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orchestra**

**David Robertson**

The Lowy Chair of  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

**2016  
SEASON**



**RICK'S PLAYLIST**

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**Tuesday 24 May 6.30pm**

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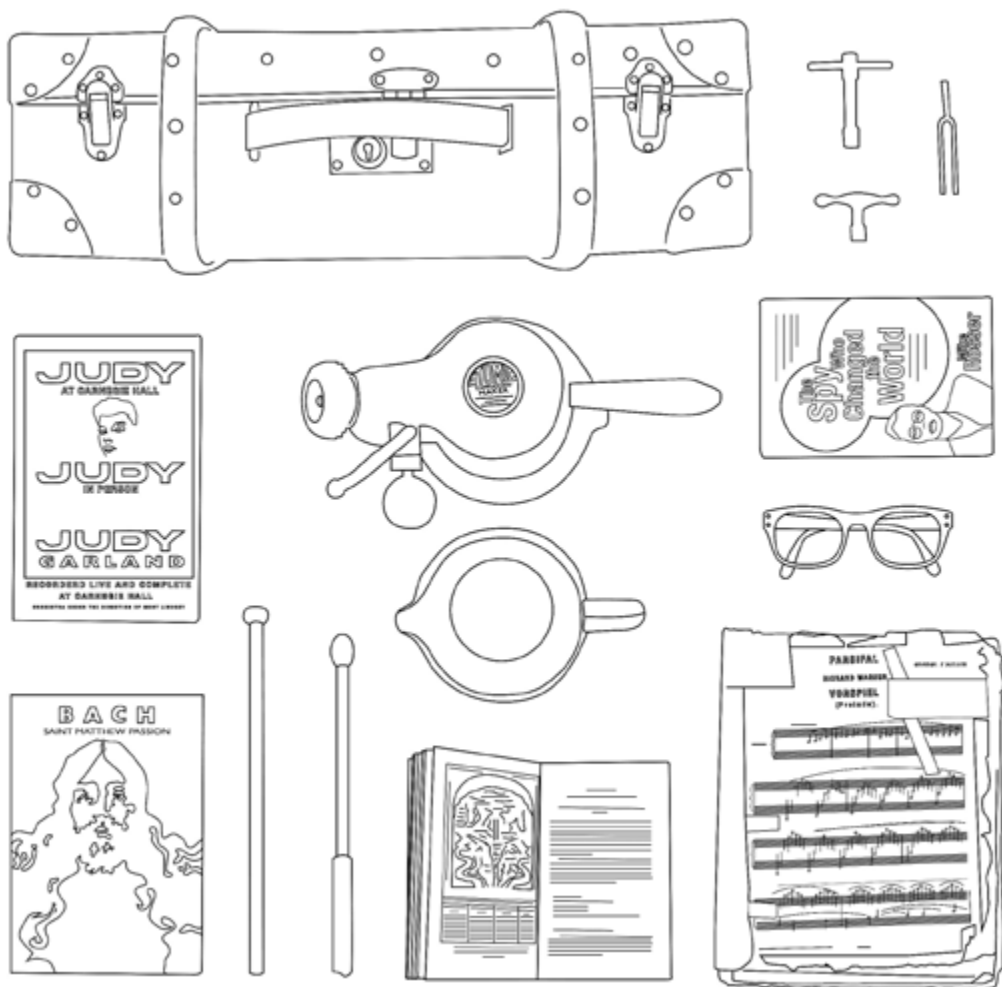
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The cover of tonight's Playlist program book assembles objects and images of personal significance to our featured musician Rick Miller. Clockwise from top left: **suitcase** – concertgoers who sit in the choir gallery behind Rick at the Sydney Opera House will recognise the vintage suitcase in which he carries his sticks; **tuning keys and tuning fork** – essential for keeping all those drums in tune; **The Spy Who Changed the World** – Mike Rossiter's biography of Klaus Fuchs reflects Rick's deep interest in 20th-century history and politics; **glasses** – part of Rick's signature look; **Wagner's Parsifal** – this vocal score belonged to Rick's father and holds personal as

well as musical significance; **Dark Night of the Soul** – this 16th-century poem and commentary by St John of the Cross proved enlightening and influential in a time of mental turmoil; **timpani sticks** – essential tools; **Bach's St Matthew Passion** – program from a Sydney Philharmonia performance in the early 1980s, a musical 'lightbulb moment' for Rick; **Judy Garland** – Rick, a huge fan, describes Judy Garland as a genius entertainer and a fantastic 'rhythmician'; and in place of place the vintage Italian **Atomic cappuccino machine** – this iconic collector's item makes two perfect cups and is, says Rick, an essential part of his life!



