

Bernd Glemser plays “Rach 2”

22, 24, 25 September 8.00pm, 23 September 1:30pm
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

A rising star when he won the People’s Choice Award at the 1985 Sydney International Piano Competition, 48-year-old Bernd Glemser now has a firmly established international reputation. He returns to perform with the Sydney Symphony this September, and he brings with him one of the most enduringly popular concertos in the repertoire.

Known affectionately as the “Rach 2”, Rachmaninoff’s second piano concerto demands both outstanding virtuosity and heartfelt lyricism, and Glemser is just the man to bring it off. The German pianist has become closely associated with this concerto; his recording of it was even used in the soundtrack to the 2007 film *Spiderman 3*.

The concerto was written between 1900 and 1901, and Rachmaninoff dedicated it to Dr Nikolay Dahl, who had succeeded in encouraging him to return to composition after the disastrous premiere of his Symphony No.1 in 1897. Rachmaninoff himself gave the premiere, and the music’s lasting success went beyond his highest hopes.

Glemser comes with an intimate understanding of Rachmaninoff’s music – music which he sees as having “no dishonest pomp, no empty posing, but true depth”. The last time he was in Sydney, in 2007, he played solo piano music by Rachmaninoff in the Sydney Symphony’s International Pianists in Recital series. That performance gave a mouth-watering taste of what to expect this time. Peter McCallum, reviewing the recital for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, wrote that Glemser “played Rachmaninoff as though it were his native land and his sensitivity, power and openness allowed the simplicity of the music to shine through”.

Growing up in the hills of southern Germany (he sometimes even skied to piano lessons), Glemser took to the piano in a big way. His Sydney International Piano Competition success was just one in an incredible run that saw him win 17 successive first or special prizes in contests across the world. In 1989 he became Germany’s youngest-ever music professor – an appointment complicated by the fact that he was still a student. “What a situation,” he reflected later, “teaching students of the same age or even older.”

Conducting these concerts is English conductor Mark Wigglesworth, who has made quite a splash recently in Australia. His music direction of Benjamin Britten’s *Peter Grimes* for Opera Australia last year was recently



nominated for a 2010 Helpmann Award. His busy schedule continues: his week with the Sydney Symphony will see him fly in for a rehearsal on Monday, fly back to Melbourne for a concert with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra that evening, and then return to Sydney the next day.

Mark Wigglesworth brings his own special interest to the program with the Symphony No.15 of Shostakovich. He is nearing the end of a project to record all 15 of Shostakovich's symphonies with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. Rossini's William Tell Overture – whose "Lone Ranger" finale makes some unexpected appearances in the Shostakovich work – rounds off the concert.

There will also be another opportunity to hear Glemser in the Sydney Symphony's International Pianists in Recital series on 20 September, performing Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Chopin. Glemser has recently completed a recording of Chopin's Ballades and Scherzos in celebration of the composer's bicentenary year.

Tickets from \$35*. To book tickets call the Sydney Symphony box office on: 8215 4600 or visit www.sydneyphilharmonicsymphony.com

CONCERT DETAILS

"RACH 2"

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No.15
RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No.2
ROSSINI William Tell: Overture

Mark Wigglesworth conductor
Bernd Glemser piano

Sydney Opera House, Concert Hall

EnergyAustralia Master Series
22, 24, 25 September 8pm

Thursday Afternoon Symphony
23 September 1.30pm

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.sydneyphilharmonicsymphony.com

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