



Beethoven One

Marwood and the SSO Fellows

TEA & SYMPHONY
Friday 17 November, llam

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VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY'S SHOSTAKOVICH TRIBUTE



Dramatic Shostakovich SHOSTAKOVICH

Ladv Macbeth of Mtsensk: Passacaglia Violin Concerto No.1 Symphony No.5.

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor Rav Chen violin

Special Event Premier Partner Credit Suisse

Fri 10 Nov, 8pm Sat 11 Nov. 2pm

Mon 13 Nov, 7pm Sydney Opera House

APT Master Series

Wed 15 Nov. 8pm Fri 17 Nov. 8pm Sat 18 Nov, 8pm

Sydney Opera House

Gripping Shostakovich SHOSTAKOVICH

Cello Concerto No.1 Symphony No.8.

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor Daniel Müller-Schott cello

CLASSICAL



Beethoven One

Marwood and the SSO Fellows **BEETHOVEN** Symphony No.1 VASKS Distant Light - Violin Concerto Anthony Marwood violin-director · SSO Fellows Tea & Symphony

Fri 17 Nov. 11am complimentary morning tea from 10am

Sydney Opera House

Belshazzar's Feast

EÖTVÖS Halleluia – Oratorium balbulum **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**

WALTON Belshazzar's Feast

David Robertson conductor Michelle DeYoung mezzo-soprano

Topi Lehtipuu tenor Andrew Foster-Williams bass-baritone Martin Crewes narrator Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Emirates Metro Series Fri 24 Nov. 8pm

Great Classics Sat 25 Nov, 2pm Sydney Opera House



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 TCHAIKOVSKY Souvenir de Florence

Roger Benedict conductor • David Elton trumpet SSO Fellows

Sun 26 Nov, 3pm Verbrugghen Hall



Bluebeard's Castle

Opera Australia Chorus

With Bach & Brahms **BRAHMS** Alto Rhapsody JS BACH Cantata No.82 - Ich habe genug BARTÓK Bluebeard's Castle David Robertson conductor Michelle DeYoung mezzo-soprano Andrew Foster-Williams bass-baritone John Relyea bass Don Hany narrator

APT Master Series

Wed 29 Nov. 8pm Fri 1 Dec. 8pm Sat 2 Dec. 8pm Sydney Opera House

sydneysymphony.com

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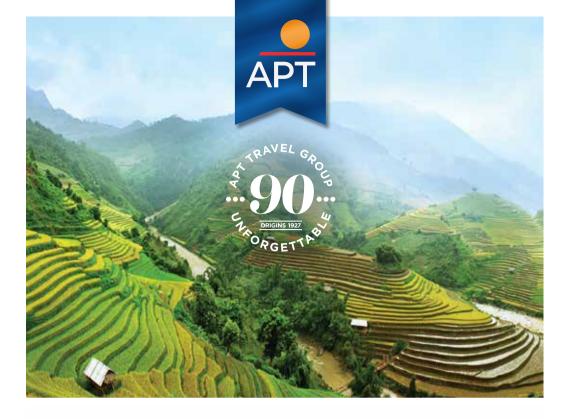












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2017 CONCERT SEASON

TEA & SYMPHONY

FRIDAY 17 NOVEMBER, 11AM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL



Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

BEETHOVEN ONE

Anthony Marwood violin and director 2017 SSO Fellows with musicians and guests of the SSO

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) Symphony No.1 in C, Op.21

Adagio molto – Allegro con brio Andante cantabile con moto Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace) – Trio Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

PĒTERIS VASKS (born 1946) Distant Light – Concerto for violin and strings

Andante – Cadenza I – Cantabile – Mosso – Cadenza II – ↓ = c.120 – Cantabile – Agitato – Cadenza III – Tempo di Valse Andante Estimated durations: 26 minutes, 31 minutes The concert will conclude at approximately 12.05pm.

