

# СУМБУР ВМЕСТО МУЗЫКИ

## Об опере «Лели Макобет Минского вёзда»

Вместе с общими художественными решениями в опере строится выразительная и интересная музыкальная картина. Иногда в операх композиторы не избегают приема такой так называемой «аутизации». Наряду со сложными инструментальными произведениями, хороши и оперы.

Некоторые театры ссылаются на то, что спектакли «пробиваются» плохо. Высокочисленная аудитория слушает оперу Шостаковича «Лели Макобет Минского вёзда» с трудом. Музыкальная картина оперы не воспринимается так, как хотелось бы зрителю. Многие считают, что опера «Лели Макобет Минского вёзда» — это не опера, а музыкальная драма. Музыкальная картина оперы не воспринимается так, как хотелось бы зрителю. Многие считают, что опера «Лели Макобет Минского вёзда» — это не опера, а музыкальная драма. Музыкальная картина оперы не воспринимается так, как хотелось бы зрителю. Многие считают, что опера «Лели Макобет Минского вёзда» — это не опера, а музыкальная драма.

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**sydney symphony orchestra**  
 David Robertson  
 The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

## Dramatic Shostakovich

### Ashkenazy's Shostakovich Tribute

SPECIAL EVENT  
 PREMIER PARTNER CREDIT SUISSE  
 Friday 10 November, 8pm  
 Saturday 11 November, 2pm

MONDAYS @ 7  
 Monday 13 November, 7pm





**VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY'S SHOSTAKOVICH TRIBUTE**



Keith Saunders

**Dramatic Shostakovich**

**SHOSTAKOVICH**

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

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** conductor  
**Ray Chen** violin

Special Event  
Premier Partner Credit Suisse

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

Mondays @ 7  
**Mon 13 Nov, 7pm**  
Sydney Opera House

**Gripping Shostakovich**

**SHOSTAKOVICH**

Cello Concerto No.1  
Symphony No.8.

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** conductor  
**Daniel Müller-Schott** cello

APT Master Series

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

Sydney Opera House

**CLASSICAL**



Pia Johnson

**Beethoven One**

*Marwood and the SSO Fellows*

**BEETHOVEN** Symphony No.1

**VASKS** Distant Light – Violin Concerto

**Anthony Marwood** violin-director • **SSO Fellows**

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**Fri 17 Nov, 11am**

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Sydney Opera House



**Belshazzar's Feast**

**EÖTVÖS** Halleluja – 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



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

**TCHAIKOVSKY** Souvenir de Florence

**Roger Benedict** conductor • **David Elton** trumpet

**SSO Fellows**

**Sun 26 Nov, 3pm**

Verbruggen Hall



Shirley Suarez

**Bluebeard's Castle**

*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

**Opera Australia Chorus**

APT Master Series

**Wed 29 Nov, 8pm**

**Fri 1 Dec, 8pm**

**Sat 2 Dec, 8pm**

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*WELCOME*



**Credit Suisse warmly welcomes you to this SSO special event featuring Vladimir Ashkenazy, violinist Ray Chen, and the music of Shostakovich.**

During his tenure as the SSO's Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, Ashkenazy conducted many memorable performances of music that is close to his heart, including the two major works on tonight's program. It is with great delight that we welcome him back to Sydney for this first week in his Shostakovich Tribute, and we are proud to be supporting these performances as part of our premier partnership with the SSO.

In recent seasons we have played a part in bringing to Sydney audiences some of the world's great violinists, including Anne-Sophie Mutter, Pinchas Zukerman and Maxim Vengerov. In this concert Ray Chen makes a welcome return to the Sydney Opera House concert platform to perform one of the most exciting and dramatic concertos in the violin repertoire.

Tonight's program carries great power, both musically and through its historical context. Ashkenazy has chosen music that engages heart and mind for what promises to be a thrilling highlight in the 2017 concert calendar, and it gives us great pleasure to be playing a role in bringing it about.

We hope you enjoy the concert and look forward to seeing you at future performances by the SSO.



**John Knox**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Credit Suisse Australia



**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

**David Robertson**  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

**SPECIAL EVENT**

**PREMIER PARTNER CREDIT SUISSE**

FRIDAY 10 NOVEMBER, 8PM

SATURDAY 11 NOVEMBER, 2PM

**MONDAYS @ 7**

MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER, 7PM

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SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

**DRAMATIC  
SHOSTAKOVICH**

**Vladimir Ashkenazy** *conductor*

**Ray Chen** *violin*

**DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)**

**Passacaglia from the opera**

***Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk***

**Violin Concerto No.1 in A minor, Op.99**

*Nocturne (Moderato)*

*Scherzo (Allegro)*

*Passacaglia (Andante) – cadenza –*

*Burlesque (Allegro con brio – Presto)*

INTERVAL

**Symphony No.5 in D minor, Op.47**

*Moderato – Allegro non troppo*

*Allegretto*

*Largo*

*Allegro non troppo*



**92.9 ABC**  
Classic FM

Saturday's concert will be recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast on Saturday 25 November at noon.

