sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson
The Lowy Chair of
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

2016
SEASON

THE FIREBIRD

Ravishing

APT MASTER SERIES

Wednesday 10 August 8pm
Friday 12 August 8pm
Saturday 13 August 8pm

■ A BMW Season Highlight

APT

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CLASSICAL

Petrushka – *Immortal*

GYGER Acquisition* PREMIERE
TAN DUN The Wolf – Double Bass Concerto
STRAVINSKY Petrushka (1911)*
David Robertson conductor
Alex Henery double bass

Meet the Music
Wed 17 Aug 6.30pm
Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 18 Aug 1.30pm
Tea & Symphony
Fri 19 Aug 11am*
complimentary morning tea from 10am

Mahler 2

Resurrection Symphony

MAHLER Symphony No.2, Resurrection
David Robertson conductor
Kiandra Howarth soprano
Caitlin Hulcup mezzo-soprano
Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Sat 27 Aug 8pm
Sun 28 Aug 2pm
Sydney Town Hall

Pink Martini

Eclectic and exotic songs in jazz-classical style
Toby Thatcher conductor

Meet the Music
Thu 15 Sep 6.30pm
Kaleidoscope
Fri 16 Sep 8pm
Sat 17 Sep 8pm

Nelson Freire plays Schumann

Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony

BEETHOVEN Coriolan Overture
SCHUMANN Piano Concerto
RACHMANINOFF Symphony No.2
Marcelo Lehninger conductor
Nelson Freire piano

APT Master Series
Wed 21 Sep 8pm
Fri 23 Sep 8pm
Sat 24 Sep 8pm

David Drury in Recital

German Organ Music

JS BACH Prelude and Fugue in D, BWV 532
JG WALTHER Concerto in B minor, after Signor Meck
MENDELSSOHN Organ Sonata No.2
REGER Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, Op.135b
David Drury organ

Tea & Symphony
Fri 23 Sep 11am
complimentary morning tea from 10am

Nelson Freire in Recital

Program to include music by **Mozart, Chopin, Shostakovich** and **Rachmaninoff** with a **Bach-Busoni transcription** and **BEETHOVEN** Sonata in A flat, Op.110
Nelson Freire piano

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Mon 26 Sep 7pm
City Recital Hall

Mad about Mozart

VERBEY Shadow
MOZART Symphony No.28
HINDSON The Rave and the Nightingale
Toby Thatcher conductor
Goldner String Quartet

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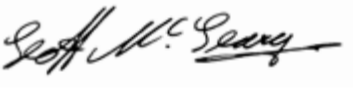
Welcome to tonight's concert in the APT Master Series, conducted by David Robertson. This program is the second in a set of three, devised by Robertson to showcase the great ballet scores that Igor Stravinsky composed for the Ballets Russes.

Tonight we hear the magical sounds of *The Firebird*, which was the first of these scores, dating from 1910. The goal of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes was to bring the glories of Russian culture to Paris and the West. Through marvellous creations such as *The Firebird* – steeped in the Russian fairytale tradition and clothed in exotic colours – the sophisticated Paris audiences could be 'armchair travellers'. Tonight, you too can be an armchair traveller through music.

Travel-in-the-imagination is a wonderful thing and our lives are richer for it. But here at APT we believe that nothing truly beats the experience of travelling for real, whether you're discovering the beauties of your own country, the glories of old Europe, or the breathtaking landscapes of Canada and Alaska. We invite you to discover the pleasure of travelling with the experts when you take an inspiring and unforgettable journey with APT.

We hope you enjoy tonight's performance and we look forward to seeing you at future Master Series concerts during the year.



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sydney symphony orchestra

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APT MASTER SERIES

WEDNESDAY 10 AUGUST, 8PM
FRIDAY 12 AUGUST, 8PM
SATURDAY 13 AUGUST, 8PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

THE FIREBIRD — RAVISHING

David Robertson *conductor*
Christian Tetzlaff *violin*

PETER SCULTHORPE (1929–2014)
Sun Music I

KAROL SZYMANOWSKI (1882–1937)
Violin Concerto No.1, Op.35

Vivace assai –
Tempo comodo. Andantino –
Vivace scherzando –
Poco meno. Allegretto –
Vivace

INTERVAL

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)
The Firebird – Ballet fantastique (1910)

See page 15 for the list of scenes.

92.9 ABC Classic FM

Friday night's performance will be recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast on Sunday 21 August at 1pm.

Pre-concert talk by Yvonne Frindle at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer. For more information visit sydneysymphony.com/speaker-bios

Estimated durations:
10 minutes, 26 minutes,
20-minute interval, 45 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 9.50pm

COVER IMAGE: Poster design by Léon Bakst showing the Firebird and the Prince (1915)

Saturday night's performance is a BMW Season Highlight

A BMW Season Highlight

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Portrait by Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861–1942) of Tamara Karsavina in the role of the Firebird, from the Bibliothèque-Musée de L'Opéra National de Paris-Garnier, with (bottom right) Léon Bakst's costume design (1910).

The Firebird – Ravishing

This month at the SSO we're performing the three great ballet scores that Igor Stravinsky composed for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes between 1910 and 1913. We are not, however, performing them in chronological order. We began the celebration last week with the groundbreaking, riotous sounds of *The Rite of Spring* in a program that highlighted perhaps the most primal aspect of music: rhythm and pulse. This week we return to the beginning, to Stravinsky's first original commission for Diaghilev, *The Firebird*.

The Rite of Spring was in every way shockingly original. By contrast, and to quote the French composer Maurice Ravel, *The Firebird* was 'original but not too original'. Stravinsky considered this a virtue and no small element in the huge success of the ballet and its music. The debt is to Rimsky-Korsakov. If you know music such as *Scheherazade*, you'll recognise the sumptuous orchestral colours and often exotic effects. Stravinsky goes further, adopting his former teacher's musical strategies for distinguishing between his human characters and the magical creatures in the scenario.

In this program, David Robertson highlights the opulence of Stravinsky's early style, placing *The Firebird* in the company of Karol Szymanowski's first violin concerto, composed in 1916, just six years after the ballet. Here, too, the effect is colourful and lavish, but goes even further with an almost physical sense of ecstasy. And from Peter Sculthorpe we have music that he described as 'quivering and intense'. Again, orchestral colour comes to the fore, shimmering and sonorous, although – unusually – there are no woodwinds in the sound palette.