COVER IMAGE: The Monkey Head Nebula lies about 6400 light-years away in the constellation of Orion (the Hunter) – this region is filled with young stars embedded with bright wisps of cosmic gas and dust (NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA))



ABOUT THE MUSIC

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No.1 in C, Op.21

Adagio molto – Allegro con brio Andante cantabile con moto Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace) – Trio Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

When Ludwig van Beethoven presented his first symphony in the gilt elegance of the Imperial Court Theatre (Burgtheater) in Vienna on 2 April 1800, he was already in his 30th year, looking forward to a new century in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and ready to have his work stand comparison with anything of Haydn and Mozart. Having lived more than six years in Vienna, he was celebrated as the city's foremost piano virtuoso through his performances in grand salons and, ultimately, his first public performance (of the B flat Concerto) in 1795. He had also achieved celebrity as a composer, the subscription list for his three Piano Trios, 0p.1, published in 1794, demonstrating an already wide circle of patrons and admirers.

But Beethoven, as he presented his first personal benefit concert in the hard-to-get Burgtheater, was attempting to do more than merely match the masterpieces of his predecessors. Having abandoned earlier sketches for a symphony, he now had a work, probably composed over the preceding year or more, in which he was ready, cautiously, to display something of his own distinctive personality.

His own boundless ambition notwithstanding, probably even Beethoven himself did not suspect that that April evening would point new ways ahead for symphonic music, away from the aristocratic traditions of the 18th century, towards a new, more public and popular, future. No one could have predicted that it would be the launch of a body of symphonies acknowledged in music history as among the most indestructible conceptions of humankind. But in this first concert of his own in Vienna, Beethoven took grateful care to acknowledge the heritage from which he drew his talent and inspiration. He programmed a symphony by Mozart and excerpts from Haydn's *Creation*, alongside his own Septet in E flat, Op.20 (which he jovially referred to as his 'Creation') and a piano concerto (probably his most recent, No.1 in C, Op.15). He also improvised at the keyboard before the first performance of his new symphony.

Beethoven asserts his innovative personality at the very beginning of the symphony with an opening chord which is not in the expected key of C major, but which is in fact a discord. Though he shifts key in the third bar, it still is not the home key. This outlandish behaviour, with the music seeming to grope for a foothold,

Keynotes

BEETHOVEN

Born Bonn, 1770 Died Vienna, 1827

Beethoven began his symphonic career at the age of 30. He had inherited the musical language of the 18th century and the symphonic style of Mozart and Haydn, and this first effort in the genre followed in their tradition: 'a new Grand Symphony with complete orchestra'. But it was adventurous, too, and audiences noticed. Nonetheless, they willingly followed as with each new symphony Beethoven took the genre to new places, breaking classical boundaries with works that were longer, more dramatic and more ambitious than anything heard before.

FIRST SYMPHONY

The First Symphony is classical on the surface but everywhere it 'breaks with the past': beginning with what would have been a shocking opening, and inching the third movement from its traditional dance-like minuet character to something more like a wild Beethovenian scherzo. Beethoven's emerging boldness is heard in the broad lines and his imaginative treatment of the most fundamental musical ideas.

The First Symphony was premiered on 2 April 1800. It was well received, and the critics approved of its novelty and wealth of ideas. One, however, thought that the prominence Beethoven had given to the wind instruments made the symphony sound more like band music than a 'proper orchestral work'.



◆ Detail from Joseph Willibrord Mähler's portrait of Beethoven (1804)

would have fallen oddly enough on the ears of Beethoven's listeners – though, as Sir George Grove points out, Bach and Haydn had perpetrated similar surprises before. More unusual than the discord itself is the way the composer uses it and the subsequent unexpected modulations to create tensions that build up throughout the slow introduction – tensions that are resolved only when we land at last in the proper C major with the arrival of the *Allegro*.

This was no doubt seen as audacious on the part of a young composer, and some critics, predictably, were offended. Yet it was no juvenile prank, nor even a joke such as Haydn might have relished, but a tentative excursion into the realm of what, with Mahler and Nielsen, would come to be called 'progressive tonality'.

Beethoven does indulge in one or two minor harmonic jokes, as for example when he introduces the subsidiary theme of the sonata-form first movement. However, we hear his authentic voice as he takes the theme darkly into the minor, with oboe plaintively above. He crowns the movement with an unexpectedly brilliant and large-scale coda.

The slow movement begins by treating its gently tripping theme like a fugue, though the movement is in sonata form, and closely resembles the more elaborate slow movement of the contemporaneous String Quartet in C minor, Op.18 No.4.

