

2017 SEASON



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Alexander Gavrylyuk in Recital

INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS PIANO SERVICES

Monday 20 November, 7pm





CLASSICAL



Belshazzar's Feast

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AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

WALTON Belshazzar's Feast

David Robertson conductor

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Topi Lehtipuu tenor

Andrew Foster-Williams bass-baritone

Martin Crewes narrator

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs & TSO Chorus

Emirates Metro Series

Fri 24 Nov, 8pm

Great Classics

Sat 25 Nov, 2pm

Sydney Opera House



Keith Saunders

Souvenirs

SSO Fellows

LIGETI arr. **Howarth** Mysteries of the Macabre

PÄRT Fratres for chamber ensemble (2007)

RAUTAVAARA Octet for Winds

GLAZUNOV In modo religioso for brass quintet

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Roger Benedict conductor

David Elton trumpet

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Verbruggen Hall



Bluebeard's Castle

With Bach & Brahms

BRAHMS Alto Rhapsody

JS BACH Cantata No.82 – Ich habe genug

BARTÓK Bluebeard's Castle

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Michelle DeYoung mezzo-soprano

Andrew Foster-Williams bass-baritone

John Relyea bass

Don Hany prologue

Opera Australia Chorus

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**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS
MONDAY 20 NOVEMBER, 7PM
.....
CITY RECITAL HALL

**ALEXANDER GAVRYLYUK
IN RECITAL**

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)
transcribed Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)
Tocatta and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)
Sonata in B minor, Hob.XVI:32 (Op.14 No.6)

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)
Six Etudes from Op.10

- No.3 in E major (Lento ma non troppo)*
- No.8 in F major (Allegro)*
- No.9 in F minor (Allegro molto agitato)*
- No.10 in A flat major (Vivace assai)*
- No.11 in E flat major (Allegretto)*
- No.12 in C minor (Allegro con fuoco) 'Revolutionary'*

INTERVAL

ALEXANDER SCRIABIN (1872–1915)
Sonata No.5, Op.53

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)
Three Preludes from Opp.23 and 32
Op.23 No.1 in F sharp minor (Largo)
Op.23 No.5 in G minor (Alla marcia)
Op.32 No.12 G sharp minor (Allegro)

Sonata No.2 in B flat minor, Op.36 (1931 version)

Pre-concert talk by David Garrett
at 6.15pm in the First Floor
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for more information.

.....
Estimated durations:
15 minutes, 15 minutes, 15 minutes,
20-minute interval, 13 minutes,
10 minutes, 20 minutes
The recital will conclude at
approximately 9.10pm.
.....

COVER PHOTO: Anna Sanfeliu

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THE ARTIST



PHOTO: MIKA BOVIAN

Alexander Gavrylyuk

piano

Born in 1984, Alexander Gavrylyuk began studying piano at the age of seven and gave his first concerto performance when he was nine. From 1998 to 2006 he lived in Sydney, and during that period he won first prize and the gold medal in the 1999 Horowitz International Piano Competition for Young Pianists, first prize in the 2000 Hamamatsu International Piano Competition in Japan, and the gold medal and award for best performance of a Classical concerto at the 2005 Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition; and in 2003 he was named a Steinway Artist.

He made his SSO debut in the 2009 Prokofiev festival, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy, and also recorded the complete Prokofiev concertos with the orchestra. More recently he has made solo recordings of music by Schumann and Mussorgsky, and Brahms and Liszt.

He is increasingly in demand for his noble and compelling interpretations, and has appeared in many of the world's major venues, including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, where he has returned each year since making his debut with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in 2010, and the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatorium, where he made a recital debut in 2007. He also performs regularly with the New York, Los Angeles, Israel, Warsaw, Moscow, Stuttgart and Rotterdam philharmonic orchestras, the

Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the NHK, Bournemouth and Cincinnati symphony orchestras, collaborating with conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Andrey Boreyko, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Valery Gergiev, Neeme Järvi, Vladimir Jurowski, Kirill Karabits, Louis Langrée, Alexander Lazarev, Gianandrea Noseda, Vassily Petrenko, Rafael Payare, Markus Stenz and Osmo Vänskä. His Australian appearances have included recitals at the Sydney Opera House and City Recital Hall, as well as performances with the Melbourne, Tasmanian and West Australian symphony orchestras.

Highlights of the 2017–18 season include his BBC Proms debut, performing Rachmaninoff with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Thomas Dausgaard, and debuts with the Czech Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Mainz Philharmonic and Orchestre National de Lille. He also returns to the Hallé, Tokyo Symphony and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras.

