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2010 SEASON

Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto

FRI 22 OCTOBER 11AM

TEA & SYMPHONY
PRESENTED BY



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WELCOME TO TEA & SYMPHONY



It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this concert in the 2010 Tea & Symphony series.

This year Tchaikovsky is a featured composer in the series, appearing in no fewer than four of the programs, represented by some of his most popular works: the Serenade for Strings, the Rocooco Variations, the Violin Concerto, and – this morning – his Piano Concerto No.1.

It's impossible not to feel affection for Tchaikovsky's music, and one of the reasons is his great gift for melody. His first piano concerto is not only virtuosic and thrilling, but full of exquisite and heart-warming themes. The lyrical gift is also present in the music of Paul Stanhope, a composer of the present generation, and nowhere more so than in his Fantasia on a Theme of Vaughan Williams.

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We hope you enjoy this morning's program with the Sydney Symphony, and look forward to welcoming you to future concerts in the Tea & Symphony series in 2010.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Oscar A. Kambly'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Oscar A. Kambly
Chairman
Kambly of Switzerland

2010 SEASON
TEA & SYMPHONY
PRESENTED BY KAMBLY

Friday 22 October | 11am
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIRST PIANO CONCERTO

Richard Gill conductor
Maxwell Foster piano

PAUL STANHOPE (born 1969)
Fantasia on a Theme of Vaughan Williams

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)
Piano Concerto No.1 in B flat minor, Op.23

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito
Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Andantino semplice
Allegro con fuoco



The music on this program has been recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast across Australia on Thursday 28 October at 1.05pm, together with music by Thomas Adès and selections from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*.

Approximate durations:
18 minutes, 32 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 12.05pm.

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

STANHOPE

Fantasia on a Theme of Vaughan Williams

This piece pays homage to the famous and much-loved Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. In his Fantasia, Vaughan Williams uses a simple hymn-like choral piece by Tallis, a setting of Psalm 2 ('Why fum'th in sight the Gentiles spite'), as the basis for his work. In turn, Paul Stanhope bases his own fantasia on Vaughan Williams' famous hymn tune 'Down Ampney' (which is used for the hymn 'Come down, O Love Divine').

But whereas the Vaughan Williams Fantasia is scored for string orchestra, Stanhope adopts the full resources of a symphony orchestra, with woodwinds, brass and percussion as well as strings.

The piece is in a single movement, played without pause but with six recognisable sections:

1. Fanfares.

Swirling figures in the woodwinds accompany trumpet flourishes in a heraldic exposition of the theme. Repetitive figures in the percussion, woodwind and strings are juxtaposed with boisterous brass chorales, which shout out fragments of the theme. Towards the end of this section these outbursts become more peaceful and resigned.

2. Lugubrious.

The music takes a more mournful turn. Sighing string lines accompany an augmented and decorated version of the hymn tune in paired woodwinds. Later, the theme is turned upside down and taken up by soaring violins, interrupted by foreboding figures from the brass and percussion.

3. Percussive.

This is a furiously energetic dance fuelled by drumming patterns on tom-toms, bongos and timpani. Interrupted briefly by a devilish marimba solo accompanied by plucked strings, this section reaches a climax with a series of trombone glissandos, which send the music hurtling towards the next section.

4. Photo Negative – Chorales with Walking Bass.

'Photo Negative' is literally the complete opposite of the previous section, hence the name. Fragments are heard



PAUL STANHOPE
Australian composer (born 1969)

in the woodwinds at extreme parts of their range (the texture is made up of a series of opposites), eventually revealing larger sections of the hymn tune. As an unexpected transformation, this stark section suddenly heads into the big band era!