.....  
Pre-concert talk by Andrew Aronowicz in the Northern Foyer 45 minutes before each performance.  
For more information visit [sydney-symphony.com/speaker-bios](http://sydney-symphony.com/speaker-bios)

.....  
Estimated durations: 8 minutes, 40 minutes, 20-minute interval, 45 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 10pm (Fri), 4pm (Sat), 9pm (Mon)

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COVER IMAGE: Montage showing the *Pravda* article from 28 January 1936, 'Muddle Instead of Music' (Private Collection/Sputnik/Bridgeman Images) and a still from Albert Gendelshtein's 1966 documentary Dmitri Shostakovich (Sputnik/Lebrecht)

SUPPORTING PARTNER





# Dramatic Shostakovich

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This week's program is the first in Vladimir Ashkenazy's Shostakovich Tribute – a two-week immersion in the music of a 20th-century master.

It begins with a highlight from one of Shostakovich's early successes, his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. And it was a *huge* success – until the night Stalin turned up, and left before the end. Having fallen from grace, Shostakovich found favour with his Fifth Symphony – tagged 'A Soviet Artist's Reply to Just Criticism'. Ten years later, as he completed his first violin concerto, he was once more under a cloud. The first performances of that work had to wait until after Stalin's death. Ashkenazy himself was at the Moscow premiere in 1955.

All the music in this concert is powerful, strongly felt and, to use Ashkenazy's own word, eloquent. The violin concerto is like a great oration – its first soloist, David Oistrakh, compared it to a 'major Shakespearean role, full of meaning which demands a great deal of thought and emotional input from the interpreter'. The relentless Passacaglia from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* demonstrates how an orchestra – without voices or words – can be an actor in a drama. And the Fifth Symphony tells its own story – a story rooted in time, place and the composer's circumstances, its classical outlines embracing contradictory emotions. This is music, said Shostakovich's friend Mstislav Rostropovich, in which 'the victim still tries to smile in his pain'.

Much has been written about Shostakovich's life and music, and the often ambiguous political significance of his work has led to intense debate. Ashkenazy, who met the composer as a student and who knew his world, offers a musician's perspective when he says:

*If you could describe Shostakovich's attitude and what he tried to express in his music, it's simply the tragedy of an individual in impossible circumstances. But we knew what he wanted to say because we felt the same that he did, and we somehow deciphered it emotionally and spiritually...And he said it so eloquently. We were looking into a mirror of our existence. That's what it was like. It's reality. But reality can be expressed only by a genius, in musical terms.*

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## READ IN ADVANCE

You can also read SSO program books on your computer or mobile device by visiting our online program library in the week leading up to the concert: [sydneyphilharmonic.com/program-library](http://sydneyphilharmonic.com/program-library)

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# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## Dmitri Shostakovich Passacaglia from the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

By 1936, Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* had enjoyed an extraordinarily successful two-year run. It opened in January 1934 with simultaneous productions in Moscow and Leningrad, had been taken on tour, and 200 performances later was still playing in both cities. At one point in Moscow there were three different productions running. But then Stalin – whose taste tended to Lehár's *Merry Widow* and kitsch socialist realist operas – saw the show. An 'anonymous' review appeared in the official newspaper *Pravda* accusing the composer of producing 'muddle [or chaos] instead of music' and warning that this 'could end very badly' for him. Shostakovich took to sleeping in the hallway of his apartment so as not to disturb his family when the NVKD (the predecessor of the KGB) arrived to arrest him – though it never came to that. *Lady Macbeth* was pulled from the stage and revised as the toned-down *Katerina Ismailova*, and he withdrew, or allowed to be withdrawn, his Fourth Symphony.

Stalin's distaste for the work, as expressed in *Pravda*, seemed based on musical concerns, expressing disapproval of the dissonance: 'the grinding, the squealing. To follow this "music" is difficult, to remember it is impossible...' In other words, no good tunes – which is palpable rubbish. In reality, the ex-seminarian lurking in Stalin seems to have bridled at the explicit sex and violence with which Shostakovich's opera is replete.

The opera is based on a novella by Nikolai Leskov, written in 1864. In this lurid tale, Katerina is in a loveless marriage with Zinovy Borisovich Ismailov, a merchant in the Russian provinces. While he is away, she distracts herself with Sergei, a handsome new labourer. Zinovy's father Boris catches Sergei leaving Katerina's bedroom and flogs him, then demands food. Katerina obliges, adding a liberal dose of rat-poison to a dish of mushrooms. The dying Boris accuses Katerina of murder, but her tears are so convincing that all, including the priest, assume he is raving. In the following scene, Zinovy, having been recalled by Boris, discovers Katerina and Sergei *in flagrante delicto*. Together they kill him and hide him in the wine cellar. On their wedding day, a drunkard breaks into the cellar where he discovers Zinovy's body and raises the alarm. The wedding feast is interrupted by the arrival of the police, and the lovers are sent into exile in Siberia. During the march, Sergei falls for another female convict, Sonyetka, and tricks Katerina in giving him her stockings – Sonyetka's price. Katerina drags her rival off a bridge into the river, where both women perish.