Alexander Gavrylyuk's most recent appearances for the SSO were in 2014, when he appeared in the Mozart in the City series and gave a solo recital.

www.alexandergavrylyuk.com

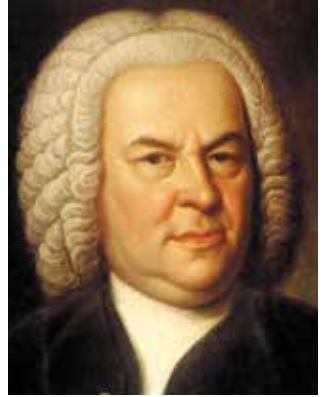
ABOUT THE MUSIC

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) transcribed by Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924) Toccatà and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565

For well over a century, this Toccata and Fugue has been Bach's best-known organ work. But in many ways it is uncharacteristic – its gothic grandeur thought by some to be both too 'simple' and too 'modern' to have come from Bach's pen. (There is no autograph: the earliest surviving version is a copy made in the middle of the 18th century.) It's appropriate then, that its run of popularity began not in the organ loft, but at the piano with a transcription made by Carl Tausig in the 1860s. Busoni's piano transcription followed in 1900 and within a decade the Toccata and Fugue had gone from footnote status to 'well known' – the work in which, according to Albert Schweitzer in 1908, Bach rises to 'independent mastery'. But for many in the current generation of concert-goers the work's real popularity is the result of Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, which begins with Leopold Stokowski's orchestration of the Toccata and Fugue – spectacularly represented in striking silhouettes and gorgeous abstractions that follow the gestures of the music.

If, like Bach scholar Christoph Wolff, we accept that this Toccata and Fugue is indeed by Bach, then it is the flamboyant showpiece of a young man, barely in his 20s, 'refreshingly imaginative, varied and ebullient'. It is suffused by the *stylus fantasticus* (fantastic style) of Buxtehude with its improvisatory impulses and extravagant, dramatic gestures, and it can seem undisciplined, yet there is nonetheless structural unity in the way the descending fugue subject is contained in the thrilling opening gesture of the toccata.

Ferruccio Busoni was a concert pianist of monumental reputation – in Germany not 'Mr Busoni' but 'The Busoni' – and one of the most celebrated arrangers and transcribers of his time, associated above all with the name of Bach. (His wife was once introduced at an American society function as 'Mrs Bach-Busoni'!) It is said that his interpretations of Bach gave the impression of an organ performance – unusually rich in tone. And yet, in transcribing Bach's organ works, Busoni didn't set out to imitate organ style and sound as Liszt or Tausig might have done. Instead he sought to illuminate and even transform the music. As Ateş Orga and Nikolai Demidenko have observed: the theme, harmonies and duration of Busoni's Toccata and Fugue transcription may be the same as Bach's, 'but the registration, the tessitura, of every other chord, every other melodic statement, is Busoni's'.



This portrait of Bach, painted by Elias Gottlob Haussmann in 1748, shows the composer in his 60s. But the Bach who composed BWV 565 was a young man with enough energy to walk (ten days each way) from Arnstadt to Lübeck to hear the great organist-composer Dietrich Buxtehude, and rash enough to overstay his leave by three months.



Ferruccio Busoni

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Sonata in B minor, Hob.XVI:32 (Op.14 No.6)

Allegro moderato

Menuet (Tempo di Menuet)

Finale (Presto)

'No one can do everything: be hilarious and shocking, make people laugh and deeply touch them – and all that as well as Haydn.' With these words Mozart offered what was perhaps the highest praise for a composer of the 18th century, when to 'touch the sensibilities' was regarded as a primary aim of the musician – composer or performer.

In the 1770s, the goal of heightened sensibility manifested itself in the style that became known as *Sturm und Drang* or 'storm and stress'. (The name comes from German literature, but the aesthetic emerged first in music, especially theatrical music, with an overriding concern for dramatic intensity.) Around this time, Haydn made a departure from what had essentially been a rococo style – 'charming, ingratiating, engaging, naturally humorous and enticing' as one contemporary described it – and in a series of impassioned works in minor keys, he assumed instead some of the strange exaggerations and capricious shifts of mood of *Sturm und Drang*, while avoiding outright melodrama.

Haydn initially withheld his Opus 14 set from publication until 1778 (the six sonatas had been composed in the period 1774–76 and circulated in manuscript by 1776), and H.C. Robbins Landon suggests this may have been 'because they contain some unusual, even eccentric movements which the composer may have thought unsuitable for the traditional amateur market'.