5. Fanfares Reprise.

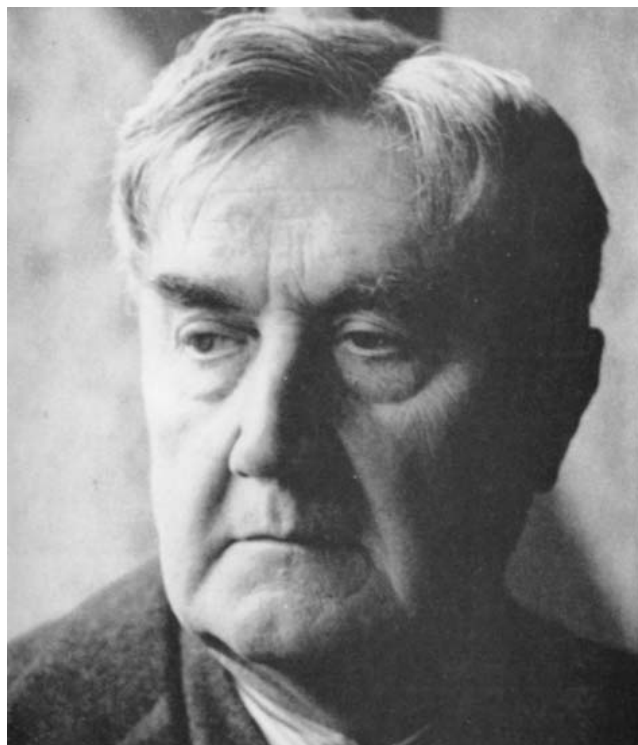
The opening material returns, but this time the pent-up energy explodes into a joyful climax followed by a descent into chaos.

6. Hymn.

The hymn tune is heard in a simple modal harmonisation (announced by the sounding of bells), emerging from the explosion that precedes it. The music strives heavenwards with high woodwinds, strings and metal percussion.

The composer writes...

Although this work alludes to matters spiritual, my idea of using a hymn tune does not address specifically religious concerns. (Vaughan Williams was, interestingly



Vaughan Williams
Born Down Ampney, Gloucestershire,
1872; died London, 1958

enough, an atheist.) The opening line of ‘Down Ampney’ is ‘Come down, O Love divine’. I interpreted this appeal to a divine love as a calling to our higher selves; a notion that is, I hope, ultimately humanising and uplifting.

ADAPTED IN PART FROM A PROGRAM NOTE BY
PAUL STANHOPE ©2004

About the composer...

Paul Stanhope’s music has been performed not only in Australia but also in the UK, Europe, Japan and the United States. In 2004 his international reputation was confirmed when he won first place in the Toru Takemitsu Composition Prize.

This year he has been Musica Viva’s featured composer, with the premiere of his String Quartet No.2 and a new duo for violin and piano, as well as performances of other chamber and choral works in the Musica Viva season.

Recent works have also included *Exile Lamentations* (2007–08), co-commissioned by the Elysian Singers of London and the Melbourne Symphony Chorus; *Love Lines* (2009), a song cycle for soprano and ensemble; and String Quartet No.1 (2008) and the Piano Trio *Dolcissimo Uscignolo* (2007), both commissioned by Musica Viva. Recent symphonic pieces include *Cloudforms* (2007, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra), and *Machinations* (2006, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra).

Paul Stanhope studied with Andrew Ford, Andrew Schultz and Peter Sculthorpe before the Charles Mackerras Scholarship enabled him to study at the Guildhall School of Music in London. He currently teaches composition part-time at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and at MLC School. He is also the music director of Sydney Chamber Choir and regularly conducts specialist choral and new music ensembles.

The Fantasia on a Theme of Vaughan Williams was awarded first place in the 2004 Toru Takemitsu Composition Prize and performed by the Tokyo Philharmonic at the Tokyo Opera City on 30 May 2004. The Sydney Symphony gave the Australian premiere in 2005.

My music presents the listener with an optimistic, personal geography... whether this is a reaction to the elemental aspects of the universe (both the celestial and terrestrial) or the throbbing energy of the inner city.

PAUL STANHOPE

TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Concerto No.1 in B flat minor

After completing the opera *Vakula the Smith* in 1874, Tchaikovsky had good reason to feel encouraged. His First Symphony was soon to be printed, there was interest in the forthcoming performance of his symphonic fantasia *The Tempest*, and by the end of the year, his two quartets were to be performed at Russian Musical Society concerts in St Petersburg. It is not clear why he decided that his next major work would be a piano concerto. He had previously confessed to disliking the combination of piano and orchestra. But after telling his brother Modest in November that he had turned his attention to a piano concerto, he finished the work in seven weeks, fired by the dramatic possibilities of the confrontation between heroic soloist and eloquent orchestra.