## Keynotes

### SHOSTAKOVICH

*Born St Petersburg, 1906*  
*Died Moscow, 1975*

One of the great symphonic composers of the 20th century, Shostakovich was also a controversial and enigmatic personality who lived through the Bolshevik Revolution, the Stalinist purges and World War II. His music is often searched for cryptic messages: criticism of the Stalinist regime disguised in music that, it was hoped, would be found acceptable by authorities. But Shostakovich's compromises only went so far and his music was nonetheless subject to censure, usually on stylistic or 'moral' grounds. Most famously, in 1936, his hitherto well-received opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was dismissed in *Pravda* as 'Muddle instead of Music'.

### PASSACAGLIA

The Passacaglia from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* is an orchestral intermezzo or interlude, heard at a climactic point in the middle of Act II, after Katerina ('Lady Macbeth') has murdered her father-in-law. It is a dark and powerful movement, drawing on the full forces of the orchestra, and the recurring bass that underpins the music suggests the inexorable journey of the drama towards its bleak and tragic end.

## The Passacaglia: Four Centuries and Counting

The passacaglia form has its origins in 17th-century Spain. Its signature features emerged early on and these included a recurring ground bass (a repeated bass line or progression of chords) over which the composer could develop a series of melodic variations, a triple-time metre and a serious or majestic character. These characteristics were shared with the chaconne, and the two terms were often used interchangeably.

The form fell into decline during the Classical era of the second half of the 18th century, but was revived in the 19th century, with many composers taking inspiration from the impressive but atypical passacaglias and chaconnes of Bach and Handel. The most famous instance is Brahms in the finale of his Fourth Symphony.

In the 20th century both Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten used the passacaglia form for operatic intermezzos (in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and *Peter Grimes* respectively) as well as in their violin concertos. And in next week's concerts a third example of a Shostakovich passacaglia can be heard, in his Eighth Symphony. The form continues to attract composers: John Adams, for example, uses it in his first violin concerto, and in his setting of John Donne's 'Batter my heart' in his opera *Doctor Atomic*.

The orchestra plays a central role in the drama of the opera, and comes to the fore in the orchestral interludes (a strategy that Benjamin Britten was to use in *Peter Grimes* in 1945). In a staged production, the Passacaglia follows Boris's death, crashing in with a massive, brazen chords before dropping to the first statement of the passacaglia bass line. With its combination of repetition overlaid with variation, the passacaglia form was a favourite of Shostakovich's, and as in *Peter Grimes*, it provides an emotional centrepiece.

A work that portrays the bourgeoisie so unflatteringly should, perhaps, have appealed to Stalin, but instead it offended his musical conservatism and sexual puritanism. More curiously, though, Shostakovich himself never showed much enthusiasm for reviving the opera in its original form, even when it would have been safe to do so. It is not, of course, an uplifting tale, it contains some of the most masterful music that the young composer wrote.

ADAPTED IN PART FROM A NOTE BY GORDON KERRY © 2010

The Passacaglia calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, E flat clarinet, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and a large percussion section; harp and strings. (In theatrical performances, the ensemble can be augmented by a large offstage banda.)

This is the first time the SSO has performed the Passacaglia from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.



Program cover from the Leningrad premiere of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in 1934.



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## Shostakovich

### Violin Concerto No.1 in A minor, Op.99

*Nocturne (Moderato)*

*Scherzo (Allegro)*

*Passacaglia (Andante) – cadenza –*

*Burlesque (Allegro con brio – Presto)*

#### Ray Chen *violin*

Paradoxically, the Second World War lulled some Soviet artists into a false sense of security. They, like the rest of the populace, endured the privations and dangers of battle and invasion, but the war provided some relief from the Great Terror of the 1930s during which Stalin had ‘purged’ – murdered or imprisoned – countless numbers of his own citizens, especially the leading intellectuals in various fields. That Shostakovich, for one, had let his guard down is evident in the events surrounding his Ninth Symphony, for which Stalin had ‘suggested’ the composer use Beethoven’s Ninth as a model. Shostakovich, unable to write the victory symphony expected, nonetheless felt safe enough to produce an ostensibly ‘light’ Ninth Symphony in 1945.

With the defeat of the Nazis, Stalin’s administration returned to the business of enforcing its values on the Soviet people, and his cultural commissar Andrei Zhdanov initiated a series of crackdowns on artistic life. By February 1948 a Party Decree had been promulgated which attacked the proponents of ‘formalism’ in music. Shostakovich, despite publicly acknowledging his ‘errors’, was relieved of his teaching duties. Richard Taruskin has pointed out that a first draft of the Party Decree included the resolution ‘to liquidate the one-sided, abnormal deviation in Soviet music towards textless instrumental works.’ In the event, ‘liquidate’ was replaced with ‘censure’, but the intention is plain: textless works are susceptible to many interpretations, and therefore less easy to censor. Perhaps for that reason, Shostakovich kept the violin concerto that he began in 1947 under wraps for some years – it only saw the light of day in 1955 when Stalin was safely embalmed.

