

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Ashkenazy conducts a choral masterpiece – Belshazzar’s Feast**

**Belshazzar’s Feast: Wed 20 May & Thu 21 May**

**Sydney Opera House, Concert Hall**

Spending much of his career in England, Vladimir Ashkenazy has developed a deep love of the country and its music, which emerges in the second program of his May visit, **Belshazzar’s Feast**.

Based on the Old Testament story of Belshazzar, William Walton’s epic choral-symphony **Belshazzar’s Feast** is one of the most exhilarating pieces for choir and orchestra ever written. A conqueror in the mighty city of Babylon, Belshazzar insults the exiled Jews by throwing a decadent feast and then, before his princes, wives and concubines, his fate is spelled out and by morning he is dead.

Receiving its world premiere in London in 1931, *Belshazzar’s Feast* brought Walton international recognition and is considered his most celebrated work. For the Sydney Symphony’s performances, the Orchestra and Ashkenazy are joined on stage by Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Australian baritone Peter Coleman-Wright.

Also on this program is a rarely performed gem by English composer Arnold Bax, **Tintagel**. This symphonic poem brings to life the myth of King Arthur in a dreamy and nostalgic depiction of the cliff-top castle on the coast of Cornwall. The charming, Celtic-tinged music, with its shimmering strings and subtle woodwinds, conjures up a summer day in Cornwall – a magical place of dreams and legends.

The program also commemorates the 80th birthday of iconic Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe with a performance of his 1988 work, **Kakadu**. The piece takes its name from the vast wilderness area of plains, mountains and bush of Northern Australia and uses Aboriginal chant for the basis of much melodic material. Written at the time of celebrations of the bicentenary of European settlement in Australia, Sculthorpe wanted this piece to bring attention to the sacredness of Kakadu, its unique and precious ecosystem and the Indigenous culture of the area – still so pertinent today. This special performance also marks the 20th anniversary of *Kakadu*’s Australian premiere given by the Sydney Symphony under Stuart Challender in 1989.

For more information about Vladimir Ashkenazy, read his biography and see a [timeline](#) of his Australian performances, visit [www.sydney-symphony.com/ashkenazy](http://www.sydney-symphony.com/ashkenazy)

### **CONCERT DETAILS**

#### **BELSHAZZAR’S FEAST**

**Wed 20 May, 6.30pm**

**Thu 21 May, 6.30pm**

**SCULTHORPE** Kakadu

**BAX** Tintagel

**WALTON** Belshazzar’s Feast

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** conductor  
**Peter Coleman-Wright** baritone  
**Sydney Philharmonia Choirs**

Tickets from \$35 (booking fee may apply). To book tickets call the Sydney Symphony box office on:  
8215 4600 or visit [www.sydneyphilharmonia.com](http://www.sydneyphilharmonia.com)

Pre-concert talk in the Sydney Opera House Northern Foyer 45 minutes before the start of each performance:  
**Interview with Peter Sculthorpe** (Belshazzar's Feast)

For further information or interviews please contact:

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