

2016
SEASON



**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director



SCHEHERAZADE
Her Story Continues

MEET THE MUSIC

Wednesday 2 March 6.30pm

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Thursday 3 March 1.30pm

EMIRATES METRO SERIES

Friday 4 March 8pm



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Wynton Marsalis trumpet
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

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Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

Meet the Music
Thu 25 Feb 6.30pm
Kaleidoscope
Fri 26 Feb 8pm
Sat 27 Feb 8pm
▪ A BMW Season Highlight



Scheherazade

Her Story Continues

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV Scheherazade
ADAMS Scheherazade.2 – Dramatic Symphony for violin and orchestra **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**

David Robertson conductor
Leila Josefowicz violin

Meet the Music
Wed 2 Mar 6.30pm
Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 3 Mar 1.30pm
Emirates Metro Series
Fri 4 Mar 8pm



From the Canyons to the Stars

MESSIAEN Des canyons aux étoiles
(From the Canyons to the Stars)
with visual production by Deborah O'Grady

David Robertson conductor
Pierre-Laurent Aimard piano
Robert Johnson horn • Rebecca Lagos xyloimba
Timothy Constable glockenspiel

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ILLEAN New Work Premiere
GRISEY 4 Songs for Crossing the Threshold

David Robertson conductor • Jessica Aszodi soprano
Pierre-Laurent Aimard piano

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Bay 17, Carriageworks



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

Barry Brown

Emirates' Divisional Vice President
for Australasia



**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

MEET THE MUSIC

WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH, 6.30PM

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

THURSDAY 3 MARCH, 1.30PM

EMIRATES METRO SERIES

FRIDAY 4 MARCH, 8PM

.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL



SCHEHERAZADE: HER STORY CONTINUES

David Robertson *conductor*

Leila Josefowicz *violin*

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844–1908)

Scheherazade – Symphonic Suite, Op.35

Largo e maestoso – Lento – Allegro non troppo

[The Sea and Sinbad’s Ship]

Lento [The Story of the Kalender Prince]

*Andantino quasi allegretto [The Young Prince and
the Young Princess]*

Allegro molto – Vivo – Allegro non troppo e maestoso – Lento

*[Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Ship Goes to Pieces
on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior – Conclusion]*

INTERVAL

JOHN ADAMS (born 1947)

Scheherazade.2 – Dramatic Symphony for violin and orchestra

Tale of the Wise Young Woman – Pursuit by the True Believers

A Long Desire [love scene]

Scheherazade and the Men with Beards

Escape, Flight, Sanctuary

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE



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.....
Estimated durations:

42 minutes, 20-minute interval,
50 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 10pm.

.....
Scheherazade.2 was commissioned
by the New York Philharmonic, Royal
Concertgebouw Orchestra and Sydney
Symphony Orchestra with the generous
support of Geoff Ainsworth AM and
Johanna Featherstone.



Principal Partner



George Barbier's print from 1913 shows a scene from the ballet *Scheherazade*, choreographed by Michel Fokine to Rimsky-Korsakov's music and premiered in Paris in 1910. The designer Léon Bakst also proposed the narrative (from the first story in *The Thousand and One Nights*) in which the Shah's favourite wife Zobeida (Ida Rubinstein)

succumbs to the fascinations of the Gold Slave (Vaslav Nijinsky).

A century later, in 2013, composer John Adams found contemporary inspiration in an exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris: *Les Mille et Une Nuits* – an exploration of the history of the Arabian Nights and the evolution of the Scheherazade story.

Scheherazade: Her Story Continues

We think we know the story of Scheherazade, Persian queen and fabled storyteller of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Some of her stories (and a few that were invented for her by Europeans) have become part of popular culture: Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, or the character of Aladdin, one of the 18th-century French additions, who has received the Disney treatment. Music lovers know Rimsky-Korsakov's popular symphonic suite, and possibly Ravel's take on Scheherazade as well. Ballet lovers know Fokine's ballet – set to Rimsky-Korsakov's score. But when in 2013 John Adams was inspired to explore the 'Arabian Nights' collection of stories further, he was shocked and appalled by the 'casual brutality' towards women that so often emerges in the tales; it also prompted him to think of contemporary misogyny in all parts of the world.

As Martin Buzacott explains (page 17), in many ways *The Thousand and One Nights*, as literature, has always enjoyed more prominence and interest in the West than in the Middle East. And in the 19th-century Europe of Rimsky-Korsakov, 'Scheherazade' embodied all that was sumptuous, exotic and romantic – part of an imagined Orient. John Adams cannot help but regard Scheherazade and her story with 21st-century eyes and the result is *Scheherazade.2*.

As his title (with its nod to computer software) suggests, Adams offers us a kind of 'update' on Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. There are distinct parallels between the two pieces, highlighted by David Robertson's combining them in a single program. Both cast a violin (the concertmaster for Rimsky-Korsakov, the soloist for Adams) as Scheherazade herself, spinning her tales and commenting on them too. Both are dramatic and symphonic in character, but one is strictly a suite and the other has all the appearances of a violin concerto – a very long violin concerto.

