

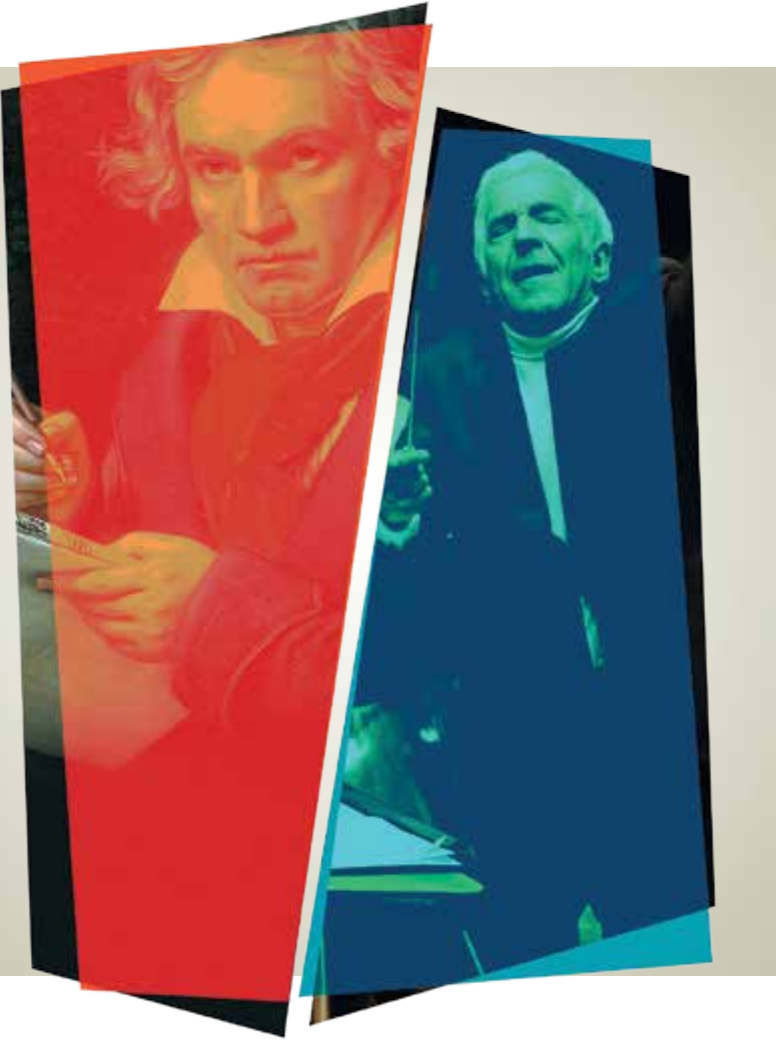


**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

**David Robertson**

The Lowy Chair of  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

**2016  
SEASON**



*Ashkenazy's Beethoven Celebration*  
**BEETHOVEN ALIVE**

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

**Thursday 4 February 1.30pm**

TEA & SYMPHONY

**Friday 5 February 11am**

GREAT CLASSICS

**Saturday 6 February 2pm**

MONDAYS @ 7

**Monday 8 February 7pm**



Principal Partner



CLASSICAL



**Beethoven Triumphant**

*Ashkenazy's Beethoven Celebration*

**BEETHOVEN** Piano Concerto No.5 (Emperor)

**BEETHOVEN** Symphony No.4

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** conductor

**Garrick Ohlsson** piano

APT Master Series

**Wed 10 Feb 8pm**

**Fri 12 Feb 8pm**

**Sat 13 Feb 8pm**

Pre-concert talk 45 minutes before each performance



**Garrick Ohlsson in Recital**

**GRANADOS** Oriental from 12 Spanish Dances

**GRANADOS** Goyescas

**MUSSORGSKY** Pictures at an Exhibition

International Pianists in Recital

**Mon 15 Feb 7pm**

City Recital Hall Angel Place



**Beethoven Ascendant**

*Ashkenazy's Beethoven Celebration*

**BEETHOVEN** Violin Concerto

**BEETHOVEN** Symphony No.5

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** conductor

**James Ehnes** violin

Special Event  
Premier Partner Credit Suisse

**Wed 17 Feb 8pm**

**Thu 18 Feb 8pm**

**Fri 19 Feb 8pm**



**Serenade**

*Mozart & Strauss*

**R STRAUSS** Serenade in E flat for 13 winds

**MOZART** Violin Rondo in B flat, K269

**R STRAUSS** Metamorphosen

**MOZART** Violin Rondo in C, K373

**James Ehnes** violin-director

2016 SSO Fellows & SSO Musicians

Tea and Symphony

**Fri 19 Feb 11 am**

complimentary morning tea from 10am



**Wynton Marsalis and the  
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**

*An evening of jazz standards*

**Wynton Marsalis** trumpet

**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**

Special Event

**Wed 24 Feb 8pm**

**Wynton Marsalis's  
Swing Symphony**

**BERNSTEIN** Fancy Free – Ballet

**BERNSTEIN** Prelude, Fugue and Riffs

**MARSALIS** Swing Symphony **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**

**David Robertson** conductor

**Wynton Marsalis** trumpet

**Francesco Celata** clarinet

**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**

Meet the Music

**Thu 25 Feb 6.30pm**

Kaleidoscope

**Fri 26 Feb 8pm**

A BMW Season Highlight

**Sat 27 Feb 8pm**



**Scheherazade**

*Her Story Continues*

**RIMSKY-KORSAKOV** Scheherazade

**ADAMS** Scheherazade.2 – Dramatic Symphony

for violin and orchestra **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**

**David Robertson** conductor

**Leila Josefowicz** violin

Meet the Music

**Wed 2 Mar 6.30pm**

Thursday Afternoon Symphony

**Thu 3 Mar 1.30pm**

Emirates Metro Series

