

SEASON 2008
MEET THE MUSIC

HOMELANDS

Wednesday 27 August | 6.30pm
Thursday 28 August | 6.30pm
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

Tomas Netopil conductor
Arabella Steinbacher violin

PETER SCULTHORPE (born 1929)
Mangrove

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897–1957)
Violin Concerto in D, Op.35

Allegro nobile
Romance (Andante)
Finale (Allegro assai vivace)

INTERVAL

BEDŘICH SMETANA (1824–1884)
Má vlast (My Country):

Vyšehrad (The High Castle)
Vltava (The Moldau)
Šárka

This concert will be introduced by Andrew Ford, award-winning composer, writer and broadcaster, and presenter of *The Music Show* on ABC Radio National.



This concert will be recorded for broadcast across Australia on ABC Classic FM 92.9.

Pre-concert talk by Margaret Moore and Peter Sculthorpe at 5.45pm in the Northern Foyer.

Estimated timings:
13 minutes, 24 minutes,
20-minute interval, 33 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 8.25pm

THE ARTISTS

Tomas Netopil conductor

Tomas Netopil studied violin and conducting in his native Czech Republic as well as in Stockholm with Jorma Panula, who has taught many prominent conductors as well as directing conductor training programs in Australia. In 2002 he won the first Sir Georg Solti Conductors Competition.

Just 33 years old, he has recently been appointed Music Director of the National Theatre in Prague (the institution that represented the fulfilment of Smetana's vision for Czech music). Elsewhere he will conduct *Così fan tutte* (Valencia), *Samson et Dalila* (Antwerp), *The Marriage of Figaro* and a revival of Busoni's *Doktor Faust* (Bavarian State Opera).

He has conducted many of the leading orchestras in Europe, including the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also conducted the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo, and recent highlights have included a debut with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. This is Tomas Netopil's Australian debut.



Arabella Steinbacher violin

German violinist Arabella Steinbacher made an extraordinary debut in 2004, when she performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto at short notice in Paris. Since then she has appeared with leading orchestras throughout Europe, America and Japan.

She was born in Munich in 1981 to a German father and a Japanese mother (both musicians), and began studying violin at the age of three. Her teachers and guides included Ana Chumachenko, Ivry Gitlis, Dorothy Delay and Kurt Sassmanshaus, and in 2001 she won an Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation scholarship. From Anne-Sophie Mutter herself she received a bow by master luthier Benoît Rolland.

Recent highlights have included a tour with Vladimir Ashkenazy and the European Youth Orchestra, and opening the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival with the NDR Symphony Orchestra and Christoph von Dohnányi. Her recordings include concertos by Shostakovich and Milhaud as well as a French recital disc and *Violino Latino*.

Arabella Steinbacher plays the 'Booth' Stradivarius (1716), generously provided by the Nippon Music Foundation. She made her Sydney Symphony debut in 2005 performing the Brahms Violin Concerto.



MICHAEL LEBS



PETER SCULTHORPE
 Australian composer
 (born 1929)

Mangrove

In *Mangrove* Sculthorpe deliberately omits woodwinds and harp, so as to avoid what he considered the hackneyed sounds of water and rain. The music is built with clearly contrasting sections, but these are dovetailed, and in the final minutes material from those sections is combined vertically.

The opening section for brass and skin-drums is dominated by terse repetitions of two-note motifs. A repeated figure in the drums and trills from the brass give way to a contrastingly static series of muted string chords. Sculthorpe has said that these sections are concerned with 'love and loving'. Accompanied by double basses and tuned percussion, the cellos then state a long section of *Ise-no-umi* (The sea of Ise), a Japanese chant. Sculthorpe divides the cello section and instructs one group to play deliberately 'out of step' with each other. This technique is related to the heterophony of traditional Japanese music (where different instruments simultaneously play the same melody with different ornamentation). The effect is of hearing the melody in a highly resonant space; it also evokes Gregorian chant. A passage of random string sounds, evoking birdsong, briefly interrupts *Ise-no-umi*. The opening brass and drum texture returns, at first punctuated by plucked strings, then overlaid with the birdsong texture. The climax is reached in a fuller statement of the 'love' music, now underpinned by the brass, before the horns and trombones, later joined by the trumpets and the strings, restate the Japanese melody.

Mangrove uses no woodwinds, but includes four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, as well as percussion instruments and strings.

Much of Peter Sculthorpe's music has resulted from an interest in the music of Australia's neighbours (including Japan) as well as from the impulse to bring together aspects of native Australian music with that of the heritage of the West. In *Mangrove*, composed in 1979 (and premiered by the Sydney Symphony), many of these elements are integrated.

In his introduction to the score Sculthorpe outlines the imagery behind the music. He refers to 'thoughts of Sidney Nolan's rain-forest paintings, in which Eliza Fraser and the

Navigating the music

About the composer

Mangroves and other images

convict Bracewell become, through love, birds and butterflies and aboriginal graffiti; even recollections of a beach, mangrove-free, at Ise in Japan; and thoughts of a New Guinea tribe that believes man and woman to be descended from mangroves.'

In 1968 Sculthorpe visited Japan, spending time in a Shinto temple in Kyoto, where he was introduced to traditional saibara chants. *Ise-no-umi* is one of these:

On the clean beach of Ise
While the tide is low,
Let's gather the seaweed,
Let's gather the sea shells,
Let's pick up shining pearls.



ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD
Austrian composer
(1897–1957)

Violin Concerto in D, Op.35

The concerto was conceived in 1937 and completed in 1945. Each movement of the three movements quotes themes from Hollywood soundtracks Korngold wrote between 1936 and 1938. The lyrical and noble **first movement** quotes *Another Dawn* in its first theme and *Juarez* for its gentle second subject. The **Romance** is like a love scene for violin and orchestra, and its lavish outpouring of melodic ideas is drawn from *Anthony Adverse*, which won Korngold his first Academy Award. The **Finale** provides a decisive change of mood with a set of variations on the opening theme from *The Prince and the Pauper*.

Korngold uses a modest orchestra with only a trombone to represent the low brass; the percussion section reveals his fondness for keyed instruments such as the glockenspiel.

Like Mozart (to whom he owed his middle name), Erich Wolfgang Korngold was a child prodigy composer. At nine he played a cantata for Mahler, who declared him a genius. The great pianist Artur Schnabel championed a sonata that he wrote aged 11. In his teens he began writing orchestral music. By the time he was 23 he'd achieved international fame. In 1934 the director Max Reinhardt invited him to Hollywood to arrange Mendelssohn's music for a film

Navigating the concerto

About the composer

production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and for the next few years Korngold lived a transatlantic existence, working in Europe on 'serious' projects such as the opera *Die Kathrin*, and making his name in America as a film composer.

Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938 made it impossible for Korngold to return home, and his family escaped Austria on the last unrestricted train. His home and assets were confiscated by the Nazis, but his publishers courageously broke into his Viennese house in the dead of night and smuggled his collection of scores to America. Films were now his only source of income. When his father berated him for not writing concert music, Korngold replied that if anyone in America wanted to perform his music they knew where to find him. His wife said later: 'It was almost as if he had made a vow not to write any more until Hitler was defeated.'

The Violin Concerto was to be Korngold's return to the concert hall, but Korngold did no serious work on the piece until the war in Europe was over. The violinist Bronislaw Huberman revived a joke that dated back to Korngold's teenage years: 'Erich, where's my violin concerto?' At dinner one night in 1945, Huberman asked the usual question, whereupon Korngold went to the piano and played the opening theme.

Huberman's death not long after meant the premiere, in St Louis, was given by Jascha Heifetz. It was a great success. But in New York, Irving Kolodin's jibe, 'More corn than gold,' hurt the composer deeply. The work languished on the fringes of the repertoire until the 1980s. It is now the most performed of all Korngold's concert works.

Where's my violin concerto?



BEDŘICH SMETANA
Czech composer
(1824–1884)

Three symphonic poems from *My Country*

Tonight's concert presents three of the six poems that make up the cycle, *My Country*.

Vyšehrad. As the River Vltava (Moldau in German) approaches Prague, the huge and venerable rock Vyšehrad rises sheer from the water's edge, dominating the entrance to the city. This was once the proud home of Bohemia's legendary first dynasty, the Přemyslid kings and princes. The opening harp motif, which evokes the remote and glorious past of Vyšehrad, is also the central theme uniting the cycle.

Navigating the poems

Recurring towards the end of *Vltava*, it stands not only for the physical manifestation of the ancient rock, or high castle, but also as a symbol of the pride and glory of the nation.

Vltava. The sources of the Vltava – two springs, one cold and one warm – are represented by flutes and clarinets respectively; strings introduce the Vltava theme, which recurs throughout the piece. Horns and trumpets suggest a forest hunt; from a village festival come the strains of a polka; against delicately shimmering orchestration, water nymphs dance in the moonlight. The Vltava theme returns, before plunging into the rapids of St John. The stream emerges a powerful river, striking out proudly and powerfully to meet its destiny – Vyšehrad and Prague, and thence dying away into the distance.

Šárka. Smetana writes: *This poem depicts not the countryside, but action – the legend of the maiden Šárka. It opens with a portrayal of the enraged girl swearing vengeance on the whole male race because of her lover's infidelity. From afar can be heard the approach of Ctirad and his armed men, coming to punish Šárka and her rebel maidens. As he draws near Ctirad hears feigned cries for help from a maiden bound to a tree. On seeing the maiden, Šárka, Ctirad is so struck by her beauty that he falls passionately in love with her and sets her free. She gives him and his men a potion, which makes them merry and intoxicates them, so that they fall asleep. At a signal from Šárka's horn the rebel maidens pour forth from their hiding places to commit their bloody deed. The horror of mass slaughter, and the passion and fury of Šárka in fulfilling her revenge, bring the poem to an end.*

Smetana's idea of a monumental symphonic cycle in honour of his homeland emerged in 1867. Visiting the forests in southern Bohemia, he came upon the spot where two small rivulets merge to become the fledgling River Otava, and he mentally followed the course of the Otava until it flowed into the Vltava, and onwards to become the greatest river of Bohemia. He began serious work on the first two poems in 1874, just months before he faced a musician's greatest tragedy, total deafness. *Vyšehrad* was premiered in 1875, to great acclaim, as was *Vltava*. The complete cycle was first performed in 1882, an occasion 'which the Czech musical world counts among its greatest celebrations...never has there been such an exalted mood in any Czech assembly...'

Homeland inspiration

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PROGRAM NOTES ABRIDGED FROM NOTES BY GORDON KERRY (SCULTHORPE), PHILLIP SAMETZ (KORNGOLD) AND ANTHONY CANE (SMETANA)

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Sydney Symphony

Gianluigi Gelmetti CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Founded in 1932, the Sydney Symphony has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the Sydney Opera House, the Orchestra also performs throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and has toured internationally. Critical to the Orchestra's success has been the leadership given by its former Chief Conductors, including Sir Eugene Goossens, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Stuart Challender and Edo de Waart, as well as collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky. Maestro Gianluigi Gelmetti is now in his fifth year as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director, a position he holds in tandem with that of Music Director at Rome Opera.

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