

2016
SEASON



**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director



CHANNEL CROSSINGS
Ravel and Vaughan Williams

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Thursday 23 June 1.30pm

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Friday 24 June 8pm

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Saturday 25 June 2pm



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Channel Crossings

Ravel & Vaughan Williams

BAX Tintagel
RAVEL Piano Concerto in G
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS A London Symphony
 [Symphony No.2]
John Wilson conductor • **Jonathan Biss** piano

Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 23 Jun 1.30pm
 Emirates Metro Series
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Sat 25 Jun 2pm
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Colin Currie percussion

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry Brown".

Barry Brown

Emirates' Divisional Vice President
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**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

THURSDAY 23 JUNE, 1.30PM

EMIRATES METRO SERIES

FRIDAY 24 JUNE, 8PM

GREAT CLASSICS

SATURDAY 25 JUNE, 2PM

.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

CHANNEL CROSSINGS

John Wilson *conductor*

Jonathan Biss *piano*

ARNOLD BAX (1883–1953)

Tintagel

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

Piano Concerto in G

Allegramente

Adagio assai

Presto

INTERVAL

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)

Symphony No.2, A London Symphony

Lento – Allegro risoluto

Lento

Scherzo. Nocturne (Allegro vivace)

Andante con moto



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.....
Estimated durations:

12 minutes, 25 minutes,
20-minute interval, 45 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 3.20pm (Thursday),
9.50pm (Friday), 3.50pm (Saturday).



Principal Partner



Tintagel on the Cornish Coast – watercolour by American landscape artist William Trost Richards (1833–1905).

Channel Crossings

This concert hops the English Channel (twice!) with music from England and France – all three pieces composed between the two world wars in the period 1914–1931. Historically, the Channel has separated two countries, sometimes at war, sometimes in alliance against common enemies, but never far from rivalry.

If you know the music of Arnold Bax, his name might bring to mind the romantic appeal of Celtic culture. (Bax was London-born but felt more at home in Ireland.) Ralph Vaughan Williams might make you think of dreamy English pastoralism – *The Lark Ascending*, perhaps. Maurice Ravel could be the poster boy for French sophistication and wit: his music is as ‘dapper’ as his dress. At first glance, England and France at the beginning of the 20th century seem as separate stylistically as they are geographically.

And yet there are aspects of this concert that ‘bridge’ the channel. In both England and France the early 20th century saw an emergence from Austro-German musical influences, and even a little cross-pollination. Bax, while studying at the Royal Academy of Music, had ‘wallowed’ in the music of Wagner, but he’d also quietly studied the music of the (unapproved) Debussy. Vaughan Williams had inherited the great English choral tradition via Hubert Parry at the Royal College of Music, but when he was in his thirties he embarked on an intensive period of study with Ravel in Paris. Even though Ravel claimed Vaughan Williams as his only student ‘who does not write my music’, RVW nonetheless credited Ravel with rescuing him from the ‘heavy contrapuntal Teutonic manner’. The influence of Debussy, too, has been detected in the opening notes of *A London Symphony*.

Both the English pieces in this concert reveal the spirit of ‘impressionism’ – an ear for colour and effect and evocative ‘painting’ in sound. There are stories and images in the background of both *Tintagel* and *A London Symphony*. Ravel adopts the ‘pure’ classical form of the solo piano concerto and puts a nifty French twist on the traditions of Mozart.

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Arnold Bax (1883–1893)

Tintagel

Arnold Bax was born in London but 'the Celt within' him secretly wanted to be Irish. He was fascinated by Irish romance, mythology and landscape and by the Irish-Romantic literary movement known as the 'Celtic Twilight'. (He wrote poetry under the name Dermot O'Byrne.) This emerges in the luxuriant sound and poetic melancholy of his music, evoking a nostalgic grandeur. He wrote seven symphonies between 1922 and 1939, but it's the earlier symphonic poems – 'brazen romantic' pieces – that are more likely to be performed, and of these the best known is *Tintagel* (1919). (It was first recorded by Eugene Goossens in 1928 and since then has become Bax's most-often recorded composition.)

