth in Concert Series.

Catherine is currently in her final year of studying at the University of Auckland for a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. Despite this, she maintains a busy performance and teaching schedule with upcoming soloist engagements this year including the Auckland Symphony Orchestra, NZ Doctors' Orchestra, and Devonport Chamber Orchestra. She is fully dedicated to continue establishing herself as a performing artist.

Having grown up in Christchurch, I first entered the National Concerto Competition at the age of 12 playing Dvorak Concerto. Many years later, this is now my final chance to compete, and I wanted to finish a chapter of my life by giving the competition one last shot.

I chose to play the Dvorak Concerto because it holds a special place in my heart. It was the first "big" concerto I learnt, and so having known and played it several times at different stages of my development, I've grown to discover more and really try to unravel the deep, intricate, and powerful layers of this piece. I am extremely thrilled and grateful for the opportunity to perform this with the CSO.