**Fri 4 Mar 8pm**

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**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

**David Robertson**  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

**THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY**

THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY, 1.30PM

**TEA & SYMPHONY\***

FRIDAY 5 FEBRUARY, 11AM

**GREAT CLASSICS**

SATURDAY 6 FEBRUARY, 2PM

**MONDAYS @ 7**

MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY, 7PM

.....  
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

**BEETHOVEN ALIVE**

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** *conductor*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)**

**Symphony No.1 in C, Op.21**

*Adagio molto – Allegro con brio*

*Andante cantabile con moto*

*Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace)*

*Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace*

**Symphony No.8 in F, Op.93**

*Allegro vivace e con brio*

*Allegretto scherzando*

*Tempo di Menuetto*

*Allegro vivace*

INTERVAL

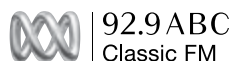
**Symphony No.7 in A, Op.92**

*Poco sostenuto – Vivace*

*Allegretto*

*Presto*

*Allegro con brio*



Saturday's performance will be recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast on Friday 19 February at 8pm.

.....  
Pre-concert talk by Scott Davie in the Northern Foyer, 45 minutes before each performance (except Friday). Visit [sydneysymphony.com/speaker-bios](http://sydneysymphony.com/speaker-bios) for more information.

.....  
Estimated durations:  
27 minutes, 27 minutes,  
20-minute interval, 38 minutes  
The concert will conclude at approximately 3.30pm (Thu), 12.10pm (Fri), 4pm (Sat), 9pm (Mon).

\* The Tea & Symphony program on Friday will consist of Symphony No.1 and No.7, performed without interval.



Principal Partner



Miniature portrait of Beethoven from 1802 by Christian Hornemann.

# Ashkenazy's Beethoven Celebration: Beethoven Alive

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It is with pleasure that we welcome back to the stage of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall one of the greatest musicians of our time, Vladimir Ashkenazy. And it gives us great delight to be able to present our former principal conductor in a series of six programs celebrating one of the greatest composers of all time – Beethoven.

Beethoven is a staple of the orchestral repertoire – it would be rare for a season to go by without at least one of his symphonies or concertos. But a festival of his music offers a special chance to hear most if not all these works in concert in relatively close succession. We presented our first Beethoven festival in 1943. More recently there have been festivals conducted by Edo de Waart (1998 and 2001) and Gianluigi Gelmetti (2007). Beethoven's music has long enjoyed a perennial appeal that's virtually unrivalled.