Tchaikovsky showed the completed work to Nikolai Rubinstein on 5 January 1875, hoping to get advice from the virtuoso on the effectiveness of the piano writing. As he was to describe the circumstances three years later in a letter to his patron Nadezhda von Meck, Rubinstein's response was devastating:

I played the first movement. Not a single word, not a single comment!...It was as though he was saying to me: 'My friend, how can I talk about details when the very essence of the thing disgusts me?' I...played on to the end...There began to flow from [Rubinstein]'s mouth a stream of words...my concerto was worthless, it was unplayable, passages were trite, awkward, and so clumsy that it was impossible to put them right...I left the room silently and went upstairs...Rubinstein soon appeared and...told me again that my concerto was worthless, and after pointing out a lot of places that needed radical change, said that if his suggested changes were made by such-and-such a date he would honour me by playing the piece in a concert of his. 'I won't change a single note,' I replied, 'and I'll publish it just as it is now!'

It is difficult to be sure, however, that Rubinstein's criticism was quite as drastic as Tchaikovsky made out. Rubinstein conducted the Moscow premiere with Sergei Taneyev at the piano in December that year, and Tchaikovsky said on that occasion, "The present writer could not wish to hear a better performance of the piece



PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Russian composer (1840–1893)

than this one.' By 1878, Rubinstein had become one of the work's most persuasive advocates.

But perhaps Rubinstein was puzzled not by the relationship between orchestra and soloist, which is mostly well-handled, but by the work's unusual structure.

The second and third movements are both fairly straightforward. The second ('easy-going and simple') really requires little more than a simple flow of melody such as Tchaikovsky was uniquely able to supply. The form is a simple ternary with a *Prestissimo* middle section (as fast as possible!). In the third movement ('fast and fiery') Tchaikovsky alternates two blocks of thematic material. They are supplemented, as David Brown notes, 'by brief self-contained chunks of transition containing only the lightest hint of quasi-developmental intent'. Tchaikovsky disdained thematic development, which he derided as 'working out', though there is some telling use of counterpoint to build the tension just before the final 'titanic' delivery of the broad second theme which concludes the concerto.

But it is the first movement which is most interesting from a structural point of view. The sinuous weaving theme introduced by the strings has become one of the best-loved melodies in the classical music repertoire. Anyone hearing this concerto complete for the first time expects to hear this impressive melody again at some stage – but it never reappears. Why? Because Tchaikovsky the melodist doesn't have enough structural sense? Or because Tchaikovsky the *great* melodist knows that the high charge of this melody will keep it memorable for the duration of the work? Or...something else?

That Tchaikovsky originally intended this introduction to be a slow introduction in the manner of a Haydn symphony is indicated by the original tempo indication *Andante non troppo e molto maestoso* (a walking pace, not too much and very majestic). But Brown points out that the apparently self-contained nature of this introduction is deceptive: this melody has implications for the rest of the movement. Its underlying harmony, for example, is invested in the chromatic sighing second subject introduced later by the winds.

The main body of the movement ('fast and spirited') is introduced by the piano in fast two-note groups.

Anyone hearing this concerto complete for the first time expects to hear this impressive melody again at some stage...

Tchaikovsky avoids his detested thematic development by dovetailing the sighing second subject directly into the end of this principal material. Muted strings then introduce the second part of the second subject, and it is the muted string theme which begins the development section, the winds adding the two-note skipping material of the first subject, until the muted string theme is pumped out forcefully by brass. Tchaikovsky fulfils the demands of sonata form by *character* transformation, not thematic transformation.

In the recapitulation, quick doubled notes in the piano signal the return of the main material. The sighing second subject appears in turn as the doubled notes of the first subject fragment and grumble away in the bass of the piano. But then, instead of the muted string theme, Tchaikovsky interpolates the high drama of a cadenza. Only after this does the muted string theme reappear and bring the movement to its conclusion.

Brown believes that ‘the frankness and force with which Tchaikovsky declared himself in this work’ have embarrassed many critics, and ‘deafened many to its finer qualities’, not least of which is the composer’s bold answer to the questions of organic growth in the first movement. Too many have assumed that Tchaikovsky’s emotional candour and melodic strengths obscured structural weaknesses.