Sculthorpe's *Sun Music I* suggests another important parallel with *The Firebird*. With the Ballets Russes, Diaghilev and his artistic collaborators sought to bring Russian culture to the West. With the *Sun Music* commission in 1965, conductor Bernard Heinze was taking Australian culture to London. For the SSO's first international tour Heinze wanted music that would dispel preconceptions that Australian music was 'hopelessly old-fashioned'. Sculthorpe succeeded, and with *Sun Music* – as with *The Firebird* – a composer's career was truly launched.

Hear David Robertson conduct *Petrushka* (17, 18, 19 Aug) as we continue our celebration of the music Stravinsky composed for the Ballets Russes.

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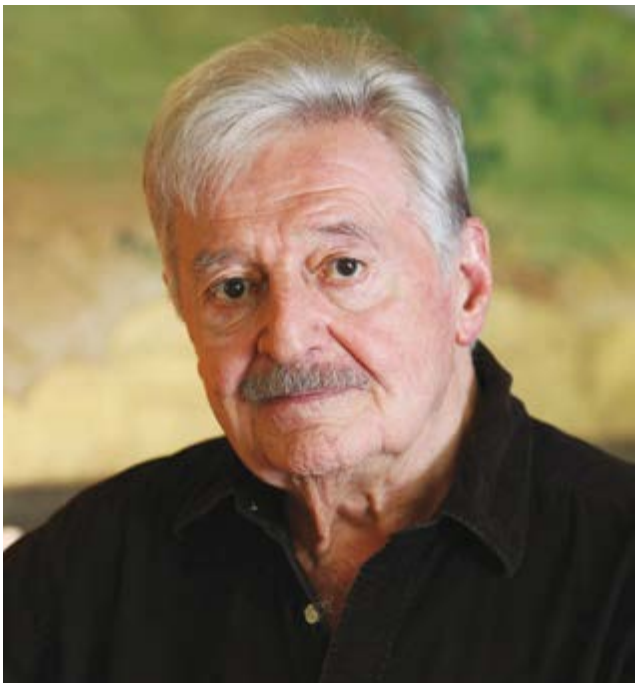
Peter Sculthorpe
Sun Music I

In May 1965, the veteran Australian conductor Sir Bernard Heinze (1894–1982) asked Peter Sculthorpe for a new orchestral work. Heinze intended to conduct it with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, on its first tour abroad, in London in September 1965, during a Commonwealth arts festival. He told Sculthorpe that he wanted an 'overture', no more than ten minutes long, something 'brassy, not another Irkanda!' (a reference to Sculthorpe's sombre earlier work, *Irkanda IV* for strings). Heinze planned to close the concert with the sub-arctic Sibelius Second Symphony, and he hoped the new Sculthorpe would register a little higher on the mercury. Within days of accepting the commission, Sculthorpe wrote to his mother: 'I'm calling it *Sun Music, for Orchestra*, as it will be all quivering & intense, blazoning & with a climax of white heat, or black.'

Clearly hoping for something that might disconcert the London critics' expectations that anything new from Australia would be hopelessly old-fashioned, Heinze told Sculthorpe that if he wanted to write 'a piece without melody, rhythm or harmony', he should. And Sculthorpe duly told listeners to the first ABC radio broadcast of the work that this was what he'd set out to do: 'Admittedly, there is rhythm, melody & harmony of a kind, but, I suppose, of rather a strange kind. My main concern…was to make long, shimmering, sonorous images, existing in their own right.'

BRIDGET ELLIOT



Keynotes

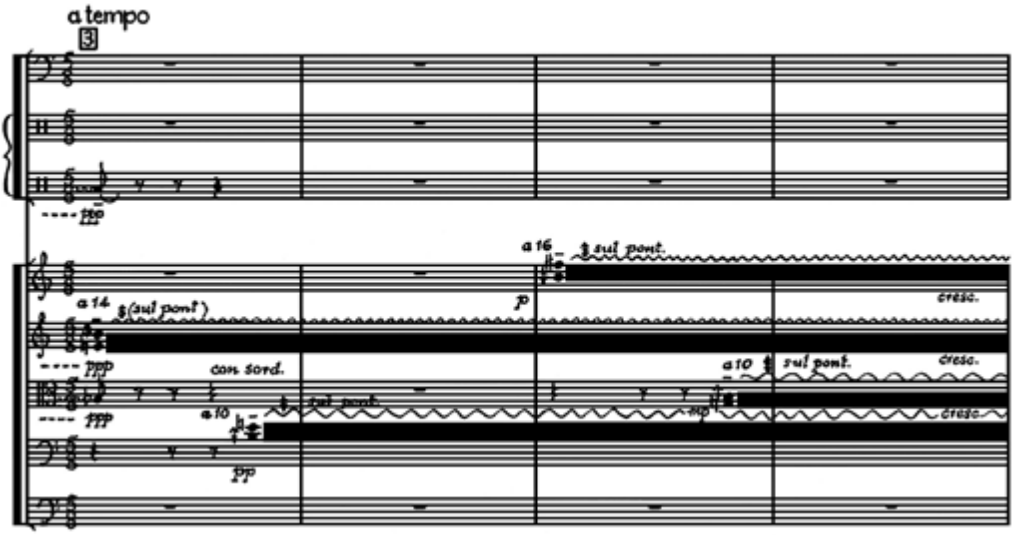
SCULTHORPE
Born Launceston, 1929
Died Sydney, 2014

Perhaps no other composer has consciously attempted to make Australian orchestral music so truly Australian as Peter Sculthorpe. His output related closely to the social and physical climate of Australia and to the cultures of the Pacific Basin, and it was influenced by the music of Asia as well as by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island music and culture.

Born in Launceston, Sculthorpe was educated at Melbourne University and Wadham College, Oxford. He first came to public attention with his String Quartet No.6 (1964) and his reputation was cemented with the *Sun Music* series for orchestra, with its image of Australia as a sun-baked landscape – a place where the sun can be as much an enemy as a friend.

