

2009 SEASON
MEET THE MUSIC

MEET THE CONCERTO

Wednesday 9 September | 6.30pm
Thursday 10 September | 6.30pm
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

Richard Gill conductor
Gautier Capuçon cello
Robert Johnson horn

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1833–1897)
Concerto grosso in E minor, Op.6 No.3

Larghetto
Andante
Allegro
Polonaise (Andante)
Allegro, ma non troppo

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)
Cello Concerto in B minor, B.191 (Op.104)

Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Allegro moderato

INTERVAL

CHRISTOPHER GORDON (born 1956)
Lightfall for horn and orchestra

I
II *Slow and free*

PREMIERE PERFORMANCES (9, 10, 11 SEPTEMBER)

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



Wednesday night's performance will be broadcast live across Australia on ABC Classic FM.



Wednesday night's performance will be webcast by BigPond. Visit sydneyssymphony.bigpondmusic.com

Pre-concert talk by Kim Waldock in conversation with Robert Johnson and Christopher Gordon at 5.45pm in the Northern Foyer.

Estimated timings:
12 minutes, 40 minutes,
20-minute interval, 25 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 8.30pm.

ABOUT THE MUSIC



GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

German-born English composer
(1685–1759)

Concerto grosso in E minor, Op.6 No.3

Each of the five movements in this work plays with the contrast between a group of soloists (the concertino) and a four-part ensemble (the ripieno). Two violinists and a cellist feature as soloists, and the ripieno is made up of strings and continuo (an instrumental bass line). The first two movements, *Larghetto* and *Andante*, have a sense of graceful dignity which is contrasted in the *Allegro*, an assertive, rhythmically-driven movement with elegant passages for a solo violin. In the *Polonaise*, a stately dance movement, you'll hear the first and second violins echo each other in the solo sections. The closing *Allegro* is full of playful interactions between concertino and ripieno before the full ensemble comes together to finish the piece.

When Handel completed his Opus 6 in 1739, he was at the height of his fame in London. The year before, a marble statue likening him to Apollo, the god of music, was commissioned for the Vauxhall pleasure gardens, where English ladies and gentlemen promenaded down the avenues listening to music by Handel and other popular composers of the day. Handel was mainly interested in writing music for voice, but his Opus 6 concertos are viewed by many as the pinnacle of Baroque instrumental music, in the same league as Bach's well-known *Brandenburg* Concertos.

Handel composed the 12 'Grand Concertos' (his translation) in just five weeks. They were designed to be played as interludes in his oratorio performances, as well as being sold to 100 privileged subscribers. These concertos were also a gesture of respect and admiration to Arcangelo Corelli. Twenty-five years earlier, Corelli had written a set of concerti grossi (also Opus 6), which enjoyed lasting popularity in London. They were still very well-known there when Handel wrote his own 12 concertos, scored for the same instrumental groupings as Corelli's.

Navigating the Concerto grosso

About the composer

Music as tribute



ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Czech composer

(1841–1904)

Cello Concerto

Dvořák's Cello Concerto follows a three-movement structure (fast–slow–fast). To meet the challenge of writing a solo cello part that can compete with a large orchestra, Dvořák employs the full ensemble only when the soloist isn't playing. In the first movement, the heroic first theme and the passionate longing of the second theme are heard in the orchestra before the soloist enters. The cello part in the second movement is serene but still yearning. The strident principal theme of the third movement returns several times before the opening theme of the concerto is heard towards the end.

When Dvořák wrote this concerto, he was Director at the National Conservatory of Music in New York, where he was expected to contribute to the creation of an American national style. But he was beginning to feel homesick for his native Bohemia and his family, and the music of the Cello Concerto contains personal references and Bohemian musical traits that suggest his heart wasn't in New York. He uses melodies based on the pentatonic scale (as if using only the black notes on a piano), which is often heard in folk music.

As he was writing the slow movement of the concerto, Dvořák learnt that his sister-in-law Josefina, with whom he had once been in love, was seriously ill. In response he wove into this movement his song 'Leave me alone' (one of her favourites). When Josefina died in 1895 he expanded the last section of the third movement, again quoting the song that she had loved.

'Why on earth didn't I know one could write a violoncello concerto like this?' said Brahms, on hearing the concerto. 'If I had only known, I would have written one long ago!' Dvořák had been inspired by cellist Victor Herbert, who played his own Cello Concerto No.2 in New York in 1894. He was impressed by the way Herbert had handled the problem of balance and, with encouragement from his cellist friend Hanuš Wihan, he set about composing his own.

Navigating the Concerto

About the composer

Gesture from the heart

I can do that!



CHRISTOPHER GORDON

Australian composer
(born 1956)

Lightfall was commissioned by Robert Gay, Mrs W Stening, Emily Chang and Charles Barran.

Lightfall for horn and orchestra

Music happens in real time, with a beginning, a middle and an end. In this horn concerto we'll *hear* two movements, the first ending abruptly before soloist and orchestra regroup for the second (slow and free).

But Christopher Gordon wants us to *approach* the music 'as two images that can be observed back and forth, rather than two movements that are heard one after the other'. Each part is conceptualised as a painting: 'One cold, static and morbid, the other warm, fluid and alive...As music we must take in the images from left to right and so move from darkness to light, from contained rage and depression to an outburst of joy and song. But there is no transition, simply two states of being.'