In 1955 the authors of *The Record Guide* pondered Beethoven's immense popularity and importance as a composer. Their conclusion, no less relevant today, was that in a tormented and troubled world most of us turn to art that springs from conflict, in which disorder resolves into order. Beethoven wrestles with Fate and triumphs; he believes in Freedom. 'Beethoven is, above all things, the poet of heroism.' In addition, we're drawn to the power of Beethoven's music, which combines expressive intensity and personal feeling with ambitious scale and a sense of the sublime.

In this opening concert of his Beethoven Celebration, Vladimir Ashkenazy features the First Symphony – a kind of farewell to the Classical style of the 18th century – and the Seventh, with its wild and often hypnotic rhythms. We hope you'll join us again this month for more symphonies and two of Beethoven's most popular concertos, and in October when Ashkenazy will return to complete the celebration.

## Beethoven Leadership Circle

The SSO thanks the following patrons who have generously supported Ashkenazy's Beethoven Celebration:

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## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No.1 in C, Op.21

*Adagio molto – Allegro con brio*

*Andante cantabile con moto*

*Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace) – Trio*

*Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace*

In November 1792 the 21-year-old Beethoven departed provincial Bonn for Vienna, to receive, in the words of Count Waldstein, 'Mozart's spirit from the hands of Haydn'. In other words, he was the inheritor of the musical language and symphonic style of the Classical era. But it was a style that was rapidly changing. An 18th-century musician could claim a common musical language, but the gradual emergence in the 19th century of independent composers as free professionals resulted in a scuffle for novelty, for the establishment of a personal idiom. The implications were profound and have been sustained into our own century.

First, in the absence of a common idiom, sheer facility was compromised – where Mozart might have written three symphonies in as many months, Beethoven could easily wrestle for years with just one work. More important, it quickly became apparent that novelty brings with it new difficulties for the performer and greater demands on the listener – a composer could easily move too far ahead of public taste and understanding. Fortunately the young Beethoven enjoyed strong support from Vienna's aristocratic circles, willing to cultivate an innovative composer who matched their romantic aspirations.

The First Symphony – 'a new Grand Symphony with complete orchestra' – was given its premiere in a Musical Academy, promoted by Beethoven himself, at Vienna's Burgtheater on 2 April 1800. Composed at the turn of the 19th century, the style and motivation of the music belongs to the 18th. The First Symphony is further linked to the Classical past in its dedication to Baron van Sweiten, a friend of both Haydn and Mozart, and a devotee of the music of Bach and Handel. At the same time Beethoven is looking to the future with an increasing scale of conception in which plain themes and compact motifs are developed through broad harmonic plans.

The musical material itself is simple, even basic, but managed in a bold, economical manner. The balanced phrases and self-contained themes of Mozart and Haydn have given way to motifs that emerge in broad lines sustained by stretches of pure harmony. Beethoven is not afraid to write music that might

### Keynotes

**BEETHOVEN**

*Born Bonn, 1770*

*Died Vienna, 1827*

**Beethoven began his symphonic career at the age of 30. He had inherited the musical language of the 18th century and the symphonic style of Mozart and Haydn, and this first effort in the genre followed in their tradition: 'a new Grand Symphony with complete orchestra'. But it was adventurous, too, and audiences noticed. Nonetheless, they willingly followed as with each new symphony Beethoven took the genre to new places, breaking classical boundaries with works that were longer, more dramatic and more adventurous than anything heard before.**

#### FIRST SYMPHONY

**The First Symphony is classical on the surface but everywhere it 'breaks with the past': beginning with what would have been a shocking opening, and inching the third movement from its traditional dance-like minuet character to something more like a wild Beethovenian scherzo. Beethoven's emerging boldness is heard in the broad lines and his imaginative treatment of the most fundamental musical ideas.**

**The First Symphony was premiered on 2 April 1800. It was well-received, and the critics approved of its novelty and wealth of ideas. One, however, thought that the prominence Beethoven had given to the wind instruments made the symphony sound more like band music than a 'proper orchestral work'.**

puzzle and surprise his listeners. He begins, for example, not in the home key of C major, not even with a conventional chord, but with a discord, and he sustains that tension through various twists and turns of the slow introduction (*Adagio molto*) until he eventually lands in C major for the beginning of the fast section (*Allegro con brio*). And even though he *calls* his third movement a *Menuetto*, the graceful character of this 18th-century dance is already giving way to a faster tempo ('very fast and lively') and a new rhythmic vigor. It is only a matter of time before the symphonic minuet will become the playful, joking scherzo.

