



**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of

Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

2016
SEASON



**INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN
RECITAL** *September–October*

PRESENTED BY
THEME AND VARIATIONS PIANO SERVICES

VOLUME 2

Nelson Freire in Recital
MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 7PM

Jayson Gillham in Recital
MONDAY 24 OCTOBER 7PM





**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL

PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS PIANO SERVICES
AT CITY RECITAL HALL

VOLUME 2: SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER

Program Contents

NELSON FREIRE

**plays transcriptions of music by Bach,
Beethoven, Debussy and Chopin**

Monday 26 September

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JAYSON GILLHAM

**plays Bach, Handel, Beethoven
and Schumann**

Monday 24 October

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This program book for International Pianists in Recital contains notes for the second two recitals in the 2016 series. Copies will be available at every performance, but we invite you to keep your program and bring it with you to each recital. Please share with your companion.

PRESENTING PARTNER



Principal Partner

WELCOME



Dear Music Lovers

We are again delighted to present the SSO's International Pianists in Recital series for 2016. It is with great pride that we welcome these fine musicians to the City Recital Hall stage.

At Theme & Variations Piano Services we aim to satisfy the musical wish of every pianist with whom we work, amateur and professional. Specialising in tuning, servicing, restoration and sales for over 30 years, we live and breathe pianos around the clock. Having catered for some of the finest pianists in the world, at many of Australia's top performance venues, we aim to deliver the highest possible quality of service to every customer.

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It is a privilege for us to look after this magnificent instrument you see before you. With an experienced and highly qualified team dedicated to bringing out the best in every piano, we are honoured to be the Steinway Accredited Service Agents for Australasia and to be the technicians of choice for many major schools, venues and institutions.

I am constantly amazed at the beauty that can emerge from a piano in the hands of a great pianist. I look forward to sharing this experience with you and I congratulate the Sydney Symphony Orchestra once again for bringing together such fine, inspirational musicians



Ara Vartoukian OAM
Director, Theme & Variations
Piano Services
Concert Technician





**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS
MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER, 7PM

CITY RECITAL HALL ANGEL PLACE

NELSON FREIRE IN RECITAL

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF MUSIC BY JS BACH

Alexander Siloti (1863–1945)
Organ Prelude in G minor, BWV 535

Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)
Two chorale preludes

Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr, BWV 639
Komm, Gott, Schöpfer! BWV 667

Myra Hess (1890–1965)
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Sonata No.31 in A flat, Op.110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo
Allegro molto –
Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga (Allegro ma non troppo)

Pre-concert talk by David Garrett
at 6.15pm in the First Floor
Reception Room.

Visit sydney-symphony.com/talk-bios
for speaker biographies.

Estimated durations:

18 minutes, 22 minutes,
20-minute interval, 17 minutes,
28 minutes

The recital will conclude at
approximately 9pm.

INTERVAL

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Children's Corner

Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum
Jimbo's Lullaby
Sérénade for the doll
The snow is dancing
The little shepherd
Golliwogg's cake-walk

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58

Allegro maestoso
Scherzo (molto vivace)
Largo
Finale (Presto non tanto)

PRESENTING PARTNER



Principal Partner

Nelson Freire in Conversation

MAT HENNEK



Nelson Freire is known as the connoisseur's pianist, a member of the most elite circle of top performers held back from global hype only by his own modesty. He is also known to hate giving interviews, an inauspicious attribute in any interview subject.

'It's true,' he says, adding sweetly, 'but I make an exception for you.'

'I'm not very talkative. And I don't like to speak about myself. I find it a little boring. And I don't know if I'm always saying what I want to say. Sometimes I'm asked something that I don't think about, and I have to invent an answer. And later, I'm not happy with it.'

There is something extraordinarily disarming about Freire's directness. We speak over the phone; it is January and he has just arrived in Paris from his home in Brazil, en route to Helsinki, Luxembourg and Leipzig for concertos. These will be followed by recitals in Berlin, Lisbon and Italy; a frantic schedule for anybody, but perhaps even more so for a 71 year old.

'It's quite a lot,' he agrees. 'And I've had a lot of long trips this season. I was in South Africa, and twice in China, and Abu Dabi, and of course Europe. Lots of travelling. I hate travel. Yesterday was ten hours of shaking.'

What does he do to survive?

'I pray,' says Freire. 'I pray!'

Does it help?

'Well, I am here now.'

There's no arguing with that.

born

Boa Esperança, a small town in Brazil

studied with

Nise Obino and Lucia Branco in Rio de Janeiro, where the whole family moved in search of better music teachers for the precociously talented 5-year-old Nelson

early success

At 12 was a finalist in the first International Piano Competition of Rio de Janeiro and was awarded a grant to study in Vienna; at 19 he was awarded the Dinu Lipatti Medal in London

big break

After his London debut at 23, *The Times* called him 'The young lion of the keyboard'; the following year he made his New York Philharmonic debut

in Australia

Makes a welcome return to Sydney after a gap of 20 years: his previous recital performances for the SSO were in 1994 and 1996

career celebration

He is the subject of the acclaimed 2003 documentary *Nelson Freire: A Man and his Music*, directed by João Moreira Salles

solo recordings

Include most recently a Bach recital album, solo music and concertos by Chopin, and Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto with Riccardo Chailly and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra – see [More Music](#) on page 17

It is 20 years since Freire was last in Australia; but he has good memories, he says, and looks forward to returning.

So perhaps we can talk about his recital program?

'For recital programs, I am a little bit unpredictable,' Freire warns. 'I may change it. I'm known for that.'

That turned out to be the case. Already in January he was beginning to rethink his program and it has changed twice, even while retaining its basic shape. Still beginning with Bach, for example, but not the fourth partita. Instead we have Bach as seen through the eyes of great pianists of the early 20th century. 'Bach is a composer I love very much, of course,' says Freire. 'I don't play any pieces by composers I don't like. I love all the composers in the program. If I don't love them, I cannot think of them.'