◀ Detail from an engraved portrait of Haydn by Johann Ernst Mansfeld, published in Vienna in 1781.

The first indication of the market 'unsuitability' of tonight's sonata (Op.14 No.6) is the key: B minor. Not simply a minor key – only eight of Haydn's 62 keyboard sonatas are in 'unnatural' minor keys – but a key considered 'difficult' or wayward by Haydn's contemporaries. The resulting sonata – despite its having a dance movement instead of a slow movement – is emotionally powerful, dark-hued, almost ferocious in character.

The opening theme of the **Allegro moderato** is based on a simple ornament (the inverted mordent) and dotted rhythms – at once quirky and light-hearted. That same theme supplies the nervous energy and vehemence of the development section, with its excursion into F sharp minor. The busy and chromatically tinged second subject takes on an expressive ambiguity in the recapitulation when Haydn presents it in the tonic minor but with the major key inflections in the left hand.

The mixing of major and minor is far more clear cut in the perfectly poised **Menuet** – one of the most calmly phrased and courtly of Haydn's minuet tunes. Poise turns to agitation in the middle for the B minor trio, with busy semiquavers grounded in the bass register of the keyboard.

But the **Finale (Presto)** is by far the most striking movement in the sonata. In a manner similar to other finale openings of Haydn's (e.g. Sonata in E flat Hob.XVI:52), it begins with percussive repeated notes that establish the energy and ferocity of the movement. And as John McCabe observes, 'Were it not for the large number of pauses and rests, which nearly always herald something of special importance, one might wish to describe it as a moto perpetuo, for it has all the atmosphere of an irresistible headlong flight.'

The movement is reminiscent of the fiery and unrelenting Sonata in C minor (Hob.XVI:20), composed in 1771 [and performed by Imogen Cooper earlier this year], but it looks even further back with the unusual and old-fashioned use of strict counterpoint in its equally fiery development. It has been suggested that Haydn and his contemporaries 'automatically turned to the older contrapuntal forms when they wanted to explore a greater depth of spirit', for, as Robbins Landon writes, 'no one in Vienna during the 18th century ever forgot how to write a good fugue'.

The disturbing effect of constant (and constantly interrupted) repetition is transformed in relentlessly swirling semiquavers that propel the finale to its uncompromising conclusion. In an intellectual game the closing gesture in grand octaves suggests both a fugal close and an orchestral tutti – a 'mighty exclamation mark' to a breathlessly turbulent sonata...!

'...no one in Vienna during the 18th century ever forgot how to write a good fugue'.

HC ROBBINS LANDON

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

6 Etudes from Op.10

No.3 in E major (Lento ma non troppo)

No.8 in F major (Allegro)

No.9 in F minor (Allegro molto agitato)

No.10 in A flat major (Vivace assai)

No.11 in E flat major (Allegretto)

No.12 in C minor (Allegro con fuoco) 'Revolutionary'

In a late night session over more than a few drinks, two pianists, both prize winners in major international competitions, agreed on one thing: the only set piece for the first round of all such competitions should be a set of Chopin études, and anyone who can't manage them should be forthwith eliminated. Chopin would have been pleased at this understanding of the gauntlet he'd thrown down. When the 12 Etudes Op.10 were published in 1833, they were widely considered unplayable – suitable only, one scoffer suggested, for straightening the twisted fingers of the only pianists who would attempt them. Chopin knew what he was doing in dedicating his Op.10 to Franz Liszt. When he began the set, Chopin described it to a friend as 'a grand exercise in my own manner'. Schumann, recognising the difficulties he could no longer execute himself, was among the first to hail the musical qualities of these studies: 'imagination and technique share dominion side by side.' He glimpsed what was later brilliantly stated by Alfred Cortot, that the études are 'as inaccessible to the musician without virtuosity as they are to the virtuoso without musicianship'.

Chopin was motivated by the inadequacy of existing studies by composers such as Cramer, Clementi and Czerny. A new musical language was posing technical difficulties for which they were no adequate preparation. Intrinsic to this language was a new kind of virtuosity. Clementi had written of 'shaping reason and feeling simultaneously with finger-technique', but the digital gymnastics required by Chopin succeed, in a quite revolutionary way, in showing how much music can be made by a mere two hands. His études are an aesthetic as much as a technical manifesto, the foundation of 19th-century keyboard technique. They also reflect Chopin's own performing style, offering for the most part studies in various types of legato playing, transcending the percussive nature of the piano. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the outer sections of Etude No.3 with its sublime mingling of melody and accompaniment in the same hand. For lineage of their musical qualities one needs to go back to the *Well-Tempered Clavier* of J.S. Bach, on which Chopin had been brought up. Once the difficulties have been overcome, the pianist must discover the poetry.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY DAVID GARRETT © 2005



'No "study" had ever been asked to contain such tragic force before.'