Meanwhile, Beethoven has other jokes to play, beginning the *Finale* with false starts in the violins before everything gets properly underway. But for all its boldness, the First Symphony remains a fitting and fond farewell to the 18th century. And it was well-received: 'truly the most interesting concert we have heard for a long time,' wrote one critic, the symphony 'contained much art, novelty and a wealth of ideas.' The only apparent censure was an observation that the prominence of the wind parts made the symphony sound more like Harmoniemusik (wind band music) than a 'proper orchestral work'. Beethoven's music would shock his listeners – but not yet.



Beethoven in 1800

YVONNE FRINDLE © 2001/2008

Beethoven's First Symphony calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the symphony in 1940 under Georg Schnévoigt and most recently in 2014, conducted by Roger Benedict.

*Vladimir Ashkenazy's*  
**BEETHOVEN  
CELEBRATION  
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## Beethoven

### Symphony No.8 in F, Op.93

*Allegro vivace e con brio*

*Allegretto scherzando*

*Tempo di Menuetto*

*Allegro vivace*

Ostensibly Beethoven's Seventh and Eighth Symphonies form a pair: both were completed in 1812. But, like the earlier pairing of the Fifth and *Pastoral* Symphonies (from 1808), it is a marriage of contrasts. The Seventh Symphony, long recognised for its compelling treatment of rhythm, enjoyed almost instant popularity and its second movement assumed the status of a hit. It was a great symphony, the composer himself thought so. The Eighth Symphony, however, was less of a success than the Seventh. 'That's because it's so much better,' Beethoven is reported to have said.

Sometimes known as the 'little F major' to distinguish it from the *Pastoral* (No.6), the Eighth Symphony is only slightly longer than the First Symphony. And for once, it would seem, Beethoven has taken the advice of the more reactionary critics and returned to his classical heritage – with an emphasis on balance in form and content, clarity of structure, wit and invention. But this is not the Beethoven of the First Symphony, and the Eighth is in no way a slight or merely diverting work – the power and material of a longer symphony has been compressed to smaller proportions, concentration is the key to this compact work.

Beethoven wastes no time in his Eighth Symphony: there's no introduction, no suspenseful meandering of harmony – instead the conductor's baton comes down on the first notes of the main theme. It's fast (*Allegro*), it's lively (*vivace*) and Beethoven asks that it be played with vigour (*con brio*). It sets the tone for the symphony as a whole, as if Beethoven has taken the power and content of a longer symphony and compressed it to a work of smaller proportions but even greater intensity – 'little, but vast' was how Sir George Grove described it.

That beginning is a bold stroke, setting off uncharacteristically with a straightforward tune. The tune suggests Haydn, but the gesture does not – Haydn would surely have preceded such a self-contained melody with a slow introduction. The mood verges on recklessness, and Beethoven keeps it up with a rich variety of musical ideas all presented within a very short space of time.

There's more that his audiences wouldn't have been expecting. The symphony doesn't have a slow movement, nor does it have

## Keynotes

### BEETHOVEN

Beethoven's work is traditionally divided into three periods – often disputed in detail, but generally tracing the progress of his life and musical style. The 'Heroic' period begins in 1803 with the completion of the *Eroica* Symphony and ends in 1812 with the composition of the Seventh and Eighth symphonies. During these years, Beethoven was stretching his audience, who (on the whole) were gamely following as he pushed the boundaries of structure, style and musical expression.

### EIGHTH SYMPHONY

Beethoven may have been in his 40s when he wrote it, but the Eighth Symphony has a youthful energy and a definite humorous side. Surprisingly, given that his symphonies had been growing longer, this is one of Beethoven's shortest – the result of a powerful concentration of musical material. It's full of unexpected gestures including the abrupt ending he gives to the second movement with its cheerful, conversational character and a 'rogue' note that intrudes on the opening of the fourth movement. The third movement, which by now his listeners would have expected to be an exuberant scherzo is instead broad and flowing minuet. The finale – bursting with vitality – provides the 'centre of gravity' for the symphony, as if all the other movements have been leading to just this moment.

a scherzo, the wildly playful movement that Beethoven had made a 'standard' element of his symphonies.

