

2017 SEASON



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Elgar's Cello Concerto

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Thursday 20 April, 1.30pm

EMIRATES METRO SERIES

Friday 21 April, 8pm

GREAT CLASSICS

Saturday 22 April, 2pm



Principal Partner



CLASSICAL



Rachmaninoff's Third
Symphony, Suite & Slides

RACHMANINOFF Symphony No.3
VINE Five Hallucinations for
trombone and orchestra **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**
WAGNER Die Meistersinger: Suite
Mark Wigglesworth conductor
Michael Mulcahy trombone *(pictured)*

Meet the Music
Wed 5 Apr 6.30pm
Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 6 Apr 1.30pm



Elgar's Cello Concerto

KNUSSEN The Way to Castle Yonder
ELGAR Cello Concerto
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Symphony No.5
Robert Spano conductor
Harriet Krijgh cello *(pictured)*

Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 20 Apr 1.30pm
Emirates Metro Series
Fri 21 Apr 8pm
Great Classics
Sat 22 Apr 2pm



Tchaikovsky's Pathétique

WAGNER Rienzi: Overture
PROKOFIEV Violin Concerto No.1
TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No.6, Pathétique
Andris Poga conductor
Baiba Skride violin *(pictured)*

APT Master Series
Wed 10 May 8pm
Fri 12 May 8pm
Sat 13 May 8pm
Mondays @ 7
Mon 15 May 7pm



Beethoven's Wind Octet
Cocktail Hour

SCHUMANN ARR. OQUEY Morning Songs, Op.133
BEETHOVEN Wind Octet
Musicians of the SSO

Cocktail Hour
Sat 13 May 6pm
Cocktails from 5.30pm
Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House



Nobuyuki Tsujii plays Chopin

BERLIOZ Le Corsaire - Overture
CHOPIN Piano Concerto No.2
DVOŘÁK Symphony No.8
Bramwell Tovey conductor
Nobuyuki Tsujii piano *(pictured)*

Emirates Metro Series
Fri 19 May 8pm
Special Event
Sat 20 May 8pm
■ A BMW Season Highlight

Nobuyuki Tsujii in Recital

JS BACH Italian Concerto, BWV 971
MOZART Sonata in B flat, K570
BEETHOVEN Moonlight Sonata, Op.27 No.2
BEETHOVEN Appassionata Sonata, Op.57
Nobuyuki Tsujii piano

Special Event
Mon 22 May 7pm
City Recital Hall



Morning Inspiration
Mozart & Haydn in the City

HAYDN Symphony No.6, Morning
MOZART ARR. HAVERON
String Quintet in G minor, K516, for
violin, viola and orchestra
Andrew Haveron violin-director
Roger Benedict viola *(pictured)*

Mozart in the City
Thu 25 May 7pm
City Recital Hall

sydneysymphony.com

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THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

THURSDAY 20 APRIL, 1.30PM

EMIRATES METRO SERIES

FRIDAY 21 APRIL, 8PM

GREAT CLASSICS

SATURDAY 22 APRIL, 2PM

.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

ELGAR'S CELLO CONCERTO

Robert Spano *conductor*

Harriet Krijgh *cello*

OLIVER KNUSSEN (born 1952)

***The Way to Castle Yonder* – Pot-pourri after the
opera *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, Op.21a**

The Journey to the Big White House –
Kleine Trauermusik (Little Funeral Music) –
The Ride to Castle Yonder

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

Cello Concerto in E minor, Op.85

Adagio – Moderato

Lento – Allegro molto

Adagio

Allegro – Moderato – Allegro, ma non troppo

INTERVAL

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)

Symphony No.5 in D

Preludio (Moderato)

Scherzo (Presto)

Romanza (Lento)

Passacaglia (Moderato)

Pre-concert talk by Scott Davie in the
Northern Foyer 45 minutes before
each performance.

.....
Estimated durations:

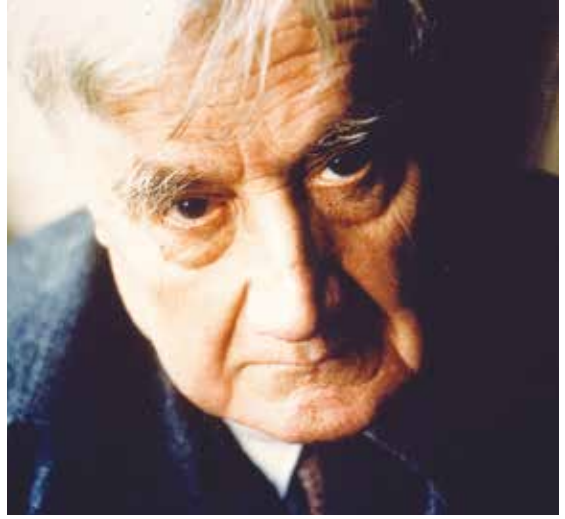
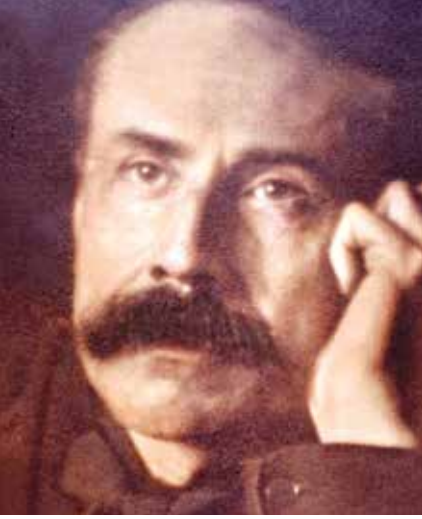
8 minutes, 30 minutes,
20-minute interval, 40 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 3.20pm (Thu),
9.50pm (Fri), 3.50pm (Sat)