Bax's description, written for a performance in Leeds in 1922, places the music at the 'castle-crowned cliff of Tintagel, and more especially of the wide distances of the Atlantic as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny but not windless summer day'. After a shimmering introduction, the brass play a theme representing the ruined castle, 'now so ancient and weather-worn as to seem an emanation of the rock upon which it is built'. This theme is worked to a climax and is then followed by a long melody for strings, suggesting the serene expanse of the ocean.

In the central part of the piece a 'more restless mood' begins to assert itself – as if the sea were rising – bringing thoughts of the 'many passionate and tragic incidents in the tales of King Arthur and King Mark'. It is this emotional core, rather than the pictorial frame, that provides the real clue to the music. A wailing chromatic figure gradually dominates the music, assuming (about five minutes into the piece) the shape of the 'sick Tristan' motif from Wagner's tragic opera *Tristan und Isolde* – 'whose fate was...intimately connected with Tintagel'. This plaintive and wistful motif is played by an oboe and a violin. Soon after there is a great climax, suddenly subsiding, followed by a passage conveying 'the impression of immense waves slowly gathering force until they smash themselves upon the impregnable rocks'. The sea theme in the strings is heard again and the piece ends as it began 'with a picture of the castle still proudly fronting the sun and wind of centuries'.

And yet – despite these pictorial elements – Bax claimed that this symphonic poem was 'only in the broadest sense program music'. His intention is to give *impressions* and bring literary associations to mind rather than to convey a detailed narrative or scenario. In fact the *Tintagel* inspiration was more complicated than the simple evocation of romantic legends.



UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE - UIG - BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



◀ Harriet Cohen

Bax had spent six weeks at Tintagel in the summer of 1917. With him was the glamorous pianist Harriet Cohen, and his affair with her had reached the point where he was faced with choosing between her and his family (he chose his pianist-muse). *Tintagel* is dedicated to 'Tania' (that is, Harriet), and the underlying themes of the music, including the quotation from *Tristan und Isolde*, may well reflect Bax's own emotional turmoil.

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA © 2009

Tintagel calls for three flutes (doubling piccolo), three oboes (doubling cor anglais), three clarinets (doubling bass clarinet) and three bassoons (doubling contrabassoon); four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; harp and strings.

The SSO first performed *Tintagel* in 1945 in a British Music Festival conducted by Percy Code, and most recently in 2009, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Maurice Ravel

Piano Concerto in G

Allegramente

Adagio assai

Presto

Jonathan Biss *piano*

Ravel's Piano Concerto in G begins with the crack of a whip, startling the piccolo into action. The scene seems set for a race – or is it a circus? But there is no question as to the spirit of this concerto. Before a minute has passed, each of its chief characteristics has made a fleeting appearance: joyous brilliance, melancholy lyricism, lively virtuosity, classical economy, evanescent orchestral colour, a hint of American jazz and a trace of Ravel's native Basque country.

Ravel gave many interviews about this concerto, including a famous one with London's *Daily Telegraph*. At times his statements seem contradictory, but several points are made again and again. His wish was to write a 'genuine concerto' – a brilliant work, highlighting the virtuosity of the soloist without claiming to be profound or aiming at dramatic effects.

Ravel was, in part, reacting to the kind of *symphonic* concerto 'conceived not for but against the piano' (here he mentions Brahms). He was also tired of combative concertos in which the piano is pitted against the orchestra, concertos in which there must be a victor and vanquished, or at least bloodshed, for the audience to be satisfied. Instead he took as his musical guides Mozart and Saint-Saëns.

Mozart is present not only in the collaborative relationship between the soloist and orchestra, but in Ravel's use of the classically proportioned orchestra, placing the woodwinds in high relief, often with music as virtuosic as the soloist's. Saint-Saëns emerges in Ravel's neoclassical forms and in the way the musical materials seem calculated to delight.