The place of the slow movement is taken by the *Allegretto scherzando*. This is supposedly a joking tribute to Maelzel, inventor of the metronome – the theme turns up in a canon, which (the story goes) Beethoven improvised at a supper where his friend Maelzel was present. Unfortunately the story (and the canon) are the invention of Beethoven's biographer Schindler, but if you want to go along with the fiction, you can hear the ticking of Maelzel's timekeeping device in the wind section's spiky repeated chords, which underpin the beginning of the movement and return whenever the sudden changes in volume and whimsical melodies threaten to lead the music from its main idea.

The scherzo is replaced by something positively old-fashioned: a flowing movement in the tempo of a minuet, the dance form that Mozart or Haydn would have used at this point in their symphonies. It comes across as courtly and comfortable – and cheerful in every way. In the middle of the movement the horns, clarinet and a busy solo cello are given the spotlight.

The finale returns to the impetuous character of the first movement. It sets off in a rush with a light-footed, dashing theme, discreet enough until, barely 15 seconds in, Beethoven throws in a rogue note, a very loud C sharp that simply doesn't belong in the symphony's key of F major. Somehow he manages to continue as if nothing untoward had happened – just as you do when recovering from a stumble – and with good reason: he has plenty of other musical surprises in store, setting up expectations and then misleading his listeners. He hints at and then denies us the repeated exposition of themes expected of a movement in sonata form, misleadingly beginning the development section in the home key. When that C sharp intrudes again, it's more insistent, a cue for the music to drag us off on excursions to remote and unexplored harmonies. So far does Beethoven wander, that it takes him longer than usual to bring the music home to F major – the result is a grand, extended coda ('tail') to bring this spirited symphony to its jubilant end.

YVONNE FRINDLE © 2011/2015

Beethoven's Eighth Symphony calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the symphony in 1941, conducted by Percy Code, and most recently in 2014, conducted by Tito Muñoz.



**An engraved portrait of the composer made in 1814 by Blasius Höfel. Beethoven was 44 years old, with eight symphonies and five piano concertos to his credit.**

## MORE MUSIC

### BEETHOVEN SYMPHONIES

For a phenomenal recording of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, look for Carlos Kleiber with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Available in the recent 12-CD set of Kleiber's complete recordings for Deutsche Grammophon and on a single disc, coupled with his recording of Beethoven's Fifth.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 477 8826 (12-CD set)  
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 447 4002 (5 and 7)

The Seventh and Eighth symphonies form a natural pairing and you can find both, together with the *Creatures of Prometheus* overture in performances by the Vienna Philharmonic and Claudio Abbado, recorded in the late 1960s.

DECCA Eloquence 480 5952

For the First Symphony, try the Cleveland Orchestra with George Szell, paired with the *Pastoral* Symphony.  
SONY CLASSICAL 89838

If you're after the complete Beethoven symphonies, look for the acclaimed collection by Osmo Vänskä with the Minnesota Orchestra.

BIS 1825/26

Or try the more recent recording of the complete symphonies by the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, who brings period instrument insight to a modern instrument performance distinguished by its clarity and energy.  
PENTATONE 518 6312

In the 21st century we have the luxury of being able to download a Beethoven symphony from the cloud, listening to it in any location we choose. In the 19th century you'd have to find a concert performance or play it for yourself. Beethoven's symphonies reached a wider audience partly through the efforts of Franz Liszt who made and performed piano transcriptions. Yury Martynov has recorded these on an 1837 Erard piano (Symphony No.1 and an especially fine performance of the Seventh) and an 1867 Blüthner (Symphony No.8 and the *Eroica*).

ZIG ZAG 317 (No.1 and 7)  
ZIG ZAG 336 (No.8 and 3)

### ASHKENAZY'S BEETHOVEN

Of the symphonies on this program, Vladimir Ashkenazy has recorded the Seventh. This recording, with the Philharmonia Orchestra, is available as an ArkivCD in a release with the *Coriolan* and *Egmont* overtures, or in the 50-CD set *Ashkenazy: 50 Years on Decca*.