'It's not that I like to improvise,' Freire adds. 'I like to play what I feel like playing, and of course I like to do the best I can, both for me and for the audience. For the piece, and for the composer as well. I like to be honest, and many people don't understand that. These days you are supposed to know exactly what you are going to do, but in fact one never knows what's going to happen. Including programs.'

'You have to think of a lot of things, no? About the tonality, about the colour, and about historical connections – it has to make sense in many ways. It's a bit like a game. Like a menu. You have to have a little bit of freedom and inspiration.'

Tonality or key, in particular, can influence everything. With the Bach D major partita gone and a C minor work under consideration, Freire had decided against the C minor of Beethoven's Op.111 as 'too much' and was already contemplating the preceding sonata: 'Maybe Opus 110,' he says, 'which finishes with a fugue, which is inspired by Bach...and it's more tender and poetic.'

Chopin's fourth ballade would also go, although when we speak he's not exactly sure which Chopin will replace it. 'I have to take some risks!' he insists. 'But maybe you should wait and see.'

As it turns out, Chopin is now represented by his third sonata, revealing more of Bach's far-reaching influence in the 19th century. In many ways the final program, as it has morphed over the months, has become an even more tightly knit selection of music than the original.

'Hopefully you don't mind that. Or get angry. Hopefully that's not the case. Australians are nice people, aren't they?'

'You have to have a little bit of freedom and inspiration.'

**Transcriptions of Music by
J.S. Bach (1685–1750)
by Alexander Siloti, Ferruccio Busoni
and Myra Hess**

Why would a pianist – in joyful possession of the largest repertoire for a single musical instrument – make a transcription of music composed for another voice?

First, a transcription can be a learning experience (think of Bach reworking Vivaldi concertos as he mastered the Italian style). It can be a way of sharing large-scale music with an audience that might not otherwise hear it (Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven symphonies in the age before recordings). A transcription offers a chance to perform great music you admire, even though it wasn't written for your instrument (Brahms's piano version of Bach's violin chaconne, or Busoni's for that matter). It can allow an interpreter to put a personal stamp on the music (Busoni again). But, above all, transcription can be an act of illumination, revealing musical possibilities not apparent, or possibly not even available, in the sound world of the original.

Living as he did in a golden age of transcription, and himself an assiduous transcriber of others, Johann Sebastian Bach might have been puzzled by the opening question, but he would have understood the motivations driving the three pianist-composers in tonight's selection and very likely have enjoyed the results.

Alexander Siloti turns up in photos with Tchaikovsky and Liszt (he was a student of both, and of Nicolai Rubinstein) and with Rachmaninoff (his cousin, whom he also mentored). Although his name has since faded, he played a legendary role in Russian musical history as concert pianist, conductor, teacher and impresario, and was an influential teacher in New York, where he moved in 1922. He was also an impressive proponent of the art of musical transcription, rivalled only by Busoni and Godowsky. Compared to Godowsky's, Siloti's transcriptions are defined by sensitive fidelity to their sources rather than elaborate virtuosity.

With the Prelude in G minor (taken from the Prelude and Fugue, BWV 535) the recital begins in a sombre, meditative mood – echoing the expansive, sustained quality of the original organ sound. This free-form prelude then shifts into toccata mode, with Siloti exploiting the delicacy and the power of the piano.

‘[Bach] was one of the most prolific arrangers of his own and other pieces, especially as an organist. From him I learnt to recognise the truth that Good and Great Universal Music remains the same through whatever medium it is sounded. But also the second truth, that different mediums each have a different language (their own) in which this music again sounds somewhat differently.’

BUSONI

**Siloti (1863–1945)
Organ Prelude in
G minor, BWV 535**



Ferruccio Busoni was a concert pianist of monumental reputation. It's often forgotten that he was also a pioneering composer, but no one forgets that he was one of the most celebrated transcribers of his time, associated above all with the name of Bach. (His wife was once introduced at an American society function as 'Mrs Bach-Busoni'!)

In the preface to his collection of Ten Organ Chorale Preludes, Busoni emphasises that these are arrangements in *chamber-music style* as opposed to concert-arrangements, demanding not virtuosity of the fingers so much as supreme musical artistry. His motivation, he wrote, was 'the desire to interest a larger section of the public in these compositions which are so rich in art, feeling and fantasy'. Despite their surface simplicity, the preludes are not without challenges. In both the pensive *Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr* (I call to Thee, Lord, BWV 639) and the magisterial *Komm, Gott, Schöpfer* (Come, God, Creator! BWV 667) the performer must balance three independent strands: the firm bass line, the chorale, and the flowing, often florid, accompaniments – all on a single keyboard.

The first three transcriptions tonight have derived from Bach's organ music, and in turn the tradition of prelude and the Lutheran practice of congregational chorale singing. The fourth transcription, by English pianist **Myra Hess**, is of the famous chorale that ends both parts of Bach's Cantata 147, *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben* (Heart and Mouth and Deed and Life).

In the cantata, Bach surrounds the sung chorale with a flowing accompaniment from the violins and oboes – to ecstatic effect. Hess first heard it in 1920, at a rehearsal of the Bach Choir of London. She was deeply impressed by its beauty, and on returning home played it over and over, reading from the full score. Soon she was sharing it with friends and performing it as an encore. In 1926 she was persuaded to publish it. The much-loved transcription – so serene and transparent – became her signature tune, and she gave it a pet name, 'Jessie', after a review referred to it as 'Jessie, Joy of Man's Desiring'.