Also in the spirit of Mozart, Ravel had intended the concerto for his own use, the vehicle for an ambitious world tour. Unlike Mozart, Ravel was no keyboard virtuoso and he wore himself out trying to build the necessary technique (he was in his fifties). But he had also, quite early on, approached pianist Marguerite Long at a dinner party telling her, point blank, that he was writing a concerto for her. In the end it was Long who gave the premiere (14 January 1932, Paris) and subsequently toured the concerto through Europe, Ravel conducting.

Two sources are claimed for the frolicsome beginning of the **first movement**. A Basque-country friend recognised in it

Keynotes

RAVEL

Born Ciboure, 1875

Died Paris 1937

Ravel was born to Swiss and Basque parents in a French village near Spain. He was the best-dressed of all the French composers of his day, and he delighted in collecting mechanical toys and exotic ornaments for his home. ('This room,' he would say to his guests, 'is all fake Japanese!') His music shows a corresponding enthusiasm for jewel-like surface detail, delicacy of expression and exotic effect. As a boy he showed talent as a pianist, although his father had to bribe him to practise and it was as a composer that he made his greatest contribution.

PIANO CONCERTO IN G

Ravel's Piano Concerto in G was completed in 1931. Even though he was out of practice, he'd intended to play it himself. That didn't happen, but he did achieve his other goal – to write a concerto that would be brilliant rather than profound. Many musical influences race by in this concerto, from folk colours and hints of jazz, to the classical traditions of the past. The slow movement, which begins with a long, serene passage for the soloist alone, was closely modelled on a piece by Mozart. The outer movements are exhilarating, and Ravel allows everyone a moment in the spotlight, giving the winds, especially, important solos to play.



an idea from a long-abandoned 'Basque rhapsody'. Ravel maintained that the theme came to him in 1928 'on a train between Oxford and London'. Nonetheless, this theme, played first by the piccolo and then by the trumpet, does have the character of an old French folk dance.

In rapid succession Ravel introduces four more themes: the cor anglais strolls across the border into languid Spanish strumming from the piano, and the clarinet introduces the first of a series of jazz-inspired gestures. The development of this thematic material is capricious and buoyant, with vivid contrasts. Ravel may not have been much of a pianist and little better as a conductor, but he was a virtuoso of the orchestra. The distinctive qualities of high bassoon, muted trumpet, the plaintive cor anglais, and subtle effects from the percussion – in this concerto the orchestra is featured as much as the piano. Indeed, the harp takes the first cadenza and the soloist must wait still further for the woodwinds to demonstrate their brilliance before the piano's own cadenza. When this arrives there is no trace of thundering chords or dramatic effects. This is discreet virtuosity – fiendishly difficult, not least because of its subtlety.



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Ravel had promised Marguerite Long that the concerto he was writing for her would end *pianissimo* and with trills. When she received the score, just two months before the scheduled premiere, she immediately turned to the last page to look for the *pianissimo* and the trills: 'they had become a *fortissimo* and percussive ninths!'

The slow **second movement** begins with piano alone, with one of the most expressive and finely crafted melodies Ravel ever wrote. As Long observed, it 'flows so easily'; there's no evidence of the painstaking effort that went into sculpting this perfectly poised music, modelled, we are told, directly on the slow movement of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. 'How I worked over it bar by bar!' claimed Ravel. 'It nearly killed me!'

Although the music is in a major key (E), the mood is coolly wistful and melancholy. The designated tempo is hypnotically slow (Ravel and Long took it faster in their performances) but Ravel creates a feeling of impulse by superimposing a stately sarabande rhythm in the right hand above a slow waltz in the left. Once the orchestra enters, the mournful tones of the cor anglais take pride of place in a tenderly poetic dialogue that leads to the promised *pianissimo* trills, at the close of the *second* movement.