DECCA 478 5093

## Broadcast Diary

### February



92.9 ABC  
Classic FM

[abc.net.au/classic](http://abc.net.au/classic)

Friday 19 February, 8pm

#### BEETHOVEN ALIVE

*See this program for details.*

Saturday 20 February, 8pm

#### BEETHOVEN ASCENDANT

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** conductor

**James Ehnes** violin

Violin Concerto, Symphony No.5

Sunday 21 February, 1pm

#### BEETHOVEN TRIUMPHANT

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** conductor

**Garrick Ohlsson** piano

Piano Concerto No.5, Symphony No.4

Wednesday 24 February, 9:30pm

#### VÄNSKÄ CONDUCTS BRAHMS

**Osmo Vänskä** conductor

**Colin Currie** percussion

Beethoven, Aho, Brahms

Friday 26 February, 8pm

#### SWING SYMPHONY

**David Robertson** conductor

**Wynton Marsalis** trumpet

**Francesco Celata** clarinet

**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**

Bernstein, Marsalis

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[sydneyphil.com/SSO\\_radio](http://sydneyphil.com/SSO_radio)



### SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 9 February, 6pm

Musicians and staff of the SSO talk about the life of the orchestra and forthcoming concerts. Hosted by Andrew Bukenya, with Principal Cor Anglairs Alexandre Oguey.

[finemusicfm.com](http://finemusicfm.com)

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### Strauss & Schubert

Gianluigi Gelmetti conducts Schubert's *Unfinished* and R Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with Ricarda Merbeth. SSO 200803



### Sir Charles Mackerras

A 2CD set featuring Sir Charles's final performances with the orchestra, in October 2007. SSO 200705



### Brett Dean

Two discs featuring the music of Brett Dean, including his award-winning violin concerto, *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*. SSO 200702, SSO 201302



### Ravel

Gelmetti conducts music by one of his favourite composers: Maurice Ravel. Includes *Bolero*. SSO 200801



### Rare Rachmaninoff

Rachmaninoff chamber music with Dene Olding, the Goldner Quartet, soprano Joan Rodgers and Vladimir Ashkenazy at the piano. SSO 200901



### Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet

Vladimir Ashkenazy conducts the complete *Romeo and Juliet* ballet music of Prokofiev – a fiery and impassioned performance. SSO 201205



### Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto

In 2013 this recording with James Ehnes and Ashkenazy was awarded a Juno (the Canadian Grammy). Lyrical miniatures fill out the disc. SSO 201206



### Tchaikovsky Second Piano Concerto

Garrick Ohlsson is the soloist in one of the few recordings of the *original* version of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.2. Ashkenazy conducts. SSO 201301



### Stravinsky's Firebird

David Robertson conducts Stravinsky's brilliant and colourful *Firebird* ballet, recorded with the SSO in concert in 2008. SSO 201402

## MAHLER ODYSSEY

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**Mahler 2** SSO 201203

**Mahler 3** SSO 201101

**Mahler 4** SSO 201102

**Mahler 5** SSO 201003

**Mahler 6** SSO 201103

**Mahler 7** SSO 201104

**Mahler 8 (Symphony of a Thousand)** SSO 201002

**Mahler 9** SSO 201201

**Mahler 10 (Barshai completion)** SSO 201202

**Song of the Earth** SSO 201004

From the archives:

**Rückert-Lieder, Kindertotenlieder, Das Lied von der Erde** SSO 201204

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## Beethoven

### Symphony No.7 in A, Op.92

*Poco sostenuto – Vivace*

*Allegretto*

*Presto – Assai meno presto*

*Allegro con brio*

Generations of music-lovers have grown up on Richard Wagner's oft-quoted description of the Seventh Symphony of Beethoven as the 'apotheosis of the dance'. Yet this is not music to which one kicks up one's heels in folk style or glides forth on a ballroom floor. Nevertheless, Wagner pinpointed one of the work's vital characteristics – rhythm for rhythm's sake.

