

MEDIA RELEASE

CHARLIE CHAPLIN ON STAGE WITH THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY

Two nights only: "Gold Rush" shows at the Sydney Opera House, Thurs 30 Aug & Sat 1 Sept.



Sydney, Thurs 16 August - Poignant, touching and even sad, Charlie Chaplin's enduring comical figure of Little Tramp remains one of the greatest comical figures of all time. He features in the silent film *The Gold Rush*, in which music was the perfect foil to the antics and physical comedy of a much-loved tragic hero. Not just the film's central character, Chaplin also wrote the film's music, making *The Gold Rush* a true showcase for the many talents of this exceptional man. In two special concert events the Sydney Symphony presents Charlie Chaplin's masterpiece - a luscious orchestral score performed against the sparkling restored version of the film.

Chaplin said *The Gold Rush* was the film he wanted to be remembered by. He got his wish - it became one of the world's most memorable films. The adorable figure of Little Tramp, a down-on-his-luck innocent, is one of the world's most recognisable characters. As fresh and funny today as it was in 1925 it features some of Chaplin's most inspired clowning (such as the boiled boot) and the sharpest social satire, along with a dash of sentiment and a great deal of falling over! *The Gold Rush* was a huge success in the US and worldwide. It is the 5th highest grossing silent film in cinema history, taking in more than \$4, 250,000 at the box office in 1926, and is in fact the highest grossing silent *comedy* film ever.

Set during the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898, the film features a comic reworking of the gruesome Donner Party story, where a group of snowbound immigrants resorted to eating their clothes and then each other to stay alive. Chaplin was inspired by photographs of the events and was moved to turn tragedy into comedy, with a sharp dose of social satire. Much of the imagery is a direct reworking of those early photographs, from the opening sequence of gold prospectors snaking up the side of a mountain. Chaplin's Little Tramp, typically estranged from the rest of the group, makes his own way across the snow and seeking shelter in a blizzard finds himself in a cabin which becomes the setting for one of the most famous moments in comic history. He savours a thanksgiving feast of boiled shoe, slip-slides inside a house teetering on a cliff, choreographs a whimsical dance of dinner rolls, and faces all manner of improbable perils.

The film was shot in 1925 in the snow country of the Sierra Nevada where Chaplin faithfully recreated the historic image of the prospectors struggling up the Chilkoot Pass. The crew included a mammoth six hundred extras, many of them homeless people from Sacramento who traveled by train to clamber up the 2,300 foot path dug especially for shooting, through the mountain snow. The crew then returned to Hollywood where all manner of special effects were pioneered for the film including a surprisingly convincing mountain range made of timber, chicken wire, plaster, salt and flour, and the miners' hut which is blown in a storm to teeter on the edge of a precipice, for one of the cinema's most sustained sequences of comic suspense.

As much a part of the film as the visuals, Chaplin's music is a pastiche of recognisable popular, classical and original tunes meshed together into a soundtrack full of humour and poignancy. It's conducted by film score specialist Frank Strobel, who has carved out a unique career in live performances of classic film music with the world's best orchestras, and has with a wealth of experience as a conductor, arranger, editor, producer and recording artist. He is an important figure in the world of film music, and a leader in this relatively unexplored area of orchestral repertoire.

As well as editing and conducting the original music for silent film classics, Frank Strobel has made a speciality of arranging and performing new scores. Vintage films he has worked on include *Battleship Potemkin*, *The New Babylon*, *Dr Mabuse*, *Metropolis*, *The Nibelungen*, *Nosferatu*, *Berlin: Symphony of a Big City*, *The Gold Rush*, *Modern Times*, *The Circus* and *The Kid*. For the 2001 Berlin Film Festival he conducted the premiere of a new score by Bernd Schultheis for the restoration of *Metropolis*. In 2003 he edited the reconstructed original music by Prokofiev for *Alexander Nevsky*, which he then conducted and recorded for CD, winning the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik 2004. He has worked on many new German, British and American films and TV movies, including *The Young Poisoner's Handbook*, *Victory*, *Meschugge*, *Gloomy Sunday* and *Blueprint*.

Frank Strobel enjoys particularly close professional relationships with the Oslo Philharmonic, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon and Iceland Symphony Orchestra. From 1997 to 1998 he was Principal Conductor of the German Filmorchestra Babelsberg. Since 2000 he has been Artistic Director of the European FilmPhilharmonic Berlin, which manages film music productions and performances worldwide. His concert tours have taken him to Europe, to the USA, Canada, South America, the Far East and Asia. He has participated in numerous music festivals, including the Berlin and Vienna Festivals.

For further information on Charlie Chaplin and *The Gold Rush* (including his illicit affair with an under-age leading lady...!) go to:

<http://www.charliechaplin.com/en/articles/5> or
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gold_Rush.

Charlie Chaplin's *Gold Rush* is part of the Kaleidoscope series. It is performed by the Sydney Symphony with Frank Strobel on Thurs 30 August and Sat 1 September at the Sydney Opera House. Tickets from \$57. To book call Sydney Symphony on 8215 4600 or visit www.sydneysymphony.com

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For further information regarding *Gold Rush* and interviews with Frank Strobel or Sydney Symphony musicians, and photo opportunities, please contact:

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Note to editors Sydney Symphony concert programs are now distributed free of charge to audiences. They are also available online for download before the concert.

Concert details

CONCERT

8pm, Thurs 30 Aug

8pm, Sat 1 Sept

Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

PROGRAM

Charlie Chaplin's *Gold Rush*

Free pre-concert talk at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer