

2009 SEASON
ENERGYAUSTRALIA MASTER SERIES

THE PRODIGAL RUSSIAN:
ASHKENAZY'S PROKOFIEV FESTIVAL

PROKOFIEV: FIRST AND FINAL

Friday 6 November | 8pm
Saturday 7 November | 8pm
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor
Boris Belkin violin
Alexander Gavrylyuk piano

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)

Violin Concerto No.1 in D, Op.19

Andantino – Andante assai
Scherzo (Vivacissimo)
Moderato – Allegro moderato – Moderato – Più tranquillo

Piano Concerto No.1 in D flat, Op.10

Allegro briosso – Andante assai – Allegro scherzando

INTERVAL

The Love for Three Oranges: Suite, Op.33a

Les Ridicules (The Cranks)
Scène infernale
Marche
Scherzo
Le Prince et la Princesse
La Fuite (The Flight)

Symphony No.7 in C sharp minor, Op.131

Moderato
Allegretto
Andante espressivo
Vivace

FESTIVAL PARTNER



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

Pre-concert talk by Yvonne Frindle at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer. Visit sydneyarts.com.au/talk-bios for speaker biographies.

Approximate durations: 22 minutes, 16 minutes, 20-minute interval, 15 minutes, 31 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 10pm.

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A composer festival is something to look forward to all year, and tonight's concert promises to be especially exciting. With Vladimir Ashkenazy at the helm, we hear not one but two virtuoso soloists – Boris Belkin and Alexander Gavrylyuk – and four great musical works that trace a journey from Prokofiev's student days to his final symphony. It's impossible to miss the sheer energy and vitality of Prokofiev's music – qualities that characterised his life's work.

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We trust that you will enjoy tonight's performance and hope you also have a chance to experience future concerts in the *EnergyAustralia* Master Series.



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PROKOFIEV : *Overture on Hebrew Themes for clarinet, string quartet and piano*; *String Quartet No.2 (on Kubatdinian themes)*; *Adagio for cello and piano*; *Quintet for oboe, clarinet, violin, viola and double bass.*

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INTRODUCTION

THE PRODIGAL RUSSIAN: ASHKENAZY'S PROKOFIEV FESTIVAL

Part 2: Prokofiev: First and Final

All of the concerts in this month's festival share an overarching theme: Prokofiev as the 'prodigal Russian' – an extraordinary composer who, alone among those who fled to the West, chose to return to Soviet Russia. But this program in particular traces the journey, beginning with two early concertos, touching on his career in America with *The Love for Three Oranges*, and concluding with his final symphony.

The two concertos were composed before Prokofiev departed for the West. He was 21 years old when he wrote the Piano Concerto No.1, the earliest and most 'youthful' music in this program. The year after he graduated he began work on his first violin concerto, setting aside the brilliant spirit of the piano concerto for a distinctive lyrical character. Significantly, this violin concerto wasn't premiered until 1923, after he'd already spent several years in America and had settled in Paris. But Prokofiev's brand of sublime lyricism was not fashionable in 1920s Paris, and the music was criticised for the very qualities that we admire today.

In America, however, Prokofiev had been able to catch the mood and taste of his audience with his comic-fantasy opera *The Love for Three Oranges*. He'd set out to amuse and the music does just that. After his return to Russia in 1936 Prokofiev experienced mixed success. He was feted for *Romeo and Juliet*, but his Sixth Symphony was denounced. His Seventh Symphony met with more favour, even though it doesn't quite fit the expected character of a symphony. Its structure is true to form, but the music itself is often yearning and wistful, as if maturity and the trials of life had led its composer to treasure a subtle and poetic style.



Autographed photograph of Prokofiev in 1916 – "That's right, it's I."

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

Sergei Prokofiev

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No.1 in D, Op.19

Andantino – Andante assai

Scherzo (Vivacissimo)

Moderato – Allegro moderato – Moderato – Più tranquillo

Boris Belkin violin

Above the soloist's first entry in the printed music for Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No.1 stands the word *sognando* – dreamily. Expansive and reflective, the exquisite melody reveals an easily neglected poetic and lyrical aspect of Prokofiev's style. It signals from the outset that this is enduringly attractive music. But the musical avant-garde at the premiere in Paris in 1923 found the work *too* lyrical – shot through, in the words of White Russian emigré critic Boris de Schloezer, with 'artificiality' and 'Mendelssohnism'.

Schloezer's accusation – despite the intended malice – was not unfounded. The concerto's melancholy lyricism *does* bring to mind Mendelssohn's music. Other comparisons are striking. Mendelssohn had been plagued by the opening of his own violin concerto for six years, a theme that wouldn't leave him in peace. Similarly, Prokofiev's first theme had come into being for a concertino in 1915. 'I had often regretted,' wrote Prokofiev, 'that other work had prevented me from returning to its "meditative opening".' It was only in 1917, during a summer retreat outside St Petersburg (by then Petrograd) that the concertino 'grew' into a concerto.

When the first performance finally came about, potential soloists could see only that the work – against expectation – lacked a virtuoso cadenza. According to Prokofiev, the celebrated Bronislaw Hubermann and other violinists had 'flatly refused to learn "that music".' But it would be wrong to think that this is not a virtuoso work. The solo part abounds in complexity and difficulty, especially in the second movement, and the soloist plays almost continuously.

It was not until 1924 – when Joseph Szigeti became its advocate – that the First Violin Concerto began to attract the recognition it deserved. But even then acceptance was not complete, and the composer Glazunov walked out during the Leningrad premiere. 'I believe this actually occurred,' recalled Szigeti, 'while we were preparing to encore the *Scherzo* in response to the enthusiastic demands of the audience.'

In Szigeti's view that *sognando* opening to the **first movement** was 'a clue to the day-dreaming expression of

Keynotes

PROKOFIEV

Born Sontsovka (Ukraine), 1891

Died Moscow, 1953

By the time he was finishing up at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, Prokofiev had developed a compositional style that balanced four distinct characteristics, which he identified as: classical, modern or 'grotesque', motoric, and lyrical or 'meditative'. He claimed that the lyrical aspect of his style was 'not noticed until much later' but it emerged quite early on and dominates both his violin concertos.

VIOLIN CONCERTO NO.1

The first thing the soloist plays in this concerto came into being in 1915, the year after Prokofiev graduated. It's a dreamy, haunting melody that floats over a shimmering accompaniment and sets the tone for the whole work. The shape of the concerto is unexpected: instead of the typical fast-slow-fast organisation of the three movements, it begins and ends with shimmering serenity and the fast, more obviously virtuosic music is in the middle. This middle movement shows Prokofiev at his most whimsical, laughing with us in a true-to-form 'joking' scherzo. The concerto was completed in 1917 (the same year as the *Classical Symphony*) and premiered in 1923 in Paris.

“the little boy listening to a story” feeling’ of the exposition. So it’s no surprise to find, a short way in, a second word above the solo part: *narrante* – literally ‘in the manner of a narration’. Here the music takes on a rhythmic character, all sparkle and bite. No longer is Prokofiev setting the scene for daydreams, instead we’re thrown headlong into a tale, a tale told in symphonic dialogue, with little sense of the traditional competition between soloist and orchestra.

But in many ways Prokofiev was as much a traditionalist as an innovator. The concerto has the clear-cut, almost neo-classical construction of the *Classical Symphony* (also composed in 1917) but at the same time it inverts the usual sequence of tempos so that two slow, lyrical movements surround the fast, rhythmic *Scherzo*.

The **Scherzo** is a catalogue of violin trickery: leaps from one extreme of register to the other, double-stopping, slides, harmonics, and rapid figuration alternating with accented rhythms. The five sections of the *Scherzo* transport the listener from the buoyant ascent of the opening theme above a clockwork accompaniment to the sinuous windings of the solo violin in its low register. This mercurial movement with its abrupt ending has been cited as an example of the ‘grotesque’ or ‘sarcastic’ element in Prokofiev’s musical style, although he would prefer us to hear it as whimsical and laughing: ‘scherzo-ish’.

The **third movement** begins with a brief theme on the bassoon (no hint of mockery here), developed by each of the woodwind instruments in turn. This sets the scene for the soloist’s entry, combining staccato and sustained ideas, suspended above orchestral writing of the utmost economy. Nowhere is the translucency of the music more apparent than in the coda, where the opening theme from the first movement returns in the orchestral violins above a shimmer of tremolos and harp arpeggios. The solo violin traces the melody with ‘altitudinous trills’ before coming to rest – exactly as it had at the end of the first movement – on a top D in unison with the piccolo.

ABRIDGED FROM A NOTE BY YVONNE FRINDLE
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA ©1997

The orchestra for the First Violin Concerto comprises two flutes, piccolo, and pairs of oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets and tuba; timpani and percussion; harp and strings.

The Sydney Symphony gave the first Australia performance of the concerto in 1938 with violinist Ernest Llewellyn and conductor George Szell. The most recent performance was in 1997 with soloist Cho-Liang Lin and conductor Donald Runnicles.

No longer is Prokofiev setting the scene for daydreams, instead we’re thrown headlong into a tale...

Sergei Prokofiev

Piano Concerto No.1 in D flat, Op.10

Allegro brioso – Andante assai – Allegro scherzando

Alexander Gavrylyuk piano

In 1914 Prokofiev walked onto the stage of the St Petersburg Conservatoire for his final examination. He'd received a poor rating for composition but didn't mind (he thought many of his classes were a complete waste of time). When it came to performance, however, he was resolved to win a first on piano, the Rubinstein Prize no less.

He was convinced he could win if he played his own concerto. 'While I might not be able to compete successfully in performance of a classical concerto,' he later wrote, 'there was a chance that my own might impress the examiners by its novelty of technique; they simply would not be able to judge whether I was playing it well or not! On the other hand, even if I did not win, the defeat would be less mortifying since no one would know whether I lost because the concerto was bad or because my performance was faulty.'

Prokofiev had already written two piano concertos. He chose the first, claiming that 'the Second would have sounded too outlandish within the Conservatoire walls'. Even so, the First created a stir of its own. The examiners refused the concerto, then conceded on condition that Prokofiev provide copies of the piano score. With the assistance of the publisher Jurgenson, the condition was met. 'When I came out on the stage,' wrote Prokofiev, 'the first thing I saw was my concerto spread out on 20 laps – an unforgettable sight for a composer who has just begun to appear in print!'

After a dazzling performance and a long and stormy adjudication session, Prokofiev won, although Glazunov, chairman of the examiners, 'flatly refused to announce the results of the voting, which, he declared, encouraged a "harmful trend"'. In the end he read the results in a flat, toneless mumble. But the 'harm' was already done, although not as Glazunov imagined: Prokofiev-the-pianist was soon to surrender to Prokofiev-the-composer, equally authoritative and virtuosic.

The critical response to the concerto ranged from admiration of its stylistic novelty and energetic rhythms to claims that it sounded 'like a lot of lunatics racing about'. Yet for all its youthful energy, the First Piano Concerto

Keynotes

PROKOFIEV

For his graduation in 1914 (also a contest for the Rubinstein prize) Prokofiev played his own piano concerto, displaying his remarkable skills as both composer and performer. At this point his career could have gone either way and it's possible that his teachers were expecting him to become a concert pianist, since his marks for composition were poor. But he'd already composed two piano concertos and various smaller works, and the distinctive compositional style of his maturity was emerging.