SUN MUSIC I

***Sun Music I* was commissioned for the SSO's first international tour in 1965. It was the first of a series of concert pieces that were later compiled and adapted as a ballet score, *Sun Music*, for Robert Helpmann and the Australian Ballet. This first 'Sun Music for orchestra' is distinctive in that the orchestra does not contain any woodwinds: no flutes, oboes, clarinets or bassoons. The brass, percussion and strings are used to create intense and evocative music that shimmers and quivers – as if caught under the glare of the Australian sun.**



Graphic notation for the first string cluster in *Sun Music I*, from Sculthorpe's original 1965 manuscript score (chosen by the composer to illustrate the work in his memoir *Sun Music: Journeys and reflections from a composer's life*, ABC Books, 1999).

He also told them that the score 'looks in places like an architectural drawing'. In this he was influenced not only by the some of the graphic notation used in recent Polish scores he and his students had been analysing, but also the new sounds connected with them, as notably in Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960), whose curiously notated clusters and percussive string sounds were, moreover, deployed with extraordinary expressivity and polemical force. Sculthorpe combined these new notations and gestures with his own characteristic ostinatos and drones, to achieve a more expressively neutral portrayal of static natural forces.

After two months of careful plotting and sketching, Sculthorpe composed most of this first Sun Music in an intense ten days, completing it on 15 August. When first confronted with orchestral parts for one of the most bizarre, avant-garde pieces they'd so far encountered – full of unconventional notational symbols for producing distressing sounds – some of the orchestra briefly threatened a boycott. Rehearsals were further complicated when Heinze suffered an attack of diverticulitis, and was replaced as conductor by John Hopkins. In his program note for the first performance on 30 September, Roger Covell warned the London audience that, despite the title, this was:

> *not in any sense bronzed, swaggering holiday music…it has more to say about the mystery, fear and lonely glare of the sun and space than about the pleasures of warmth. This is sun music written by a composer living in a country where the sun can be as much enemy as friend; and, since light is often most clearly defined by darkness, it contains the aural equivalent of shadows as well as a representation of dazzling brightness. It is basically slow in tempo, static and incantatory…*

'…long, shimmering, sonorous images, existing in their own right.'

SCULTHORPE

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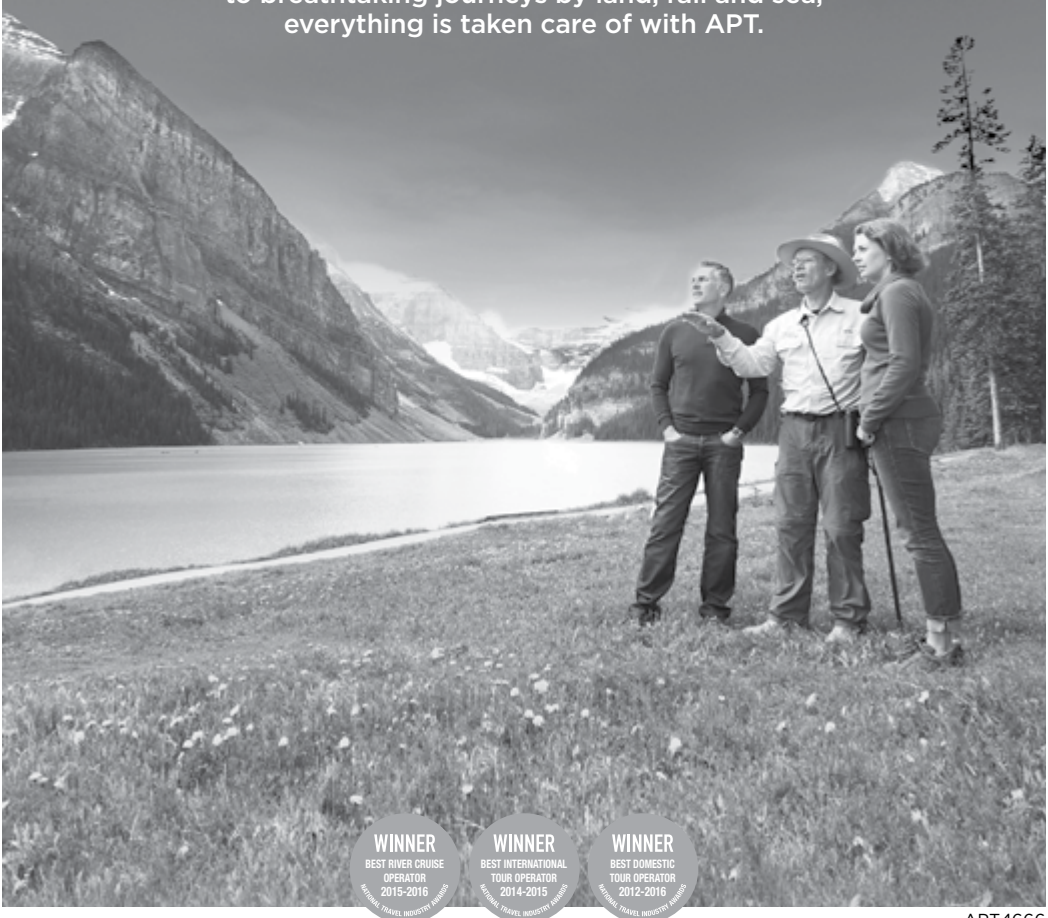

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ABC DOCUMENT ARCHIVES

Peter Sculthorpe with conductor Henry Krips after a performance of *Sun Music I* at the Sydney Town Hall in 1968.

Sculthorpe explained to his new publisher: 'If Sun Music is rather "way out", it is so on my own terms, being a logical development of the Irkanda series.' That he wanted to indicate this, aurally and symbolically, is evident in the work's 'incantatory' four-note opening figure for muted trumpet, which outlines not the yearning *Irkanda* intervals of major sevenths and a minor third, but their tonal opposites, more neutral-sounding minor sevenths and major third. Also for brass, at the piece's core is a brief contrasting low-pitched episode, based on *Haiku* (1965), a piano piece he had composed for his students as a classroom exercise in Anton Webern's serial technique, and which he later also incorporated into the *Night Pieces* (1971) for piano. As Anne Boyd, one of his students at that time, recalled, Sculthorpe's use of brass and strings sounds had a symbolic significance: 'the brass represent terrestrial forces (frequently pedantic and stuttering) while the strings are associated with celestial activities (utilising sounds ranging from sustained shimmers and gleams to those that are sharply percussive and rhythmically articulated).' Massive cluster chords, formed by splitting the strings into multiple parts, and slow interlocking glissandos – recalling Japanese Noh music – dominate in the 'celestial' strings' thoroughly unconventional materials.