Adams admits: 'You have to be very, very prestigious – like a Brahms piano concerto or the Beethoven Violin Concerto – to take over the larger spot in the program. But, that's what I wanted to write.' In this concert Robertson gives *Scheherazade.2* the 'larger spot' – Rimsky-Korsakov is followed by an expansive musical journey, full of emotion and laden with contemporary significance. Perhaps, like its champion Leila Josefowicz, you'll 'never see music quite the same way again'. Certainly you won't think of Scheherazade and her story in quite the same way.

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Scheherazade – Symphonic Suite, Op.35

Largo e maestoso – Lento – Allegro non troppo (The Sea and Sinbad's Ship)

Lento (The Story of the Kalender Prince)

Andantino quasi allegretto (The Young Prince and the Young Princess)

Allegro molto – Vivo – Allegro non troppo e maestoso – Lento (Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Ship Goes to Pieces on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior – Conclusion)

The Sultan Shahryar, convinced of the duplicity and infidelity of all women, had vowed to slay each of his wives after the first night. The Sultana Scheherazade, however, saved her life by the expedient of recounting to the Sultan a succession of tales over a period of a thousand and one nights. Overcome by curiosity, the Sultan postponed from day to day the execution of his wife, and ended by renouncing altogether his sanguinary resolution.

Many were the marvels recounted to Shahryar by Scheherazade. For the telling of these she drew from the verses of the poets and the words of folk songs and tales, connecting her stories one with the other.

Rimsky-Korsakov conceived the idea of a symphonic suite based on episodes from *Scheherazade* in the middle of winter 1887–88, while he and fellow composer Glazunov were busy with the completion of Borodin's unfinished opera *Prince Igor*.



Rimsky-Korsakov's music inhabits the same sumptuous world as Ferdinand Keller's *Scheherazade and the Sultan Shahryar* (1880).

Keynotes

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Born Tikhvin, 1844

Died Lyubensk, 1908

Rimsky-Korsakov was the most prolific and successful member of the Russian 'nationalist' composers known as 'The Mighty Handful' or 'The Five'. Largely self-taught, he formalised much of his musical technique only after being appointed professor at the St Petersburg conservatory in 1871. As a young naval officer he travelled widely soaking up the sounds and colours of the Orient, influences which subsequently emerged in *Scheherazade* in 1887–88.

SCHEHERAZADE

Rimsky-Korsakov took the idea of *Scheherazade* and the Arabian Nights as his starting point, and at first he gave the movements titles that would bring to mind particular characters or stories. But the end result was a 'kaleidoscope of fairytale images and designs of Oriental character' and the title was chosen more for the connotations of the East that it brings to mind. He even withdrew the movement titles in an attempt to avoid constraining his listeners' imaginations.

In this music the concertmaster takes on the role of Scheherazade: the many beautiful violin solos represent the storyteller herself, spinning her tales. These are told with brilliant orchestral colours, richly coloured fantasies that suggest (perhaps!) the sea, a beggar prince, two young lovers, and vibrant festival and a ship in the storm.

The following summer the suite was completed – ‘a kaleidoscope of fairytale images and designs of Oriental character’.

‘All I had desired,’ he later wrote in *My Musical Life*, ‘was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an Oriental narrative describing a motley succession of fantastic happenings and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on the basis of themes common to all the four movements. Why then, if that be so, does my suite bear the name, precisely, of *Scheherazade*? Because this name and the title *The Arabian Nights* connote in everybody’s mind the East and fairytale wonders; besides, certain details of the musical exposition hint at the fact that all of these are various tales of some one person (who happens to be Scheherazade) entertaining therewith her stern husband.’

Rimsky-Korsakov considered *Scheherazade* one of those works in which his ‘orchestration had reached a considerable degree of virtuosity and bright sonority without Wagner’s influence, within the limits of the usual make-up of Glinka’s orchestra’. So formidable is his instinct that, with surprisingly modest forces (adding to the traditional orchestra only piccolo, cor anglais, harp and percussion), Rimsky-Korsakov can convince his listeners of the raging of a storm at sea, the exuberance of a festival, and the exotic colour of the Orient.

As if repeating in music Scheherazade’s feat of narrative woven from poetry and folk tales, Rimsky-Korsakov drew on isolated episodes from *The Thousand and One Nights* for his suite. At first he was persuaded to identify and assign to specific movements the fragments that had caught his imagination – ‘the sea and Sinbad’s ship, the fantastic narrative of the Kalender Prince, the Prince and Princess, the Baghdad festival, and the ship dashing against the rock with the bronze rider upon it’. But within a year of the first performance, he’d withdrawn the descriptive headings, which, he said, were intended to ‘direct but slightly the listener’s fancy on the path which my own imagination had travelled, and to leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each’.