PIANO CONCERTO NO.1

Prokofiev's strategy of playing his own piano concerto paid off and he won the coveted prize with the First Piano Concerto, completed two years earlier in 1912. It's a compact work in just one movement, betraying its original conception as a concertino, a 'little concerto'. But within that single movement are three distinct transitions of tempo, suggesting the traditional format of a three-movement concerto: fast-slow-fast. The exultant opening, played by piano and orchestra together after three introductory chords, and the perky theme that follows it both return in the concluding fast section to tie the whole work together.

(written in 1911) shows remarkable maturity in style and structure. Prokofiev himself considered it his ‘first more or less mature composition as regards conception and fulfilment’.

Like his First Violin Concerto, the Piano Concerto began life as a single-movement concertino. A superficial listening suggests that Prokofiev adopted the traditional three-movement concerto structure (fast–slow–fast) as the music metamorphosed into something much longer. Closer listening, however, reveals that his conception of a single-movement work was retained. The final effect was achieved by layering the characteristic tempo changes of a multi-movement concerto over a larger sonata-form structure.

The concerto indulges in mercurial shifts of mood and tempo, from the opening grandeur of the *Allegro brio* to its perky second theme and the nostalgia of the *Andante assai*. The glue holding these apparently episodic sections together is the exultant main theme that begins the concerto: soloist and orchestra plunging in together with just the barest of preliminaries: three accented chords.

The solo writing features all the gestures of which Prokofiev-the-pianist was so fond: massive chordal effects, wide, angular leaps, relentless octave passages and rapid legato runs. But despite its brittle virtuosity the concerto is no mere bravura showpiece. Its maturity is to be found not just in Prokofiev’s grasp of structure and his clever balancing of piano and orchestra but in the clearly recognisable stylistic gestures that mark the language of Prokofiev-the-composer. (Even in this early work Prokofiev was building his style on four ‘basic lines’ that he himself identified: a classical approach to structure; piquant harmonies searching for expressive effect; rhythmic momentum; and a reflective lyricism based on an unerring melodic instinct.) The music is mature and assured, but the concerto retains its aura of youthful genius. As Prokofiev-the-pianist proved in 1914, its high spirits, energy and compelling charm are truly winning.

YVONNE FRINDLE ©1997/2009

The orchestra for Prokofiev’s First Piano Concerto comprises two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; and strings.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the concerto in 1973 with pianist Tony Baldwin and Wilfred Lehmann conducting, and most recently in 1998 with Kun Woo Paik and conductor Justin Brown.



Prokofiev at the piano (1910)

PROKOFIEV DESCRIBES THE STRUCTURE OF HIS FIRST PIANO CONCERTO:

‘a sonata *Allegro* with the introduction repeated after the exposition and at the end; a short *Andante* inserted before the development; development in the form of a *Scherzo* and a cadenza to introduce the recapitulation.’



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INTERLUDE

In Search of Truth Prokofiev's last three symphonies

Most composers take the issue of creative freedom for granted, yet in the last years of his life Prokofiev witnessed one of history's most repressive and sustained attacks on musical culture. During these years, he wrote his final symphonies.

A true patriot, Prokofiev wrote his ever-popular Fifth Symphony in 1944 as Russia edged more confidently toward the end of the Second World War. Rather than dwelling on the dark days that had passed, the work is marked by a sparkling and irrepressible wit in its faster movements and, in its Adagio, by an almost delirious sensuality.

The hallmark despotism of the 1930s had eased during the war years, and a more tolerant regard for artists had been evident. However, following the victory of 1945 the restrictive controls resumed, and the arts again were censored. Despite its initial success, Prokofiev's Sixth Symphony suffered this fate in 1948. An introspective and monumentally philosophical work, the good humour of its finale appears unable to escape earlier moods, and the symphony, ultimately, seems curiously unresolved. As 'optimism' had become the single, implacable demand of composers, such a personal and, at times, dissonant work was perhaps destined to elude official favour. Tragically, Prokofiev's music was banned from performance.

It has been said the composer never fully recovered. His reputation was partially rehabilitated the following year, yet he was unable to progress great works, such as his opera *War and Peace*, to the stage, nor even weaker ones, such as the Soviet-themed *Story of a Real Man*. Beset by failing health and poor finances, he wrote his Seventh Symphony in a purposely inoffensive style, presenting it a year before his death in 1952. It is a work of gentle charm yet, to some, it has appeared the chronicle of a broken man. Conversely, more enlightened commentators have observed that the soaring theme which crowns the symphony stands as testament to the power of beauty – and humanity – to rise above, and conquer, adversity.

SCOTT DAVIE ©2009

'[Socialist Realism] demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism.'

FROM THE SOVIET DEFINITION OF
SOCIALIST REALISM (1934)

Hear the Sixth Symphony
in the live broadcast
on ABC Classic FM on
Saturday 14 November at
2pm.

Sergei Prokofiev

The Love for Three Oranges: Suite, Op.33a

Les Ridicules (The Cranks)

Scène infernale

Marche

Scherzo

Le Prince et la Princesse

La Fuite (The Flight)

Venetian nobleman Carlo Gozzi (1720–1806) had a profound personal and aesthetic hatred of the two leading playwrights of his day, Carlo Goldoni (1707–1792), who advocated ‘realism’ and the abolition of the traditional *commedia dell’arte*, and author of French-style melodrama, Pietro Chiari (1700–1788). For *The Love for Three Oranges*, the first of ten ‘theatrical fantasies’, Gozzi enlisted a *commedia dell’arte* company and drafted a scenario around which the actors could improvise and parody his rivals. The *dramatis personæ* included stock characters such as Tartaglia (the Prince), Pantalone, Smeraldina and Truffaldino (an alternative name for Arlecchino or Harlequin). The Prince is suffering from ‘hypochondria’ and dying from an inability to laugh. He is cured by a piece of accidental slapstick when the witch Fata Morgana (who for her own evil political reasons is trying to make sure that the Prince is not cured) takes a pratfall. She in turn curses him with an obsession for three oranges which he must seek throughout the world. Each of the oranges contains a princess, but the first two die of thirst on being released from their pithy prison. The third Princess, after one or two other adventures, marries the Prince and they all live happily ever after.

Prokofiev’s first opera was *The Gambler*, composed in 1916–17 to his own libretto based on Dostoyevsky’s novella. It had been commissioned by Albert Coates, the English-born music director of the Mariinsky (later Kirov) Theatre, but the premiere was doomed by several events: the orchestra hated it, the stage director was incompetent, and perhaps most importantly, the country was in the grip of revolution. In an attempt to save the show, the director was replaced by the brilliant and (artistically) revolutionary Vsevolod Meyerhold, but even that was to no avail. It did however bring together two like-minded artists, and when Prokofiev set off for the United States, via Japan, in 1918, Meyerhold presented him with a copy

Keynotes

PROKOFIEV

The year after he completed his first violin concerto, Prokofiev left Russia, travelling to the United States via Tokyo and working on his second full-scale opera, *The Love for Three Oranges*, during the journey. His reception in the US was mixed: in New York the congenial *Classical Symphony* was heard as ‘an orgy of dissonance’, but in Chicago his Piano Concerto No.1 was met with great enthusiasm. And it was the Chicago Opera which commissioned him to complete his opera and gave its premiere in 1921. (Initially the performances were to be sponsored by Sunkist Oranges. The final cost of the production was \$130,000, or \$43,000 per orange!)

THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES

The Love for Three Oranges is a comedy with its roots in fairytales and the *commedia dell’arte* tradition. It was transformed from an old Italian play into a Russian libretto, translated into French for an American audience and intended, said Prokofiev, to amuse. The number that always sparks a smile of recognition is the famous March, heard in the opera as the prelude to a festival. The remaining five movements of Prokofiev’s symphonic suite introduce the mercurial moods and characters of the opera.

of the first issue of his new journal: *The Love for Three Oranges*. Meyerhold perhaps saw himself as playing Gozzi to the influential Stanislavsky, and the version of Gozzi's play he published in his journal was a kind of manifesto against Stanislavskian realism. By the time Prokofiev had arrived in the USA he had a draft libretto in hand, and when the opera was premiered in Chicago in 1921 it was a great success.

A great recycler, Prokofiev knew the value of extracting music for the concert hall from theatrical works and in 1924 produced this suite. Following Meyerhold, Prokofiev's tale is framed by an on-stage argument between tragedians, comedians, lyricists and *ridicules* (or 'Cranks') about the merits of various theatrical genres. The Suite opens with music in the **Ridicules'** clamour. The **Scène infernale** depicts the witch Fata Morgana playing cards with the sorcerer Celio, the king's protector, in a tussle for power. The celebrated **March** introduces the comic festival which the King hopes will cure the Prince, while the **Scherzo** describes the flight of the Prince and his jester Truffaldino – propelled by the wind from a devilish pair of bellows – across the desert. (Gozzi, incidentally, literally deflated the heroic style of Chiari by having them 'sprawl on the grass at the sudden cessation of the favouring gale!') The **Prince and the Princess** fall in love – fortunately for her, the Cranks lower a bucket of water to the stage when her orange is peeled, so she doesn't die of thirst, and Prokofiev allows them a luscious music which looks forward to his *Romeo and Juliet* ballet. It doesn't end there: the princess is abducted, turned into a rat and so on, but it all ends with general rejoicing, and the baddies like Fata Morgana disappear through a trap door to the music of **La Fuite**.

ABRIDGED FROM A NOTE BY GORDON KERRY ©2005

The suite from *The Love for Three Oranges* calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet and three bassoons, one doubling contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; two harps and strings.

The Sydney Symphony gave the first Australian performance of the suite in 1944, conducted by Bernard Heinze; the most recent performance was in 2002, conducted by Luke Dollman.



Prokofiev in Chicago

Sergei Prokofiev Symphony No.7 in C sharp minor, Op.131

Moderato

Allegretto

Andante espressivo

Vivace

Sergei Prokofiev's Seventh Symphony, completed in 1952, a year before his death, was one of his last works. Controversially, a number of compositions from his final years have had an uneasy history. Some have asserted that these late works are weak, that they portray a composer – by then frail from illness, and increasingly impoverished – who possessed little of his former skills. As a recent example, Dorothea Redepenning writes in *New Grove* that 'the late instrumental works are curiously colourless, and conspicuous for an almost excessive tendency to simplicity; there is nothing here of the lively nonconformity of the young Prokofiev'. Others have been even less complimentary. About his final symphony, the composer similarly indicated reservations when he turned to his companions during a rehearsal and asked 'but isn't the music rather too simple?'

Yet those with a negative opinion of the Seventh Symphony often miss many of its finer nuances, and almost certainly assess the work separately from the circumstances of its composition. With an awareness of the context in which it was written, however, certain aspects of its style and character can be more easily understood. Chief among the factors that contributed to the composer's difficult final years was a famous resolution on Soviet music in 1948 which attacked Russia's most gifted composers, of whom Prokofiev was a leading member. Accused of 'formalism' – an ill-defined notion that, in its most simplistic reading, related to the use of dissonance, but which could be also levelled as an attack on socialist ideology – his powerful Sixth Symphony was denounced, and his entire output effectively banned from performance. Furthermore, the arrest and incarceration of his foreign-born wife, the deaths of fellow composer and friend, Nikolay Myaskovsky, and film director, Sergei Eisenstein, the subsequent loss of income from performances and prizes, and the rapid erosion of his health, combined to bring about his own death within five years.