Though, through illness, Bernard Heinze missed out on conducting the world premiere of the first *Sun Music* in London, he did give the first Australian performance, in Hobart, with the visiting Victorian Symphony Orchestra, on 21 November 1965, and when the score was published by Faber Music in 1966, Sculthorpe dedicated the work to Heinze and his wife Valerie.

Sun Music I calls for an orchestra of four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and two percussion; and strings.

The SSO first performed *Sun Music I* on tour in London in 1965, conducted by John Hopkins, who also conducted the work for its Sydney premiere in the Town Hall Proms in 1966.

Karol Szymanowski
Violin Concerto No.1, Op.35

Vivace assai –
Tempo comodo. Andantino –
Vivace scherzando –
Poco meno. Allegretto –
Vivace

Christian Tetzlaff *violin*

Szymanowski's output can be divided into four periods: the first, dominated by the influence of Chopin and Scriabin; a second where he responded to Wagner's legacy; the third, where he turned to the so-called impressionistic techniques of Debussy and Ravel; and finally a return to the folk music of his native Poland.

Declared unfit for military service owing to an injury sustained in childhood, Szymanowski spent the years of World War I at Tymoszówka, his family estate (and birthplace) in the Ukraine. During these years he contemplated many of the diverse cultural elements that had been the subject of his attention on journeys to the Mediterranean and North Africa. He studied classical Greek drama, the works of Plato and Leonardo da Vinci, 13th-century Persian poetry – especially that of the sufi master Jalāl ad-Dīn ar-Rūmī – and Byzantine history. He also wrote a novel called *The Ephebe* (1919) in which Szymanowski celebrated 'a love which is independent of all norms (of public opinion)'. It is at this time, regarded as his third period, that much of Szymanowski's most important music was composed.

Well over half of Szymanowski's compositions have some kind of extra-musical reference: his *Metopes* for solo piano take various incidents from the *Odyssey* as their starting points; the *Myths* for violin and piano are also based on Greek legend; the Third Symphony bursts into song in the words of Rūmī. The first violin concerto, composed in 1916, is believed to have been inspired by *A Night in May*, a poem by Tadeusz Miciński (1873–1918). The common thread here is eroticism, from the 'Isle of the Sirens' (*Metopes*) to the conflict between mediæval Christianity and the cult of Dionysus that forms the crux of Szymanowski's opera *King Roger*. Miciński's poem is a frank expression of joy: beside a crimson lake and surrounded by bird song, the poet describes his rapture as 'today I wed a goddess'. The concerto is similarly imbued with a strong feeling of physical ecstasy, and this is achieved by the cumulative power of its single movement structure, its extraordinarily varied orchestral palette and its

Keynotes

SZYMANOWSKI
Born Tymoszówka, near Kiev, 1882
Died Lausanne, 1937

Szymanowski grew up in the Ukraine, where many Polish families owned land, and studied music at home and then in Warsaw, before moving to Berlin while he was in his twenties. There the influence of Richard Strauss's music was added to his deep enthusiasm for Chopin and his Polish nationalist instincts. Later he discovered the colour and sensual appeal of French Impressionism through the music of Debussy, and it was around this time that he composed the First Violin Concerto. Szymanowski can be regarded as a modern romantic, experimenting with the techniques of the avant-garde in music characterised by exquisite effects, marvellous colours and an almost physical sense of ecstasy.

VIOLIN CONCERTO NO.1

This concerto is one of Szymanowski's best-known works and the most characteristic. It's organised in a single movement, but with five defined sections that form an 'arch' shape, alternating between fast music (outer and central sections) and a 'less feverish' mood.

The orchestra is extraordinarily large for a concerto accompaniment – the full woodwind and brass complements and the use of two harps, piano and celesta allow for a vividly coloured orchestral palette and an intensity of effect. The harmonies have the richness of the late-Romantic style.

GEORGE GRANTHAM BAIN COLLECTION / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Karol Szymanowski in the early 1920s

assimilation and integration of the emotive power of late-Romantic chromatic harmony.

The concerto is scored for a very large orchestra, including triple woodwinds, two harps, piano and celeste as well as a full complement of brass and strings. Though in one continuous movement, it falls into five clearly defined sections that create a kind of 'arch form'. Fast music (*vivace*) dominates the first, third and fifth sections, while the second and fourth, by contrast, use less feverish markings like *andantino* and *allegretto*.

The **first section** makes the composer's debt to Debussy immediately clear, characterised as it is by a shimmering texture punctuated by short woodwind motifs (perhaps an evocation of Miciński's bird calls) and its lack of any clear tonal focus, which creates a sense of heightened expectation. The soloist's first entry is a high, cantilena passage reminiscent of some of the music Szymanowski had written in response to Persian texts, chromatic, sinuous and seductive. This is followed by a scherzo-like passage, a tour-de-force both of virtuosity for the soloist and of scintillating scoring. Both of these passages are, however, quite short, and together form the work's first section; there follows a more extended, slower section where the main melodic material of the work is developed.

In general, it is melody that carries the main structural burden in Szymanowski's music, his harmony, like Debussy's, being frequently colouristic rather than traditionally 'goal-directed' as

The concerto is imbued with a strong feeling of physical ecstasy…

in classical music. In the concerto, much of the music is generated out of a simple little six-note motif stated at this point by the violin – a pattern of five descending notes followed by one ascending. By manipulating the intervals of this motif, Szymanowski spins from it a progressively more extended melody. Despite the rhapsodic impression that the concerto gives, Szymanowski creates considerable tension by offsetting this extension of melody against shorter episodic interruptions, and, with a masterstroke of timing, places the cadenza (written largely by the work's dedicatee, Pawel Kochański) just where the gathering momentum of the work leads us to expect a climax. When the deferred climax is finally reached, preceded by a passage redolent of the sound-world of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, it is with a statement of the original six-note motif scored with an opulence worthy of Richard Strauss. The concerto ends with a whimsical return to the shimmering soundscape of the opening pages, as the solo violin line takes flight and slowly vanishes as the birds continue to sing.

GORDON KERRY ©1988/2010

Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No.1 calls for a large orchestra, with parts for three flutes (one doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling cor anglais), three clarinets (one doubling E flat clarinet), bass clarinet and three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon); four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; two harps; celesta, piano and strings.