The **third movement** – a whirlwind *presto* barely four minutes long – is launched with a drum roll and a fanfare. We are back in the world of races and circuses – the world of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and Satie's *Parade*. It's also the world of Gershwin's syncopation and Prokofiev's perpetual motion. The music plays out a game, says Long, in which two themes are pursued between soloist and orchestra. The *Presto* is more overtly jazzy than the first movement, with piercing clarinet flourishes, sliding trombones and a boisterous atmosphere. Through all this the nimble piano darts and weaves until the dazzling movement is brought to a sudden and abrupt end, exactly as it began.

YVONNE FRINDLE © 2000/2009

The orchestra for Ravel's Piano Concerto in G calls for flute, piccolo, oboe, cor anglais, clarinet, E flat clarinet and two bassoons; two horns, trumpet and trombone; timpani and percussion, harp and strings.

The SSO gave the first performance of this concerto by an ABC orchestra with pianist Peter Cooper and conductor Joseph Post in 1953, and our most recent performance was in 2010 with Louis Lortie and Pinchas Steinberg conducting.

**'How I worked over
it bar by bar! It
nearly killed me!'**

RAVEL

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Symphony No.2, *A London Symphony*

Lento – Allegro risoluto

Lento

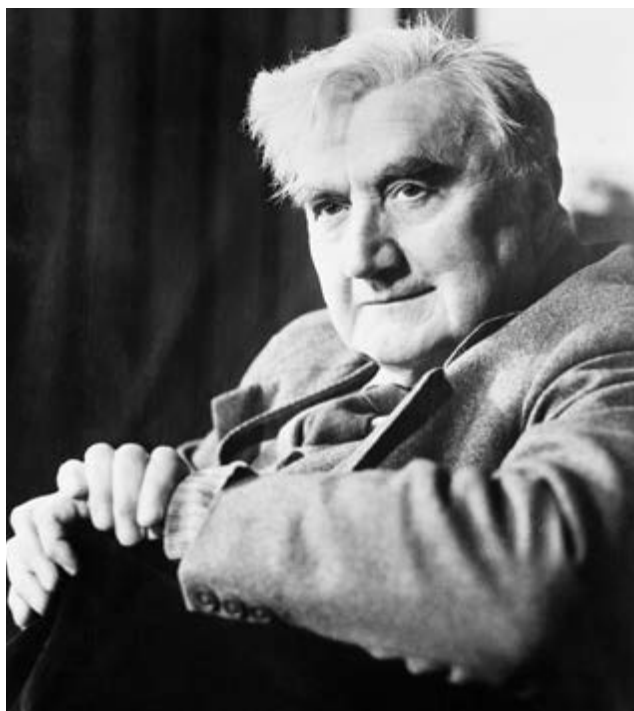
Scherzo. Nocturne (Allegro vivace)

Andante con moto

To run down the Thames so is to run one's hand over the pages in the book of England from end to end...England and the Kingdom, Britain and the Empire, the old prides and the old devotions glide abeam, astern, sink down upon the horizon, pass – pass. The river passes – London passes, England passes...

Thus ends H.G. Wells' novel *Tono-Bungay*, a work which Vaughan Williams said inspired the sublime coda at the end of his *London Symphony*. As Wells captured the specific sights and sounds of the city while making a larger point about the nation as a whole, so *A London Symphony* employs unmistakable musical reminiscences of London as a starting point which then transcends its specific references to place.

Though filled with the sounds and images of London – the chimes of Big Ben, the jingling of hansom cabs, fog-banks drifting down the Thames – *A London Symphony* is a work not so much about a city as about humanity itself. In this regard,



Keynotes

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Born Gloucestershire, 1872

Died London, 1958

His father was a vicar, his mother descended from Josiah Wedgwood, an uncle was Lord Chief Justice, and Charles Darwin a great uncle. RVW himself was a mild-mannered, mystical, agnostic Labour voter. At the Royal College of Music, Stokowski and Holst were friends, Stanford and Parry his teachers, as also later in Berlin and Paris were Bruch and Ravel. Like Bartók in Hungary, from 1900 onwards RVW found inspiration in his country's age-old folk music traditions. His major legacy is his nine symphonies, works of huge emotional span, from the pastoral third and fifth, to the dissonant wartime fourth and dramatic ninth. ('Ralph' is pronounced in the traditional way: rafe)