Keynotes

PROKOFIEV

Prokofiev completed his final symphony in 1952, five years after the much-maligned Sixth Symphony and less than a year before his death. Its initial conception was as music for children (with the Soviet Children's Radio Division the intended audience) but the final form of the symphony suggests that it outgrew this vision.

SEVENTH SYMPHONY

The Seventh Symphony begins in a serene, almost delicate spirit, with no sense of the magnitude or formal argument of a traditional Romantic symphony. It eludes expectation, instead conveying an atmosphere of nostalgia, even whimsy. The symphony adopts a classical four-movement structure with a gently capricious waltz in second place, followed by a tender slow movement salvaged from music that he'd written to accompany Pushkin's *Yevgeny Onegin*. The final movement sets off in a gallop, brilliant, spirited and good-humoured, but there's ambiguity in its ending, with two possibilities open to conductors. (Ashkenazy chooses the cheerful ending for these concerts.) It might be possible to hear the symphony's original conception as music for children, but even stronger is the feeling of this mature music as an adult's view of childhood – wistful and yearning.

In the case of the Seventh Symphony, some of the simplicity for which he has been criticised may stem from its origins as a work intended for the Children's Radio Division. While some have suggested that writing for a youthful audience may have been an attempt at skirting official censorship, the exact circumstances of its composition are not known. The initial mood of the symphony reveals a stark, and mature, reality, with the plaintive writing at times pared back to just two lines. The wintry tone is soon broken by a theme of extraordinary warmth, the soaring melody being lent a sense of elevation by its rippling accompaniment. A curiously tinkling motif follows in flute and glockenspiel, recalling the magical soundscapes so common to Russian music since the time of Glinka. The instrumentation also draws to mind a ticking clock, an effect that Shostakovich was to use in his final symphony. Perhaps advisedly, Prokofiev proceeds with a typically 'classical' development of the material, marking one of the few instances where he adheres to the archaic 'sonata form'. The themes are again presented, before the movement ends quietly with an unexpected return to the colder tonality of the opening.

The bright and capricious *Allegretto* movement immediately brings to mind many of the composer's earlier forays into ironical waltzes. As the movement progresses, however, focus is drawn increasingly to the recurrence of fateful pounding rhythms and seemingly portentous moments of subdued orchestration, such as in the theme of the repeated trio section, scored for muted strings. The slow movement revisits a melody that Prokofiev had composed for a theatrical adaptation of Pushkin's *Yevgeny Onegin* in 1936. The production never took place, however, as its director, Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, fell out of favour – perhaps ominously – with Soviet authorities. The short theme is the basis of numerous variations, each utilising an ever wider palette of orchestral colours, and in increasingly disparate keys. Adding contrast is a simple, childlike tune, introduced by the oboe.

The final movement seems most easily identifiable with the audience originally designated for the work, as it noisily bursts forth in a sprightly gallop. A yearning subsidiary theme leads to a playful march, recalling the humour of an earlier youth-oriented work, *Peter and the*



Prokofiev towards the end of his life

Wolf. The momentum is ultimately broken by a series of heaving chords, leading to the unexpected re-emergence of the broad-winged theme from the first movement. The tinkling bell motif duly follows, but the alternation between major and minor tonalities creates an impression of bittersweet resignation. On this irresolute point, the symphony was originally intended to close. However, Prokofiev was persuaded to change the ending by writing a few further bars, returning with great optimism to the gallop. For some, a sadly forlorn conclusion might potentially trouble an audience, as the symphony's first conductor, Samuil Samosud, may have pointed out. At the same time, it is difficult to ignore the composer's dire financial situation, and the knowledge that such a change would gain his eligibility for a Stalin Prize First Class, worth some 100,000 rubles. Ultimately, the composer decided not to step entirely away from his earlier plan, and the published score states that performance of either ending is valid. Given the many unanswered, and perhaps unanswerable, questions that still surround Prokofiev – such as how much he truly understood of the events of 1917 when he decided to leave Russia, and why he chose to return in the 1930s, when so many liberties were being curtailed – it is perhaps only fitting that the close of his final symphony is similarly enigmatic.

On this irresolute point, the symphony was originally intended to close.

SCOTT DAVIE ©2009

The orchestra for Prokofiev's Seventh Symphony comprises two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet and two bassoons; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and a large percussion section; harp, piano and strings.

The Sydney Symphony gave the first Australian performance of the symphony in 1955, conducted by Bernard Heinze; the most recent performance on record was in 1961, conducted by Alberto Bolet.

GLOSSARY

ARPEGGIO – a musical gesture in which the notes of a chord are ‘spread’, or played one after the other instead of simultaneously. It nearly always starts at the bottom of the chord.

CADENZA – a virtuoso passage for a solo instrument, traditionally inserted towards the end of a concerto movement and marking the final ‘cadence’.

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE – literally ‘comedy of the artists [or guild]’, a tradition of improvised theatre based on stock characters and scenarios. It emerged in Italy in the 16th century and had some influence in the development of opera (many of its practitioners performed in other dramatic genres, and some were acclaimed singers).

CONCERTINO – a ‘little’ concerto. Like a concerto, it features a solo instrument with orchestra, but is more modest in scale and difficulty.

FORMALISM – a term in Soviet music criticism, implying (as a fault) an excessive intellectual concern with ‘form’ over emotional content and communication and generally applied to music that was considered overly discordant and ‘modern’.

LEGATO – (literally ‘bound together’) a direction for notes to be played or sung in a smooth and connected manner; the opposite of *staccato*.

OCTAVE PASSAGES – a technique in piano writing where the melody is doubled (played simultaneously) in different octaves or registers. This gives increased power and emphasis to the melodic line at the expense of filling in the harmony.