The impetus for the work was almost certainly the series of concerts given by David Oistrakh in 1947 entitled ‘The Development of the Violin’, and Shostakovich’s response to Oistrakh’s amazing artistry was to compose this big, four-movement, essentially symphonic work and dedicate it to him. It was initially given the opus number 77 but when published appeared as Op.99. Oistrakh himself made many illuminating remarks about the work, saying:

*This composition sets before the violinist a fascinating and noble task...enabling him not only to display his virtuosity,*

## Keynotes

### VIOLIN CONCERTO NO.1

This concerto was composed for the great virtuoso David Oistrakh in 1947 (when it was designated Op.77) but not performed until 1955, after Stalin’s death.

It is in four movements: an unexpectedly lyrical *Nocturne*; a *Scherzo* that takes the idea of musical playfulness and gives it a ‘prickly’ character, quoting Shostakovich’s four-note ‘signature’ motif; and a long and noble *Passacaglia*, which builds variations on a theme introduced by strings and timpani before dissolving into a cadenza for the soloist alone, and then ‘crashes down’ into the *Burlesque*.

Shostakovich was part-way through the final movement of his First Violin Concerto when the Zhdanov Decree was published. His friend and fellow-composer, Mikhail Meyerovich recalled: ‘[I asked] “At which point were you exactly in the score when the decree was published?” He showed me the exact spot. The violin played semiquavers before and after it. There was no change evident in the music.’



Shostakovich (left) looks over a score with violinist David Oistrakh

*but, in the first place, to give utterance to the most profound feelings, ideas and emotions.*

*The concerto is not readily grasped by the violinist. I recall that a clear perception of it came to me slowly and not without difficulty. I became more and more interested in the work as the days went by, until finally I found myself wholly under the spell of the music.*

The music weaves that spell gradually on its audience. The opening **Nocturne** – and how seemingly perverse to begin a bravura work with a nocturne! – is neither symphonic sonata-allegro nor virtuosic display. Rather the soloist is presented as a lyrical, meditative character, tentatively exploring a sombre landscape and rising by degrees to more impassioned, double-stopped gestures before retreating slowly. Oistrakh described the movement's 'suppression of feelings' and air of 'tragedy in the best sense of purification'. The comparison with the following **Scherzo** – one of Shostakovich's more mordant jokes – could hardly be greater. Here the music is, in Oistrakh's words, 'malignant, demonic, prickly'. The solo part, often playing in counterpoint with solo woodwinds, requires all the virtuosity apparently lacking in the first movement. The movement reaches a grim climax with the bone-rattling timbre of the xylophone.

While there is some gallows-humour in the *Scherzo* [and references to the DSCH motive [D-E flat-C-B natural] which

Shostakovich uses as his musical signature), the **Passacaglia** is unapologetically baleful. Its theme, hinted at in the *Scherzo* but fully stated here by low strings and timpani, has an ominous tread to which the violin replies with long, heart-rending melodies – again called upon to play double-stopped sections at moments of high drama. Like the Nocturne, the *Passacaglia* emphasises the melodic, rather than the bravura, aspects of the solo instrument, but as the movement dissolves into the concerto's cadenza, there can be no doubt that this is music conceived for a prodigiously talented performer. The cadenza requires the full gamut of the soloist's technical armoury, and leads without a break into the finale **Burlesque**.

It is only here, where the orchestra (again rendered brittle by the xylophone) plays the introductory bars without the soloist, that we realise how constant a presence the violin has been until now, and what stamina is required to play a work of such dimensions. But there's more, and it's not long before the violin is drawn back into the maelstrom, responding with astounding agility to a movement of classic Shostakovich. There is black humour, and acid energy, and ever more impossible-seeming gestures for the soloist before a brief reminiscence of the *Passacaglia* is peremptorily dismissed by a sudden cadence.

Oistrakh gave the first performance in Leningrad in 1955 and a few months later introduced it to the West in a concert at Carnegie Hall. The US press went wild; Stalin would have turned in his mausoleum.

GORDON KERRY © 2002

The orchestra for Shostakovich's Violin Concerto comprises three flutes (one doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling cor anglais), three clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet), and three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon); four horns and tuba; timpani and percussion (xylophone, tambourine, tam tam); two harps, celesta and strings.

The Violin Concerto Op.99 was completed at the beginning of March 1948, but was not performed publicly until 29 October 1955, with its dedicatee David Oistrakh as soloist and Evgeny Mravinsky conducting. During the period between its completion and premiere, Shostakovich made numerous alterations to the score, requiring a change in opus number from 77 to 99. The original version still exists, but is rarely performed.

The SSO gave the first Australian performance of this concerto in 1962 with violinist Leonid Kogan and conductor Jascha Horenstein. The most recent performance in was in 2009 with Vladimir Ashkenazy and soloist Sascha Rozhdestvensky.

...there can be no doubt that this is music conceived for a prodigiously talented performer.

## The Shostakovich Experience

In a lecture for the SSO, Andrew Ford once asked, 'Can we learn to hear Shostakovich's music only as music, instead of as a series of coded messages?' The question is moot, of course, and there is no short answer. Moreover, the reception of Shostakovich's music in the West, and discussion of it – especially among English-speaking writers – has inevitably turned on its, and its composer's, relationship to the politics of the Soviet Union.