JEREMY SIEPMANN ON THE 'REVOLUTIONARY' ÉTUDE

Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915)

Sonata No.5, Op.53

Scriabin is a composer with a reputation for extravagance: of scale, of colour and of vision. He can be thought of as a missing link between the chromatic extremes of Mahler and Schoenberg's vision of atonality, and at his death he was working on *Mysterium*, a vast multimedia creation with elements of theatre, dance, art, poetry and perfume(!) as well as music. In 1905 he encountered the theosophical teachings of Helena Blavatsky and came to believe his music could be a bridge to spiritual ecstasy. He was inspired to write a 300-line poem, initially called *Poème Orgiaque*, which became the background to his most popular orchestral work, *Le Poème de l'extase* [The Poem of Ecstasy]. When the orchestral poem was eventually completed in 1908, he suppressed the text. But four lines from it were reproduced at the top of his Fifth Sonata, composed in under a week in 1907.

It has been said that the Russian piano sonata begins with Scriabin. His ten numbered sonatas reflect a developing style and personal philosophy, moving from the conventional to the modern and, writes Fabion Bowers, 'from 19th-century intensity and discursiveness into 20th-century condensation and economy'. Lacking traditional models, Scriabin's sonatas are highly distinctive and varied in shape. The first four, for example, are in either two movements or four, but with the Fifth Sonata he moves to a compact single-movement structure.

Some single-movement sonatas can be heard as thinly disguised multi-movement works, simply played without pause. But Scriabin's Fifth Sonata presents a fluid succession of alternating tempos and moods. The beginning is marked 'Allegro. Impetuoso. Con extravaganza'. It is the kind of abrupt opening – barely ten seconds long – that might take you by surprise. But pay attention, as this climactic gesture will return. For now, though, Scriabin shifts to what is effectively a slow introduction – 'Languido', delicate, sonorous and sweetly caressing – before a 'Presto con allegrezza' theme (joyful music, as fast as possible) embarks on the sonata movement proper. Scriabin's tempo and expression markings – too numerous to list here – continue to dart between affects, from the fantastical to the tumultuous, the ecstatic, the impetuous, and back to the languid. And then... 'Leggerissimo volando', very light, flying. After its startling opening gesture, the Fifth Sonata follows Scriabin's personal dictum: 'From the greatest delicacy (refinement) via active efficacy (flight) to the greatest grandiosity.'

YVONNE FRINDLE

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*I summon you to life,
secret yearnings!
You who have been
drowned in the dark
depths
Of the creative spirit,
you timorous
Embryos of life, it is to
you that I bring daring.*

FROM THE POEM OF ECSTASY

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Three Preludes from Opp.23 and 32

Op.23 No.1 in F sharp minor (Largo)

Op.23 No.5 in G minor (Alla marcia)

Op.32 No.12 G sharp minor (Allegro)

Sonata No.2 in B flat minor, Op.36

(1931 version)

Allegro agitato –

Non allegro – Lento –

L'istesso tempo – Allegro molto

Rachmaninoff was undoubtedly one of the greatest pianists. Listening to his recordings one can but marvel at the control over every aspect of the sound; his own music never sounded sentimental or sloppy, as so many other players made it sound, but always noble, expressive, strongly architectural, with clear outlines and incisive accents when he wanted them. He caused a sensation when he performed, yet it is interesting how long it took for his compositional reputation to grow to its current stature. Until recently even standard texts would describe his compositions as the overwritten utterances of a virtuoso. Rachmaninoff had to live with the perception of many musicians that he had little to say, writing in an out-dated idiom when the rest of the world had moved on.

Rachmaninoff aspired not necessarily to become to a world-famous pianist, but rather to be a composer and to conduct and compose opera. But as a refugee in exile, his piano playing was what earned him money – people came to hear him play. Everyone knew his C sharp minor Prelude (Op.3 No.2) and wouldn't allow him to leave the platform until he had played it, no matter what serious music making had preceded it. He got to the stage where he would simply launch into that early piece of his without even getting up from the piano stool!