Beethoven's sketches for the symphony show that he was preoccupied from the outset with expression through rhythm. Rhythm was to be a dominant and unifying force throughout the work. An insistent skipping rhythm almost totally pervades the main body of the first movement (*Vivace*). A solemn march tread underpinning the second movement would, at a slow tempo, be funereal but, being *allegretto*, becomes *post*-funereal – elevated to a dream-like consciousness, freed of earthly shackles. And there are repeated rhythmic patterns also in both scherzo and trio, and heavy syncopation in the main theme of the headlong finale – 'a veritable dervish-whirl' in the words of William Mann. Whilst maintaining basic rhythmic consistency throughout each movement, Beethoven nevertheless keeps the music alive and fluid through many subtle variations.

More recently than Wagner, however, Robert Simpson has argued persuasively that Beethoven's greatest innovation in the Seventh is his treatment of harmony, the symphony being in effect a struggle for supremacy between the home key, A major, and two 'foreign' keys, C and F.

Completed in the summer of 1812, the Seventh Symphony helped to usher in a period in which Beethoven not only enjoyed great artistic success in the concert hall but also earned commensurate financial rewards. He turned the money into bank shares, which he held as a legacy for his nephew Karl.

Compared with the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, of about four years earlier, the Seventh appears quite conventional, with the normal four movements, no tone-painting and no additional instrumentation. Even so, Beethoven was obliged in 1819 to condemn the poetic fancies of a critic so carried away as to analyse it in terms of a political revolution.

Beethoven conducted the first performance of the Seventh in an extraordinary charity concert for wounded Austrian and

## Keynotes

### SEVENTH SYMPHONY

**Rhythm is the essence of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. In each of its four movements, whether fast or slow, is the rhetoric of repeated rhythmic patterns and a propelling energy. The Seventh Symphony has a pulse; more than that, it moves. There is the skipping of the first movement, the throbbing tread of the second, a relentless scherzo, and a whirling and delirious finale. The most famous part of the Seventh Symphony is the *Allegretto* second movement. Hypnotic and irresistible, the *Allegretto* was encored – right then and there, between movements! – at the premiere in 1813.**



Bavarian soldiers at the old University in Vienna on 8 December 1813. Giving their services in the national cause, and playing in the orchestra under Beethoven (which would normally have been beneath their dignity), were numerous eminent musicians, including Salieri, Spohr, Mayseder and Schuppanzigh. Also in the program, besides Johann Mälzel's latest novelty, the Mechanical Trumpeter, playing a pair of marches, was the premiere of Beethoven's occasional piece *Wellington's Victory, or The Battle of Vittoria*. Given the patriotic nature of the occasion and the heightened public enthusiasm aroused by the turning tide of the war, applause for the latter work, it was reported, 'rose to the point of ecstasy'. However, the *Allegretto* of Beethoven's new symphony was also an immediate popular success, being encored at the first performance and again when the concert was repeated four days later.

If the long slow introduction to the symphony seems to be groping its way through darkness, this is because the strange tussle of tonalities described by Robert Simpson is already under way. Immediately after the opening chord of A major, a simple, insinuating oboe melody begins pulling in a different direction. The orchestra unites as if to set the music back on course but ends up on yet another tack, and the symphony for the moment is lost in a limbo of three juxtaposed tonalities – the intended A major, the oboe's C major, and the orchestra's F major. The alien keys so permeate the symphony as a whole that they seem to be different dimensions rather than different keys, like planets in another galaxy.

The alien keys are less remote in the *Allegretto*, which is in A minor; but their appearances, while less outlandish, are nonetheless magical. When Beethoven unexpectedly launches the third movement in F, we find that A has suddenly become a foreign key in its own symphony. And when the scherzo first modulates from F to A, the latter key suffers a crisis of identity because in this context it cannot sound like itself and must masquerade as an element of D major – until the central trio section comes to its aid, resplendent in that very key.

Once the scherzo has ended, as it began, in F, only the finale remains to restore A as the rightful home key. The most forceful means are thus required to make the alien C and F again sound as remote as they did at the beginning. Hence one of the most stunning and vehement finales in all of Beethoven, thanks, in Simpson's view, to the limitless energy generated by this dramatic new, 'progressive' use of tonality – a procedure which foreshadows techniques to be exploited decades later by Gustav Mahler and Carl Nielsen (though we

the 'apotheosis of  
the dance'

RICHARD WAGNER

'Music is the wine  
which inspires us  
to new acts of  
generation, and  
I am the Bacchus  
who presses out  
this glorious wine  
to make mankind  
spiritually drunk.'