SCHERZO – literally, a joke; the term generally refers to a movement in a fast, light triple time, which may involve whimsical, startling or playful elements. Beethoven was responsible for establishing the scherzo as a ‘standard’ movement type in symphonies.

SONATA FORM – this term was conceived in the 19th century to describe the harmonically based structure most classical composers

had adopted for the first movements of their sonatas and symphonies. It involves the **EXPOSITION**, or presentation of themes and subjects: the first in the tonic or home key, the second in a contrasting key. The tension between the two keys is intensified in the **DEVELOPMENT**, where the themes are manipulated and varied as the music moves further and further away from the ultimate goal of the home key. Tension is resolved in the **RECAPITULATION**, where both subjects are restated in the tonic. Sometimes a **CODA** (‘tail’) is added to enhance the sense of finality.

STACCATO – a crisp style of articulation in which the notes of a phrase are played shorter than their written duration and are detached from each other. (Think of the idiom: the staccato sound of a machine-gun.)

TREMOLO – repeating the same note many times very quickly, to produce a ‘shaking’ or ‘trembling’ effect. In string playing this is achieved by rapid back-and-forth strokes of the bow.

In much of the classical repertoire, movement titles are taken from the Italian words that indicate the tempo and mood. A selection of terms from this program is included here.

Allegretto – not so fast as *Allegro* (fast)

Allegro brioso – fast and spirited

Allegro moderato – moderately fast

Allegro scherzando – fast and playful

Andante assai – very easy walking pace

Andante espressivo – walking pace, expressively

Andantino – a diminutive of *Andante* (walking pace), this term can be interpreted as either a little slower than *Andante* or, as is more common nowadays, a little faster

Moderato – at a moderate tempo

Più tranquillo – very tranquil

Vivace – lively

Vivacissimo – as lively as possible

This glossary is intended only as a quick and easy guide, not as a set of comprehensive and absolute definitions. Most of these terms have many subtle shades of meaning which cannot be included for reasons of space.

MORE MUSIC

Selected Discography

THE PROKOFIEV EXPERIENCE

Decca has assembled the four symphonies heard in this festival, together with Vladimir Ashkenazy playing all five piano concertos, and the complete *Romeo and Juliet* ballet music. Ashkenazy conducts the Cleveland and Concertgebouw orchestras and the London Symphony Orchestra; the London Symphony Orchestra and André Previn accompany the concertos. A 6-CD set.

DECCA 480 3154

BELKIN PLAYS PROKOFIEV

Boris Belkin recorded both of Prokofiev's violin concertos with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Kiril Kondrashin (No.1) and Rudolf Barshai (No.2). Filling out this disc from Decca's Eloquence label is the suite from *The Love for Three Oranges*, with Walter Weller conducting the LPO.

DECCA 476 2744

HISTORICAL PROKOFIEV

Prokofiev made a number of piano rolls, including his transcriptions of the March and the Intermezzo from *The Love for Three Oranges*. These and other Prokofiev piano pieces are available on a Masters of the Piano Roll disc.

DAL SEGNO 5

Joseph Szigeti was the first violinist to record Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto, in 1935 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Thomas Beecham; the music especially suited his style. On this disc from the Naxos Historical label, it's paired with the Bloch Violin Concerto (written for Szigeti).

NAXOS 8.110973

GAVRILYUK PLAYS PROKOFIEV

Alexander Gavrylyuk plays two of Prokofiev's piano sonatas (Nos. 6 and 7) in a live recital disc recorded in 2005.

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Broadcast Diary



NOVEMBER

The Prodigal Russian: Ashkenazy's Prokofiev Festival

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor
Jacqueline Porter soprano
Boris Belkin violin
Alexander Gavrylyuk piano
John Bell narrator

6 Nov, 8pm

PROKOFIEV: FIRST AND FINAL

See this program book for details.

14 Nov, 2pm

PROKOFIEV THE ROMANTIC

Romeo and Juliet: Suite
Piano Concerto No.3;
Symphony No.6

18 Nov, 8pm

PROKOFIEV'S RUSSIAN MAGIC

Lieutenant Kijé: Suite;
Piano Concerto No.5
The Ugly Duckling;
Peter and the Wolf

21 Nov, 10am

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY No.2 (2008)

Thomas Dausgaard conductor

2MBS-FM 102.5

SYDNEY SYMPHONY 2009

10 November, 6pm

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PROKOFIEV THE ROMANTIC

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC ADVISOR

In the years since Vladimir Ashkenazy first came to prominence on the world stage in the 1955 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, he has built an extraordinary career not only as one of the most renowned and revered pianists of our times, but as an inspiring artist whose creative life encompasses a vast range of activities.

Conducting has formed the largest part of his music-making for the past 20 years. He was Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic from 1998 to 2003, and he was Music Director of the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo from 2004 to 2007. In 2009 he takes up the position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Sydney Symphony.

Alongside these roles, Vladimir Ashkenazy is also Conductor Laureate of the Philharmonia Orchestra, with whom he has developed landmark projects such as *Prokofiev and Shostakovich Under Stalin* (a project which he toured and later developed into a TV documentary) and *Rachmaninoff Revisited* at the Lincoln Center, New York.

He also holds the positions of Music Director of the European Union Youth Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. He maintains strong links with a number of other major orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra (where he was formerly Principal Guest Conductor), San Francisco Symphony, and Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin (Chief Conductor and Music Director 1988–96), and last year returned to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic.

Vladimir Ashkenazy continues to devote himself to the piano, building his comprehensive recording catalogue with releases such as the 1999 Grammy award-winning Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, Rautavaara's Piano Concerto No.3 (which he commissioned), and Rachmaninoff transcriptions. His latest releases are recordings of Bach's *Wohltemperierte Klavier* and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*.