**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

**David Robertson**  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

**PLAYLIST**

TUESDAY 24 MAY, 6.30PM

CITY RECITAL HALL ANGEL PLACE

# RICK'S PLAYLIST

**Brett Weymark** *conductor*

**Nicole Youl** *mezzo-soprano*

**Richard Miller** *timpani*

**A personal selection of music  
presented by Richard Miller  
with Benjamin Schwartz**

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)**

**Beginning of the 2nd movement (Molto vivace) of  
Symphony No.9 in D minor, Op.125 (Choral)**

**EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)**

**Troyte, Variation No.7 from the  
Enigma Variations, Op.36**

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)**

**1st movement (Marcia maestoso) from  
Serenata notturna, K239**

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)**

**Aria – 'Erbarme dich, mein Gott' from the  
St Matthew Passion**

Nicole Youl, mezzo-soprano

**RICHARD WAGNER (1813–1883)**

**Good Friday Music from Parsifal**

**IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)**

**Highlights from The Soldier's Tale**

*Three Dances: Tango, Waltz, Ragtime*

*Dance of the Devil*

*Triumphal March of the Devil*

Estimated durations:

5 minutes, 2 minutes, 4 minutes,

7 minutes, 11 minutes, 11 minutes

The concert will be performed without  
interval and will conclude at  
approximately 7.30 pm.

Please join us in the foyer following  
the concert for a chance to mingle with  
the musicians.

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## Rick's Playlist

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Welcome to the second concert in our new Playlist series!

Anyone who loves music knows that in addition to the purely sonic pleasure it brings, there are all sorts of factors that contribute to our enjoyment. These might be intellectual or emotional or even the sometimes serendipitous association a piece of music might have with an important person or moment in your life. In this series, individual members of the SSO will introduce you to very personal selections of music – sharing what makes those pieces special to them.

Tonight's 'playlist' has been devised by Richard Miller, who has held the post of Principal Timpani since 1986 and is a fondly recognised figure in the orchestra.

Rick's own instrument, the timpani or kettle drums, is in the spotlight in this concert, from the opening seconds of the Beethoven scherzo to the triumphant Stravinsky march at the end. But not everything is about the drums. As Rick has said, real music-making happens when the performer opens his or her ears to what music is beyond the ego, and so we'll hear a heartfelt aria from Bach's *St Matthew Passion* – a work which offered him a 'lightbulb moment' more than 30 years ago. This is a program that hints at the infinite expressive possibilities of music, from the mystical and tender to the wild and witty, and we are privileged tonight to experience Rick's enthusiasm and wisdom as he guides us through his choices.

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## ABOUT THE MUSIC



### BEETHOVEN Scherzo from Symphony No.9

The two best-known Beethoven themes of all are the beginning of Fifth Symphony (da da da dum!) and the 'Ode to Joy', which forms the great choral finale of his Ninth Symphony. Tonight we begin with the Ninth Symphony, but not with the Ode. Richard Miller has chosen – and you'll almost instantly hear why – the beginning of the second movement, the scherzo, from this symphony.

In your music dictionary, 'scherzo' will most likely be defined as 'playful', literally a joke. But Beethoven, who singlehandedly invented the symphonic scherzo, has something in mind that's fiercer and more volatile. The music alternates ferocious energy with jubilant charm, and is studded with surprises along the way, from sudden silences to unexpected key changes.

#### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Beethoven, like his predecessor Mozart, was a musical prodigy as a child (his father always told him – and everyone else – that he was several years younger than his actual age so that he would sound more impressive). Unlike Mozart, Beethoven didn't begin writing symphonies until the age of 30, but when he did it was on a

grandeur scale than his musical forebears and in a vigorous, dramatic style that suited the sensibilities of the 19th century.

By the time he premiered his ninth and final symphony in Vienna in May 1824, it was over 10 years since a new Beethoven symphony had been heard, and more than 12 since the composer himself had appeared onstage. The Viennese public were ecstatic, and the auditorium was packed. But by this stage Beethoven was profoundly deaf – a soloist had to turn him around to acknowledge the thunderous applause.

The work that was heard that night has become a symbol of joy, an emblem of freedom, a testimony of the human condition and a testament to the brotherhood of man. It is so revered that in 2001 Beethoven's autographed score became the first musical artefact to be listed by the United Nations on their Memory of the World heritage list.