.....
COVER IMAGE: Christian Descending
into the Valley of Humiliation,
an allegorical painting by Samuel
Palmer after *The Pilgrim's Progress*
(watercolour and gouache, 1848).
Ashmolean Museum, University of
Oxford (the-athenaeum.org)



Principal Partner



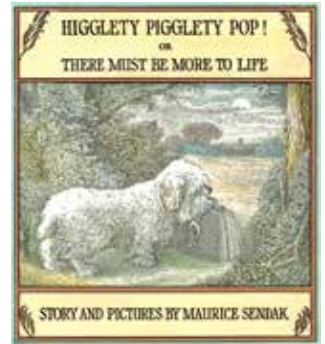
From top: Portrait of Edward Elgar by Charles F Grindrod made about a year before the composer was knighted by King Edward VII in 1904 (sepia bromide print). A photo of Ralph Vaughan Williams taken in 1952 for Australian composer and pianist Percy Grainger (courtesy of Ursula Vaughan Williams). A scene from the 2012 Aldeburgh Festival production of Oliver Knussen's *Higglety Pigglety Pop* – the Pig-in-Sandwich-Boards can offer Jennie food and perhaps a job...

In Search of Heaven

The symphony in this concert has in its background an opera (or 'Morality' as he liked to call it) that Ralph Vaughan Williams was writing, based on John Bunyan's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But don't try to follow Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. The novel remains firmly in the background, with the exception of the slow third movement, where the composer quotes from both Bunyan's words and his own *Morality*. But even though Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony doesn't have a narrative or program, the very nature of a symphony – its overall form and its internal structures – sets us up to experience it as a *musical* journey, and the destination of RVW's Fifth is one of peace and transcendence. For an hour or so, the 'Celestial City' can be found in the concert hall.

The concert begins with another journey and another literary inspiration. Oliver Knussen's *Way to Castle Yonder* is arranged from his opera *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, after the book by Maurice Sendak. In an unintended parallel with the 1679 frontispiece of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Sendak's cover shows Jennie, a Sealyham terrier, setting off with her black bag on a quest: There must be more to life, she thinks, than having everything! The destination in Jennie's case, Knussen explains, is Castle Yonder, 'the animals' theatrical heaven of Sendak's imagination'. (Another coincidence: Jennie dreams of lions at one point, just as Bunyan does.)

Between these two 'quests' is Elgar's Cello Concerto, which could be heard as music for a journey's end. It was his last major work, and it has an autumnal quality, a feeling of tiredness and resignation. When asked the 'meaning' of the concerto, Elgar replied: 'A man's attitude to life.' This was a composer in his 60s, fatigued by illness and depressed by the carnage of World War I and the vanishing of his world. And yet this powerful music – even in the heart-wrenching slow movement – stops short of mawkish sentiment and the nostalgia is always balanced by vitality, bringing to mind another of Elgar's observations: it's 'a real large work & I think good & alive.'



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Oliver Knussen

The Way to Castle Yonder – Pot-pourri from the opera *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, Op.21a

The Journey to the Big White House –
Kleine Trauermusik (*Little Funeral Music*) –
The Ride to Castle Yonder

The composer writes...

The Way to Castle Yonder (1988–90) is a concise digest of orchestral interludes for my second operatic collaboration with Maurice Sendak, *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, which is a theatrical requiem for his dog, Jennie, in the frame of a 'quest' opera. Castle Yonder is the animals' theatrical heaven of Sendak's imagination. *The Way to Castle Yonder* is affectionately dedicated to Belinda and Colin Matthews, and the three continuous sections are:

1. *The Journey to the Big White House*, on a horse-drawn milk wagon driven by a cat-milk-man. The music is based on Jennie's aria which opens the opera. 'The wagon drives off and the show curtain closes. After a while, the pig is seen peeking out mysteriously from an arbour. He makes himself scarce when the milk wagon appears, crossing the stage in front of the show curtain.'
2. *Kleine Trauermusik*: 'A little orchestral meditation while Jennie dreams of lions' – a chorale with another variant of Jennie's aria.
3. *The Ride to Castle Yonder*: 'Chimes begin to sound in the distance. The characters climb on the Lion's back. Mother Goose disappears as the bells get louder. The Lion springs forward, and the show curtain closes'. This final section grows from these images virtually in reverse, and the arrival at Castle Yonder briefly harks back to the *Trauermusik* chorale.