BEETHOVEN

may recall hearing the first hints of it back in the introduction to Beethoven's Symphony No.1).

For all its ostensibly conventional form, the Seventh remains one of Beethoven's compelling and exhilarating works, a life-affirming celebration of physical vigour and spiritual delight. While Beethoven was not one to reveal himself in his music, there could be a happy coincidence in the probability that his famous letter to the unidentified 'Immortal Beloved' (now thought likely to have been Antonie von Brentano) was written within weeks, or even days, of the completion of the Seventh Symphony.

ANTHONY CANE © 2001

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the symphony in 1939 under Malcolm Sargent and most recently in 2014 conducted by David Robertson.



## sydney symphony orchestra

**David Robertson**  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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KEITH SAUNDERS

## **Vladimir Ashkenazy** *conductor*

---

One of the few artists to combine a successful career as a pianist and conductor, Vladimir Ashkenazy inherited his musical gift from both sides of his family: his father David Ashkenazy was a professional light music pianist and his mother Evstolia (née Plotnova) was daughter of a chorusmaster in the Russian Orthodox church.

He first came to prominence in the 1955 Chopin Competition in Warsaw and as winner of the 1956 Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels. Since then he has built an extraordinary career, not only as one of the most outstanding pianists of the 20th century, but as an artist whose creative life encompasses a vast range of activities and continues to offer inspiration to music-lovers across the world.

A regular visitor to Sydney since his Australian debut, as a pianist, in 1969, Vladimir Ashkenazy subsequently conducted subscription concerts and composer festivals for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and from 2009 to 2013 he was Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor. Highlights of his tenure included the Mahler Odyssey project, concert performances of Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* and annual international touring.

Conducting has formed the larger part of his activities for the past 30 years and he appears regularly with major orchestras around the world. He continues his longstanding relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra, which appointed

him Conductor Laureate in 2000, and he is also Conductor Laureate of both the Iceland and NHK symphony orchestras. He has recently stepped down from the Music Directorship of the EUYO, a post he has held with great satisfaction for 15 years, and he previously held the post of Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. He maintains strong links with other major orchestras including the Cleveland Orchestra (where he was formerly Principal Guest Conductor) and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (Chief Conductor and Music Director 1988–96).

Ashkenazy maintains his devotion to the piano, these days mostly in the recording studio. His comprehensive discography includes the Grammy award-winning Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, Rautavaara's Piano Concerto No.3 (which he commissioned), Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, Rachmaninoff Transcriptions and Beethoven's Diabelli Variations. Milestone collections include *Ashkenazy: 50 Years on Decca* – a 50-CD box set (2013) and his vast catalogue of Rachmaninoff's piano music, which also includes all of his recordings as a conductor of the composer's orchestral music (2014).

Beyond his performing schedule, Vladimir Ashkenazy has also been involved in many TV projects, inspired by his passionate drive to ensure that serious music retains a platform in the mainstream media and is available to as broad an audience as possible.



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## DAVID ROBERTSON

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Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra 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 SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales. International tours to Europe, Asia and the USA – including three visits to China – have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The orchestra'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. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013. The orchestra's history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures

such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky.

The SSO's award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, developing audiences and engaging the participation of young people.

The orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Lee Bracegirdle, Gordon Kerry, Mary Finsterer, Nigel Westlake and Georges Lentz, and the orchestra's recordings of music by Brett Dean have been released on both the BIS and SSO Live labels.

Other releases on the SSO Live label, established in 2006, include performances with Alexander Lazarev, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Vladimir Ashkenazy and David Robertson. In 2010–11 the orchestra made concert recordings of the complete Mahler symphonies with Ashkenazy, and has also released recordings of Rachmaninoff and Elgar orchestral works on the Exton/Triton labels, as well as numerous recordings on ABC Classics.

This is the third year of David Robertson's tenure as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

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*Umberto Clerici has been Principal Cello of the SSO since 2014. He has performed as a soloist with orchestras around the world and served as principal cello at the Teatro Regio in Turin in his native Italy before joining the SSO. Umberto's chair is generously supported by Garry and Shiva Rich. Their son Samuel recently started learning the cello and aspires to join the SSO one day.*



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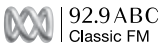


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