### ELGAR Troyte from the Enigma Variations

By the time he entered his 40s, Edward Elgar was beginning to despair of ever being able to succeed as a professional composer. He was living quietly in the Malvern Hills of Worcestershire and cobbling together a living as a music teacher, arranger and occasional performer. Circumstances looked so hopeless that he was considering giving up music altogether (the notion of becoming a professional golfer appealed strongly). One evening, after a long day of teaching, Elgar was noodling at the piano and picked out a little melody that caught his wife's ear. She encouraged him to play with it, and he came up with the notion of writing musical variations upon it in the 'manner' of his friends. These 'enigmatic' variations became an instant success in both the UK and in Europe, and opened a new, glorious phase of Elgar's career.

*Troyte*, the seventh variation, was named after Elgar's friend Arthur Troyte Griffith, a local architect and music lover. Griffith was also an amateur musician in his own right – a pianist more notable for his enthusiasm than his subtlety!



Elgar sketches his friend's musical likeness in a torrent of swirling strings and thundering brass, all set at a frenetic tempo.

## EDWARD ELGAR

Edward Elgar was arguably the first major composer to emerge in Britain since Henry Purcell in the 17th century. The son of a piano tuner, Elgar often felt like an outsider among the gentlemen who led English musical society, both because of his plebeian origins and because his Catholicism rendered him suspect amidst a sea of Anglicans. Ultimately, none of this stopped Elgar from becoming one of Britain's best loved composers, with his oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*, and his symphonies and concertos attracting admiration for the way in which they combined home-grown lyricism with the modern compositional techniques emerging from continental Europe.

## MOZART

### March from the *Serenata notturna*

In 18th-century Europe, serenades were typically cheerful, frothy pieces played at outdoor events and celebrations. The peak season for such festivities was in the summertime, which makes



Mozart's composition of his *Serenata notturna* in January 1776 seem slightly odd. Winter in Salzburg is picturesque, but hardly conducive to lingering evening garden parties; Mozart's music almost certainly was intended to bring a summery al fresco spirit to an *indoor* event.

Although in the circumstances it wouldn't have been needed, Mozart begins his *Serenata notturna* with a March such as would traditionally have been played as outdoor serenaders moved into position. Something else about marching: cellists can't hold their instruments between their knees and walk at the same time, but a double bass can be worn on a strap. Look closely and you'll see that reflected in the featured solo group: a string quartet, but one made up of two violins, viola and *double bass*.

That solo group alternates with the main ensemble of strings and timpani in a style of writing that echoes the baroque concerto grosso (a concerto with multiple soloists). The two groups may even have played at opposite ends of a large room, or perhaps different rooms, to create the 18th-century equivalent of stereo sound.

## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Mozart is as well known for his remarkable childhood and his tragically early death as for the supreme beauty and power of his compositions, which showed a mastery of all the major forms and genres of music even when the composer was just a young man. He was just 19 years old when he wrote the *Serenata notturna*, one of several serenades that he composed in his years working as a court musician in his native Salzburg before going on to bigger and brighter things in Vienna.

## BACH

### 'Erbarme dich, mein Gott' from the St Matthew Passion

Bach wrote at least three passion settings, each one effectively an oratorio (a semi-dramatic work, usually on a sacred topic) based on one of the four biblical Gospels and originally intended to be performed in church on Good Friday. In these works, the narrative of Christ's betrayal and crucifixion is sung in dramatic recitative, approximating the inflections of natural speech. However, the emotional heart of the work is found



in the solo arias that respond to the events of the drama.

The mezzo-soprano aria 'Erbarme dich, mein Gott' (Have mercy, my God) is one such response. At this point in the narrative, Jesus has been arrested and tried. His disciple Peter, sitting outside the court, denies three times that he has any connection with Jesus, as indeed Christ foretold he would. Realising that he has let his fear conquer his faithfulness, Peter weeps bitter tears.

The aria that follows is at once the voice of Peter, and of all the sorrowful sinners who have come after him, pleading for God's pity and forgiveness. Distinctively, Bach gives that voice first to the violin: the concertmaster playing alone before being joined by the singer in heartfelt duet:

*Erbarme dich, mein Gott,  
um meiner Zahren willen!  
Schau hier, Herz und Auge  
weint vor dir bitterlich.  
Erbarme dich, mein Gott.*

Have mercy, my God,  
for the sake of my tears!  
See here, before you,  
heart and eyes weep bitterly.  
Have mercy, my God.

## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

In his lifetime Bach was renowned as an organist, but the courts and churches for which he worked often found his music old-fashioned and excessively complicated. Almost a century after his death a revival of Bach's music began, and since then he has never failed to be counted as one of the greatest composers in the Western classical tradition. Bach composed his passion settings, along with hundreds of other masterpieces, for use in the Thomas Church in Leipzig, where he worked for the last 27 years of his life.





## WAGNER

### Good Friday Music from Parsifal

For the pious Lutheran communities in Bach's time, Good Friday was a day of abstinence, to be spent reflecting on the suffering and sorrows of Christ. For Richard Wagner, composing in the following century, Good Friday symbolised a deep mystical transformation – one that took place not only on the universal or religious level, but which also signified personal and spiritual fruition, and the renewal of the earth with the coming of Spring.

And so it is in Act III of Wagner's final opera *Parsifal*, when the title character returns on Good Friday to a legendary kingdom that guards the Holy Grail. Parsifal arrives after a quest of many years – years that have taken him on a journey from a state of youthful ignorance and innocence to one of wisdom, understanding, and maturity. Having arrived at a state of wholeness through experience and empathy, he is able to bring healing to the wounded, peace and rest to the tormented, and is elevated to his rightful place as the new King of the Grail. The *Good Friday Music* – sometimes known as the 'Good Friday Spell' – that accompanies this moment is thus replete with both longing and fulfilment as the fanfare

that later acclaims Parsifal as king gives way to a shimmering and tranquil ocean of sound.

## RICHARD WAGNER

Wagner completely transformed opera in the 19th century with his belief that opera should be a 'total art work' of music, words and lavish staging. His music and philosophies attracted equally passionate fans and detractors in his lifetime, and have continued to do so ever since. Wagner found particular meaning and expressive potential in Germanic myths and legends. His massive cycle of four operas, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, was based on an epic 12th-century poem populated by gods, dragons and heroes. Wagner became interested in *Parzival*, another mediæval epic, in 1845, but his opera in the subject took almost 40 years to be completed, and was finally staged in full for the first time in 1882.

## STRAVINSKY

### Highlights from The Soldier's Tale

Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale* (L'Histoire du soldat, composed in Switzerland to a French libretto by C.F. Ramuz in 1917) is a theatrical work in miniature: a piece 'to be read, played and danced' by three actors, several dancers and a small ensemble of seven musicians. It's a far cry from the massive orchestration of the



scandalously modern *Rite of Spring*, which Stravinsky had written just four years earlier, but preference and circumstance alike encouraged Stravinsky to develop a leaner, more streamlined style. [As a result of World War I, both Stravinsky and his friend Ramuz had been cut off from their royalties and other sources of income. Perhaps naively, they thought their theatre piece for a small, inexpensive and 'portable' ensemble would solve their financial woes.]

The soldier of the title makes a deal with the Devil, giving up his treasured violin in return for a promise of endless wealth. As usual, this turns out to be a bad bargain; but towards the end of the story the soldier manages to trick the devil into returning his violin. His extraordinary playing revives a dying princess, who rises from her sickbed, embraces the soldier, and joyfully performs three dances: a tango, a waltz and a ragtime. The soldier again puts bow to strings and the devil, unable to resist the music, dances until he collapses from exhaustion. Ultimately the devil (and the ensemble's drummer!) has the

last, triumphant laugh, but the soldier's inexorable journey towards damnation is rendered positively jaunty by Stravinsky's angular melodies and light, jazzy orchestration.

## IGOR STRAVINSKY

One of the 20th century's greatest and most influential composers, Igor Stravinsky was born in Russia, but as an adult adopted French, and later American, nationality. His musical style bears the marks of its own journeys, from the exotic richness of the harmonic and instrumental colours of *The Firebird* – his first big hit – to the crispness and precise assurance of his later neoclassical style. Throughout his long career, Stravinsky had a great interest in dance. His early successes included a trio of ballets (*The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*) and he wrote many more, as well as a number of independent instrumental dances such as tangos, ragtimes and (mostly famously) a polka for a circus elephant.

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## ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

CHRISTIE BREWSTER



### **Richard Miller** *timpani*

*Principal Timpani*

---

Richard Miller was born in Melbourne in 1948, into a musical and theatrical family. His first instrument was the violin; the drum kit soon followed. He moved to Sydney with his family when they decided to open the Music Hall at Neutral Bay. Although rock and jazz were the abiding passions of his youth, he decided to begin percussion and timpani studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's timpanist Alard Maling. He then joined the ABC's newly formed National Training Orchestra and subsequently began playing with the SSO.