© OLIVER KNUSSSEN

The Way to Castle Yonder calls for three flutes, oboe, cor anglais, three clarinets, bassoon and contrabassoon; four horns, three trombones (but no trumpets or tuba); timpani and percussion; harp, celesta and piano; and strings.

The third movement, *The Ride...*, was first performed by the English Chamber Orchestra and Stuart Bedford in 1988 as part of the 42nd Aldeburgh Festival; the London Symphony Orchestra and Michael Tilson Thomas gave the first complete performance in 1991. The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Robert Spano gave the Australian premiere in 2016; this the SSO's first performance of the work.

Keynotes

KNUSSSEN

Born Glasgow, 1952

Oliver Knussen grew up near London, where his father was Principal Double Bass of the LSO, and was exposed from a young age to the repertoire and life of a symphony orchestra. It is perhaps no surprise that the orchestra is his preferred medium, allowing him to make full use of his ear for colour and texture. He began composing at the age of six and at 15 completed his first symphony, conducting it in his LSO debut in 1968. He describes that first effort as 'something like a "tonal" American symphony written by a Russian who knows his Britten'.

Today he occupies an established place at the forefront of British music and enjoys a worldwide reputation, composing in all the major genres. His output, writes Julian Anderson, 'has probably come nearer than that of any other contemporary composer to entering the concert repertoire without making any stylistic compromises'. Anderson continues: 'Although the influences on Knussen's music are as diverse as his musical sympathies are catholic, he fused these long ago into a unique sound-world which is instantly recognisable from the first bars of any work.'

Among his most successful and popular creations is the pair of 'fantasy operas' from the 1980s based on books by American artist and writer Maurice Sendak: *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, from which today's music is drawn.

About the composer...

Oliver Knussen is one of the world's most eminent and influential composers, creating work of crystalline concision, complexity and richness. Born in 1952, he studied composition with John Lambert in London and Gunther Schuller at Tanglewood. He was just 15 when he wrote his First Symphony (later conducting its premiere with the London Symphony Orchestra), and his Third Symphony (1973–79) is now widely regarded as a 20th-century classic. A number of dazzling ensemble works, including *Ophelia Dances* (a Koussevitzky centennial commission, 1975) and *Coursing* (1979), cemented Knussen's position at the forefront of contemporary British music.

In the 1980s, Knussen collaborated with Maurice Sendak on an operatic double-bill – *Where the Wild Things Are* (1979–83) and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (1984–85, revised 1999). His ebullient concert opener *Flourish with Fireworks* (1988) quickly entered standard orchestral repertoire, as did his concertos for horn and violin. The latter, written in 2002 for Pinchas Zukerman and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, has received close to 100 performances. Recent works include *Requiem – Songs for Sue* (2005–06), *Ophelia's Last Dance* (2010) and *Reflection* (2016).

As one of the foremost composer-conductors in the world, Oliver Knussen is renowned for his unflinching advocacy across a wide range of contemporary music. The recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Conductor Award in 2009, he has been Artist in Association with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (2009–14), Music Director of the London Sinfonietta (1998–2002) and Head of Contemporary Music at the Tanglewood Music Center (1986–93), and is currently Artist in Association with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. He was Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival from 1983 to 1998, and in 1992 co-founded the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme's Contemporary Composition and Performance courses.

Oliver Knussen lives in Snape, Suffolk. He was appointed a CBE in 1994 and received the 2015 Queen's Medal for Music. In 2014 he became the inaugural Richard Rodney Bennett Professor of Music at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY © FABER MUSIC

KEYNOTES ADAPTED IN PART FROM AN ARTICLE BY JULIAN ANDERSON;

OPERA SYNOPSIS ADAPTED FROM ANDREW CLEMENTS



MAURICE FOXALL

Higglety Pigglety Pop!

Knussen's second one-act fantasy opera is based on the book by Maurice Sendak, *Higglety Pigglety Pop! or There Must Be More to Life*. Its principal character is Jennie, a white Sealyham Terrier, who has 'everything' – a master who cares for her, a red woollen sweater, her pills and thermometer, a black bag with gold buckles – but feels 'there must be something more to life than having everything!'

A Pig offers her a job in the theatre, but the role requires experience so the Cat-Milkman suggests she take a job at the Big White House as nurse to a Baby that won't eat. (The Cat also tells her that the six previous nurses were eaten by a Lion in the cellar.) This proves to be an experience indeed and the story concludes with Jennie as the new leading lady of the World Mother Goose Theatre and riding on the back of the Lion to Castle Yonder. As the opera concludes, Jennie writes to her master explaining that she is not coming back: 'I am very experienced now and very famous. I am even a star.'