If you've seen the film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, you've heard Christopher Gordon's music. His many film scores include *Moby Dick* and the forthcoming *Mao's Last Dancer*. Gordon describes himself as 'an intuitive composer' who sometimes gets 'bogged down in systems and methodology'. In 2004 the Sydney Symphony premiered his Bass Trombone Concerto and he has composed for ensembles such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Gondwana Voices. In 2006 he was commissioned to arrange the official version of the Australian National Anthem.

Gordon first considered writing a horn concerto in 1998, when he approached Robert Johnson, whose playing he admired. The project was then put on the backburner until last year. During this period, Gordon's initial idea of an arc form that 'parallels the life circle' or the journey of a comet, had changed to the juxtaposition of two 'static' states that we hear tonight.

'I was aware that the word "lightfall" could have two, antithetical interpretations. Most would take the word to mean the oncoming of light, such as a sunrise; but it

Navigating *Lightfall*

About the composer

An idea comes to fruition

Gordon explains the title

could equally mean the opposite, the falling away of light. Although the title was chosen for the earlier concept of the concerto I found it even more suitable for the final work with its two, opposite images.'

Gordon adds that he has deliberately avoided the word 'concerto' in his title, in order to avoid preconceived notions of what a concerto should be. 'Of course, it is a concerto,' he writes, but in particular it lacks the expected pyrotechnics and cadenzas (although there are solo moments for the horn).

Visit Christopher Gordon's website:
www.christophergordon.net
and follow his blog about the composition of *Lightfall*:
hornconcerto.net
The blog discusses the concerto and its creation in much greater detail than is possible here and includes links to the full score of the music and the solo horn part.

PROGRAM NOTES FOR THIS CONCERT BY RACHEL ORZECH
2009 AYO MUSIC PRESENTATION FELLOW
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ©2009

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Richard Gill conductor

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, EDUCATION PROGRAM

Richard Gill is one of Australia's pre-eminent and most admired conductors and is internationally respected as a music educator, specialising in opera, musical theatre and vocal and choral training. His work in developing young musicians and creating opportunities for them is recognised worldwide. In addition to his role as Artistic Director of the Sydney Symphony's Education Program, he is Music Director of Victorian Opera. He has also been Artistic Director of OzOpera, Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, and the Adviser for the Musica Viva in Schools program.

His work in the concert hall includes concerts with all the major Australian orchestras, Sydney Philharmonia, and the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, as well as the Australian, Sydney and Western Australian youth orchestras. He regularly conducts Sydney Symphony Meet the Music concerts and Discovery concerts with the Sydney Sinfonia, and directs the annual Sinfonietta Project for composers.

Richard Gill has received numerous accolades, including an Order of Australia Medal, the Bernard Heinze Award, an Honorary Doctorate from the Edith Cowan University of Western Australia, the Australian Music Centre's award for Most Distinguished Contribution to the Presentation of Australian Composition by an individual, and the Australia Council's prestigious Don Banks Award.



JEFF BUSBY

Gautier Capuçon cello

Born in 1981 in Chambéry, France, Gautier Capuçon began studying cello at the age of five at the Ecole Nationale de Musique de Chambéry. He studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris with Phillipe Muller, Annie Cochet-Zakine and Christophe Egiziano, and in Vienna with Heinrich Schiff.

He has given recitals in Berlin, Brussels, Hannover, Dresden, London, Paris and Vienna, as well as appearing in numerous festivals in Europe and Israel and playing with orchestras all over the world. In 2005 he toured Japan with Martha Argerich and in 2006 he made critically acclaimed debuts with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Charles Dutoit and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under Hans Graf.

Gautier Capuçon has recorded chamber music by Ravel and Brahms; Haydn's cello concertos with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra under Daniel Harding; *Face à Face*, a CD of 20th-century music for cello and violin; and Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff sonatas with Gabriella Montero. His recording of the Herbert and Dvořák cello concertos with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra under Paavo Järvi was released earlier this year.

Gautier Capuçon plays a 1701 Matteo Goffriler.



M. TAMMARA VIRGIN CLASSICS

Robert Johnson horn

Robert Johnson studied horn at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. After further study in Europe and the USA and appointments as Principal Horn in the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, he joined the Sydney Symphony as Principal Horn in 1986.

He has performed as soloist with the Sydney Symphony on many occasions, playing music by Mozart, Richard Strauss, Benjamin Britten and Ross Edwards, and most recently Schumann's Concertstück in F for four horns.

He is also currently Principal Horn with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and recently returned from a successful ACO tour of the USA, where his playing was praised in a number of reviews including the *New York Times*. He also works regularly with the Australia Ensemble and Sydney Soloists and has appeared at the Chamber Music Festival in Townsville.

Robert Johnson has taught at the Sydney Conservatorium (Head of Brass 1999–2001) and Canberra School of Music and has been Artist in Residence at music institutions in Brisbane, Hobart, Perth, Melbourne and Hong Kong. He has also tutored the Australian Youth Orchestra, Sydney Youth Orchestra, SBS Youth Orchestra and been on the staff at National Music Camp.

Lightfall is the first horn concerto written for him and he is very proud to present it to the world.



KEITH SAUNDERS

Sydney Symphony

Vladimir Ashkenazy PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC ADVISOR

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. The Sydney Symphony's first Chief Conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by conductors such as Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and, most recently, Gianluigi Gelmetti. The Orchestra's history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky. This year Vladimir Ashkenazy begins his tenure as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor.

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