The most innovative thing in Beethoven's first symphony is the third movement, which we refer to as a scherzo though the composer called it a minuet. The point is that *scherzo* implies a joke; and Beethoven, ever scrupulous, makes a point of using ...some critics, predictably, were offended. the term only when in a humorous mood. But this is no longer a dance, even in the sense that Haydn had endowed the once stately minuet with power and pace. Under Beethoven, *scherzo* took on a new meaning, one which was defined by the music itself, with its vigorous one-in-a-bar beat and totally new driving force. Here we have Beethoven's first major contribution to symphonic form, one with which, in the oft-quoted words of J.W. Davison, he 'took a leap into a new world'.

By no means revolutionary, but again offensive to some in the conservative musical establishment, was the apparent frivolity with which Beethoven opens his finale – violins fool over several false starts before they eventually hit on the tune and then whirl away with great *brio*. One respected German conductor is said to have habitually cut the introduction lest it evoke laughter in the audience. A light-hearted movement, the finale culminates, like the first movement, in a coda already stamped with true Beethovenian power and authority.

Beethoven thus makes his symphonic bow with a show of respect for the past, acknowledging his responsibilities in the future. Already evident, however, are signs of the extraordinary expansion that would be achieved by the symphony in his hands.

ANTHONY CANE © 1978/1998

Beethoven's First Symphony calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the symphony in 1940 under Georg Schnéevoigt and most recently in 2016 as part of Vladimir Ashkenazy's Beethoven Celebration.

VERBRUGGHEN HALL Sun 26 Nov, 3pm



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From the absurd to the sublime – the talented SSO Fellows present a concert that will be something to write home about. Featuring Tchaikovsky's gorgeous *Souvenir de Florence*.

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LIGETI arr. Howarth Mysteries of the Macabre
PÄRT Fratres for chamber ensemble (2007)
RAUTAVAARA Octet for Winds
GLAZUNOV In modo religioso for brass quartet
TCHAIKOVSKY Souvenir de Florence

ARTISTS

Roger Benedict conductor
David Elton trumpet
2017 Fellows

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Pēteris Vasks Distant Light (Tālā Gaisma) – Concerto for violin and strings

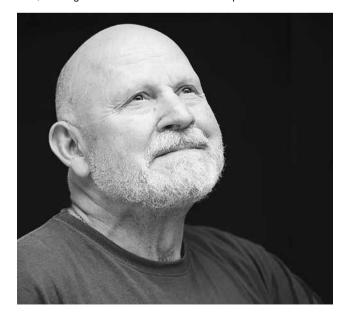
Andante – Cadenza I – Cantabile – Mosso – Cadenza II – ↓ = c.120 – Cantabile – Agitato – Cadenza III – Tempo di Valse Andante

Anthony Marwood violin

For more than 35 years now, orchestral repertoire has been replenished by Eastern European and Baltic composers, among them Latvian Pēteris Vasks. US radio presenter Daniel Stephen Johnson has said: 'The rough outlines of Pēteris Vasks' work and career might have a familiar ring to them: born in Soviet Latvia, Vasks endured government repression not only for his aesthetics but for his Christian faith, and emerged in the late 1970s with a pared-down compositional style heavily influenced by sacred themes.'

Endurance of the human spirit against the brutality of a monolithic oppressor might describe Vasks' Symphony No.1.

The influence of earlier models – the Poles Lutosławski and Penderecki – can be heard, particularly in moments of controlled 'indeterminacy'. Vasks' later works are concerned with broader questions of the soul (he is the son of a clergyman) and they sometimes put us in mind of the sacred music of Estonian Arvo Pärt, although Vasks himself identifies an important difference



Keynotes

VASKS

Born Aizpute, Latvia, 1946

Pēteris Vasks was born in Sovietoccupied Latvia, the son of a Baptist pastor in an atheist state. Stigmatised and precluded from studying double bass at the Latvian Academy of Music, he enrolled instead at the Academy of Music in Vilnius, in neighbouring Lithuania. He performed with the Latvian National Opera Orchestra and the Latvian Symphony Orchestra before turning to composition. Early influences included Polish composers Lutosławski and Penderecki and the then new aleatoric ('chance') approach to music, as well as Latvian folk traditions. By the 1980s he had forged a unique musical vocabulary and had become known in the West through violinist Gidon Kremer's championing of his music. He was contracted by the German publisher Schott in 1990, the year before Latvian independence.