Edward Elgar

Cello Concerto in E minor, Op.85

Adagio – Moderato

Lento – Allegro molto

Adagio

Allegro – Moderato – Allegro, ma non troppo

Harriet Krijgh *cello*

In March 1918, the final year of World War I, Edward Elgar went into hospital to have a septic tonsil removed. Always given to depression and a degree of self-loathing, his spirits were particularly low at this point. As the foremost living English composer – and indeed the man who almost single-handedly had resurrected English music from the doldrums in which it had languished since the era of Purcell – his music nevertheless was drastically underrated in his home country. It was around this time, in fact, that Elgar began to proclaim that he loathed music and wanted nothing more to do with it.

But as the 61-year-old convalesced in hospital, he was also aware that the Edwardian world of which he and his music had been such distinctive representatives was crumbling in the wake of the War. The political crises of the previous four years and the philosophical challenges which tend to follow acts of international mass destruction had changed the face of European society forever. The arts reflected the ensuing radical re-evaluation of the new world order.

Already Schoenberg had exploded the concept of tonality; he was soon to establish serialism as one of the most radical and rigorous compositional methods ever created. In England, young composers like Gustav Holst, whose *Planets* was first performed in 1918, began to be recognised and celebrated for their outward-looking internationalist perspectives. In other post-War arts, modernism began to establish its ascendancy in the cubist works of Picasso and the literary extravaganzas of James Joyce.

So it was with an awareness of a brutal modern world rapidly passing him by that the convalescent Elgar asked a nurse for a pencil and paper. On the scrap of paper he sketched what was to become the nostalgic opening theme of the Cello Concerto.

Later in the year, the now-recovered Elgar was deeply involved in the piece as a whole, writing from his country cottage in Sussex to a friend that he was 'frantically busy writing & have nearly completed a Concerto for Violoncello – a real large work & I think good & alive.' He wrote it for Felix Salmond, cellist with the British String Quartet, who offered much technical advice during the composition and who was destined to give the premiere.

Keynotes

ELGAR

Born Broadheath, 1857

Died Worcester, 1934

Edward Elgar was arguably the first major British composer after Henry Purcell in the 17th century. He came to prominence at the age of 42 with the *Enigma Variations*; this was followed by *The Dream of Gerontius*, the finest oratorio by an English-born composer, the violin and cello concertos, and two symphonies – powerful and inventive works that combined the inspiration of his homeland with the technique and musical vision of his European peers.

CELLO CONCERTO

This was the concerto that made the 20-year-old Jacqueline du Pré a star when she recorded it in 1965. It's an intimate and moving work, intensely emotional but at the same time dignified. Unusually for a concerto, it's structured in four movements. Elgar indicates that it should be begin 'nobly' and the opening entry of the soloist remains one of the concerto's most striking aspects. The idea turns up again, with plucked strings, in the playful second movement, and in the mostly boisterous and uncomplicated finale. But at one point in the finale, Elgar drops his guard and shows his suffering soul in a self-pitying outburst. The *Adagio* third movement offers four minutes of exquisite lyricism.

The concerto was premiered in 1919.

From that undulating initial theme so hastily sketched in hospital, the concerto unfolds as a rhapsodically-structured, requiem-like outpouring of undiluted emotion in four movements. And yet for all the immediate appeal which the work seems to have these days, its premiere in 1919 bordered on disaster. Conducted by Elgar himself, it was programmed at the Queen's Hall alongside Scriabin's *Poème de l'extase* and Borodin's Second Symphony, the latter two works conducted by Albert Coates.

Apparently Coates was reluctant to let Elgar have any rehearsal time, resulting not just in the insult of Elgar being kept waiting for more than an hour while the fractured sounds of Scriabin emerged from the rehearsal studio within, but also meaning that the public performance itself, in a half-empty hall, was painfully under-prepared. Indeed Ernest Newman wrote that the London Symphony Orchestra 'made a lamentable public exhibition of itself.' For her part, Lady Elgar noted in her diary: 'shameful...hope never to speak to that brutal Coates again.'

But perhaps there was something in the music too which exacerbated the effects of a poor performance. Certainly for those accustomed to the Edwardian splendour of Elgar's two pre-War symphonies and the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches, this work must have seemed unusually subdued and perhaps even austere in its orchestration. Even more than that, the Cello Concerto was written in an age when formal innovation and dazzling technical virtuosity were perhaps more highly prized than nakedly emotional and regretful statements such as this.

The Cello Concerto is in E minor, a reflective and almost naive key in Elgar's harmonic palette and the key of three of his last four major works. The opening of the **first movement**, with its characteristic *nobilmente* [nobly] marking in the score, is a flourish for the soloist which recurs throughout the concerto. The unmistakable main melody – at once both wistful and sublime – emerges almost immediately in the violas, before being taken up by the soloist. Throughout the course of the movement the theme winds its way through various keys, while the secondary thematic material emerges in the clarinets.