A regular visitor to Sydney over many years, he has conducted subscription concerts and composer festivals for the Sydney Symphony, with his five-program Rachmaninoff festival forming a highlight of the 75th Anniversary Season in 2007. Vladimir Ashkenazy's artistic role with the Orchestra includes collaborations on composer festivals, major recording projects and international touring activities.



SASHA GUSOVY/DECCA

Boris Belkin violin

Boris Belkin began studying the violin at the age of six, and the following year made his first public appearance with Kiril Kondrashin. He studied at the Central Music School in the Moscow Conservatory and as a student played all over the Soviet Union with leading national orchestras. In 1973 he won first prize in the Soviet National Competition for Violinists.

In 1974 he emigrated to the West, and the following year made his American debut performing Tchaikovsky with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon has released this performance on DVD.) Since then he has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the major British orchestras.

His television appearances include a film biography of Sibelius in which he performed the Sibelius concerto with the Swedish Radio Orchestra and Vladimir Ashkenazy. He has also collaborated with conductors such as Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa, Kurt Sanderling, Yuri Temirkanov, Christoph von Dohnanyi, Charles Dutoit, Gunther Herbig, Klaus Tennstedt, Simon Rattle, Bernard Haitink, Paavo Berglund, Eduardo Mata, Myung-Whun Chung, Franz Welsch-Möst and Alexander Lazarev.

His discography includes the major romantic concertos, including Tchaikovsky and Sibelius (Philharmonia Orchestra), Shostakovich Violin Concerto No.1 (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra), and Richard Strauss's early concerto (Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra), all conducted by Ashkenazy. He has recorded several Mozart concertos with the Salzburg Chamber Soloists, and both the Prokofiev concertos (see page 18).

He has also recorded Brahms sonatas with Michel Dalberto, and in 1997 Isaac Stern invited Belkin to perform with him at the Miyazaki Festival. Since 1987 he has held masterclasses in Siena, Italy, at the Accademia Chigiana.

Boris Belkin played the Sibelius violin concerto in the Sydney Symphony's Sibelius festival conducted by Ashkenazy in 2004. His most recent appearance with the orchestra was in 2006, when he performed the Tchaikovsky concerto with Gianluigi Gelmetti conducting.



Boris Belkin performs on an instrument crafted by Roberto Regazzi in Bologna.

Alexander Gavrylyuk piano

Alexander Gavrylyuk was born in 1984, began studying piano at seven and gave his first concerto performance when he was nine. He received second prize in his group at the 1997 Horowitz International Competition for Young Pianists, and when he returned to the competition two years later he won first prize and a gold medal. He subsequently won first prize in the 2000 Hamamatsu International Piano Competition in Japan, and he has since returned regularly to Japan, performing in some of the major concert venues and recording his first two CDs. Most recently he won first prize, gold medal and the award for Best Performance of a Classical Concerto at the 2005 Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition. He also recorded a recital performance at the Miami Piano Discoveries Festival.

He was based in Sydney from 1998 to 2006, with his Australian concert activities including recitals at the Sydney Opera House and City Recital Hall Angel Place as well as performances with the Melbourne and West Australian symphony orchestras.

As a concerto soloist he has also appeared with the Russian National Orchestra, Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Israeli Chamber Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. He has worked with conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Oleg Caetani, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Alexander Lazarev, Sebastian Lang-Lessing, Mikhail Pletnev, Stefan Sanderling and Leif Segerstam.

In 2007 he made his solo recital debut at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatorium; he has also performed in recital at the Kremlin. His forthcoming engagements will include concerts with the New York Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, among others, and a second recital in the Master Pianists series at the Concertgebouw. He has also been invited to record the two Glazunov piano concertos with the Russian National Orchestra and José Serebrier.

This is Alexander Gavrylyuk's Sydney Symphony debut.



THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY

PATRON Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales



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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 iconic Sydney Opera House, where it gives more than 100 performances each year, the Sydney Symphony also performs concerts in a variety of venues around Sydney and regional New South Wales. International tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra world-wide recognition for artistic excellence. Last year the Sydney Symphony toured Italy, and it has recently returned from a tour to Asia.

The Sydney Symphony's first Chief Conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by conductors such as Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, 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.

The Sydney Symphony's award-winning Education Program is central to the Orchestra's commitment to the future of live symphonic music, developing audiences and engaging the participation of young people. The Sydney Symphony also maintains an active commissioning program and promotes the work of Australian composers through performances and recordings. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Liza Lim, Lee Bracegirdle and Georges Lentz, and the Orchestra's recording of works by Brett Dean was released last year on the BIS and Sydney Symphony Live labels.

Other releases on the Orchestra's own label, established in 2006, include performances with Alexander Lazarev, Gianluigi Gelmetti and Sir Charles Mackerras, as well as a recording of rare Rachmaninoff chamber music with Vladimir Ashkenazy.

This year Vladimir Ashkenazy begins his tenure as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor.