Pawel Kochański played through the concerto in 1917, but its public premiere had to wait until 1922, when Józef Ozimiński performed it in Warsaw. The SSO first performed the concerto in 1968 at a Proms concert conducted by John Hopkins. Violinist Ladislav Jasek had been engaged as soloist but there was a late substitution and Albert Preston played the solo part. Since then we have performed the concerto on three occasions, twice with violinist Wanda Wilkomirska (in 1973 with Dean Dixon conducting and in 1982 with Niklaus Wyss) and most recently in 2010, with soloist Baiba Skride and conductor Simone Young.

Igor Stravinsky
The Firebird (L'Oiseau de feu) – Ballet fantastique (1910)

Introduction

I. Tableau

Kashchei's enchanted garden
The Firebird appears, pursued by Ivan Tsarevich
Dance of the Firebird
Ivan Tsarevich captures the Firebird
The Firebird's entreaties
Appearance of the thirteen enchanted princesses
The princesses play with the golden apples (Scherzo)
Sudden appearance of Ivan Tsarevich
Khorovod (Round dance) of the princesses
Sunrise
Ivan Tsarevich manages to enter Kashchei's palace – Magical chimes, the entrance of Kashchei's guardian monsters and the capture of Ivan Tsarevich
Arrival of Kashchei the Immortal
Kashchei's dialogue with Ivan Tsarevich
The princesses plead for mercy
The Firebird appears
Kashchei's retinue dances under the Firebird's spell
Infernal dance of all Kashchei's subjects
Berceuse (The Firebird)
Kaschei's awakening – Death of Kashchei – Dark shadows

II. Tableau

The palace disappears and Kashchei's spells are broken, the stone knights return to life – General rejoicing

Nowadays we'd call it a creative team: choreographer, designers, entrepreneur-producer, and composer, of course. Michel Fokine was the choreographer; Léon Bakst was to devise extravagant costumes, Alexander Golovine a sumptuous set as well as costumes; Sergei Diaghilev was the entrepreneur and visionary. For the Ballets Russes' 1910 season, Diaghilev wanted to create 'the first Russian ballet, for there is no such thing as yet'. And in *The Firebird* (L'Oiseau de feu) they were striving for a harmonious blend of the arts – music, design and dance – with a libretto 'gotten up by all of us in a common effort'.

When Igor Stravinsky was invited to join the team he wasn't Diaghilev's first choice of composer: Nikolai Tcherepnin, possibly

Keynotes

STRAVINSKY
Born near St Petersburg, 1882
Died New York, 1971

One of the 20th century's greatest and most influential composers, Igor Stravinsky was born in Russia, later adopting French and then American nationality. His style is similarly multi-faceted, from the exotic instrumental and harmonic colours of *The Firebird* – his first big hit – to the transparency of his later neoclassical style. His most popular orchestral works include the three ballets created for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* following the success of *Firebird*. All three, despite their obvious differences, demonstrate Stravinsky's power as a musical storyteller and creator of viscerally compelling music for dance.

THE FIREBIRD

Stravinsky was commissioned to write *The Firebird* when he was still young and unknown. The gamble paid off for all concerned: the ballet, premiered in Paris in 1910, was a huge success.

The unsettling harmonies of the Introduction reveal Stravinsky's debt to his teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov. Just as Rimsky-Korsakov had done in his operas, Stravinsky uses harmonic language to distinguish between mortal and supernatural characters. His music for mortals such as Ivan and the princesses is built from familiar major and minor scales, often drawing on folk music. Meanwhile, the supernatural characters are portrayed through artificial scales, flourishing harmonies and highly chromatic music.

Alexander Glazunov, and Diaghilev's former teacher Anatol Liadov (famous now for his procrastination) were offered the project and either turned it down or lost interest. Stravinsky had caught Diaghilev's attention with the extravagant orchestral colours of his *Scherzo fantastique* and *Fireworks* in 1909, then won his confidence when he was entrusted with orchestrating the opening and closing numbers for *Les Sylphides*, based on music by Chopin. For a young composer barely emerged from obscurity, the *Firebird* commission was a marvellous opportunity. (Stravinsky's only fear was that, never having had to work to a deadline before, he might not complete the music in time!) For Diaghilev it was perhaps the most daring, and fortunate, artistic risk he ever took.

The Firebird conflates themes from traditional Russian fairytales such as the Firebird and Ivan Tsarevich, Kashchei the Deathless, and the princesses with the golden apples. Michel Fokine, eventually credited with the scenario, developed the many details of the ballet, supporting it with a progressive

The young Stravinsky (from a promotional postcard from 1910)

Scenario, with some musical landmarks

Ivan Tsarevich pursues the magical Firebird into an enchanted garden belonging to Kashchei the Deathless. He finds her fluttering around a tree bearing golden apples. In their slow pas de deux she pleads for her release; he exacts a feather as forfeit before agreeing to let her go. Thirteen princesses enter and play with the golden apples (Scherzo). They are under the spell of Kashchei, and one – the Princess Unearthly Beauty represented by a solo clarinet – soon has the watching Ivan under an enchantment of her own. Ivan reveals his presence in a noble horn solo and the princesses invite him to join in a circle dance, a khorovod, with an oboe theme based on a Russian folk tune. At dawn they must return to Kashchei's palace; when Ivan follows he is captured by Kashchei's monsters. About to be turned into stone, he waves the feather, calling on the Firebird, who casts Kashchei and his followers into a trance before hurling them headlong into the Infernal Dance. She moves among the exhausted dancers and with the Berceuse (lullaby) charms them into a profound sleep. This ravishing movement suspends the descending four-note Firebird motif above a lyrical bassoon theme. Meanwhile, Ivan destroys the egg that holds Kashchei's immortal soul, and the princesses and their petrified lovers are released. In the brief second tableau – the betrothal of Ivan and the princess – a horn theme is developed into a majestic hymn of thanksgiving.

and influential style of choreography that turned its back on the conventions and formulas of classical ballet mime in favour of more natural and realistic expression.