The next time we hear the soloist's opening flourish, it is transformed into a pizzicato passage at the beginning of the **second movement** – a scherzo-like movement in G major, which is linked without substantial pause to the first movement. The main theme appears in staccato semiquavers, almost like a *moto perpetuo*, with a series of episodes intervening from time to time.

The core of the work is in the **Adagio**, which at just 60 bars in duration is one of the most extraordinary achievements in this form from an undisputed master of the slow movement. (The *Adagio* from Elgar's First Symphony and the *Larghetto* from the



...an outpouring of undiluted emotion...



Don Quixote

Fantastic Variations

Join us in June when SSO Principal Cello Umberto Clerici takes on the role of the eccentric Don Quixote in Richard Strauss's famous tone poem, inspired by Cervantes. Accompanied by his stalwart squire Sancho Panza (Principal Viola Tobias Breider), Clerici's 'knight of the woeful countenance' will embark on a series of variations depicting his fantastic quests: the windmills, the sheep, Dulcinea... Another eccentric - Haydn's 'distracted gentleman' - begins the concert and the whole orchestra enters the spotlight in Elliott Carter's exhilarating Variations.

Dates

Thu 15 Jun / 1:30pm

Fri 16 Jun / 11am

Complimentary morning tea from 10am

Sat 17 Jun / 2pm

Program

HAYDN Symphony No.60 (Il distratto)^

CARTER Variations for Orchestra

R STRAUSS Don Quixote^

^These works will be performed on Fri 16 Jun.

Artists

DAVID ROBERTSON conductor

UMBERTO CLERICI cello

TOBIAS BREIDER viola

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Second are among the glories of English music.) In the unexpected key of B flat, the *Adagio* makes time stand still as the beautiful cantilena sings its music of unequivocal heartbreak. The orchestration here is reduced to strings, clarinets, bassoons and horns, as the soloist weaves in and out of the orchestral fabric in an eloquent song without words.

The **finale** settles back in E minor and has a rondo-like *risoluto* main subject. Echoes of the concerto's opening flourish abound as the music toys with fragments of themes from all the previous movements. Here more than anywhere else in the concerto, Elgar harks back to the boisterousness of his pre-War works (and in particular the finale of the *Enigma Variations*). But nothing can disguise the fact that underlying the concerto as a whole is a mood of resignation and finality – a fact amply demonstrated by the absence, following the completion of this concerto, of any further orchestral music from Elgar in the 15 years that remained of his life.

MARTIN BUZACOTT
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 1996

Elgar's Cello Concerto calls for an orchestra comprising pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and an optional tuba; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the concerto in 1944, with conductor Percy Code and soloist Lauri Kennedy, and most recently in 2014, with David Robertson and soloist Truls Mørk.

Elgar rehearsing with Beatrice Harrison in 1929. Harrison made the first (abridged) recording of the concerto, with the composer conducting. After this, she became Elgar's preferred soloist.

The unmistakable main melody – at once both wistful and sublime...

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Symphony No.5 in D

Preludio (Moderato)

Scherzo (Presto)

Romanza (Lento)

Passacaglia (Moderato)

Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony is a work of extraordinary, exultant beauty, born in the depths of the Second World War. It was premiered at the Albert Hall on 24 June 1943, six months after Winston Churchill's famous declaration of the 'end of the beginning' of the War. Conflict and violence had characterised Vaughan Williams' Fourth Symphony, written eight years earlier (1935), and in his succeeding symphony, Vaughan Williams chose to create its opposite, a work of sublime tranquillity and moral reassurance.

Much of the material of the Fifth Symphony derives from music Vaughan Williams had been working on for a projected opera of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Indeed this project had occupied Vaughan Williams for many years, though it never seemed to come closer to final realisation. It may be true that as the composer got on in years, he worried that the work he'd poured into this operatic project would not see the light of day and would be wasted, so he determined to use some of its elements in the new symphony. But that is a rather prosaic way of considering a work of such moving beauty and musical unity.

It's better to think of the Fifth as being imbued with the character and aesthetic of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, so that it represents, in Wilfrid Mellers' words, a 'musical quintessence' of the book. Bunyan's story has lost its appeal to modern readers, and we are liable to think of it (most likely without ever having read it) as an empty piece of aged religious propaganda. But Vaughan Williams obviously saw a great deal more in the book than that: it was a story that worked powerfully on his imagination from childhood to old age, bringing together many of the philosophical themes that were important to him. Or perhaps more accurately, the book gave the composer a framework within which to consider these philosophical themes.