The 21-year-old composer's First Symphony premiered in his home town of Leningrad (St Petersburg) in 1928; its introduction to the West by Bruno Walter assured Shostakovich of world celebrity, but was also an announcement of the optimistic, outward-looking Russia of the immediate post-Revolutionary period. A decade later, things had changed: in 1934 Stalin had unleashed the five-year 'Great Terror', and within that period were two particularly bloody years where N.I. Yezhov, chief of the NKVD (later the KGB), oversaw the imprisonment and murder of Stalin's principal remaining Party rivals as well as leading scientists, writers and musicians. The effect of the purges was to rob the USSR of millions of its citizens, especially leading intellectuals in most fields, so that by the end of the 1930s the country's infrastructure was almost fatally weakened. In 1936, Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, having enjoyed a spectacularly successful two-year run, was attacked in the pages of *Pravda* as 'chaos instead of music', its composer being warned that 'this could all end very badly'. Shostakovich, or the orchestral management in Leningrad, immediately withdrew his demanding Fourth Symphony.

This watershed in Shostakovich's political fortunes produced substantial changes in his music: whether or not he called the Fifth Symphony 'an artist's response to just criticism', it remains a work of neoclassical proportions with much less complex harmony, especially compared with the almost mannerist distortions of the Fourth. At this time, too, Shostakovich began writing chamber music in earnest, notably the first of the epochal cycle of 15 string quartets. In due course *Lady Macbeth* was heavily revised, its violence and irony toned down, and the new work retitled *Katerina Ismailova*. (And we might note that the composer himself preferred the revised version, even in later years when the original was 'acceptable' again.) There were further reversals of fortune: in the forties Shostakovich was denounced a second time [by, amongst others, Prokofiev] despite having been awarded the Stalin prize in 1940 and the order of Lenin in 1946; his Ninth Symphony displeased Stalin in its refusal to use Beethoven's Ninth as a model to glorify the Soviet victory over the Nazis. By the late fifties, with both Stalin

and Prokofiev dead, Shostakovich was back in favour, making an official goodwill tour of Italy and France in 1958 and presiding over the Union of Soviet Composers from 1960 (in which capacity he was not above attacking colleagues himself). He became a member of the Communist Party in 1962, when, as Richard Taruskin points out, the dissident movement was finally emerging; his last works routinely explore notions of mortality.

It might have been possible to discuss the music as music – after all, the stylistic differences between Vaughan Williams' Fourth and Fifth Symphonies are as striking as those in Shostakovich's case – had the Cold War not intervened. Even in the mid-1940s, American composer and critic Virgil Thomson was making his famous dismissal of Shostakovich's symphonies as mere 'national advertising'. As the political temperature dropped, so was Shostakovich increasingly seen as a spokesman for the Communist bogeyman.

In 1979, four years after Shostakovich's death, a volume entitled *Testimony: Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov appeared in English, in which the composer is presented as a secret dissident, encoding specific messages of protest against Stalin's regime in his music. *Testimony* is, even now, the nub of a fierce controversy in English Shostakovich studies. Writers like Taruskin and Laurel Fay (author of *Shostakovich: A Life*) regard it as a complete fraud, noting that Volkov has declined to publish the 'original' Russian version; journalist Norman Lebrecht and Ian MacDonald (author of *The New Shostakovich*) regard the text of *Testimony* as completely reliable, and MacDonald marshals a number of people who claim to have seen pages of the original endorsed by Shostakovich's signature.

The fact is that Shostakovich's own statements about the music must be viewed with caution, as anything he said or wrote would have been subject to official scrutiny. It is a fact that his style changed in 1936–37, and almost certainly as a direct result of the *Pravda* denunciation, but whether the Fifth Symphony is heroic or ironic is ultimately unprovable. Likewise, the Eighth Quartet may be a 'memorial to the victims of fascism and war' as officially stated, or to those who perished under Stalin, as the pro-*Testimony* lobby believes. It could, of course, be both: in any case, we should start by listening to the music...

GORDON KERRY © 2002

## Shostakovich

### Symphony No.5 in D minor, Op.47

*Moderato – Allegro non troppo*

*Allegretto*

*Largo*

*Allegro non troppo*

Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony is one of the iconic works of the 20th century. In purely musical terms it is a masterpiece, coherently expressed and brilliantly orchestrated in a large-scale architecture whose pacing is always expertly judged. But the work's status derives at least in part from extra-musical considerations: the circumstances in which the work was conceived were extraordinary, and the piece has become a powerful symbol in the battle for the composer's ideological soul.

The well-known facts of the symphony's genesis bear repeating. Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was enjoying extraordinary success until Stalin saw the show in 1936. An 'anonymous' review appeared in the official newspaper *Pravda* accusing the composer of producing 'muddle instead of music' and warning that this 'could end very badly' for him. The opera was pulled from Soviet stages, and he withdrew, or allowed to be withdrawn, his Symphony No.4. Shostakovich himself lived in fear of arrest and took to sleeping in the hallway of his apartment. He had good reason for alarm. The Great Terror, Stalin's infamous 'purges', was at its height, resulting in the incarceration, and often murder, of a colossal number of leading intellectuals in all walks of life as well as potential political rivals. Whether out of caprice, paranoia or sheer sadism, Stalin came close to fatally weakening his country.

Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony – which had to wait decades for a performance – is an epic, blisteringly ironic work where triumphal fanfares turn sour in the space of a single bar and glacial spaces unfold menacingly. Composed in 1937, the Fifth, by contrast, is essentially a neoclassical piece, the angular contour and dotted rhythms of its opening gesture immediately recalling the baroque overture. The work has four movements in conventional forms (sonata-allegro, scherzo and so on); its musical language affirms traditional diatonic harmony in a Beethovenian journey from a striving D minor opening to the blazing major-key optimism of the finale. Following the common practice of Russian composers like Borodin, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich places the dance-like scherzo second, before an emotionally powerful *Largo* which alludes briefly to his own setting of Pushkin's poem *Rebirth*. At the time, Shostakovich claimed that: 'man with all his experiences [is] in the centre of

## Keynotes

### FIFTH SYMPHONY

This symphony was composed in 1937, following the *Pravda* criticism of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and the withdrawal of his audacious Fourth Symphony, and it has long been associated with the tagline (not from Shostakovich): 'A Soviet artist's reply to just criticism.' In that light, the conservative aspects of the symphony make sense. The first movement seems positively orderly in character, despite its boldly jagged opening. The second movement is a traditional scherzo with a playful central section, and the slow third movement is powerful and expressive in a way that made the first audience weep. The finale is contentions – it might be optimistic on the surface but the rejoicing seems forced.

Soon after his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was denounced in 1936, Shostakovich composed *Rebirth (Vozrozhdenie)*, a setting of verse of Pushkin, portraying the immortality of beauty, the victory of the artist over his persecutors and the triumph of genius over mediocrity. In the Fifth Symphony he first alludes to the main theme of *Rebirth* in the *Largo* movement. Then, in the finale, he hides the theme amongst the triumphant brass and rejoicing strings, as if to say that the 'secret' of the symphony is the triumph of culture over barbarism.



the composition, which is lyrical in form from beginning to end. In the finale, the tragically tense impulses of the earlier movements are resolved in optimism and joy of living.' Composers' program notes are often unreliable, but years later Shostakovich's conductor son Maxim claimed that his father had described it as an 'heroic symphony' – not unlike Beethoven's Third in intent.

The Fifth Symphony was a huge success at its premiere, with audience members weeping during the slow movement and on their feet, cheering, as the finale drew to a close. (And they stayed on their feet for 40 minutes after the piece finished!) As a work which reflected the ideals of Socialist Realism, and which was clearly such a hit with the masses, the Fifth was Shostakovich's passport to a return – for now at least – to official favour. When a journalist described it as 'an artist's response to just criticism' Shostakovich didn't demur, and that phrase has come to be seen as the work's subtitle, though there is no evidence that it was indeed Shostakovich's expressed view.

During the early stages of the Cold War, Shostakovich was derided in the West as a composer of what Virgil Thomson called 'national advertising' and a work like the Fifth seen as a piece of mandatory optimism and Soviet propaganda. In the late 20th century, however, that attitude changed radically as the view emerged that Shostakovich was a secret dissident, encoding anti-Soviet 'messages' in his music, including the Fifth Symphony.

This view gathered strength with the publication in 1979 (four years after Shostakovich's death) of a volume entitled *Testimony: Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov*. In it Volkov quotes Shostakovich contradicting what he told his son, by saying:

*I think it is clear to everyone what happens in the Fifth. The rejoicing is forced, created under threat, as in Boris Godunov.*

**'The applause went on for an entire hour. People were in uproar, and ran up and down through the streets of Leningrad till the small hours, embracing and congratulating each other on having been there. They had understood the message that forms the "lower bottom", the outer hull, of the Fifth Symphony: the message of sorrow, suffering and isolation; stretched on the rack of the Inquisition, the victim still tries to smile in his pain. The shrill repetition of the A at the end of the symphony is to me like a spear-point jabbing in the wounds of a person on the rack. The hearers of the first performance could identify with that person. Anybody who thinks the finale is glorification is an idiot – yes, it is a triumph of idiots.'**

**MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVICH  
(PREMIERE)**

**'The Great Hall erupted. Everybody left their seats and ran towards the platform, and their ecstatic clamouring joined into a single roar.'**

**DAVID OISTRAKH  
(MOSCOW PREMIERE)**



*It's as if someone were beating you with a stick and saying, 'Your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing,' and you rise, shaky, and go marching off, muttering, 'our business is rejoicing, our business is rejoicing.' What kind of apotheosis is that? You have to be a complete oaf not to hear that.*

*Testimony* created an ongoing furore, with musicologists and journalists confidently proclaiming the work either a complete fraud or a valuable document of the composer's thought. In 2004 one of the sceptics, Laurel E Fay, subjected the text to detailed examination. Fay cast doubt on the authenticity of the book, having discovered that the eight pages which the composer signed as having read all contained material which was not only innocuous but all of which had been published before. There was no guarantee that he saw, let alone dictated, the rest.