A LONDON SYMPHONY

Vaughan Williams' second symphony was premiered in 1914 but he continued to revise it until 1920. It offers a vision of an Edwardian London, sometimes criticised as pompous and noisy, but also praised for the vividness of its musical impressions. It's perhaps most helpful to keep in mind that RVW himself thought of it as a *symphony by a Londoner*, as opposed to a symphony simply describing London.

it is perhaps significant that while English conductors such as Sir Adrian Boult and Sir John Barbirolli have always been closely identified with this work, recent recordings of it have been made by Europeans like Bernard Haitink and Americans such as Leonard Slatkin.

The symphony is not really 'program music' as such – at least not in the sense of a Berlioz or a Richard Strauss 'program'. Vaughan Williams himself referred to it as a 'Symphony by a Londoner' rather than a 'London Symphony'. Rather than program music, the symphony is a fascinating English version of musical impressionism. Only five years before its completion, Vaughan Williams had been a student of Ravel in Paris and had returned to England writing works which sounded, as a friend of Vaughan Williams so aptly described the G minor string quartet, as if Vaughan Williams 'had been having tea with Debussy'.

In *A London Symphony*, the spirit of impressionistic scene-painting and the deliberate evocation of 'mood' which Debussy and Ravel captured in music (as Monet had in painting) are clearly observable at the beginning and end of the piece. Indeed the opening bars of *A London Symphony* – based on a rising fourth played by the violas, cellos, basses and clarinets – despite their apparent 'Englishness', are actually an unconscious paraphrase of the opening of Debussy's *La Mer*. (In the incidental music for *The Wasps* two or three years earlier, Vaughan Williams had *consciously* quoted Debussy.) Similarly the music at the end of the symphony 'drifts away', as if the subject had been as much an idea as a physical reality.

But while ironically using French models for its depiction of an English scene, Vaughan Williams was nevertheless participating in what was becoming something of a tradition of musical depictions of London in the early part of the century. As the Empire began to crumble and as political developments in Europe pointed toward the end of an era, composers (who could not rely on television to do it for them) set out to document the sights and sounds of their national capital as they had known it.

Elgar began the trend with his *Cockaigne Overture* of 1901, and after Vaughan Williams completed *A London Symphony* just before the First World War, still more works followed, including Holst's *Hammersmith*, John Ireland's *London Overture*, and the two London Suites by Eric Coates. (Ironically, the trend may actually have been started by another Englishman, Frederick Delius, who wrote about the French capital in *Paris: The Song of a Great City* in 1899!)

...the spirit of
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But *A London Symphony* is richer in thematic and structural detail than any of Vaughan Williams' eight other works in the form (some indeed think it is too rich in detail!) and its affinity with other great works in the orchestral repertoire extends beyond French and English music. A less often acknowledged but no less significant parallel exists with Brahms's great C minor symphony (No.1), and by extension the symphonies of Beethoven as well.

Despite all the modal influences, *A London Symphony* basically opens its first movement in G minor and over the course of its four large movements works its way through all manner of daring harmonic deviations to the triumphant establishment of G major. (Brahms and Beethoven do a similar thing between C minor and C major in their most celebrated symphonies.) And then there is the opening of the final movement, where Vaughan Williams' massive orchestral flourish is followed by the 'big tune' – a march-like anthem which sweeps all before it in exactly the same way as occurs in the finales of Brahms's First Symphony and Beethoven's Symphony No.9.

Given this 'Germanic' context, it's particularly interesting (and again ironic) to note that, following the completion of *A London Symphony* in 1913, no English publisher was interested in the work, and so Vaughan Williams sent the only copy of his manuscript to Breitkopf & Härtel in Germany. When the political situation darkened and it seemed that war was inevitable (and the return of the score impossible), Vaughan Williams himself, George Butterworth, Geoffrey Toye and Edward Dent, set about reconstructing the score from the orchestral parts, and this manuscript in four different hand-writings is now kept in the British Library.