Above all, the book provides a vision of the heavenly Ideal. According to his wife Ursula, Vaughan Williams did not consider himself a confirmed Christian, but adopted a state of 'cheerful agnosticism'. Nevertheless, he understood the promise of heaven and its importance for individuals and for society. Perhaps this heaven can be read more rightly as 'utopia', but certainly its defining character is peacefulness. The musicologist

Keynotes

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Born Gloucestershire, 1872

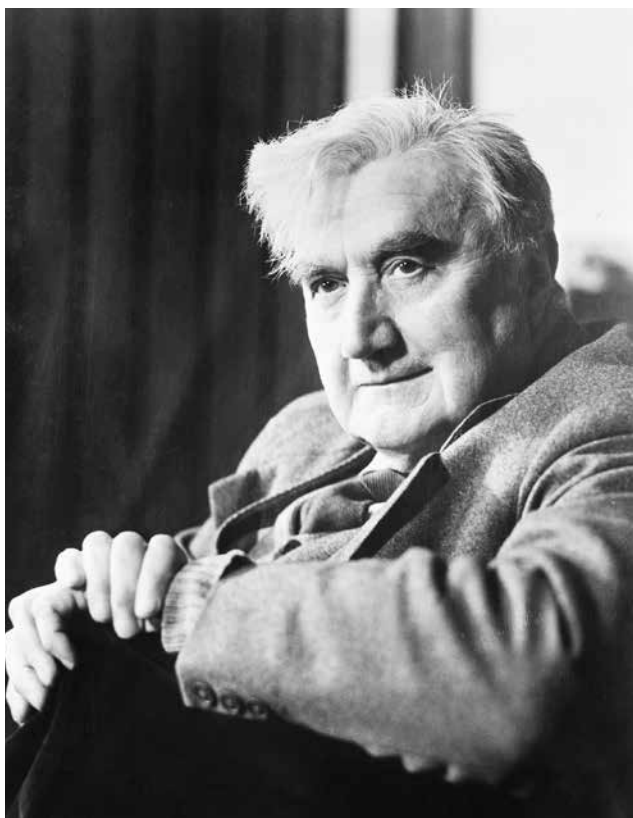
Died London, 1958

His father was a vicar, his mother descended from Josiah Wedgwood, an uncle was Lord Chief Justice, and Charles Darwin a great uncle. RVW himself was a mild-mannered, mystical, agnostic Labour voter. At the Royal College of Music, Stokowski and Holst were friends, Stanford and Parry his teachers, as also later in Berlin and Paris were Bruch and Ravel. Like Bartók in Hungary, from 1900 onwards RVW found inspiration in his country's age-old folk music traditions. His major legacy is his nine symphonies, works of huge emotional span, from the pastoral third and fifth, to the dissonant wartime fourth and dramatic ninth. ('Ralph' is pronounced in the traditional way: rafe)

SYMPHONY NO.5

This symphony began to emerge in 1936, drawing on ideas from his opera (or 'Morality') *Pilgrim's Progress* (1909–52); it was completed in 1943 and premiered at the Proms that year, then revised in 1951. The original wording of the dedication read: 'Without permission and with sincerest flattery to Jean Sibelius, whose great example is worthy of imitation.'

Despite the literary origins behind the music, the symphony shouldn't be heard in a programmatic or narrative sense, although its Classical four-movement structure does suggest something of life's journey through different emotional experiences.



...a work of sublime tranquillity and moral reassurance.

Frank Howes, the composer's colleague and champion, observed that in this symphony, Vaughan Williams is not only reflecting upon a world after the War, in which there is an 'absence of armed conflict', but aspires to essay a higher, spiritual condition of 'peace, ultimate and fundamental'.

This profound peaceful state is attained only after a considerable quest – the pilgrim's journey. While thankfully the symphony doesn't put us through a litany of trials like *Pilgrim* goes through, we nevertheless gain through the four movements of the symphony a potent sense of a life's journey through different emotional experiences. The symphony adopts a relatively formal Classical symphonic structure, so we should avoid ascribing to it an excessively programmatic or narrative reading: the music can happily be left alone to communicate for itself. However, some of the symphony's music appears also in Vaughan Williams' other versions or tellings of the *Pilgrim's Progress* story, in particular a radio play from 1942 and an opera [more like a dramatic oratorio] performed in 1951. Some observation of the linkages between the symphony and the sources of its material in Vaughan Williams' other *Pilgrim's Progress* music can inform an appreciation of the music.

The symphony opens with an evocation of blissful, unsullied nature. This music certainly has the character of something that has approached us from far off, or of a musical brook that we have stumbled upon in the woods. Human or perhaps sinister influence intrudes eventually, with thematic material which is adapted from music associated with Beelzebub in Vaughan Williams' opera. Wilfrid Mellers concludes that this is the pilgrim's journey in overview: an onward march with moments of threat and triumph, but without resolution or finality. The sinister presence comes forward more in the second movement, the scherzo, where the scurrying, ethereal music is like that with which Vaughan Williams describes Pilgrim's fight with the devilish 'hobgoblins' in the opera.

