

Sydney Symphony to give Australian premiere of John Adams' Doctor Atomic Symphony

Doctor Atomic Symphony & Beethoven 5: 21, 23, 24, 26 July
Best of Bernstein: 30, 31 July
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

This July, the Sydney Symphony will give the Australian premiere of John Adams' powerful 'Doctor Atomic Symphony' led by acclaimed American conductor David Robertson, who is the work's dedicatee.

According to Sydney Symphony Managing Director, Rory Jeffes, the performances are a significant event in Sydney's cultural calendar.

"David Robertson's commitment to new music is well known and deeply rooted. He is one of the world's leading interpreters of Adams' music and we are thrilled to have him in Sydney to give the Australian premiere of this very important contemporary work."

The Doctor Atomic Symphony is a 24-minute orchestral score adapted by Adams from his 2005 opera *Doctor Atomic* and was co-commissioned by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall and the BBC.

Adams, a Pulitzer prize-winning American composer, conducted the first performance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London in December 2007 and David Robertson conducted the North American premiere with the St Louis Symphony Orchestra in 2008.

A "dark, urgent and brilliant" symphony follows the journey of scientist Robert J Oppenheimer, the man who directed the project to create the atomic bomb. The harrowing subject matter creates an unflinching drama which explores humans' capacity to harness creative genius for the purpose of destruction.

The Symphony has three movements, entitled The Laboratory, Panic and Trinity. The opening, with its pounding timpani and jagged brass fanfares, summons a devastated and barren post-nuclear landscape. The frenzied "panic music" which follows evokes a fierce electrical storm which lashes the test site in the hours before the first atomic bomb's explosion (nicknamed 'Trinity'). The ensuing music is taken from moments in the opera which show the intense activity in the lead up to the test. The US Army General Leslie Groves can be heard in the boorish music of the trombone as he berates both the scientists and his military subordinates, before the music gives way to a ritual dance of the local Tewa Indians. The symphony ends with an



instrumental working of the opera's most memorable moment, a setting (originally for baritone voice, here played by solo trumpet) of John Donne's holy sonnet, "Batter my heart, three person'd God" – a poem Oppenheimer loved.

Following the premiere of the *Doctor Atomic Symphony* in 2007, Adams was praised for being "a well-rounded orchestral virtuoso" (The Times), and in the hands of Adams specialist, David Robertson, the four Sydney performances of the Symphony will be definite highlights in the Orchestra's 2010 season.

Also on the program is Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Chopin's Second Piano concerto with American pianist Garrick Ohlsson as soloist. Ohlsson has long been regarded as one of the world's leading exponents of the music of Frédéric Chopin, whose bicentennial occurs this year, and is known as a musician of magisterial interpretive and technical prowess.

Best of Bernstein: 30, 31 July

For David Robertson's second program with the Sydney Symphony, he conducts the music of great American composer Leonard Bernstein including his Age of Anxiety (Symphony No.2) featuring Orli Shaham on piano and the overture and suite from *Candide*. The concert also features excerpts from *West Side Story* with singers Amelia Farrugia and James Egglestone.

#ENDS#

CONCERT DETAILS

BEETHOVEN 5

21 July, 8.00pm
23 July, 8.00pm
24 July, 8.00pm
26 July, 7.00pm

ADAMS Doctor Atomic Symphony AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

CHOPIN Piano Concerto No.2

BEETHOVEN Symphony No.5

David Robertson conductor

Garrick Ohlsson piano

Pre-concert talk by: David Robertson

BEST OF BERNSTEIN

30 July, 8.00pm
31 July, 8.00pm

BERNSTEIN:

Candide: Overture and Suite

The Age of Anxiety (Symphony No.2)

West Side Story: Suite for voices and orchestra (to include 'Maria', 'Somewhere' and 'Tonight')

David Robertson conductor

Orli Shaham piano

Amelia Farrugia soprano

James Egglestone tenor

Pre-concert talk by: Robert Murray

Tickets from \$35* (booking fee of \$6 - \$8.50 may apply).

Bookings through Sydney Symphony 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on 8215 4600 or select your own seat at:

www.sydneysymphony.com

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