DISTANT LIGHT

This violin concerto was composed in 1996–97 at the request of Gidon Kremer and was inspired in part by the realisation that they had, unknowingly, attended the same school but were meeting only as adults, through music. There is memory and nostalgia in the music, sadness too, but also the promise of the distant stars.

The concerto is structured as a single span of music, with three cadenzas for the soloist alone providing landmarks in a musical journey that moves between serenity, the sounds of lament, a dancing folk-like episode, and even a moment of chaos.

between them: 'he is already living in Paradise, and his music comes from there! There's no emotion, no drama. My ideal is there, but I am living here, and my compositions deal with the contradiction between the ideal and reality.'

Distant Light ('Tālā Gaisma' in Latvian) was composed in 1996–97 at the request of violinist Gidon Kremer, and Vasks was inspired in part by reading Kremer's autobiography, Childhood Fragments. Vasks realised that he and Kremer had, unknowingly, gone to the same school: 'But we have only really met now in music. Distant Light is nostalgia with a touch of tragedy. Childhood memories, but also the glittering stars millions of light-years away.'

This most 'ethereal' of violin concertos is characterised by its sheer beauty of sound and, as Martin Anderson writes, 'it observes the basic topos of many other Vasks works in its suggestion that music can relieve suffering and assuage grief'.

'Distant Light is nostalgia with a touch of tragedy. Childhood memories, but also the glittering stars millions of light-years away.'

Discovering Vasks - A Recollection

One of the earliest performances in Australia of symphonic music by Pēteris Vasks took place in Perth in 2001. It was the Australian premiere of his cello concerto with its dedicatee. David Geringas, as soloist. I was especially excited to be presenting this beautiful and exciting work to the WASO's audiences, playing advocate for a composer whose work I'd discovered only two years earlier. What was even more rewarding was the response: many in the audience who'd arrived at the concert hall expecting Schubert's Great C Major Symphony to be the highlight of evening wrote afterwards expressing delight at their own discovery. This is relatively unusual we are drawn to the familiar, a fact of human nature that crosses all musical genres. Even I might not have been especially curious about the Vasks Cello Concerto except that someone I trust had said that it was really worth hearing.

So who is Pēteris Vasks?

On a first hearing I recognised the radiant simplicity of composers such as Arvo Pārt and Henryk Gorecki but with a stronger undercurrent of drama. At times in the cello concerto I could hear the strident brilliance of Shostakovich, but without the bitterness. And it seemed Vasks could compete with Mahler any day when it came to sumptuous romantic lines. Of course, Vasks possesses a distinctive musical language

of his own, but these were the stylistic landmarks I latched on to. Just as it might be helpful to place Vasks' native Latvia as a country on the Baltic coast, halfway between Finland and Poland, and 600km west of Moscow.

The proximity to Moscow is not insignificant. As a Latvian, Vasks belongs to a geographical group of composers who were becoming increasingly popular during the 1980s and 90s: Pärt in Estonia, Rautavaara in Finland, Kancheli in Georgia, Gorecki in Poland. These countries were neighbours or part of the Soviet Union, and in many cases their composers were emerging from an atmosphere of oppression and the struggle for independence.

It's no surprise then that a composer like Vasks might respond to the natural environment of his homeland and its turbulent history or that his music would contain a strong spiritual element. Vasks taps into our desire for beauty, and for hope. 'Music must carry a message,' he says, 'with an ideal form, with spiritual concentration. That's my way. My music doesn't tell how awful things are, how bad the world is, how bad people are. It's the other way around: [it tells] how beautiful the world is, how beautiful people's souls are.'

YVONNE FRINDLE © 2017

The concerto follows a distinctive single-movement structure, shifting style and character without pause. Beginning with atmospheric sounds (the soloist, for example, is asked to play an arpeggio of unspecified 'bird-like' harmonics). Vasks soon introduces a broad, lyrical melody. The passion rises (and it is possible to talk of passion in Vasks' music), then the soloist launches into the first of three cadenzas that will define the structure. Out of glacially moving lower strings, a new lyrical section emerges and builds toward a folk-like dance (with glints of waltz) leading to the second cadenza. After more dance-like music, silence... and then slow music resumes. The aspiring lyricism of this work is won against genuine intrusion of drama; there are what sound like apprehensions of alarm and then the most intense of the cadenzas takes place, before the brief, lumbering return of dance music. Recollection of the opening melodic material suggests that we may have been listening all this time to a highly interesting arch structure; the return of atmospheric sounds supports this.