YVONNE FRINDLE

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA © 2016

Busoni (1866–1924) **Two chorale preludes**

*Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr
Komm, Gott, Schöpfer!*



Hess (1890–1965) **Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring** (from Cantata No.147)



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Sonata No.31 in A flat, Op.110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga (Allegro ma non troppo)

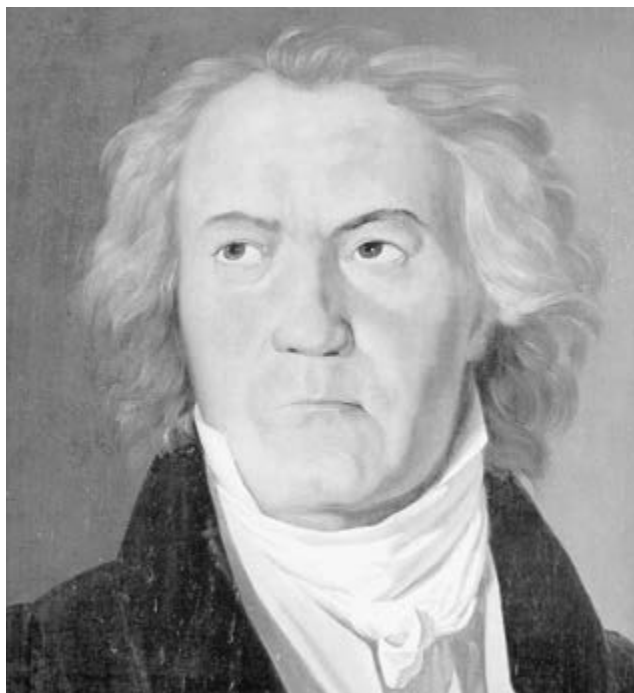
This sonata (begun during the summer of 1821 and published in early 1822) seems at odds with the popular image of Beethoven. While generally known to be irascible, and increasingly so in his later years, Beethoven in this work reveals little of the angst and capriciousness for which he was famed. Perhaps poor health (much of 1821 was lost to illness) created a sense of mortality and a need for a re-appraisal of his affairs. At times it is as if this often subtle sonata exhibits an attempt to ameliorate his outward lack of grace through genial composition.

What is evident, however, is Beethoven's interest in technical and musical disciplines, as well as his continuing development of the sonata away from a four-movement *fast – slow – fast – fast* structure. Thus, instead of a rondo finale we encounter an old-fashioned 'scholarly' fugue appended to a slow introduction in a way that brings to mind the prelude-and-fugue pairings of Bach. It is well documented that Beethoven often used preludes and fugues of J.S. Bach as a teaching guide, and the elaborate weavings of the fugal form played an increasingly important role in the compositions of the last decade of his life, as if, having mastered the Classical style, he was now attempting the role of master contrapuntalist.

The beginning of the sonata is almost understated – gentle and lyrical in a way that suggests a Mozart aria. From the very first phrase, the development of the theme seems related more to emotional intensity than physical or formal brilliance, though the latter two are also in evidence.

The brief scherzo-like second movement is distinctive in its use of contrasting dynamics, unexpected slackening of the tempo and measured silence. It sets out with a foursquare theme (in duple rather than triple time) but is driven by syncopated rhythms in the bass and glittering quavers in the right hand. An emphatic coda enters with dramatic chords demanding notice; just as suddenly, a tranquil arpeggiated figure brings the dance to a serene close.

The third movement is harmonically and emotionally complex. Its first section is characterised by recitative – the piano 'speaking' over a variety of chords, some strikingly distant from the sonata's tonal domain. The melancholy theme that follows,



◀ Portrait of Beethoven by Ferdinand Waldmüller (1823)

Arioso dolente, is remarkable in its resemblance to the Bach aria 'Es ist vollbracht' [It is fulfilled] from the *John Passion*.

The quiet segue into the fugue finale comes as something of a surprise. The fugue as a genre is an epitome of strictness, its techniques include inversion, augmentation, diminution and stretto (in which multiple entries of the theme follow in close succession). Beethoven had once said that making a fugue is 'not art' – he'd made dozens as a student – but the introduction of a poetic element into this academic form was where true artistry was to be found. In this sonata, certainly, he achieved poetry, setting out with a fugue theme that is derived from the beautiful opening melody of the first movement. Beethoven interrupts the flow of the exercise with a variation of the earlier doleful melody but the energy of the fugue will not be denied and it returns after a series of ponderous chords. Almost as if giving a series of stage directions, Beethoven adds continual subtle changes in tempo and expression as the movement builds to its triumphant climax.

Whether this sonata gives us a new insight into Beethoven 'the man' is debatable but, in musical terms, it consolidates the role that his late piano sonatas play in extending sonata form as a vehicle for musical and emotional expression.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY DAVID VIVIAN RUSSELL
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 2000

'To make a fugue is not art: I made dozens of them during my student days. But imagination, too, claims its right, and today another, really poetic element must be introduced into the old traditional form.'

BEETHOVEN

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Children's Corner

Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum

Jimbo's Lullaby

Sérénade for the doll

The snow is dancing

The little shepherd

Golliwogg's cake-walk

In its insight into the world of childhood, Debussy's *Children's Corner* (1908) has few peers. The pieces are too demanding for children to play, but they evoke a child's world and were affectionately dedicated to Debussy's four-year-old daughter Chouchou 'with her father's apologies for what follows'. He needn't have apologised – their charm and ease of comprehension quickly put them among his most popular music.

The French pianist Alfred Cortot observed that in *Children's Corner* Debussy portrays 'the quiet decorous games of a sophisticated little town girl, already a small coquette with her

◀ Debussy with Chouchou

LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS



prudent frolics and coaxing ways; and her quicksilver caprices seem sometimes to be held well in check by the presence of a traditional English Nannie.

The English titles for the suite and the individual pieces are Debussy's own, sometimes betraying his lack of mastery of the language. He affectionately parodies an Anglomania very prevalent in France at the time, and which he shared to no small extent. He read English books, in translation, his wife Emma had employed an English governess, and the walls of Chouchou's room were hung with nothing but English pictures.

Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum refers to the title of Clementi's graded studies, the bane of budding pianists. Debussy aims 'a little humour' at old Muzio Clementi – 'a kind of progressive, hygienic gymnastic exercise to be played every morning'. On this particular morning the child began with brave determination, but was soon distracted, slowed down, and wandered into reverie, then firmly and to make up for having strayed, imposed a brilliant end on the exercise.