According to the composer, it is futile to seek in *Scheherazade* leading motifs that are consistently linked with the same poetic ideas and conceptions. Instead, these apparent leitmotifs were ‘nothing but purely musical material...for symphonic development’. The motifs unify all the movements of the suite, appearing in different musical guises so that the ‘themes correspond each time to different images, actions and pictures’. The ominous octaves representing the stern Sultan in the opening, for example, appear in the tale of the Kalender Prince, although Shahryar plays no part in that narrative. And the muted fanfare



Rimsky-Korsakov (1897)

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of the second movement returns in the otherwise unconnected depiction of the foundering ship. Rimsky-Korsakov also cites the appearance of both the Kalender Prince's theme and the theme of the Young Princess in the Baghdad festival although 'nothing is said about these persons taking part in the festivities'.

Rimsky-Korsakov did admit, however, that one of his motifs was quite specific, attached not to any of the stories, but to the storyteller: 'The unifying thread consisted of the brief introductions to the first, second and fourth movements and the intermezzo in movement three, written for violin solo and delineating Scheherazade herself as telling her wondrous tales to the stern Sultan.' It is this idea – an intricately winding violin theme supported only by the harp – which soothes the thunderous opening and embarks upon the first tale: the sea and Sinbad's ship. For Rimsky-Korsakov, who was synæsthetic, the choice of E major for the billowing cello figures was surely no accident: his ears 'saw' it as dark blue.

A cajoling melody played by solo bassoon represents a Kalender (or 'beggar') Prince in the second movement. (Rimsky-Korsakov, perhaps deliberately, neglects to tell us which of the beggar princes in *The Arabian Nights* he had in mind.) The dramatic middle section features muted fanfares, based on the Sultan's theme. The third movement opens with a sinuous violin melody – it's easy to imagine that Scheherazade is telling this story in her own voice. The similarity between the two main themes of the third movement (for violin and then flute and clarinet) suggests that the Young Prince and Princess are perfectly matched in temperament and character.

An agitated transformation of the Sultan's theme, in dialogue with Scheherazade's theme, prefaces the final tale. The fourth movement combines the Festival in Baghdad and the tale of the shipwreck, described by one writer as a 'confused dream of oriental splendour and terror'. Triangle and tambourines accompany the lively cross-rhythms of the carnival; and the mood builds in intensity before all is swamped by the return of the sea theme from the first movement. But after the fury of the shipwreck, it is Scheherazade who has the last word. Her spinning violin solo emerges in gentle triumph over the Sultan's bloodthirsty resolution.

YVONNE FRINDLE © 1998/2016

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* calls for an orchestra of two flutes, piccolo, two oboes (one doubling cor anglais), two clarinets and two bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and a large percussion section; harp and strings.

The SSO was the first ABC orchestra to perform this work, in 1938 with Malcolm Sargent, and our most recent performance was in 2010, conducted by Alexander Lazarev.

SULTAN: 'Oh, Scheherazade...you have taught me many lessons, letting me see that every man is at the call of Fate...I have listened to you for a thousand nights and one night, and now my soul is changed and joyful; it beats with an appetite for life.'

John Adams

***Scheherazade.2* – Dramatic Symphony for violin and orchestra**

Tale of the Wise Young Woman – Pursuit by the True Believers

A Long Desire (love scene)

Scheherazade and the Men with Beards

Escape, Flight, Sanctuary

Leila Josefowicz *violin*

The composer writes...

The impetus for *Scheherazade.2* was an exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris detailing the history of the ‘Arabian Nights’ and of Scheherazade and how this story has evolved over the centuries. The casual brutality toward women that lies at the base of many of these tales prodded me to think about the many images of women oppressed or abused or violated that we see today in the news on a daily basis. In the old tale Scheherazade is the lucky one who, through her endless inventiveness, is able to save her life. But there is not much to celebrate here when one thinks that she is spared simply because of her cleverness and ability to keep on entertaining her warped, murderous husband.

Thinking about what a Scheherazade in our own time might be, brought to mind some famous examples of women under threat for their lives, for example the ‘woman in the blue bra’ in Tahrir Square, Cairo – dragged through the streets, severely beaten, humiliated and physically exposed by enraged, violent men. Or the young Iranian student, Neda Agha-Soltan, who was shot to death while attending a peaceful protest in Teheran. Or women routinely attacked and even executed by religious fanatics in any number of countries – India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, wherever. The modern images that come to mind certainly aren’t exclusive to the Middle East – we see examples, if not quite so graphic nonetheless profoundly disturbing, from everywhere in the world including in the United States and even on our own college campuses.