The stylistic change that came about with the Fifth was almost certainly fuelled by Shostakovich's brush with the regime, and it is no accident that he began his epic cycle of intensely personal string quartets at this time. But certain facts are inconvenient to a simplistic reading of the man and his work, such as his decision to join the Communist Party in 1960, long after the immediate danger of Stalinism had passed. Moreover the Fifth Symphony was at one stage seen as pro-Soviet tub-thumping and then almost overnight regarded as a denunciation of the very same regime. Maybe it's neither, but as critic Alex Ross puts it: 'The notes, in any case, remain the same. The symphony still ends fortissimo, in D major, and it still brings audiences to their feet.'

GORDON KERRY © 2007

Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, E flat clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and a large percussion section; two harps, piano, celesta and strings.

Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was premiered on 21 November 1937 in a Leningrad Philharmonic concert conducted by the young Evgeny Mravinsky. The SSO gave the first Australian performance of the symphony on 16 June 1944, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Its popularity is reflected in its frequent programming in SSO concerts, most recently in 2015, conducted by James Gaffigan. Memorable performances have included those conducted by Mariss Jansons in 1995, Charles Dutoit in 2005 and Vladimir Ashkenazy in 2012.

## NEWS FROM THE SSO

In recent months we've been delighted to announce the extension of David Robertson's term as Chief Conductor and the appointment of new CEO, Emma Dunch.



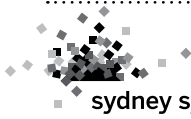
PHOTO: JAY FRAY

**David Robertson**, who took up his position with the SSO in 2014, has extended his term until the conclusion of 2019. Sydney, he says, is 'among a handful of cities where it is possible to realise projects that are difficult to accomplish anywhere else. Combined with the virtuosity and ambition of the musicians of the SSO, this makes the job of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director such a joy!' Although his tenure will finish, his relationship with the orchestra will continue: 'I look forward to returning (as much as they'll have me!) in 2020 and 2021 as a guest conductor.'



PHOTO: RICHARD PABLIKHOFF

In August, we announced the appointment of **Emma Dunch** as CEO, who will take up her new role with the SSO in January 2018. With degrees in opera performance and journalism, she began her arts management career at the SSO in 1996. Since then she has forged an illustrious career in the United States and in 2008 founded DUNCH, a New York-based cultural management firm. 'I am truly inspired by this opportunity to come full circle,' she says, 'returning to my home city and to the organisation that first fostered my love of symphonic music.'



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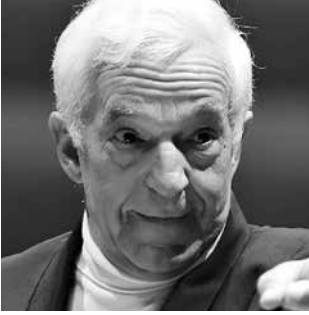
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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



KEITH SAUNDERS

### Vladimir Ashkenazy *conductor*

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One of the few artists to combine a successful career as a pianist and conductor, Vladimir Ashkenazy inherited his musical gift from both sides of his family: his father David Ashkenazy was a professional light music pianist and his mother Evstolia (née Plotnova) was daughter of a chorumaster in the Russian Orthodox church.

He came to prominence in the 1955 Chopin Competition in Warsaw and as winner of the 1956 Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels. Since then he has built an extraordinary career, not only as one of the most outstanding pianists of the 20th century, but as an artist whose creative life encompasses a vast range of activities and continues to offer inspiration to music-lovers across the world.

A regular visitor to Sydney since his Australian debut, as a pianist, in 1969, Vladimir Ashkenazy subsequently conducted subscription concerts and composer festivals for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and from 2009 to 2013 was Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor. Highlights of his tenure included the Mahler Odyssey, Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* and annual international touring.

Conducting has formed the larger part of his activities for the past 35 years and he appears regularly with major orchestras around the world. He continues his longstanding relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra, which appointed him Conductor Laureate in 2000, and he is also Conductor Laureate of both the Iceland and

NHK Symphony orchestras, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana. Previous posts include the Music Directorship of the EUYO and Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. He maintains strong links with the Cleveland Orchestra (where he was formerly Principal Guest Conductor) and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (Chief Conductor and Music Director 1988–96).

Ashkenazy maintains his devotion to the piano, these days mostly in the recording studio. His comprehensive discography includes the Grammy award-winning Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, Rautavaara's Piano Concerto No.3 (which he commissioned), Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Rachmaninoff Transcriptions and Beethoven's Diabelli Variations. Milestone collections include *Ashkenazy: 50 Years on Decca*, his complete concerto recordings, a personal selection of solo and chamber works, and his vast catalogue of Rachmaninoff's piano music, which also includes his recordings as a conductor of the composer's orchestral music. Most recently he released a recording of Bach's French Suites

Beyond his performing schedule, Vladimir Ashkenazy has also been involved in many TV projects, inspired by his passionate drive to ensure that serious music retains a platform in the mainstream media and is available to as broad an audience as possible.



JULIAN HARGREAVES

## Ray Chen

*violin*

---

Ray Chen redefines what it is to be a classical musician in the 21st century. With a media presence reaching millions through his unprecedented online following, his remarkable musicianship transmits to a global audience that is reflected in his engagements with the foremost orchestras, conductors and concert halls around the world.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Australia, Ray Chen was accepted at the age of 15 to the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Aaron Rosand and was supported by Young Concert Artists. He came to wide attention when he won the Yehudi Menuhin (2008) and Queen Elisabeth, Belgium (2009) competitions. Since then he has built a worldwide profile as a concert and recording artist.