Jimbo [Debussy's mistake for Jumbo] was Chouchou's felt elephant. Cortot imagines the four-year-old Scheherazade turning the lullaby into a story, evoking the elephant's exotic jungle homeland. For Debussy, orientalism comes naturally with pentatonic then whole-tone scales. Who drops off to sleep at the end – the elephant, the child, or both?

Debussy's title for the third piece, as his French version reveals, should be 'serenade to the doll'. There's a suggestion of guitar music and the rhythms are a little Spanish, but, says Debussy, 'with none of the passion of a Spanish serenader'.

In *The snow is dancing*, the child, warm inside, looks out through the window as the snow falls. 'A mood picture as well as a tone picture,' Debussy told an interpreter, 'it should be misty, dreary, monotonous.'

The shepherd who improvises on his pipe is a toy. His melody recalls *The Girl with Flaxen Hair*, from Debussy's preludes, and more distantly his orchestral masterpiece *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*.

The cakewalk was danced to the syncopated marches of ragtime, an American craze just beginning to be known in Europe. As part of his love-hate relationship with Wagner, Debussy 'hid' in the middle of this piece a quotation of the famous opening bars of *Tristan und Isolde*. The mechanical and jerky rhythms imitating ragtime make an ironic context for the Wagner quote, marked 'with great feeling' – Debussy said 'don't be afraid to overdo it here'.



ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY DAVID GARRETT

Quality has a name...



NEW!

Nelson Freire plays Bach
478 8449



Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 32
Piano Concerto No. 5 'Emperor'
Freire · Chailly
478 6771



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Kovacevich · Grumiaux
Krebbars · Davis · Haitink
480 5946 (4-CD SET)

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58

Allegro maestoso

Scherzo (molto vivace)

Largo

Finale (Presto non tanto)

As a pianist and composer, Chopin was something of a phenomenon. While great piano music had been written before his time – most notably by Beethoven – Chopin transformed the piano repertoire, creating a substantial body of work (more than 160 pieces in all) in which new depths of expression and new structural horizons were opened up for pianists and composers alike. But – unlike Beethoven’s 32 – there are just three Chopin piano sonatas, of which the first (composed when he was 18) is almost never heard, usually dismissed as unworthy of the composer. The remaining two are notable exceptions to Chopin’s tendency to adopt miniature or more poetical forms.

The sonata – a Classical and largely Germanic form – was not native to Chopin, and for a long time his sonatas were criticised for their perceived inferiority to earlier models. (Schumann cast one the first stones by describing the Second Sonata as ‘four of Chopin’s most unruly children under the same roof’; in 1843 a critic in *Musical World* complained that ‘the entire work is not a consequence of the first idea...therefore Chopin is not capable of a large and profound work of art.’) But Chopin scholar Jim Samson characterises the sonatas as approaching the genre from a distance, suggesting we regard the differences from earlier models as motivated by a desire to make a well-established genre more spontaneous and less predictable. It’s as if Chopin’s sonatas present a ‘dialogue’ between the lines of thinking that emerge in his other works and the principles of German sonata form.

Chopin’s departure from the Classical sonata principles and his kaleidoscopic profusion of themes may have been criticised in his day as adding an untidiness to the form, but now the word ‘sonata’ has become so flexible in its meaning that we should not be troubled in any way, even if it is true that the shadow of the nocturne is ever-present in Chopin’s larger structures.

The B minor sonata was composed in 1844 during a summer at Nohant, the rural retreat where, with his lover George Sand, Chopin found a haven and an ideal setting for composing. At this time, writes Jeremy Siepmann, Chopin’s reverence for Bach was at its height and his immersion in treatises on counterpoint by older masters such as Cherubini is especially evident in the first movement of the sonata: ‘No work by Chopin is more riddled

...his kaleidoscope
profusion of
themes...



◀ Frédéric Chopin grew up in Warsaw, where he was acclaimed as a teenage piano virtuoso, before heading to Vienna and then Paris in pursuit of a career. His delicate constitution did not lend itself to concert hall success or life as a touring virtuoso, but his innate elegance gave him entry to the fashionable salons of Paris, and his fame grew on the back of performances for intimate circles and his many publications. This photograph, taken in 1849, shows the composer in his final illness, his face swollen with neuralgia.

with polyphonic devices, or more rooted in the aesthetics of a bygone age.'

The third sonata, like the earlier two, was criticised for Chopin's handling of form, for his inability to make of the whole work a unity in the expected manner. 'When is a Sonata a Sonata?' asked the first, astonished listeners. But it counts among his most epic, and ingenious, achievements. There is inspiration on every page and the glorious melodies make one forgive everything – witness the wonderful transition from B minor to D major in the first movement and the beautiful singing line suddenly emerging from the turbulent opening; this kind of sudden sunlight effect is present throughout the work.

Five years after the second sonata, Samson suggests, Chopin is now ready to tackle the genre 'on its own terms', having approached it 'obliquely' via the achievements of his etudes, nocturnes and dances. With great ingenuity he shifts from adapting the sonata principle to his own requirements to more closely accommodating his ideas to the Classical archetype, especially in the first movement. Even so, the abundance of thematic material points to Chopin's lyrical instincts. The scherzo in the B minor sonata is in marked contrast to the grim, slightly wild mazurka of the previous sonata. Instead it ripples with genuine playfulness and charm – as playful as its title suggests. The slow movement, in third spot, has the character of a barcarolle, the lilting song of Venetian gondoliers. The galloping finale – a sonata-rondo that undermines criticisms of Chopin's formal mastery – returns to the German sonata traditions even as it soars and storms to its conclusion.

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA © 2015
ADAPTED IN PART FROM NOTES BY LARRY SITSKY

MORE MUSIC

NELSON FREIRE

Nelson Freire's most recent release, from earlier this year, is an all-Bach album, including Partita No.4, the third English Suite and the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue. Concluding the album is the beautiful slow movement from Bach's transcription of the Oboe Concerto in D minor by Alessandro Marcello, together with the four transcriptions heard in this recital program.