The intricacy of the choreography was matched by the costumes and scenery – 'submerged,' said artist Alexandre Benois, 'in uniform luxury'. Léon Bakst devised extravagant and elaborate costumes for the Princess Unearthly Beauty and the Firebird. Alexander Golovine's sumptuous set was as fantastic and evocative as Stravinsky's music, the interweaving of green, gold, russet and silver thread matching the web of shimmering harmonic and instrumental colour cast from the pit. The dancers were the stars of the day. Anna Pavlova, sought for the title role, had declared Stravinsky's music impossible; instead Tamara Karsavina won hearts as the graceful Firebird. Fokine himself danced the role of the prince, Ivan Tsarevich.

But such was the impact of Stravinsky's music that it threatened to destroy the intimate blending of the arts. The collaborators had worked a miracle – harmony of sound, form

…such was the impact of Stravinsky's music that it threatened to destroy the intimate blending of the arts.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Tamara Karsavina as the Firebird and Michel Fokine as Ivan Tsarevich (1910)

and movement – but despite this *The Firebird* was truly borne aloft by the music. 'If in other ways *The Firebird* was not all that we had dreamed of,' wrote Benois, 'in its music it achieved complete perfection. Music more poetic, music more expressive of every moment and shading, music more beautiful sounding and phantasmagoric could not be imagined.'

The Firebird orchestra was the largest that had ever been used in a ballet score – including four each of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; three harps; celeste and piano; and a backstage band of trumpets and Wagner tubas. (This is one of the reasons the ballet is rarely staged in its original form.) Yet these 'wastefully large' forces (Stravinsky's description) are deployed with a remarkable lightness of touch. Richard Strauss had recommended Stravinsky begin the ballet with a bang, but the young Russian knew how to capture and enchant his audience with low murmurings from the strings setting out mysterious alternations of major and minor thirds.

The unsettling harmonies of the opening – in the Enchanted Garden – reveal from the outset Stravinsky's debt to his teacher. As Rimsky-Korsakov had done in his later operas (including *Kashchei the Deathless*), Stravinsky gives his mortal characters music built from familiar major and minor scales while the supernatural characters are portrayed through artificial scales and highly chromatic music. The flourishing harmonies of the Firebird and Kashchei's ominous rumblings belong in a completely different musical world to the noble horn theme that accompanies Ivan Tsarevich's sudden entrance or the Round Dance of the Princesses, based on a khorovod from Rimsky-Korsakov's folksong collection.

Among the best-known music from *The Firebird* are the numbers that Stravinsky retained in the orchestral suites: the Dance of the Firebird, the Round Dance, the princesses' Scherzo with its hints of Mendelssohn, the Infernal Dance, and the exquisite Berceuse and Finale. If the ballet had been the opera that Diaghilev could not afford to produce then hese would have been the 'arias'. But a performance of the complete original ballet music affords an opportunity to hear what were the most innovative and original elements in Stravinsky's score: to continue the operatic analogy, the 'recitatives'.

Fokine's graphic, presentational style of dance mime or 'choreodrama' required music that illustrated the smallest gesture on the stage. Comparing his style with the mime conventions of traditional ballet, he said:

The prince did not say in mime 'I have come here'. Instead he just entered. The princesses did not say 'We are having a good

Tamara Karsavina's 'interpretation of the part of the Firebird was perfect' (Stravinsky)

time'. Instead, they had a good time. King Kashchei did not state 'I will destroy thee'. Instead, he attempted to turn the prince into stone. The prince and princess did not use sign language to express their love. But from their positions and looks, from the very fact that Ivan wrenched at the gates to follow her, and from her tearful pleading to save him from Kashchei – from all this one could feel their mutual love. In short, no one had to explain anything to anyone else or to the audience; everything was expressed by action and dances... This is a vital difference between the old and the new ballet.

Often improvising while Fokine demonstrated new scenes, Stravinsky devised music that was deliberately formless, relying for coherence on a system of recurring musical motifs associated with characters and dramatic situations. This 'leit-musique' technique, adopted from Wagnerian music-drama, served Fokine's aim well, although Stravinsky rejected these often lengthy recitative-like sections (for example the sequence from Sunrise until the Firebird's reappearance) when he revised the ballet in 1945 – he said they made the ballet too long and patchy and, besides, he found them embarrassing.

With *The Firebird* Stravinsky revealed his talents as a composer for the ballet stage. Most important, he created a score that was sufficiently modern to titillate but never tax its audience. As Ravel put it, the music was 'original but not too original'. True (and taxing!) innovation was to emerge three years later in the notorious *Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky himself later observed that *The Firebird*'s lack of pure originality was in fact a virtue – along with the natural vigour of the music it made 'good conditions for success'.

The Firebird was the perfect graceful entry for a composer who had *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Pulcinella*, *Apollo*, *Orpheus*, *Agon* and a little number for a circus elephant waiting in the wings. Well did Diaghilev point him out to Karsavina, saying: 'Watch him closely. He is a man on the eve of celebrity.'

YVONNE FRINDLE © 2000/2016

The Firebird calls for a large orchestra of three flutes (one doubling piccolo), piccolo, three oboes, cor anglais, three clarinets (one doubling E flat clarinet), bass clarinet, three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; and offstage band of three trumpets and four Wagner tubas; timpani and percussion (xylophone, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, glockenspiel, cymbals, bass drum, suspended cymbal, chimes); three harps, celesta and piano; and strings.

Each time choreographer Michel Fokine narrated the Firebird libretto he would be carried away by his own fantasy – with each description adding new details

The Firebird ballet was premiered on 25 June 1910 in Paris. The SSO performed a suite from the ballet in 1938 under Malcolm Sargent, but it was not until 1976 that the orchestra first performed the complete ballet music, conducted by Willem van Otterloo. The most recent performance of the 1910 ballet score was in 2008 under David Robertson. (This was also the second time the SSO had recorded the ballet, following a recording in 2000 with Edo de Waart.) Most recently, in 2012, the SSO performed the 1945 ballet suite, conducted by Matthias Pintscher.

Diaghilev the Creator

Lee Christofis examines the career of the man who commissioned The Firebird

Nijinsky, Karsavina, Fokine, Rimsky-Korsakov, Debussy, Stravinsky, Satie, Poulenc, Bakst, Picasso, Cocteau, Pergolesi, Pavlova…It is hard to believe these names came together because of one person, Sergei Pavlovitch Diaghilev, creator, guide and manager of that extraordinary artistic experiment, the Ballets Russes.