Richard Miller studied in the United States for five years: in Los Angeles with Forest Clark and Mitchell Peters of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and in New York with Fred Hinger, timpanist with the Philadelphia Orchestra for many years and later with the orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera. He then spent two years in Britain and Europe, pursuing his jazz and rock career, before returning to Australia to take up a position as percussionist with the SSO.

He was also involved with the Sydney-based Synergy percussion ensemble, a partnership which brought him in close contact with many of Australia's leading composers, including Peter Sculthorpe, Ross Edwards and Nigel Westlake.

Since his appointment as the SSO's principal timpanist in 1986, Richard Miller has performed with almost all the major performance ensembles in Sydney and has also taught at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.



## Brett Weymark

### *conductor*

Brett Weymark was born in Sydney and trained at the University of Sydney and NSW Conservatorium of Music. He is currently the Music Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, a post he has held since 2004.

He has worked with many organisations in both Australia and internationally, including the BBC Proms, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and all the Australian state symphony orchestras, as well as conducting opera productions for WAAPA, Pacific Opera and OzOpera, and he has recorded films scores ranging from *Happy Feet* to *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

Brett Weymark has conducted world premieres of works by Peter Sculthorpe, Dan Walker, Paul Stanhope, Elena Kats Chernin, Andrew Schultz and Matthew Hindson. He initiated the annual ChorusOz project at the Sydney Opera House in 2005 – this event now draws more than a thousand singers each year. His performance of Purcell's *King Arthur* was nominated for a Limelight Award and his work as chorusmaster on the Sydney Festival presentations of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms* (directed by Peter Sellars) won a Helpmann Award.

Recent conducting highlights have included the premiere of Paul Stanhope's *Jandamarra* with the SSO, and Haydn's *Creation* with the HKPO; in 2016 he conducts *King Arthur* for Brisbane Baroque and *Jephtha* for the Canberra Choral Society.



## Nicole Youl

### *mezzo-soprano*

After studying with Dame Joan Hammond at the Victorian College of the Arts, Nicole Youl won the Herald-Sun Aria (1991) before travelling to London for further study. She was a finalist in the 1994 Plácido Domingo World Operalia competition and won the Metropolitan Opera Awards in 1995, the Rome Opera Award in 1996 and the Australian Singing Competition's Opera Awards in 2002.

Nicole Youl made her mark as a soprano singing Puccini and Verdi. She appeared frequently for Opera Australia as well as state opera companies, in roles such as Cio-Cio San (*Madama Butterfly*), Mimi (*La bohème*) and Tosca. Other roles included Elsa (*Lohengrin*), Micaëla (*Carmen*) and Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*). With the Australian orchestras, she has appeared as soprano soloist in works such as Mahler's Symphony No.2 and No.8, Verdi's Requiem and Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, as well as Ortlinde in *Die Walküre* (SSO).

Having moved to the mezzo-soprano voice type, where she started as a student, she now relishes the challenge of a new chapter in her story. Highlights in 2015 included a sold-out concert at Berrima Gaol, concerts with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, and Opera in the Vineyard. She continues her association with OA, covering the role of Amneris in *Aida* (Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour) and in 2016 singing Grimgerde in *Die Walküre*.

# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



## DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF  
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

.....  
PATRON Professor The Hon. Dame Marie Bashir AD cvo  
.....

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.

# THE ORCHESTRA



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**Fiona Ziegler**

ASSISTANT CONCERTMASTER

Amber Davis

Nicola Lewis

Alexandra Mitchell

Emily Qin<sup>o</sup>

Lucy Warren\*

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**Sun Yi**

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**Kirsten Williams**

ASSOCIATE CONCERTMASTER

Jenny Booth

Brielle Clapson

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alexander Norton

Léone Ziegler

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ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

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Shuti Huang

Maja Verunica

Elizabeth Jones<sup>o</sup>

Veronique Serret\*

**Kirsty Hilton**

**Marianne Broadfoot**

Sophie Cole

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Justin Williams

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Kristy Conrau

Fenella Gill

Elizabeth Neville

Umberto Clerici

Leah Lynn

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

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Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis

David Wickham

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Benjamin Ward

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Rachel Silver

Jenny McLeod-Sneyd<sup>o</sup>

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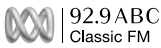
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