DECCA 478 8449

Other recent releases include a recording of Chopin's Piano Concerto No.2, together with solo piano pieces. The concerto is accompanied by the Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra and Lionel Bringuier.

DECCA 478 5332

In another pairing of concerto and solo works, you can hear him play Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto (accompanied by Riccardo Chailly and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra) and his final sonata, Op.111.

DECCA 478 6771

The Op.110 sonata of Beethoven can be heard on his Beethoven Piano Sonatas album from 2006, together with the *Waldstein*, 'Les Adieux' and *Moonlight* sonatas.

DECCA 478 8155

Freire's Debussy recital album pairs *Children's Corner* with the first book of *Préludes*. The famous *Clair de lune* from Suite bergamasque and *La plus que lente* complete the disc.

DECCA 478 1111

And his recording of Chopin's Sonata No.3 is paired with Etudes: the Op.25 set of 12 and the three 'Méthode des méthodes' studies published after Chopin's death.

DECCA 470 2882

Finally, for a sense of Nelson Freire 'at home', look for *Brasileiro: Villa-Lobos and Friends*, a collection of rarely recorded miniatures that begins with Villa-Lobos' *Children's Carnival*.

DECCA 478 3533

JAYSON GILLHAM

Jayson Gillham has already recorded two recital discs, both available from his website. The first is *The Romantic Virtuoso Pianist*, which brings together original pieces and transcriptions by Liszt and Percy

Grainger. The second is a program of Beethoven (Sonata No.28, Op.101), Chopin and the second book of Debussy Études.

jaysongillham.co.uk

And last year Gillham signed a three-album contract with ABC Classics. The first release, scheduled for 7 October, features music by Bach, Schubert and Chopin.

Broadcast Diary

October



92.9 ABC
Classic FM

abc.net.au/classic

Saturday 1 October, 1pm

NELSON FREIRE PLAYS SCHUMANN

Marcelo Lehninger conductor

Nelson Freire piano

Beethoven, Schumann, Rachmaninoff

Tuesday 18 October, 1pm

ENIGMA VARIATIONS [2014]

Donald Runnicles conductor

Frank Peter Zimmermann violin

Britten, Sibelius, JS Bach, Elgar

SSO Radio

Selected SSO performances, as recorded by the ABC, are available on demand:

sydney-symphony.com/SSO_radio



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 11 October, 6pm

Tuesday 8 November, 6pm

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

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INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS
MONDAY 24 OCTOBER, 7PM
.....
CITY RECITAL HALL ANGEL PLACE

JAYSON GILLHAM IN RECITAL

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)
Toccatà in C minor, BWV 911

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)
Chaconne in G, HWV 435

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Sonata No.21 in C, Op.53 (Waldstein)

Allegro con brio

Introduzione (Adagio molto) –

Rondo (Allegro moderato – Prestissimo)

INTERVAL

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1956)
Symphonic Etudes, Op.13
(complete with posthumous variations)

Pre-concert talk by David Garrett
at 6.15pm in the First Floor
Reception Room. Visit
sydney-symphony.com/talk-bios
for speaker biographies.

.....
Estimated durations:
12 minutes, 8 minutes, 26 minutes,
20-minute interval, 37 minutes
The recital will conclude at
approximately 9pm.

PRESENTING PARTNER



Jayson Gillham in Conversation

ANDY HOLDSWORTH



When he was growing up in Dolby, it never occurred to Jayson Gillham that playing music by dead European men might in any way be an incongruous pastime for a young boy in Western Queensland.

‘I suppose I had no concept of the other side of the world,’ he recalls, ‘and I just thought it was nice music. I never had any sense of disconnection. It was only when I moved to London that I grasped the idea of being far away from everything. I guess I just thought that everybody can play every kind of music.’

For the young Australian, playing the piano was just another activity alongside ballroom dancing, soccer and tennis. But while his peers kept an eye on the clock during piano practice, Gillham found himself increasingly inclined to spend time on the instrument. That began to mean more and more time on the road; the round trip to Brisbane involved 500km of driving per piano lesson for his mother.

‘My parents drove me everywhere – sometimes two days of driving to Melbourne just to play for half an hour. Every so often Mum said, “Well, you’re just having more piano lessons – we’ll see how it goes.” It wasn’t until I got to the semi-final in the Sydney International Piano Competition when I was 17 that I thought, “OK, let’s see if I can do this.”’

Gillham, as it turns out, can do this. His move to London and postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music were followed by prestigious competition wins and a growing international career. His appearance in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s recital series marks the launch of his first CD for

born

Dolby, Queensland in 1986

studied with

Leah Horwitz at the Queensland Conservatorium and with Christopher Elton at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he completed a Master’s degree in 2009

early success

At 17 he reached the semi-finals of the Sydney International Piano Competition

recent achievements

In 2014 he won First Prize in the Montreal International Music Competition, performing Beethoven’s Fourth Piano Concerto (which he performs with the SSO and Vladimir Ashkenazy on 12, 14 and 15 October)

in Australia

Holds dual Australian and British nationality and is now based in London; returning home, he enjoys the ‘consistently good’ weather and the spaciousness of Australia

solo recordings

Jayson already has two recital recordings to his name: a program of Beethoven, Chopin and Debussy, and another combining music by Liszt and Grainger; in October he releases his first recording with ABC Classics

read more

jaysongillham.co.uk

ABC Classics, a happy coincidence which also dictated some of his program choices.

‘The Bach C minor Toccata is on the CD, and I thought it would be a very positive kind of opening piece, sort of like saying, “Here I am!” Then I wanted to put the Handel, which is a new discovery for me, along with it. The Chaconne is a perfect length and a good contrast to the Bach.’

Both pieces were written to be performed on the harpsichord. Gillham, who says he has learned a lot about early repertoire from playing historical instruments, describes the process of ‘translating’ a work composed for a different instrument as being ‘like speaking with a completely different voice type, if not quite a different language’. At the same time, he says, it is important to remain in touch with the unique possibilities of the modern piano as a performance medium.