Diaghilev's curiosity for new ideas and his vision of presenting ballet in exciting, innovative ways have their origins in a love of the arts engendered by an intensely musical family. His father Pavel could sing Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* from memory; his step-aunt was a favourite singer of Tchaikovsky's; Mussorgsky played songs and piano versions of his operas, like *Boris Godunov*, for the crowds which gathered in the huge Diaghilev family home in Perm. With excellent French and German, a fine baritone voice and gregarious personality, Diaghilev left Perm in 1890 to study law and, more important, composition with Rimsky-Korsakov in St Petersburg. His cousin Dmitri Filosovof, painters Alexandre Benois and Léon Bakst and composer Walter Nuvel were his affectionate and argumentative intimates.

GEORGE GRANTHAM BAIN COLLECTION / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Sergei Diaghilev

Diaghilev knew little about painting and wisely accepted Benois' and Bakst's guidance. His complete grasp of new styles, including Impressionism, and his rejection of entrenched realist and academic painting soon impressed them. Soon Diaghilev was their equal except in the execution of his own art. A private concert where he and one of his aunts sang a duet he composed for the occasion was a disaster, and Diaghilev never sang publicly or composed again. Writing art criticism became a successful but temporary substitute.

Diaghilev's circle was named the Nevsky Pickwickians. It soon began to resemble, rather more seriously than was appreciated at the time, two other amateur groups that radically changed Russian theatrical life – Konstantin Stanislavsky's ground-breaking Moscow art theatre and Savva Mamontov's Private Opera Company, the first in Russia. All three groups reacted against the imperial theatres' staid productions, bureaucratic intransigence, a preference for French and Italian imports over local artists.

In 1899 the Nevsky Pickwickians launched *Mir Isskustva* (World of Art), a magazine to confront what they regarded as conventional and pedestrian art by means of polemical articles and increasingly lavish reproductions of significant paintings from the Russian avant-garde and Western Europe. At this time Diaghilev became assistant to the director of the Imperial Theatres

where he produced the theatres' yearbook. Unlike its prosaic predecessors, Diaghilev's sumptuous number impressed the Tsar and the nobility generally. Its success opened doors all over Russia in 1905, when he curated the Exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits. This mammoth undertaking earned the Tsar's 'Most August Protection' and articulated, albeit briefly, Diaghilev's conception of a national gallery. With 150 years' previously unseen art works Diaghilev re-created a history of Russianness at the right psychological moment, just after the 1905 revolution that foreshadowed the collapse of the entire Tsarist regime. The first of a three-volume project on 18th-century Russian painters, won Diaghilev a prestigious award from the Academy of Sciences.

Paris was the scene of Diaghilev's next triumphs. He staged a Russian exhibition in 1906, concerts in 1907 and again in 1908 with Chaliapin as *Boris Godunov* in a production grander than any seen in Russia. 1909 saw the drawing together of Diaghilev's preoccupations and secured his reputation – a joint season of opera and ballet which captivated Paris with exotic stars like Pavlova, Nijinsky and Chaliapin in *Les Sylphides, Cléopâtre*, *Prince Igor* and *Ruslan and Ludmila*. The rest, as they say, is history.

Diaghilev applied the *Gesamtkunstwerk* principle to the overall scheme of an evening's performance, balancing and placing ballets like pictures at an exhibition.

Superficially, Diaghilev seemed to remain a collagist or curator of other people's work, and the collector of the most arresting talents and avant-gardists around; he had an instinct for it. But over the next 20 years, his preoccupations expressed his individualistic creative impulse. Like any artist, he raised artistic problems to solve: in his case, to refine and elevate ballet from its moribund state to an exceptional art form. His ideal was Wagner's concept of opera as an integration of voice, orchestra, plot and design, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which Diaghilev applied to ballet. By integrating dance, music, painting and libretto, and shortening ballets to less than an hour, he created a new genre that is today's mainstay.

He experimented with all emerging dance ideas, from Michel Fokine's in 1909 to George Balanchine's in 1928. He adopted every major art movement as it emerged – cubism, primitivism, abstraction, surrealism, futurism, constructivism and neoclassicism, yet maintained traditional things he considered desirable, like a story or plot outline, even a vestigial one, for modern and 'abstract' ballets.

Equally significant was Diaghilev's application of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* principle to the overall scheme of an evening's performance, balancing and placing ballets like pictures at an exhibition. He perceived ballets as individual entities to manipulate and juxtapose, to carry the audience through a series of moods. This indefinable art, which Diaghilev created, habitually eludes many artistic directors around the world 80 or more years later.

Examination of the collaborative work ethos of the Ballets Russes reveals Diaghilev as conceptualiser and instigator of most of the new ballets he produced, often as librettist, music editor, costume and lighting designer. Over the years his curiosity and more frequent, autocratic 'last word' reflected his increasing creativity. The press preview was another Diaghilev invention. Anxious about the premiere of Nijinsky's ballet *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, he invited the press and his friends to a midday dress rehearsal. They sat stunned into silence at the end, so Diaghilev insisted it be repeated, saying that such a new art form could not be comprehended in one viewing. The crowd, still perplexed, were whisked off for champagne and caviar in the theatre foyer – the first time such a thing had happened.

Had he achieved nothing else, the greatest of all Diaghilev's work was the creation of an entirely new movement which spawned an international outbreak of experimental dance, completely revitalised classical ballet, and encouraged male dancers to take centre stage again. Without the Ballets Russes it is impossible to imagine how long Western art would have taken to achieve the huge experimental leaps Diaghilev made in 20 years.

ABRIDGED FROM AN ARTICLE BY LEE CHRISTOFIS

sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Clocktower Square, Argyle Street, The Rocks NSW 2000
GPO Box 4972, Sydney NSW 2001
Telephone (02) 8215 4644 Box Office (02) 8215 4600
Facsimile (02) 8215 4646 www.sydneysymphony.com

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

Principal Partner
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Suite 2, Level 5, 1 Oxford St,
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Head Office: Suite A, Level 1, Building 16,
Fox Studios Australia, Park Road North, Moore Park NSW 2021
PO Box 410, Paddington NSW 2021
Telephone: +61 2 9921 5353 Fax: +61 2 9449 6053
E-mail: admin@playbill.com.au Website: www.playbill.com.au

Chairman & Advertising Director Brian Nebenzahl OAM RFD
Managing Director Michael Nebenzahl
Editorial Director Jocelyn Nebenzahl
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SCULTHORPE

You can find the four *Sun Music* pieces, recorded by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and David Porcelijn, in an 11-disc collection, *Peter Sculthorpe: The ABC Recordings*. (The set also includes the SSO's Sculthorpe recordings with Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Porcelijn.)