Rachmaninoff did not compose much (relatively speaking) after he fled Russia in 1917. But by then, his music had acquired its main features: always a strongly delineated melodic line, a great sense of architecture often requiring heroic dynamic control from the performer; secondary voices often moving around under the principal voice, and sometimes an edge to the metric outlines. The lyricism was often dark, even tragic; the harmonies extravagant, rich and demanding large hands, not to speak of a large heart. Now, nearly 75 years after his death, it seems to matter little whether the music was, in its day, old-fashioned or not, for what surely counts in the end is whether it was good music.



PHOTO: KUBEY REMBRANDT (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Like Shostakovich, Rachmaninoff followed in the tradition of Bach and Chopin, writing preludes in all the major and minor keys. (The C sharp minor Prelude was followed by the ten preludes of Op.23 in 1903 and the 13 of Op.32 in 1910.) Concise and evocative, they are like miniature tone poems.

Prelude in F sharp minor, Op.23 No.1 (Largo). Tonight's set of three preludes begins with a deliciously gloomy and meditative demeanour. Opus 23 is dedicated to Alexander Siloti, the Russian pupil of Liszt, and a prominent musician in his day.

Prelude in G minor, Op.23 No.5 (Alla marcia). One of the best-known preludes from this set, the Prelude in G minor shifts the key centre up a semitone and the mood several notches. The bravura march theme frames a characteristically lyrical and nostalgic central section.

Prelude in G sharp minor, Op.32 No.12 (Allegro). This prelude floats sparkling right-hand figurations over a sombre left-hand melody that reaches to the bass register of the piano.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY LARRY SITSKY © 2006

* * * * *

For a composer who was often disparaged as anachronistic, it's interesting to note that Rachmaninoff generally avoided descriptive titles for his music. (I imagine he winced when the otherwise abstract Prelude in C sharp minor was published as 'The Bells of Moscow'.) Yet perhaps there is something inevitable in finding extra-musical associations, especially when a work such as his **Second Piano Sonata** can seem so evocative, and where a recurrence of tolling bells might also seem to dominate. The sonata was written in 1913, when late-Romantic sensibilities were approaching a dead-end, the futility of extreme maximalist pursuits indicating to some that the path forward might necessitate a 'less is more' approach. This may partly explain why Rachmaninoff later published a revised version (1931, as performed tonight), where textures are pared back and sections are cut or recast. Common to both versions, however, is the composer's utilisation of the piano's complete range, and with massive double-octave strikes to the lowest notes its power can be tested to the limit.

The first movement opens with the simultaneous presentation of two musical ideas: an heraldic motto of a falling third, and a sinuously descending melody. Again reflecting the composer's classical upbringing, the music follows strictly in sonata form, contrast occurring in the warmer relative major tonality for the second subject. The pages of the central development section witness some of Rachmaninoff's most tumultuous



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Rachmaninoff sitting at a Steinway piano in 1925

music, yet perhaps surprisingly the movement tapers to a quiet close.

Like bookends harmonised with a prescient nod to jazz, two elliptical phrases frame the slow movement, an initially peaceful Lento in the unrelated key of E minor. The music is violently upended in the central section, which features unexpected references to the opening of the sonata. A climax leads not, as might be anticipated, to a return of the movement's opening material, but in this later version to a brief recollection of the first movement's warm second subject.

The final movement is a study in exuberance, the music shifting to the more optimistic major tonality. Repeated chords suggest riotousness, while the heraldic motto from the opening of the sonata is ever present. A languorous second subject shows Rachmaninoff in typically lyrical vein, and to great effect he returns to this theme in the final pages, the music lifted to the zenith of the capacity of both pianist and piano. Despite the composer's Romantic reputation, the sonata ultimately reflects both modern and classical sensibilities, and occupies a position in the repertoire as one of the most demanding ever written for the instrument.

SCOTT DAVIE © 2013

...the sonata
ultimately reflects
both modern and
classical sensibilities...



**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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PHOTO: JAY FRAM

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PHOTO: CHRISTIE BREWSTER

Nora Goodridge with Tutti Second Violin Nicole Masters. Nicole says she feels incredibly privileged to have this connection with someone who wants to support her chair in the orchestra. 'I feel really grateful that there are people like Nora still in this world.' For her part, Nora sums it up: 'It's my choice, and it's a joy!'



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MAJOR PARTNERS



OFFICIAL CAR PARTNER



TECHNOLOGY PARTNER



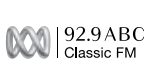
GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS



MEDIA PARTNERS



VANGUARD PARTNER



REGIONAL TOUR PARTNER