So I was suddenly struck by the idea of a ‘dramatic symphony’ in which the principal character role is taken by the solo violin – and she would be Scheherazade. While not having an actual story line or plot, the symphony follows a set of provocative images: a beautiful young woman with grit and personal power; a pursuit by ‘true believers’; a love scene which is both violent and tender; a scene in which she is tried by a court of religious zealots (*Scheherazade and the Men with Beards*, during which the men argue doctrine among themselves and rage and shout at her only to have her calmly respond to their accusations); and

Keynotes

ADAMS

Born Worcester, Massachusetts, 1947

Composer, conductor, and creative thinker – John Adams occupies a unique position in the world of American music. One of the most performed of all living composers, his works, both operatic and symphonic, stand out among contemporary classical compositions for their depth of expression, brilliance of sound and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. Over the past 25 years, his music has played a decisive role in turning the tide of contemporary musical aesthetics away from academic modernism and toward a more expansive, expressive language, entirely characteristic of his New World surroundings.

His music frequently features some of the trademark repetition, harmonic language and energy of minimalism. But his works vary greatly, embracing the cyclic *Shaker Loops* (1978), popular orchestral showpieces such as *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* and celebrated operas such as *Nixon in China* (1987). More recently, his *Gospel According to the Other Mary* (2012) was described by Alex Ross as a work of daring from a popular, celebrated artist willing to set aside familiar devices and step into the unknown.

John Adams has written three major works for violin and orchestra: the *Violin Concerto* (1993), *The Dharma at Big Sur* (2003, for electric violin) and *Scheherazade.2*.



John Adams and Leila Josefowicz performing *Scheherazade.2* in Atlanta in May 2015.

a final 'escape, flight and sanctuary', which must be the archetypal dream of any woman importuned by a man or men.

I composed the piece specifically for Leila Josefowicz, who has been my friend and champion of my music (and many other composers) for nearly 15 years. Together we've performed my Violin Concerto and my concerto for amplified violin, *The Dharma at Big Sur*, many times. This work is a true collaboration and reflects a creative dialogue that went back and forth for well over a year and that I expect will continue long after the first performance. I find Leila a perfect embodiment of that kind of empowered strength and energy that a modern Scheherazade would possess.

JOHN ADAMS © 2015

About the composer...

Born and raised in New England, John Adams learned the clarinet from his father and played in marching bands and community orchestras during his formative years. He began composing at age ten and heard his first orchestral pieces performed while still a teenager. The intellectual and artistic traditions of New England, including his studies at Harvard University and attendance at Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts, helped shape him as an artist and thinker.

In 1971, having earned two degrees from Harvard, Adams moved from the US East Coast to California where he taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (and later became composer-in-residence of the San Francisco Symphony, during the period when Edo de Waart was music director). The next big thing in music was minimalism, but while Adams felt it was 'the only really interesting, important stylistic development in the

John Adams in Sydney

First Australian performances by the SSO:

- 1986 Shaker Loops
- 1986 Harmonium
- 1988 Short Ride in a Fast Machine
- 1990 The Wound Dresser
- 2000 Naive and Sentimental Music*
- 2001 Century Rolls – Piano Concerto
- 2003 Guide to Strange Places*
- 2004 On the Transmigration of Souls
- 2010 Doctor Atomic Symphony
- 2013 Violin Concerto
- 2013 Saxophone Concerto*†
- 2014 Absolute Jest
- 2016 Scheherazade.2*

* SSO co-commission

† World premiere

past 30 years; he was aware of its expressive limitations. As Anthony Fogg has written:

Instead of the trance-like Eastern rhythms and mechanical repetitiveness of much early minimalism, Adams' music began to establish much clearer directions, with climaxes and more clearly defined structures underlying the minimalist method.

Adams was also receptive to a wide range of influences that shaped his style and musical architecture. An example appears as early as the triptych, *American Standard* (1973), which looks to the particular kind of minimalism espoused by Cornelius Cardew in England, but which at the same time abstracts and enshrines, with loving nostalgia, American vernacular music such as the march, hymn and jazz ballad. A similar impulse is at work in the iridescent string writing of *Shaker Loops* (composed as a chamber work in 1979 but revised for string orchestra in 1983) or the rolling, big-hearted tune that appears at the climax of *Grand Pianola Music* (1982).

In 1979, Adams began the series of large-scale orchestral works that have marked the development of his musical language. Works of the early 1980s such as *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* and *Harmonielehre* (whose title refers to the teaching method of Arnold Schoenberg) spring from a confident, optimistic energy embodied in the use of large-scale fields of stable diatonic harmony. By the early 1990s, in such music as the Chamber Symphony, Adams explores more introspective, and occasionally darker, worlds, encompassing references to Schoenberg, Warner Brothers cartoons and the mediæval mysticism of Meister Eckhardt.

He also works closely with particular musicians and this in turn affects the work: the piano concerto *Century Rolls* (1996) celebrates the artistry and repertoire of Emanuel Ax. In this concert *Scheherazade.2* reflects a longstanding musical partnership with violinist Leila Josefowicz.