This year he recorded an album with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, following three critically acclaimed recordings, of which his debut recital album, *Virtuoso*, received an ECHO Klassik Award.

Named as 'one to watch' by the *Strad* and *Gramophone* magazines, he has also featured in the Forbes list of 30 most influential Asians under 30, appeared in the TV series *Mozart in the Jungle*, established a multi-year partnership with Giorgio Armani (who designed the cover of his Mozart album with Christoph Eschenbach), and performed at high-profile events such as France's Bastille Day, the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm

and the BBC Proms. From 2012 to 2015 he was resident at the Dortmund Konzerthaus and in the 2017–18 season he is an 'Artist Focus' with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Ray Chen's social media presence has made him a pioneer in artist-audience interaction, and his appearances and interactions with music and musicians reach a new public in contemporary and relatable ways. He was the first musician to be invited to write a lifestyle blog for the Italian publishing house RCS Rizzoli (*Corriere della Sera*, *Gazzetta dello Sport*, *Max*), he has featured in *Vogue* magazine, and is currently releasing his own design of violin case for the industry manufacturer GEWA. His commitment to music education is paramount, and he inspires the younger generation of music students with self-produced videos combining comedy and music.

He plays the 1715 'Joachim' Stradivarius violin (once owned by famed Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim), on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation. Ray Chen made his SSO debut in 2011 performing the Brahms concerto.

[www.raychenviolin.com](http://www.raychenviolin.com)

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# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



## DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF  
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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

# THE ORCHESTRA



**David Robertson**

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KEITH SAUNDERS

*Janet and Robert Constable with Associate Principal Flute Emma Sholl. 'When we first met her in the Green Room at the Opera House,' recalls Robert, 'it was a lovely hug from Emma that convinced us that this was not only an opportunity to support her chair but to get involved with the orchestra and its supporters. It has been a great experience.'*



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Ms Philippa Kearsley  
Mrs Leslie Kennedy  
In memory of Bernard M H Khaw  
Dr Henry Kilham  
Jennifer King  
Mr & Mrs Gilles Kryger  
Mr Patrick Lane  
The Laing Family  
Ms Sonia Lal  
Elaine M Langshaw  
Dr Leo & Mrs Shirley Leader  
Mr Cheok F Lee  
Peter Leow & Sue Choong  
Mrs Erna Levy  
Liftronic Pty Ltd  
Joseph Lipski  
Helen Little  
Norma Lopata  
Kevin McDonald  
Frank Machart  
Ms Margaret McKenna  
Melvyn Madigan  
Mrs Silvana Mantellato  
Ms Kwok-Ling Mau  
Louise Miller  
Mr John Mitchell  
Kevin Newton Mitchell  
Robert Mitchell  
Howard Morris  
Alan Hauserman & Janet Nash

Mr John R Nethercote  
Mrs Janet &  
Mr Michael Neustein  
Mr Davil Nolan  
John & Verity Norman  
Mr Graham North  
Paul O'Donnell  
Mr Edmund Ong  
Dr Kevin Pedemont  
Michael Quailley  
Suzanne Rea &  
Graham Stewart  
Kim & Graham Richmond  
Dr Peter Roach  
Mr David Robinson  
Alexander & Rosemary Roche  
Mr Michael Rollinson  
Agnes Ross  
Mrs Audrey Sanderson  
Garry E Scarf & Morgie Blaxill  
Mr Tony Schlosser  
Lucille Seale  
Peter & Virginia Shaw  
David & Alison Shillington  
Mrs Diane Shteinman AM  
Dr Evan Siegel  
Margaret Sikora  
Jan & Ian Sloan  
Maureen Smith  
Ann & Roger Smith  
Titia Sprague  
Mrs Jennifer Spitzer  
Robert Spry  
Ms Donna St Clair  
Cheri Stevenson  
Fiona Stewart  
Dr Vera Stoermer  
Margaret & Bill Suthers  
Mr Ian Taylor  
Mr Ludovic Theau  
Alma Toohey  
Hugh Tregarthen  
Ms Laurel Tsang  
Gillian Turner & Rob Bishop  
Ms Kathryn Turner  
Ross Tzannes  
Mr Thierry Vancaillie  
Jan & Arthur Waddington  
Ronald Wallede  
In memory of Don Ward  
Mrs Bernadette Williamson  
Jane Sarah Williamson  
Peter Williamson  
Mr D & Mrs H Wilson  
Dr Wayne Wong  
Mrs Sue Woodhead  
Sir Robert Woods  
Ms Roberta Woolcott  
Dawn & Graham Worner  
Mr John Wotton  
Ms Lee Wright  
Ms Juliana Wusun  
Paul Wyckaert  
Anne Yabsley  
L D & H Y  
Anonymous [52]

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# SALUTE

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## GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



## PREMIER PARTNER



## PLATINUM PARTNER



## MAJOR PARTNERS



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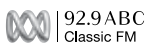
## GOLD PARTNERS



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