Perhaps the question for the listener, however, is simply this: do you miss not hearing the bold opening theme again? Or, at work’s end, particularly with Tchaikovsky providing you with yet another wonderful melody (the second subject of the finale), are you satisfied with the surfeit of riches? Would you criticise the work as scathingly as Rubinstein is alleged to have done?

**...Tchaikovsky's
emotional candour and
melodic strengths...**

GORDON KALTON WILLIAMS
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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

RICHARD GILL conductor

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, SANDRA & PAUL SALTERI CHAIR

Richard Gill is the Artistic Director of the Sydney Symphony's Education Program. In 2006 he was appointed Music Director of the then newly formed Victorian Opera Company, where his performances have since included *Les Noces*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Così fan tutte*, Puccini's *Mass*, *The Coronation of Poppea* and *Sing Your Own 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.

He has frequently conducted for Opera Australia and OzOpera, and in recent seasons has conducted Meet the Music concerts with the Sydney Symphony, Discovery concerts with the Sydney Sinfonia; the Melbourne, Canberra, Queensland and Tasmanian symphony orchestras; *Sing Your Own Opera* at the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts; and the Brisbane and Melbourne premiere seasons of *The Love of the Nightingale* by Richard Mills.

His operatic repertoire includes *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Faust*, *The Gondoliers*, Moya Henderson's *Lindy*, *The Eighth Wonder* by Alan John and Dennis Watkins, *Macbeth*, *Rigoletto*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il trovatore*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *La Périchole*, *The Merry Widow*, *Fidelio*, *Turandot*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *The Force of Destiny*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, *The Love for Three Oranges*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. For OzOpera he has conducted *Carmen*, *The Magic Flute*, *La bohème*, and *The Barber of Seville*. His music theatre repertoire includes Jonathan Mills' *Ghost Wife*, which he has conducted in Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and London, and *Eternity Man* for the Sydney Festival.

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.



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Maxwell Foster piano

Born in Brisbane, Maxwell Foster attended Queensland's Young Conservatorium of Music from the age of eight, where he studied with Jenni Flemming. He subsequently moved to Melbourne where he attended Scotch College and studied with Rita Reichman at the Australian National Academy of Music. He has performed with the Queensland Orchestra and the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and West Australian symphony orchestras, as well as the St Lucia Orchestra, Melbourne's Pro Musica, and Orchestra Victoria, and he has worked with conductors including Lutz Koehler, Richard Gill, Vladimir Verbitsky and Sebastian Lang-Lessing.

In 2008 he won the ABC Symphony Australia Young Performers Award, performing Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He was also the recipient of the David Paul Landa Memorial Scholarship for Pianists. Earlier this year he performed a Mozart piano concerto with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, gave recitals for Musica Viva in Melbourne and Sydney, and performed at the Camden Haven Music Festival. Other recent engagements have included performances of Ravel's Piano Concerto in G with Orchestra Victoria, a recital for Kevin Rudd and senior cabinet members in Parliament House, Canberra, as well as recitals in Oxford, England. He also presented a recital program of Bach, Beethoven, Prokofiev, Chopin and Tchaikovsky in Melbourne, Sydney, and country New South Wales.

In addition to performing, Maxwell Foster coaches chamber ensembles at Scotch College, Melbourne, and has also been involved in educational concerts, including the performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. For this week's performances with the Sydney Symphony he has travelled from New York, where he recently began studying with Seymour Lipkin at the Juilliard School of Music.



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Emily Long

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Jane Hazelwood

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Noriko Shimada

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THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY

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Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 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 Sydney Symphony also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional NSW. International tours have earned the orchestra world-wide recognition for artistic excellence, and in 2009 it made its first tour to mainland Asia.

The Sydney Symphony's first Chief Conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and 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 its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

The Sydney Symphony Live label has captured performances with Alexander Lazarev, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Sir Charles Mackerras and Vladimir Ashkenazy. The orchestra has also released recordings with Ashkenazy on the Exton/Triton labels, and numerous recordings for ABC Classics.

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