‘When we play the piano, all the time we’re being told, “Don’t think of it as a piano. Think of it as a voice. Think of it as an oboe, think of it as a violin think of this line as a cello.” You don’t have to copy the sound of a harpsichord. You can also think about how a violinist might play this.’

A session with a fortepiano from around the time of Beethoven’s *Waldstein* sonata at the Royal Academy also proved a revelatory experience for Gillham.

‘There’s a kind of natural sustain to the notes. In the opening part with the repeated chords, it sounds as if you’re holding just one chord.’

‘This piano had a bigger range than earlier ones, and the *Waldstein* is the first sonata that Beethoven wrote for it. So he introduces the new notes one by one, by semitone, during the course of the first movement.’

Gillham can’t repress a laugh when he tries to imagine it. ‘He sort of slips them in. Perhaps some people would buy the score and get half way through the first movement before they realised that their piano wasn’t big enough to play it!’

Schumann, too, explored the far limits of his instrument when he wrote his Symphonic Etudes, a piece which has grown in importance and depth for Gillham since his discovery of the so-called ‘posthumous’ variations. Schumann began writing the piece for Ernestine von Fricken, but, Gillham says, adapted it instead for Clara Wieck when he broke off his engagement with the former in favour of the latter.

‘I think Clara probably hated the romantic variations in the piece, and that’s why he took them out. But it makes a more beautiful piece that goes through extremes of emotion.’

‘...we’re being told,
“Don’t think of it
as a piano. Think of
it as a voice.”...’

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Toccatà in C minor, BWV 911

The most famous portrait of Bach, by Haussmann, shows the composer in his 60s – a picture of Lutheran respectability. Tonight’s recital opens with a very different ‘picture’ of Bach. This composer is in his 20s – a young man with enough energy to walk (ten days each way) from Arnstadt to Lübeck to hear the great organist-composer Dieterich Buxtehude, and rash enough to overstay his leave by three months. This wins him a reprimand from the Arnstadt authorities, who have clearly been harbouring grievances against their Neue Kirche organist: he has been making ‘many curious variations in the chorale’ and confusing the congregation with his strange harmonies, and has allowed an ‘unfamiliar maiden’ into the choir loft to make music. Having married the maiden (Maria Barbara), it’s time to move on and by 1708 he is court organist in Weimar.

At some point during this period (1705–14), Bach wrote seven toccatas for keyboard – likely harpsichord, although scholars can’t rule out the possibility of organ. The 1705 walk to Lübeck paid off, with Buxtehude’s characteristic blend of improvised invention and contrapuntal discipline in evidence. Also from Buxtehude: *stylus fantasticus* or the ‘fantastic style’ – unrestrained and extravagant in its dramatic gestures.

Although not exclusively a keyboard genre, a toccata (from *toccare*, ‘to touch’) was nearly always a brilliant work for harpsichord or organ. Of Bach’s seven, the Toccata in C minor is one of the best-known and most musically mature. Despite its minor key, it conveys, as Jayson Gillham observes, a ‘very positive’ character. You can easily imagine the young virtuoso organist and genius composer announcing ‘Here I am!’ with this exciting and eloquent music.

The Toccata in C minor juxtaposes distinct rhetorical gestures: the ‘improvised’ flourishing line, bold and declamatory; slow, meditative music suggestive of a church motet; and the fugue, one of Bach’s longest, which pauses only to re-emerge as a double fugue when Bach weaves in another subject. At the end, the opening idea returns once more before the music tumbles from the top of the keyboard to the bottom in one final dramatic flourish.



Portrait of Bach by Elias Gottlob Haussmann (1748)

YVONNE FRINDLE

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA © 2016

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Chaconne in G, HWV 435

Like Bach, Handel was a virtuoso of the harpsichord and organ, although he nearly didn't study music: his father, a barber surgeon, had intended him to study law and Handel was obliged to practise secretly on a clavichord smuggled into the attic. Whereas Bach remained in Germany his entire life, Handel travelled extensively, developing an eclectic and cosmopolitan style based on a distinctive mix of Italian, German and French styles, and writing in almost every genre of the day. (One of the few areas he neglected was the chorale-based composition, so important in the work of Bach.) At 25 Handel took the post Kapellmeister to the Elector of Hanover, an appointment he immediately deferred with a leave of absence in London. As with Bach's journey to Lübeck, Handel overstayed (eight months) and when he was granted permission to visit London a second time he was urged to return 'within reasonable time'. As it turned out, Handel was still in England in 1714 when the Elector assumed the English throne as George I.

Tonight's Chaconne in G major with its 21 virtuoso variations was probably written in England, where Handel composed most of his keyboard works. It first appeared in print in an unauthorised edition; when it was published by John Walsh in 1733, Handel noted in the dedication (to his adopted English nation) that 'Surreptitious and incorrect copies' of the pieces had 'got abroad'. But despite its English origin, the Chaconne is magnificently Gallic, presenting its theme in the grand French overture style: assertive chords interspersed with rapid flourishes and trills.

A chaconne in the tradition of French baroque opera or ballet would function as a grand orchestral finale to show off the star dancers in the company. You could count on it to be in triple time and to adopt a moderately moving tempo – lively but still majestic. Well into the second half of the 18th century, traditional chaconnes would feature an 'obstinately' repeating bass line, as you will hear in Handel's variations, although in many places he disguises it with fast-moving figuration for the left hand. A compelling regularity of phrasing and repetition of melodic shapes gives this music its chaconne character. Contrast is provided through changes of melodic and rhythmic patterning, and, in variations 9 to 16, a shift to the minor mode that brings a sighing, wistful quality to this otherwise confident and joyous music.