Adams' distinguished career in the opera theatre began in earnest in 1987 with *Nixon in China*, his first collaboration with Alice Goodman and Peter Sellars. This was followed by *The Death of Klinghoffer* – which only recently received its Metropolitan Opera premiere, conducted by David Robertson, and remains as controversial as ever – as well as several other works including *Doctor Atomic* (2005), *A Flowering Tree* (2006) and more recently the Passion oratorio *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* (2012). The operas all have a direct concern with contemporary life; the essential humanism of Adams' works is also manifest in works such as *On the Transmigration of Souls* of 2002, his response to the appalling events of 11 September 2001.

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY GORDON KERRY © 2013



DEBORAH O'GRADY

The orchestra for *Scheherazade.2* calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, three percussion, cymbalom (an instrument related to the hammered dulcimer), celesta, two harps and strings.

Scheherazade.2 was first performed on 26 March 2015 by Leila Josefowicz with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Alan Gilbert. This is the Australian premiere.

The work was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra with the generous support of Geoff Ainsworth AM and Johanna Featherstone.

Scheherazade.2 in Review

Leila Josefowicz gave the premiere of Scheherazade.2 on 26 March 2015 with the New York Philharmonic and Alan Gilbert. Here is just some of the critical response...

New Yorker critic Alex Ross heard it in an open rehearsal in advance of the premiere and recognised, despite the 'less than ideal conditions', John Adams' 'most imposing work of recent years: the Romantic minimalism of past decades has given way to a kind of Romantic neo-modernism, with episodes of dissonant density abutting lush, Sibelius-inflected textures. ...the protagonist holds her own against dogmatic thrashings of the orchestra, and steals away in a mood of melancholy rapture.' [11 April 2015]

After the premiere, Anthony Tommasini (*New York Times*) asked: 'What would a Scheherazade for our own time be like? This work offers [Adams'] answer in the portrait of a beautiful, empowered and fearless woman confronting oppression.'

'Long an Adams champion, Ms Josefowicz gave a dazzling and inspired performance, backed by the glittering, rhapsodic and supremely confident playing of the orchestra under Mr Gilbert. ...Playing this formidable violin part from memory, she gave a stunning performance, by turns commanding and vulnerable, slashing and sensual. The ovation was tremendous.'

Tommasini also remarked on the prominent part for the cimbalom (a kind of hammered dulcimer), which 'lends the entire score an exotic flavour'. [27 March 2015]

Alan Kozinn, writing for the *Wall St Journal*, described the premiere as 'electrifying, not least because the violinist Leila Josefowicz embraced the idea of Scheherazade as a flesh-and-blood character and played the solo line with vehemence and passion, almost as if it were a spoken text. She brought a measure of physicality to the part as well: In Scheherazade's disputes with the True Believers, Ms Josefowicz's moves were overtly dramatic – more combative trial lawyer than solo fiddler.'

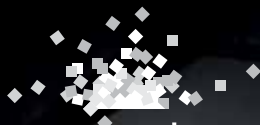


CHRIS LEE

Leila Josefowicz

'Mr Adams gave Ms Josefowicz and the orchestra, led by Mr Gilbert, plenty to work with. It should be noted that this is not the Adams of *Shaker Loops*, *Harmonielehre* or even *The Death of Klinghoffer*. *Scheherazade.2* is not merely post-Minimalist; except for the vaguest hints of sequencing, the style that brought Mr Adams to prominence is now wholly abandoned. This is free-flowing, picturesque eclecticism that puts the narrative and its associated message (women should fight back) first, and style considerations well down the list. So the solo violin line climbs, sings and battles with such animation that you scarcely realize, at first, how virtuosic it is. Ms Josefowicz brings considerable beauty to it; even at its most contentious, her tone is never strident. A movement-long love scene allows a gentler approach, and – spoiler alert – Scheherazade escapes her tormentors in a dramatic finale.' [27 March 2015]

COMING UP



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David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

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Scheherazade and the Art of Salvation

Martin Buzacott examines The Thousand and One Nights and the myth of Scheherazade.

The so-called 'book' in which Scheherazade originally appeared is one of the strangest texts in the history of civilisation. It goes by many names, appears in many versions, is wildly inconsistent both in content and style, and has no definitive shape to its internal narrative. It has no formal author, no single nationality, and it bears all the hallmarks of centuries, indeed more than a millennium, of ongoing development, misinterpretation and interpolations.

We are told, for instance, that Scheherazade lived in the glorious age of pre-Islamic Persia, even though many of the stories that she narrates are set in Baghdad, Basra and Cairo – cities only founded centuries after the rise of Islam. Yet this strange, motley collection of hundreds upon hundreds of tales continues to exert its influence upon generation after generation of Western artists.

Versions of the Arabic story collection *Alf Layla wa-Layla* were known as early as the ninth century and by the year 947 it was referred to by the Persian title *Hazar Afsanak* or 'A Thousand Tales'. In the popular speech of the time it was also known as 'A Thousand Nights'. It was said that Abdus al-Jashyari set out to assemble a collection of 1,000 popular tales from Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Indian and possibly Greek sources, but died when 'only' 480 were completed.