It was not to be the last version of the score, however, as the symphony was revised again and again over the next decades – the most significant revision occurring in 1920 – as Vaughan Williams characteristically did with his most loved scores, such as this one and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In the case of *A London Symphony*, Vaughan Williams conducted it himself on many occasions throughout his long life, and his love of the symphony may also have been prompted by its association with his great friend, the gifted composer George Butterworth, who was killed in the War only two years after its premiere.

Vaughan Williams wrote:

*One of my most grateful memories of George is connected with my **London Symphony**; indeed I owe its whole idea to him. I remember very well how the idea originated. He had*

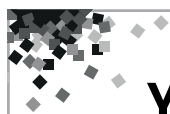
been sitting with us one evening and...as he was getting up to go, he said in his characteristically abrupt way: 'You know, you ought to write a symphony.' From that moment the idea of a symphony – a thing I had always declared I would never attempt – dominated my mind. I showed the sketches to George bit by bit as they were finished...

[Interestingly, Vaughan Williams didn't seem to regard the choral *Sea Symphony*, which preceded *A London Symphony* by four years, as a symphony at all!]

The **first movement** of *A London Symphony* begins with a slow prelude which leads into a vigorous Allegro suggesting the noise and bustle of London but – as Vaughan Williams said – 'with its always underlying calm'. The noise of the city is suggested by the principal theme, which is announced by the higher strings and woodwinds in unison and the movement as a whole adheres to an elaborate version of traditional sonata form. The development is unusually rich and a wide range of subsidiary themes is employed. The Westminster Chimes are intoned on the harp and clarinet and there are other passages suggesting the quiet of London's parks and churches.

In the **Lento slow movement**, the opening of low muted strings underpins the evocative main melody on cor anglais. Vaughan Williams described the movement as 'Bloomsbury Square on a November afternoon', while George Butterworth called it 'an idyll of grey skies and secluded byways...the feeling of the music is remote and mystical'.

In the **Scherzo**, the bustle returns, but this time it is a nocturnal scene. Beginning in a modal D minor, wisps of themes swirl around in a virtuosic orchestral display depicting the Westminster Embankment at night 'with distant sounds of The Strand', as the composer himself described it. In the C major trio,



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the sounds of mouth-organ and harmonica, and a sense of Cockney charm are evoked, before a darker mood enters.

An intense outburst from the full orchestra ushers in the **finale**, with its march theme (suggestive of beggars on a hunger march, according to one account) and an *Allegro* in E minor. The theme from the opening movement returns toward the end and other earlier material is also introduced before the coda leaves London passing behind.

MARTIN BUZACOTT © 1997

Vaughan William's *London Symphony* calls for three flutes (two doubling piccolo), two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, two trumpets, two cornets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and a large percussion section; harp and strings.

Geoffrey Toye conducted the first performance of *A London Symphony* with the Queen's Hall Orchestra at the Queen's Hall in London on 27 March 1914.

The SSO first performed the symphony in 1946, conducted by Eugene Goossens, and most recently in 1991, conducted by Vernon Handley. A planned SSO performance of the original version of the symphony in 2009 was thwarted by the untimely death of conductor Richard Hickox (1948–2008).