ABC CLASSICS 481 1293

For a selection of classic Sculthorpe orchestral works, look for the SSO recording with Stuart Challender. Re-released in 2014, it features *Kakadu*, *Mangrove*, *Earth Cry*, *Irkanda IV* (with violinist Donald Hazelwood) and *Small Town* (with oboist Guy Henderson).

ABC CLASSICS 426 4812

SZYMANOWSKI

Christian Tetzlaff recorded tonight's concerto with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Pierre Boulez, and you can find it paired with Szymanowski's Symphony No.3 (Song of the Night) in a release from 2012.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 0068

And for a comprehensive introduction to Szymanowski's orchestral music, you can't go past the Simon Rattle 4-CD set, recorded with the City of Birmingham Orchestra and Choruses, and soloists including Thomas Zehetmair, who plays both the violin concertos. Also included in the set are two of the symphonies, vocal music and a sumptuous version of *King Roger*.

EMI CLASSICS 14576

STRAVINSKY

The SSO has made two recordings of the complete *Firebird* ballet. The first in 2000 with Edo de Waart for ABC Classics is available for download and streaming. More recently, in 2008, we recorded the ballet with David Robertson for release on our house label.

SSO LIVE SSO201402

Stravinsky himself conducts *The Firebird* and three early orchestral works with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra (the CBC Orchestra for *Scherzo fantastique*).

CBS MASTERWORKS 42432

Or for a performance from a conductor who was close to Stravinsky and the Ballets Russes, look for the 1968 recording with the New Philharmonia Orchestra by Ernest Ansermet, who became Diaghilev's principal conductor in 1915. It's available in a 2-CD set that also includes a CD of excerpts from the rehearsals.

DECCA ELOQUENCE 480 3780

THE FIREBIRD ON STAGE

A number of ballet companies have staged reconstructions of *The Firebird* with Fokine's choreography and sets and costumes based on the early designs. Look for DVDs from the Royal Ballet (which uses Natalia Goncharova's designs from 1926 and is paired with Bronislava Nijinska's *Les Noces*), and the Mariinsky (conducted by Valery Gergiev and paired with Millicent Hodson's reconstruction of Nijinsky's choreography for *The Rite of Spring*).

OPUS ARTE 833 (Royal Ballet)
BEL AIR CLASSIQUES 241 (Mariinsky)

Or for a contemporary take on the story, there's the Australian Ballet's recording of Graeme Murphy's version from 2009. Find it on *Firebird and Other Legends*, a 2-disc set with the original versions of *Petrushka* and *Les Sylphides* and the documentary *A Thousand Encores: The Ballets Russes in Australia*.

ABC CLASSICS 076 277

BROADCAST DIARY

August

92.9 ABC Classic FM

abc.net.au/classic

Friday 19 August, 8pm
PETRUSHKA – IMMORTAL
David Robertson conductor
Alex Henery double bass
Gyger, Tan Dun, Stravinsky

Saturday 20 August, 1pm
THE RITE OF SPRING – PRIMAL
David Robertson conductor
Synergy Vocals
Reich, Stravinsky

Sunday 21 August, 1pm
THE FIREBIRD – RAVISHING
See this program for details.

Wednesday 24 August, 10pm
SCHUMANN 3 & 4 (2015)
David Robertson conductor
Lentz, Schumann

SSO Radio

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

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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR
Tuesday 13 September, 6pm

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

finemusicfm.com

MICHAEL TAMMARO

David Robertson

THE LOWY CHAIR OF
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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 11th 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.

GIORGIA BERTAZZI

Christian Tetzlaff

violin

For more than 20 years Christian Tetzlaff has enjoyed a fulfilling concert life with more than a hundred concerts each year. Highlights of the 2015–16 season included appearances in Leipzig, London, Paris and Vienna, performing Mozart's Violin Concerto No.3 with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Riccardo Chailly. He also performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Christoph Eschenbach) in Frankfurt and Amsterdam, with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen (Paavo Järvi) in Frankfurt and Hamburg, and with the Budapest Festival Orchestra (Jukka-Pekka Saraste), the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (Gianandrea Noseda) and the Staatskapelle Dresden (Manfred Honeck).

During the past season he also toured with his string quartet, the Tetzlaff Quartett, and other chamber music groups; and with his sister, cellist Tanja Tetzlaff, and pianist Lars Vogt on a summer festivals tour and through the United States. He also performed Brahms' piano quartets with Leif Ove Andsnes, Clemens Hagen and Tabea Zimmermann in Europe and America, and led a chamber music week at Toppan Hall, Tokyo.

The violin music of Johann Sebastian Bach is an important feature of Tetzlaff's concert life. In 2013 he gave a solo recital, Alone With Bach, at the Sydney Opera House, and in 2015–16 he performed all the sonatas and partitas in one evening in Tokyo's Kioi Hall as well as at the Bachfest Leipzig in Bach's own church, the Thomaskirche.

In the United States he returned to the Tanglewood Festival with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Andris Nelsons, and performed with the San Francisco Symphony (Susanna Mälkki), Philadelphia Orchestra (Fabio Luisi), and Minnesota Orchestra (Osmo Vänskä).

Christian Tetzlaff's discography includes the most frequently played works for the violin. He has recently released the Brahms piano trios with Lars Vogt and Tanja Tetzlaff, and has made two recordings with the Helsinki Philharmonic and John Storgårds: the Shostakovich violin concertos and an album of music by Dvořák and Suk.

Christian Tetzlaff plays a violin made by German maker Peter Greiner and teaches regularly at the Kronberg Academy near Frankfurt. His most recent appearances with the SSO were in 2015, when he performed concertos by Mendelssohn and Jörg Widmann.

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.

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This year we are bidding farewell to two longstanding members of the SSO.
Dene Olding will give his final performances as Concertmaster on 26, 28 and 29 October;
Principal Flute Janet Webb will give her final performances on 10, 11 and 12 November.

www.sydneysymphony.com/SSO_musicians

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