YVONNE FRINDLE

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Handel at the keyboard in the Chandos portrait from c.1720, formerly attributed to James Thornhill

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No.21 in C, Op.53 (Waldstein)

Allegro con brio

Introduzione (Adagio molto) –

Rondo (Allegretto moderato)

This is the first work that Beethoven wrote following the gift of his new Erard piano in 1803 and no manufacturer could wish for a more remarkable endorsement of their product. The sonata certainly exploits several features of the new piano – its extended range beyond the usual five octaves of the day, and foot-operated pedals (rather than levers activated by the knee) used extensively in the last movement. (Beethoven's method of marking the pedal, pointed out with particular care on the first page of the manuscript, is now universally used.)

There are also technical innovations which move far beyond the scope of Erard's imagination. There is the hammering articulation and driving semiquavers of the first movement and, in the last movement, two new features which Beethoven felt needed special comment. First there are the peculiarly energised textures involving trills concealed in inner parts which he was also to exploit in his late sonatas. This was something sufficiently new that Beethoven felt the need to rally the faint-hearted with an easier alternative, and the encouraging comment 'It is not at all important whether this trill loses here something of its usual speed.' Second are the glissando octaves towards the very end, a technique which appears to have been easier on the Erard instruments than on the heavier action of a modern piano. Czerny, however, in his guide to the Beethoven sonatas, curiously likens the passage to similar things in the work his pupil, Liszt.

But it would be a mistake to see the innovations as purely pianistic. Harmonically the work explores key changes based on the interval of a third – C major to E major – rather than those using the Classical convention of the fifth, an innovation of Beethoven's in the early years of the century which was almost to become the norm in his late works. The juxtaposition of C major and E major clearly fascinated Beethoven. He had used it in his earlier Piano Sonata in C (Op.2 No.3) as the defining contrast between the first and the second movements, and was to return to it in the *Kyrie* of the Mass in C (1807). Yet despite the great originality of the outer movements, there are some ways in which the small *Introduzione* to the last movement, which Beethoven wrote between them, is the most forward looking of the three, pointing to the way in which, in late works



like the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, Op.106 and the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven was able to meld formal composition with a spirit of improvisation.

Beethoven's sketches for this second movement in the famous Eroica sketchbook now known as *Landsberg 6* (housed, since World War II in the Biblioteka Jagiellonska in Krakow) show that he first planned the original slow movement in E major as well, but then reverted to F, placing E major in the first movement (although the eventual *Introduzione* does move to E major in its second bar). The published slow movement was not the one originally played by Beethoven to his friends. Ferdinand Ries describes that there had originally been a 'grand Andante' as the slow movement but 'a friend of Beethoven's suggested to him that the sonata was too long, whereupon he was taken to task most severely. Calmer deliberation, however, soon convinced my teacher that the remark had some truth to it. He then published the grand *Andante* in F major, in 3/8 time, on its own and later composed the interesting introduction to the rondo in its present form.' (The original slow movement can be heard today as the stand-alone piece, the *Andante favori* in F, WoO 57. Czerny claims the title *Andante favori* was Beethoven's own after the work achieved some popularity and was reprinted.)

It should also be noted in passing perhaps that the person immortalised by receiving the dedication of this work, Count Ferdinand Ernst von Waldstein (1762–1823) was praised in another contemporary memoir by Beethoven's friend Wegeler as being the first of Beethoven's several patrons who recognised his genius while in Bonn. Waldstein used his influence with the Elector of Bonn to have Beethoven sent to Vienna in 1792 to 'receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands' as he famously wrote in Beethoven's album and helped him with contacts after he had arrived.

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Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Etudes symphoniques, Op.13

(complete, with posthumous variations)

Robert Schumann's love for Clara Wieck, the daughter of his piano teacher, is one of the great romances of classical music. But his Symphonic Etudes began life under the influence of a different woman. In 1834 Schumann met Ernestine, who had also come to Leipzig to study with Friedrich Wieck. She was a talented pianist, beautiful, and apparently the daughter of a rich Bohemian, Baron von Fricken – Schumann fell in love and found himself in a 'summer novel'. As it turned out, she was the illegitimate daughter of the Baron's sister-in-law (only formally adopted after the Baron had agreed to her engagement with Schumann) and she would not be rich – Schumann's ardour cooled and in August 1835 the engagement was broken off.

In the meantime, however, Schumann had agreed to comment on a set of theme and variations that the Baron, an amateur, had composed. This he did, also paying the compliment of writing his own set of variations.

An ordinary theme, extraordinary variations

Schumann began to explore the possibilities of the Baron's simple, even staid, theme. At first he had in mind a set of variations in alternating emotional characters and there is a clue to that in his plan to publish the work under his double nom de plume: *Etüden im Orchester-Charakter, von Florestan und Eusebius* (Studies in the Orchestral Character, with 'Florestan' contributing the vigorous and extrovert studies, 'Eusebius' the dreamy and introverted ones).

But Schumann's publisher urged him to release them under his own name, and they were first printed in 1837 as *12 Etudes symphoniques* (12 Symphonic Studies). By this stage Schumann had already cut the 'Eusebian' movements (see 'Editing the Etudes').

The variations blend two genres: the keyboard study, which had originally been for private use but which was becoming a public genre in the hands of Chopin and Liszt; and theme and variation form. Schumann's title for the revised edition of 1852 points to this: *Etudes en forme de variations* (Studies in the Form of Variations), retaining 'Etudes symphoniques' as a subtitle. Schumann himself believed that 'in a broad sense, every piece of music is an etude', but in the end the work is more concerned with the poetry and inventiveness of variation principle than with the athletic display of technical difficulties.



Robert Schumann – portrait by Josef Kriehuber (1893)



Miniature portrait of Ernestine von Fricken



Clara Wieck in 1839

Editing the Etudes

During the composition of his Opus 13, Schumann wrote many variations or studies – experimenting with different moods and techniques. In preparing the set for publication in 1837, he discarded five of the variations, replacing them with new ones. (These five were published as a supplementary group in 1873, after Schumann's death, in an edition prepared by Brahms.)