David Robertson

Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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Please address all correspondence to the Publications Editor:
Email: program.editor@sydneyssymphony.com

Clocktower Square,
Argyle Street,
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SYMPHONY SERVICES INTERNATIONAL

Suite 2, Level 5, 1 Oxford St, Darlinghurst 2010
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Telephone: +61 2 9921 5353 Fax: +61 2 9449 6053
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MORE MUSIC

ON THE SEA

Bax's *Tintagel* begins the thematic compilation *The Sea in Music*. Also included are selections from *La Mer* by Debussy (echoed in the opening notes of Vaughan Williams' *A London Symphony*), *Seascape* by Frank Bridge and two of the Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* by his student Benjamin Britten, a movement from Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* overture and his *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*, and Ravel's *Une barque sur l'océan*, as well as highlights from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*.
NAXOS 8.578269

ARNOLD BAX

To hear more of the symphonic poems of Arnold Bax, look for David Lloyd-Jones's recording with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. *Tintagel* is followed by *November Woods*, *The Tale the Pine Trees Knew*, *Garden of Fand* and *Happy Forest*.
NAXOS 8.557599

For the symphonies, look for Vernon Handley and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra.
CHANDOS 10122

RAVEL PIANO CONCERTOS

Recent SSO guest artist Pierre-Laurent Aimard recorded both the Ravel piano concertos with the Cleveland Orchestra and Pierre Boulez. The five movements of *Miroirs* for solo piano fill out the album.
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 477 8770

Or from Decca's Virtuoso series, try Alicia De Larrocha in performances with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Lawrence Foster. As a bonus you'll get her recording of Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* with Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos conducting.
DECCA 478 6966

A LONDON SYMPHONY

Among recent recordings of *A London Symphony* is the one by Christopher Seaman and the Rochester Philharmonic. It's paired with RVW's *Serenade to Music* for 16 solo singers.
HARMONIA MUNDI 807567

For a broader selection, there's *An Introduction to Ralph Vaughan Williams*, with performances by the London Symphony Orchestra and Bryden Thomson. *A London Symphony* is programmed with *The Lark Ascending* (violinist Michael Davis) and *Fantasia on Greensleeves*, and the overture to *The Wasps*, performed by the London Philharmonic and Vernon Handley.
CHANDOS 2028

For the original (hour-long) version of *A London Symphony*, seek out the recording by Richard Hickox and the London Symphony Orchestra.
CHANDOS 9902

JOHN WILSON

You can hear John Wilson conduct other music by Arnold Bax and Ralph Vaughan Williams on the album *Made in Britain*, which he recorded with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. The attractive selection of pieces also makes an ideal introduction to British orchestral music, with Vaughan Williams' *A Lark Ascending* (violinist James Clark), Walton's *Scapino* comedy overture, Elgar's *Salut d'amour* and Bax's *Happy Forest* included in the program.
AVIE 2194

JONATHAN BISS

Jonathan Biss is recording the complete Beethoven sonatas, with five volumes currently available. The most recent release begins with Op.2 No.3 in C major before jumping to the other end of Beethoven's sonata output with No.25 in G (Op.79), No.27 in E minor (Op.90) and No.28 in A (Op.101).
MEYER MEDIA MM16030

For a full discography visit www.jonathanbiss.com/store

Broadcast Diary

June–July



92.9 ABC
Classic FM

abc.net.au/classic

Tuesday 28 June, 1pm

CHANNEL CROSSINGS

John Wilson conductor

Jonathan Biss piano

Bax, Ravel, Vaughan Williams

SSO Radio

Selected SSO performances, as recorded by the ABC, are available on demand:
sydneyphilharmonic.com/SSO_radio



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 12 July, 6pm

Musicians and staff of the SSO talk about the life of the orchestra and forthcoming concerts. Hosted by Andrew Bukenya.

finemusicfm.com



SIM CANETTY-CLARKE

John Wilson *conductor*

English conductor John Wilson is known for his vivid interpretations and is applauded for the rich and colourful sounds he draws from orchestras in repertoire ranging from the core classical to the 20th century. An outstanding communicator and a recognised builder of audiences, he has developed long-term affiliations with many of the major British orchestras. This year he took up the post of Associate Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He is also Principal Conductor of the Royal Northern Sinfonia and of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Dublin.

Highlights of the 2015–16 season include the continuation of his Vaughan Williams symphony cycle with the Philharmonia Orchestra, concerts with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Royal Northern Sinfonia, and a performance and recording of Copland's *Organ Symphony* with the BBC Philharmonic.