'Nostalgia with a touch of tragedy' partly explains the emotional appeal of this work. But it could also be explained by the prevailing singing style through which, says the composer, 'I express my ideals'. Overall, Vasks asks listeners to hold out against the darkness and focus on the 'distant light'.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY GORDON KALTON WILLIAMS © 2015

In *Distant Light* the soloist is accompanied by a small string orchestra.

Distant Light was premiered by Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica in Salzburg in 1997. The first Australian performances of the concerto were given by Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber Orchestra as part of their Luminous project in 2005, and in 2015 Anthony Marwood performed it in concerts with the Adelaide and Tasmanian symphony orchestras. This is the SSO's first performance of the concerto.



David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Anthony Marwood violin and director

British violinist Anthony Marwood is in demand worldwide as an orchestra director, concerto soloist and chamber musician. Since 2015 he has been Principal Artistic Partner of the Canadian chamber orchestra Les Violons du Roy, and in the 2016–17 season he was Artist in Residence at the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra. As a soloist he has worked with conductors such as Valery Gergiev, Andrew Davis, Thomas Søndergård, David Robertson, Gerard Korsten, Ilan Volkov, Jaime Martin, Bernard Labadie and Douglas Boyd.

A regular visitor to Australia, he has performed with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Tasmanian and Adelaide symphony orchestras, and also enjoys a close association with the Australian National Academy of Music. He previously appeared with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2012 and 2015.

Equally comfortable in mainstream repertoire and contemporary music, he has premiered and recorded many new works for violin, including those written for him by Thomas Adès (Concentric Paths, which he performed with the SSO in 2012), Sally Beamish, Steven Mackey and Samuel Adams. Another facet of Marwood's career is genre-bending presentations such as the Academy of St Martin in the Fields' staged production of Stravinsky's A Soldier's Tale, in which he acted the role of the Soldier and played the violin part.

Highlights of recent seasons have included engagements with the Boston, St Louis, Vienna Radio and New Zealand symphony orchestras. The 2017–18 season includes a tour with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, a play-direct engagement with the Tapiola Symphony in Helsinki, concerto appearances with the Chamber Orchestra of Paris, and a return to Wigmore Hall to perform the Mendelssohn and Enescu octets.

His many recordings include violin sonatas by Schumann and Brahms with Aleksandar Madžar, Stravinsky's complete works for violin and piano with Thomas Adès, and with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra Britten's Violin Concerto and Double Concerto (violin and viola) and Schumann's later works for violin and orchestra. His most recent release is a critically acclaimed recording of Walton's Violin Concerto (BBC SSO and Martyn Brabbins).

Anthony Marwood was named Instrumentalist of the Year by the Royal Philharmonic Society in 2006 and a Fellow of the Guildhall School of Music in 2013. He plays a 1736 Carlo Bergonzi violin, kindly bought by a syndicate of purchasers.

www.anthonymarwood.com

SSO Fellowship 2017

The SSO Fellowship is recognised as one of the world's leading orchestral training programs. Each year, up to 16 exceptional young musicians are selected through a national audition process to participate in an intensive, year-long program of mentoring, performances, workshops, masterclasses with international soloists and immersion in the world of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra – honing their skills in the real-world environment of professional rehearsals and orchestral concerts. Under the guidance of SSO Principal Viola and Fellowship Artistic Director

Roger Benedict, they also present chamber music performances in Sydney and on tour. Each Fellow receives a scholarship and professional support to allow them to fully commit to their year with the SSO.

Since the program's beginnings in 2001, Fellowship alumni have won positions in some of the finest orchestras in Europe, Asia and Australia, including 11 past Fellows who now hold permanent positions with the SSO. sydneysymphony.com/fellowship



The 2017 SSO Fellows with Fellowship Artistic Director Roger Benedict (centre)



We also thank our Fellowship Patrons and Supporters for their generosity (see page 18).

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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, 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 fourth year as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

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Ruben Palma cello
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David McGregor clarinet
Christopher Haycroft bassoon
Alice Yang horn
Jenna Smith trumpet
Sami Butler timpani

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