Jayson Gillham observes that the discarded variations represent 'the most beautiful and introspective movements' – Schumann effectively removed the introverted 'Eusebian' element of the work. Perhaps, says Gillham, these movements were closely associated in Schumann's mind with Ernestine, by now his former fiancée. At the same time, the variations that replaced them are characterised by greater virtuosity. Maybe to show off the formidable technique of Schumann's new love interest, Clara?

As evidence of this 'erasure' of Ernestine and appropriation of the work for Clara, Gillham points to Etude XI, one of the new variations: 'It features two intertwining voices in the right hand – a passionate love duet – and contains the descending five notes often cited as the "Clara theme" as if to say "This is *your* piece now!"

In the age of the 'Director's Cut', it is hardly surprising that pianists and audiences would be interested in the posthumous variations, not only for the insights they give but for their inherent beauty. But where to place them in the sequence? Some pianists bracket them together in the middle as a kind of 'slow movement'. The alternative, which Gillham adopts, is to sprinkle them throughout, thus juxtaposing Schumann's dual personalities and enhancing the unique character of each movement.

Symphonic studies

Schumann's titles refer to 'orchestral character' and 'symphonic studies'. The work is certainly substantial – it approaches Beethoven's Diabelli Variations in length – and rich in ideas. And there is great variety of texture and colour, as well as grand effects and subtlety of timbre. Yet these qualities only emphasise the *pianistic* brilliance of the writing. Perhaps Schumann was pointing to the 'public' character of this work; this is no domestic salon piece. Or perhaps, as Bernhard Appel suggests, in using 'symphonic' as an adjective Schumann was making the highest artistic claim that could be made in the 1830s. For what could be grander and more ambitious than symphonic music?

The movement headings that follow are derived from the 1837 edition [etude numbers] and the 1852 revision, from which two etudes were cut [variation numbers].

Thema (Andante) –

Etude I (Variation 1) *Un poco più vivo*

Schumann's tiny theme might have been borrowed, but it fits the strict criteria he himself set for variation themes – simple, concentrated and direct – and makes an impression through its gravity and balance. It is in C sharp minor (a key that was considered sombre and at times despairing) and although it is marked *Andante*, it is a slow 'walking pace' as his metronome marking confirms. Most striking is the simple descending melody of the opening phrase, heard three times in all.

The first etude ('a little more lively') promptly turns that descending line upside down, beginning, as one writer has described it, in the manner of a 'spectral march', emerging from the depths.

Posthumous variation I

The first of the interpolated posthumous variations creates a dreamy swirl of sound. As with the other variations that Schumann had discarded, it conveys an introverted 'Eusebian' character.

Posthumous variation II

This unusual variation is an exercise in tremolo (rapid alternations of notes), allowing the theme to emerge in a 'shimmering veil of sound'.

Etude II (Variation 2)

The second etude requires the pianist to 'mark' the melody of the theme – which Schumann has entrusted to the bass – while the upper parts are expressive and 'singing'.

Etude III *Vivace*

This is a lively study in contrasts between staccato (detached) and legato (smooth) playing. One scholar has described it as a 'string trio', with the sounds of a violin with bouncing bow, and sustained viola and cello, all suggested by the piano. Its connection to the theme itself is tenuous and, together with Etude IX, Brahms labelled it a 'fantasy variation'.

Etude IV (Variation 3) –

Posthumous variation III

Solid chords march their way through the fourth etude, which is also a canon, with the left hand entering after the right in imitation. Like a childhood singing round, the canon is a circular strategy, and the only way Schumann can end is by sliding into the next movement. In the third posthumous variation the theme is given to the bass, with rhythmic momentum created through continuous triplets.

Etude V (Variation 4)

The fifth etude is as sprightly and playful as the fourth is emphatic, with brief phrases tossed between left and right. It is dominated by a single, skipping, rhythmic figure and takes us into the relative major (E).

Etude VI (Variation 5) *Agitato*

The bravura sixth etude achieves its intense and agitated effect by constantly displacing the accents so that they never fall on the strong beat – something of a Schumann signature.

Posthumous variation IV

This is the only one of the posthumous variations for which we know Schumann's intentions: he had planned for it to precede the finale. It is a reflective and elegant waltz, the only movement in a dance metre.

Etude IX *Presto possibile*

This etude ('as fast as possible') is effervescent, witty and vivacious – Mendelssohn's midsummer night fairies would have approved.

Etude VII (Variation 6) *Allegro molto*

Fast and always brilliant, the seventh etude returns to a more vigorous character.

Etude VIII (Variation 7)

The dramatic rhythmic gestures of long notes separated by short runs of quick notes, are a tribute to the French overture style of the Baroque period, and the result is both majestic and graceful.

Posthumous variation V

The last of the posthumous variations takes the music into D flat major and, as in the fifth variation, Schumann continually displaces the accents. He sends the pianist to the top of the keyboard for music that sounds charming and gracious as well as brilliant.

Etude X (Variation 8)

Marked 'always with energy', this etude is energetic and propulsive.

Etude XI (Variation 9) *Con espressione*

By contrast, the eleventh etude is dark and brooding, with a humming left-hand accompaniment below a melody of sustained simplicity.

Etude XII (Finale) *Allegro brillante*

The brilliant finale is in D flat major (which is simply C sharp major 'spelled' differently). The sombre and despairing character of the theme and its variations has brought us to a heroic and triumphant conclusion. It is by far the longest single movement in the set, and is based on a new theme, which Schumann quotes from an opera by Heinrich Marschner (1792) based on Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. This new melody is based on a grand rising figure – balancing the descending motion of the *Thema* – and its text in the opera refers to Richard-the-Lionheart. It is, in other words, a musical tribute to the dedicatee of Opus 13: the young British composer William Sterndale Bennett, whom Schumann had befriended in Leipzig.

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DAVID ROBERTSON

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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,

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Playbill Proprietary Limited / Showbill Proprietary Limited
ACN 003 311 064 ABN 27 003 311 064

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17770 – 1/260916 – 03PB 591,5103

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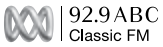
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