The first European version of the stories was translated by Frenchman Antoine Galland as *Les Mille et une nuits* between 1704 and 1717 and before long it began appearing in translated versions throughout Europe. The classic (but incomplete) English translation by EW Lane appeared between 1839 and 1841 with the title *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, and the most popular edition, by the Sir Richard Burton of *Kama-Sutra* and African exploration fame, was published between 1885 and 1889.

The disparate tales of *The Thousand and One Nights* (a more exact translation than the original 'Thousand') are united as far as possible by a frame-tale that has become as much a part of Western culture as anything by Shakespeare.

In this frame-tale, the mythical king Shahryar, on discovering that his wife has been rather too familiar with a kitchen servant, puts her to death. In his bitter reaction to her infidelity, he takes a new wife each day and has each one beheaded the following morning.

As the supply of available young virgins begins to dry up, the vizier's daughter Scheherazade volunteers against her father's

...this strange, motley collection continues to exert its influence...



Léon Carré's illustration for Dr JC Mardrus's French translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* (1899–1903) shows the three principal actors in the frame story: Shahryar, Scheherazade and, sitting with her back to us, her sister Dunyazade.

wishes for the toughest job in the land – she will marry Shahryar. It's expected she will meet the same fate as all who went before her.

But the selfless Scheherazade has a plan. She clues in her sister Dunyazade and the wedding night proceeds. After the formalities are completed in Shahryar's bedroom, Dunyazade emerges and asks her sister for a story. Shahryar agrees and Scheherazade tells 'The Story of the Merchant and the Demon', but stops just as Shahryar is getting interested. He puts off her execution until the story is complete.

The following night she weaves another story into the previous one and, as dawn breaks, that story, too, is left incomplete. So she is spared again – and again and again, night after night, tale after tale. Several years pass with no apparent fading of Scheherazade's narrative inspiration (or Shahryar's pleasure, if the increasing numbers of children which Scheherazade bears is anything to go by) until, in the end, won over by Scheherazade's tales, Shahryar gives up altogether on his cruel plan. Through telling stories to save her own life, Scheherazade has also saved the nation from a reign of terror. Plato argues in *The Republic* that art weakens the moral fibre of society but Scheherazade disproves that argument – through her art, society (or at least its ruler Shahryar) has been rendered morally stronger.

The versions of the tales that are known in the West are very different from those in the Arab world, and are regarded quite differently by literary scholars in the various hemispheres. In the original Arabic versions, the tales are continually interrupted by conversations between Scheherazade and Dunyazade and by



◀ Antoine Galland made the first European version of the 'Arabian Tales' – the title page from the third volume of *Les Mille et une nuit* (1706). The frontispiece illustrates the frame story but places its characters in a very European setting.

routine descriptions of morning arriving and Scheherazade lapsing into silence. These are omitted in English versions, as are most of the stories themselves.

When Galland made his selections, he included only those tales like *Sinbad the Sailor* which were filled with exotic colour and strange 'Eastern' phenomena, with the result that this amazingly diverse, sometimes downright mundane collection of folk tales became synonymous with bizarre oriental delights. Out went the social satires, the comedies of sexual manners, the anecdotes, and anything that suggested ordinary life, and in came tales of magic lamps and genies and exotic locations.

Indeed some of the collection's most popular stories in the West, including the children's classics *Aladdin* and *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, are not found in the original Arabic sources at all, and only made their appearance in Galland's translation. And for some years Galland was even suspected of forgery, until the discovery of the original manuscripts.

The stories that are in the original Arabic texts are far more diverse than the modern selections would suggest. They range in length from one paragraph to hundreds of pages and their styles cover the epic, the mystical, the hilariously funny and the downright pornographic. In all, there are about 468 stories but it's sometimes difficult to decipher where one tale ends and another begins.

Scheherazade herself tells stories, and stories-within-stories, and her characters within her tales tell stories too. In the 'Hunchback' series, for instance, a tailor relates a tale supposedly told to him by a lame young man. But this second-hand tale also includes a tale told by a barber, and that barber's tale also includes tales about six brothers! It becomes like a narrative hall of mirrors. No wonder Sir Richard Burton's published edition occupied 16 individual volumes!

While in the West *The Thousand and One Nights* is regarded as the pinnacle of 'Eastern literature', Arabic scholars regard the text with a certain disdain. Indeed, in the Middle East *The Thousand and One Nights* is not really regarded as literature at all and is rarely given prominence in histories of Arabic fiction. Certainly the quality of the construction varies wildly. Some tales are, frankly, incomprehensible, while others are too vulgar for polite society. In any case, there is a longstanding tradition in the Middle East which says that anyone who reads *The Thousand and One Nights* in its entirety will die. Or at least that's the fascinating tale of Oriental mystery which Sir Richard Burton told when promoting his translation!

In the West, Scheherazade's stories are held in less dread. The frame-tale weaving together the multiple narratives is seen

Out went the social satires, the comedies of sexual manners, the anecdotes, and anything that suggested ordinary life, and in came tales of magic lamps and genies and exotic locations.