John Wilson made his operatic debut in 2010 with Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore* at Opera North, and with the Philharmonia Orchestra he has conducted concert performances of *The Merry Widow* (Lehár) and *Die Fledermaus* (Johann Strauss II). He has worked with some of the world's finest singers, including Sir Thomas Allen, Joyce DiDonato, Simon Keenlyside and Renée Fleming and later this year he will make his Glyndebourne Opera debut.

He has a catalogue of over 40 recordings, including Elgar's *Spirit of England* and *With Proud Thanksgiving* (Philharmonia Orchestra and the London Symphony Chorus), and an album of Copland ballet suites (BBC Philharmonic).

Born in Gateshead, John Wilson studied composition and conducting at the Royal College of Music, where he was taught by Joseph Horowitz and Neil Thomson, and where he won all the major conducting prizes. In 2011 he was made a Fellow of the RCM. In 1994 he formed his own orchestra, the John Wilson Orchestra, dedicated to performing film music of Hollywood's golden age. As well as making extensive annual tours of the UK and appearing frequently in radio and television broadcasts, the John Wilson Orchestra performs at the BBC Proms, appearing twice in 2015 with programs featuring songs popularised by Frank Sinatra and a Bernstein retrospective.

Last week John Wilson made his SSO debut conducting a program of highlights from classic film scores.



BENJAMIN EALOVBEA

Jonathan Biss

piano

American pianist Jonathan Biss shares his deep musical and intellectual curiosity with classical music lovers in the concert hall and beyond; in addition to performing a full schedule of concerts, he has spent nine summers at the Marlboro Music Festival and has written extensively on music, including his best-selling e-book, *Beethoven's Shadow*. A faculty member of his alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music, since 2010, he led the first 'massive open online course' (MOOC) offered by a classical music conservatory, *Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*.

Last year Jonathan Biss launched his latest Beethoven project, *Beethoven/5*, for which the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra commissioned five composers – including Brett Dean – to write new piano concertos, each inspired by a Beethoven piano concerto. He is currently recording the complete Beethoven piano sonatas, releasing the fifth volume earlier this year. As part of his project *Schumann: Under the Influence*, he recorded the Schumann and Dvořák Piano Quintets with the Elias String Quartet and published the e-book *A Pianist Under the Influence*.

As an advocate for new music, he has commissioned *Lunaire Variations* by David Ludwig, *Interlude II* by Leon Kirchner, *Wonderer* by Lewis Spratlan, and *Three Pieces for Piano* and a concerto by Bernard Rands, which he

premiered with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has also premiered a piano quintet by William Bolcom.

Jonathan Biss represents the third generation in a family of musicians. His grandmother, Raya Garbousova, was the cellist for whom Samuel Barber composed his Cello Concerto and his parents are Miriam Fried, a distinguished violinist and teacher, and violist and violinist Paul Biss. He studied at Indiana University with Evelyne Brancart and at Curtis with Leon Fleisher. At 20 he made his New York recital debut at the 92nd Street Y's Tisch Center for the Arts and his New York Philharmonic debut under Kurt Masur, and he was the first American chosen to participate in the BBC's New Generation Artist program.

His most recent appearance in Sydney was in 2013, when he performed a Mozart concerto and gave a recital of Beethoven sonatas. On this tour he also performs with the MSO.

www.jonathanbiss.com

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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, the SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

Well on its way to becoming the premier orchestra of the Asia Pacific region, the SSO has toured China on four occasions, and in 2014 won the arts category in the Australian Government's inaugural Australia-China Achievement Awards, recognising ground-breaking work in nurturing the cultural and artistic relationship between the two nations.

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 Learning and Engagement 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 commissions. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Lee Bracegirdle, Gordon Kerry, Mary Finsterer, Nigel Westlake, Paul Stanhope and Georges Lentz, and 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 conducted by Alexander Lazarev, Sir Charles Mackerras and David Robertson, as well as the complete Mahler symphonies conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

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

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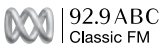
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