MUSICIANS



Vladimir Ashkenazy
Principal Conductor and
Artistic Advisor



Michael Dauth
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Dene Olding
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Second Violins



First Violins

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Associate Concertmaster
- 02 Kirsten Williams
Associate Concertmaster
- 03 Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
- 04 Julie Batty
- 05 Sophie Cole
- 06 Amber Gunther
- 07 Jennifer Hoy
- 08 Jennifer Johnson
- 09 Georges Lentz
- 10 Nicola Lewis
- 11 Alexandra Mitchell
- 12 Léone Ziegler
- 13 Brielle Clapson
Marianne Broadfoot

Second Violins

- 01 Marina Marsden
Principal
- 02 Kirsty Hilton
Principal
- 03 Emma West
A/Associate Principal
- 04 Shuti Huang
A/Assistant Principal
- 05 Susan Dobbie
Principal Emeritus
- 06 Maria Durek
- 07 Emma Hayes
- 08 Stan W Kornel
- 09 Benjamin Li
- 10 Nicole Masters
- 11 Philippa Paige
- 12 Bijana Rozenblit
- 13 Maja Verunica

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- Emily Qin
First Violin#
- Alexandra D'Elia
Second Violin#
- Monique Irik
Second Violin†
- Charlotte Burbrook
de Vere
Viola†
- Jacqueline Cronin
Viola#
- Jennifer Curl
Viola#
- Rosemary Curtin
Viola#
- Rowena Crouch
Cello#
- Patrick Murphy
Cello
- Anna Rex
Cello
- Rachael Tobin
Cello†
- Daniel Yeadon
Cello
- Josef Bisits
Double Bass
- Benjamin Ward
Double Bass#
- Kate Lawson
Flute

- Alexander Love
Horn#
- Kevin Man
Percussion
- Brian Nixon
Percussion
- Genevieve Lang
Harp

= Contract Musician
† = Sydney Symphony
Fellow

MUSICIANS

Violas



Cellos



Double Basses



Harp

Flutes

Piccolo



Violas

- 01 Roger Benedict
Principal Viola
Roger Allen and
Maggie Gray Chair
- 02 Anne Louise Comerford
Associate Principal
- 03 Yvette Goodchild
Assistant Principal
- 04 Robyn Brookfield
- 05 Sandro Costantino
- 06 Jane Hazelwood
- 07 Graham Hennings
- 08 Mary McVarish
- 09 Justine Marsden
- 10 Leonid Volovelsky
- 11 Felicity Wytthe
Stuart Johnson

Cellos

- 01 Catherine Hewgill
Principal Cello
Tony and Fran Meagher
Chair
- 02 Timothy Walden
Principal
- 03 Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
- 04 Kristy Conrau
- 05 Fenella Gill
- 06 Timothy Nankervis
- 07 Elizabeth Neville
- 08 Adrian Wallis
- 09 David Wickham

Double Basses

- 01 Kees Boersma
Principal
- 02 Alex Henery
Principal
- 03 Neil Brawley
Principal Emeritus
- 04 David Campbell
- 05 Steven Larson
- 06 Richard Lynn
- 07 David Murray

Harp

- Louise Johnson
Principal Harp
Mulpha Australia Chair

Flutes

- 01 Janet Webb
Principal
- 02 Emma Sholl
Associate Principal
Flute
Robert and Janet
Constable Chair
- 03 Carolyn Harris

Piccolo

- Rosamund Plummer
Principal

MUSICIANS

Oboes



Cor Anglais



Clarinets



Bass Clarinet

Bassoons



Contrabassoon



Horns



04



05



06



Trumpets



Trombones



Percussion



Piano



Nicholas Carter
Assistant Conductor
supported by
Symphony Australia

Oboes

- 01 Diana Doherty
Principal Oboe
Andrew Kaldor and
Renata Kaldor Ao Chair
- 02 Shefali Pryor
Associate Principal
David Papp

Cor Anglais

Alexandre Oguey
Principal

Clarinets

- 01 Lawrence Dobell
Principal
- 02 Francesco Celata
Associate Principal
- 03 Christopher Tingay

Bass Clarinet

Craig Wernicke
Principal

Bassoons

- 01 Matthew Wilkie
Principal
- 02 Roger Brooke
Associate Principal
- 03 Fiona McNamara

Contrabassoon

01 Noriko Shimada
Principal

Horns

- 01 Robert Johnson
Principal
- 02 Ben Jacks
Principal
- 03 Geoff O'Reilly
Principal 3rd
- 04 Lee Bracegirdle
- 05 Euan Harvey
- 06 Marnie Sebire

Trumpets

- 01 Daniel Mendelow
Principal
- 02 Paul Goodchild
Associate Principal
Trumpet
The Hansen Family Chair
- 03 John Foster
- 04 Anthony Heinrichs

Trombone

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- 02 Scott Kinmont
Associate Principal
- 03 Nick Byrne
RogenSi International
Chair

Bass Trombone

Christopher Harris
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Tuba

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Principal
Mark Robinson

Percussion

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Principal
- 02 Colin Piper

Piano

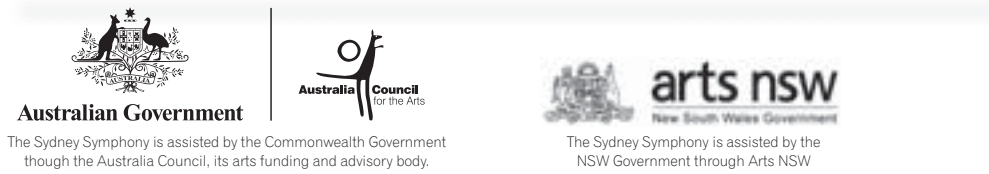
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01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08



09



10



01

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04

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06

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09

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05

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Trombone
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07

Paul Goodchild
Associate Principal
Trumpet
The Hansen Family Chair

10

Roger Benedict
Principal Viola
Roger Allen and
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03

Ronald Prussing
Principal Trombone
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NSW Chair

08

Catherine Hewgill
Principal Cello
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Level 9, 35 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000
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Please address all correspondence to the
 Publications Editor,
 Sydney Symphony,
 GPO Box 4972, Sydney NSW 2001.
 Fax (02) 8215 4660.
 Email program.editor@sydneyssymphony.com



SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA LIMITED
 Suite 2, Level 5, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 300
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Head Office:
 1017 Pacific Highway, Pymble, NSW 2073

Telephone: (02) 9449 6433
 Fax: (02) 9449 6053
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