Frontispiece to Sir Richard Burton's 1855 edition (*Adolphe Lalauze*)

as the precursor to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* – not to mention much modern fiction, including the work of Salman Rushdie. And with the selected editions being so popular, and the subject matter so exotic and evocative to those who dream of other worlds, it's no wonder that *The Thousand and One Nights* have proved inspirational to Western artists, and to composers in particular.

We know that Mozart was a great admirer, and his operas *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and the incomplete *Zaïde* indicated a particular interest in exotic Oriental locations (as well as reflecting the prevailing fad for all things 'Turkish'). In 1770 he wrote to his sister Nannerl: 'Our hostess in Rome gave me as a present the *Arabian Nights* in Italian. It is very amusing to read.'

But it was really toward the end of the 19th century – when Europe's conquest of Empire was at its height, and when improving transport and communication meant that the faraway world was coming closer – that *The Thousand and One Nights* truly fired the imaginations of generations of dreamers. The greatest musical appropriations of the tales were those by Rimsky-Korsakov and Ravel.

Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestral showpiece *Scheherazade* was intended not so much as a programmatic musical depiction of the tales themselves but as 'a kaleidoscope of fairy-tale images and designs of an oriental character'. The tales offered the greatest orchestrator of his era the chance to create one of his most colourful, virtuosically composed scores – as close as music could come to the supposedly perfumed scents of the East which had obsessed Western artists from Flaubert onwards.

Maurice Ravel was perhaps even more obsessed than Rimsky-Korsakov. He began his career with the intention of writing an opera based on *Scheherazade*, but only the overture eventuated. It was his very first orchestral work, which he later described as a 'clumsy hotch-potch'. His later song-cycle, *Shéhérazade*, on the other hand, was one of his earliest masterpieces. Whereas in later life Ravel tended toward the ascetic in his compositions, the vocal settings in *Shéhérazade*, based on poems by the symbolist Tristan Klingsor, brought out his unashamedly sensual side.

The influence of *Scheherazade* continues to be felt in our own time. The great Russian painter Marc Chagall completed a series of paintings illustrating the *Arabian Nights* in 1945, while Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (written shortly after the imposition of the fatwa) bears obvious echoes of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Before his death in 2012, Michael



Rimsky-Korsakov's sumptuous orchestral showpiece in turn fired the imaginations of Diaghilev's colleagues in the Ballets Russes. Fokine turned three of the movements into a ballet for the 1910 season and Léon Bakst designed the set and costumes. *La Sultane bleue* (the Blue Sultana).

Dunford of the British prog rock band Renaissance was developing *Scheherazade – The Musical*, in turn based on the their album *Scheherazade and Other Stories*. And in this concert, John Adams takes the idea of Scheherazade as starting point and inspiration.

Even modern critical theorist Michel Foucault got in on the act. 'Scheherazade's narrative,' Foucault wrote in *What is an Author?*, 'is an effort, renewed each night, to keep death outside the circle of life.' The myth of Scheherazade is so pleasing to these Western theorists and artists because it suggests that through extreme physical endurance and imaginative vigour, the inevitable onset of death can be forestalled. As Jorge Luis Borges wrote: 'One feels like getting lost in *The Thousand and One Nights*, one knows that entering that book one can forget one's own poor human fate.'

For the duration of her tales, Scheherazade-the-individual 'disappears' as the power of art takes over. She offers a glorious and compelling reminder that the act of artistic creation can lead to the salvation of self and others. And that is why every creative artist in the world identifies with her position – and secretly hopes and dreams they share her talent and can apply it as successfully.



Bakst's costume design for one of the odalisques in Fokine's *Scheherazade*.

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY MARTIN BUZACOTT
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sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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SCHEHERAZADE IN MUSIC

Scheherazade is Rimsky-Korsakov's most popular work and there are many recordings to choose from. An arrangement of Balakirev's *Islamey*, and Borodin's *In the Steppes of Central Asia* makes for an oriental theme in a 'red-blooded' Kirov Theatre Orchestra recording conducted by Valery Gergiev.

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The young Maurice Ravel planned to write an opera on the Scheherazade theme but only completed the overture. Later, though, his inspiration took the shape of three shimmering songs for soprano and orchestra, *Shéhérazade*. You can hear both works in a Deutsche Grammophon release with soprano Margaret Price and the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Claudio Abbado. *Tzigane*, movements from *Miroirs* and *La Valse* complete this all-Ravel album. Available as an ArkivCD from arkivmusic.com

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JOHN ADAMS AND THE VIOLIN

If you enjoyed Leila Josefowicz's performance of *Scheherazade.2*, look for her recording of the Adams Violin Concerto – a piece that she made her calling card for many years. John Adams conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Available on the BBC's contemporary classical and world music label, Late Junction.

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Adams composed *The Dharma at Big Sur* in 2003 for the opening of Disney Hall in Los Angeles and was inspired by the electric violin playing of Tracy Silverman. It's paired with *My Father Knew Charles Ives* in a recording by Silverman and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer.

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Or you can hear Leila Josefowicz perform *The Dharma at Big Sur* with the LA Philharmonic and John Adams in a live concert recording from Deutsche Grammophon's DG CONCERTS digital label (available from iTunes).

And for still more John Adams, look for *Hallelujah Junction – A Nonesuch Retrospective*, a 2-CD set bringing together highlights from Adams' concert music and stage works. An excellent introduction to his range and stylistic development if you're just beginning to explore his music.

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ONLINE & SOCIAL: John Adams' official website www.earbox.com is an excellent resource and you can find him on twitter @helltweet or on Facebook.

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RUSSIAN ROMANTICS (2015)

Vasily Petrenko conductor

Simon Trpčeski piano

Schultz, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff

Friday 4 March, 8pm

SIBELIUS 2 (2015)

David Robertson conductor

Andrew Haveron violin

Sculthorpe, Walton, Sibelius

Sunday 6 March, 1pm

SCHEHERAZADE: HER STORY CONTINUES

David Robertson conductor

Leila Josefowicz violin

Rimsky-Korsakov, Adams

Thursday 17 March, 8pm

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Lerida Delbridge violin

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Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*

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



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



Tchaikovsky Second Piano Concerto

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



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MICHAEL TAMMARO

David Robertson

THE LOWY CHAIR OF
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David Robertson is a compelling and passionate communicator whose stimulating ideas and music-making have captivated audiences and musicians alike. A consummate musician and masterful programmer, he has forged strong relationships with major orchestras throughout Europe and North America.

He made his Australian debut with the SSO in 2003 and soon became a regular visitor to Sydney, with projects such as *The Colour of Time*, a conceptual multimedia concert; the Australian premiere of John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* Symphony; and concert performances of *The Flying Dutchman* with video projections. In 2014, his inaugural season as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director, he led the SSO on a seven-city tour of China.

Last year he launched his tenth season as Music Director of the St Louis Symphony. Other titled posts have included Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lyon and resident conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. An expert in 20th- and 21st-century music, he has also been Music Director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris (where composer and conductor Pierre Boulez was an early supporter). He is also a champion of young musicians, devoting time to working with students and young artists.

David Robertson is a frequent guest with major orchestras and opera houses throughout the world and in recent seasons he has conducted the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras, as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2014 he conducted the controversial but highly acclaimed Metropolitan Opera premiere of John Adams' *Death of Klinghoffer*.

His awards and accolades include Musical America Conductor of the Year (2000), Columbia University's 2006 Ditson Conductor's Award, and, with the SLSO, the 2005–06 ASCAP Morton Gould Award for Innovative Programming. In 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in 2011 a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

David Robertson was born in Santa Monica, California, and educated at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied French horn and composition before turning to conducting. He is married to pianist Orli Shaham.

The position of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director is also supported by Principal Partner Emirates.



CHRIS LEE

Leila Josefowicz

violin

Leila Josefowicz's passionate advocacy of contemporary music for the violin is reflected in her diverse programs and enthusiasm to perform new works. She frequently collaborates with leading composers and works with orchestras and conductors at the highest level around the world. In 2008 she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship, joining prominent scientists, writers and musicians who have made unique contributions to contemporary life.

Highlights of the 2015–16 season include engagements with the London Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony orchestras and the Orquesta Nacional de España, as well as the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, including on tour in Vienna, Salzburg and Innsbruck. Her North American appearances include the Cleveland Orchestra and Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, St Louis Symphony and National Symphony Orchestra (Washington DC). She also appears in recital at New York's Zankel Hall as well as in Berkeley and Denver.

Leading composers have composed concertos especially for Leila Josefowicz, including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Colin Matthews and Steven Mackey, as well as John Adams. She gave the premiere of Adams' *Scheherazade.2*

in March 2015 with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Alan Gilbert. Luca Francesconi's concerto *Duende – The Dark Notes* was also written for her; she gave the premiere in 2014 with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Susanna Mälkki before taking it to the 2015 BBC Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, again conducted by Mälkki.

Other recent highlights include performances with the Chicago, Cincinnati, Baltimore and Melbourne symphony orchestras, the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Ottawa), Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Filarmonica della Scala and the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester.

She has released several recordings and was featured on the acclaimed iPad app, The Orchestra. Her latest recording – Esa-Pekka Salonen's Violin Concerto with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer – was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2014.

Leila Josefowicz's most recent appearance with the SSO was in 2013, when she gave the Australian premiere of John Adams' Violin Concerto (1993) with the composer conducting.

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities.

Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, where it gives more than 100 performances each year, the SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales. International tours to Europe, Asia and the USA – including three visits to China – have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The orchestra's first Chief Conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013. The orchestra's history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures

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

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

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

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

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

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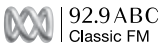


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