The third movement is entitled *Romanza*, but even here the idyllic mood (the material of it similar to the opera's Act I, Scene ii, 'The House Beautiful') is contrasted with music of agitation (from Act I, Scene 1, where Pilgrim sings, 'Save me, Lord! My burden is greater than I can bear'). Initially, Vaughan Williams appended a quotation from Bunyan to this movement: 'he hath given us rest by his sorrow and life by his death' – an apt inscription in wartime, but perhaps at odds with the abstract nature of the symphony. The final movement is dominated by

Vaughan Williams conducting the London Symphony Orchestra for the premiere of his Fifth Symphony in the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall on 24 June 1943. (Courtesy of Ursula Vaughan Williams)



a glorious passacaglia on a hymnlike theme, rising to a great D major climax. But this is not the symphony's end: an epilogue follows, which shares melodic material with the scene in the opera where Pilgrim passes over the River of Death, entering humbly but triumphantly into Paradise.

These instances illustrate not so much a *narrative* underpinning, but a *philosophical* one for the symphony, namely that the pursuit of goodness and justice faces continual challenge from darker forces. In seeing the evidence of *Pilgrim's Progress* references in the work, we understand its character as one of benediction. In the contest of good and evil, Vaughan Williams offers us gentle encouragement to maintain our resolve and persistence towards attaining the final goal – peace.

The music's structure reflects this philosophical purpose. While the structure of a Classical symphony is present underneath the music, it is subjected to such richly imaginative and intuitive remodelling that we can barely recognise it. For the most part, the symphony proceeds by means of contrasts rather than by the traditional 'argument' or development based on key changes and thematic 'conflict'. This gives the experience of listening to the symphony its powerful serenity. The harmonic language of the symphony also contributes to this sensibility, artfully combining ancient modality and pentatonic scales with contemporary tonality to create an extended, harmonically luscious sound-world. While the symphony is designated as D major, this tonality is quite hazy for most of the time. It's only in the final movement that D major unequivocally asserts itself, but its triumph here is so emphatic that Wilfrid Mellers describes the key as representing 'human fulfillment'.

The feeling that persists at the end of a performance of this work is bound to be one of absolution, from which, it is to be hoped, we gain the resolve to continue our pursuit of the just cause or to seek out the path of goodness.

JAMES KOEHNE © 2004

Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony calls for two flutes, oboe, cor anglais, two clarinets and two bassoons; two horns, two trumpets and three trombones (but no tuba); timpani and strings.

The SSO was the first ABC orchestra to perform this symphony, on 8 February 1945 with conductor Percy Code. We believe that was probably the Australian premiere. Our most recent performance was in 1986, conducted by Patrick Thomas.

This gives the experience of listening to the symphony its powerful serenity.

Passacaglia

For his finale, Vaughan Williams, writes a free passacaglia. This musical form reached a peak in the Baroque period and was revived in the 19th century. It is characterised by a recurring ground bass, which provides the support for an extended set of variations, and many composers have taken inspiration from the impressive passacaglias of Bach and Handel, including Brahms in the finale of his Fourth Symphony and Britten in the finale of his Violin Concerto. RVW's ground bass is seven bars long and not always repeated with strict precision! Listen in particular for the featured use of solo viola and solo cello.

MORE MUSIC

MORE KNUSSEN

It's a sign of Oliver Knussen's popularity and established reputation that his music has been widely recorded. A search of YouTube or a streaming service like Spotify also yields riches, including interviews and videos that allow you to follow along with the sheet music.

If tonight's orchestral pot-pourri has inspired you to seek out Knussen's Maurice Sendak-inspired operas, you can find them on DVD in a performance by the London Sinfonietta with soprano Karen Beardsley singing Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* and mezzo-soprano Cynthia Buchan as Jennie in *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* The designs and librettos are by Sendak; Knussen conducts. KULTUR VIDEO 4451

The same 'fantasy opera' pairing is available on CD in a studio recording, again with the London Sinfonietta, Oliver Knussen and a similar cast (Lisa Saffer is Max). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 469 5562

The Way to Castle Yonder can be found on the London Sinfonietta's *Knussen Conducts Knussen* album, together with pieces such as *Flourish with Fireworks* and *Music for a Puppet Court*, and the Horn Concerto with Barry Tuckwell as soloist. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 449 5722

ELGAR'S CELLO CONCERTO

Elgar's Cello Concerto found its most ardent interpreter in Jacqueline du Pré, and it was largely through her performances and recordings that the concerto achieved its well-deserved place in the repertoire. The most acclaimed recording of the work dates from 1965, with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli. It's available on several releases, including in EMI's Great Recordings of the Century series, with Janet Baker singing Elgar's *Sea Pictures*. EMI CLASSICS 562886

In 1999 Truls Mørk recorded the Elgar concerto with Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in its then new, and acoustically impressive, Symphony Hall. VIRGIN CLASSICS 86353

SPANO CONDUCTS RVW

In addition to many premiere recordings of major new orchestral works with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Robert Spano's discography includes several recordings of music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, including the symphony heard in this concert. The Fifth is presented in a beautiful program alongside the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis (and the Tallis psalm tune on which it is based) and *Serenade to Music*. TELARC 80676 (60676 FOR SACD)

Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra have also recorded the Fourth Symphony, in an album with *Dona nobis pacem* (with soprano Jessica Rivera, baritone Brett Pologato and the Atlanta Symphony Chorus) and *The Lark Ascending* (with violinist David Coucheron). ASO MEDIA 1005

And soprano Christine Goerke is the soloist in a much-praised recording of Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony* (Symphony No.1) with baritone Brett Pologato and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. TELARC 80588

MORE VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

For even more of RVW's orchestral music, look for *An Introduction to Ralph Vaughan Williams*, with performances by the London Symphony Orchestra and Bryden Thomson. *A London Symphony* (Symphony No.2) is programmed with *The Lark Ascending* (violinist Michael Davis) and *Fantasia* on Greensleeves, and the overture to *The Wasps*, performed by the London Philharmonic and Vernon Handley. CHANDOS 2028

HARRIET KRIJGH

You can hear Harriet Krijgh play music by Rachmaninoff in her most recent recording, with pianist Magda Amara. In addition to the G minor sonata (Op.19), the album includes song transcriptions and the famous Vocalise. CAPRICCIO RECORDS 5258

There are more exquisite gems in *Elegie*, an album recorded with the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz conducted by Gustavo Gimeno. Think *The Swan* from Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* and Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*. CAPRICCIO 5222

Broadcast Diary

April

 | 92.9 ABC
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abc.net.au/classic

Friday 21 April, noon

SYMPHONY FOR THE COMMON MAN

Benjamin Northey conductor
Simon Tedeschi piano
Ford, Rachmaninoff, Copland

SSO Radio

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



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 9 May, 6pm

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

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18075 - 1/200417 - 15 \$29/31

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ANDREW ECCLES

Robert Spano *conductor*

Conductor, pianist, composer and pedagogue Robert Spano has served as Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra since 2001, and he has conducted the ASO in performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Ravinia, Ojai and Savannah music festivals. This imaginative conductor has been responsible for nurturing the careers of numerous celebrated composers, conductors and performers, and the Atlanta School of Composers reflects his commitment to American contemporary music. As Music Director of the Aspen Music Festival and School, he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students, including Aspen's American Academy of Conducting.

His guest engagements have included orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony and the Boston, Cleveland, Chicago and Philadelphia symphony orchestras, as well as the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. His opera performances include Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, and the 2005 and 2009 Seattle Opera productions of Wagner's *Ring* cycle.

Season highlights for the 2016–17 season include engagements with the St Louis and Singapore symphony orchestras and the Helsinki Philharmonic, *Carmina Burana* with the Minnesota Orchestra and John Adams' *Nixon in China* with Houston Grand Opera.

Robert Spano's discography includes critically acclaimed recordings made with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra over a period of nine years, and he has won six Grammy Awards with the orchestra. He is on the faculty of Oberlin Conservatory and has received honorary doctorates from Bowling Green State University, the Curtis Institute of Music, Emory University and Oberlin. He is one of two classical musicians inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame, and lives in Atlanta.

In Australia Robert Spano has conducted the Tasmanian, West Australian, Melbourne and Sydney symphony orchestras; his most recent appearance with the SSO was in 2012, when he conducted Copland's Third Symphony and music by Debussy and Takemitsu.



NANCY HIGROWITZ

Harriet Krijgh

cello

Harriet Krijgh shares her warmth and musical generosity across a rapidly growing international performance circuit, from Australia to New York City as well as in her native Holland. This year she begins her role as Artistic Director of the Utrecht International Chamber Music Festival, a post she takes over from violinist Janine Jansens.

Earlier this year she made her Boston Symphony Orchestra debut, performing Gubaidulina's concerto for violin, cello and bayan in both Boston and New York's Carnegie Hall. In the 2016–17 season she also appears with the Frankfurt and Vienna radio symphony orchestras, Netherlands Philharmonic, Tampere Philharmonic (Finland) and Copenhagen Philharmonic. She will also make recital debuts in Lincoln Center New York, the Vancouver Recital Series, San Francisco, and in London's Wigmore Hall with the Pavel Haas Quartet, and is a guest artist of the first International Chamber Music Festival, Malmö.

Other recent highlights have included her debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, a tour with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Neville Marriner, and performances with the radio orchestras of Berlin and Hamburg, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Bamberg Symphony Orchestra.

As a 2015–16 Rising Star in the series of the European Concert Hall Organisation (ECHO), Harriet Krijgh gave recitals in London,

Birmingham and the Philharmonie concert halls of Paris, Luxembourg and Cologne, as well as Bozar Brussels, the Festspielhaus of Baden-Baden, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Tonhalle Zurich and the Vienna Musikverein.

Her recent recordings include a Rachmaninoff recital album and *Elegy*, an album of Romantic cello works with the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz and conductor Gustavo Gimeno. She has also recorded the Haydn cello concertos, a duo CD of French music and the cello sonatas of Brahms.

A passionate chamber musician and enterprising young artist, Harriet Krijgh formed her own festival, *Harriet and Friends*, which has taken place every summer at the Feistritz castle in Austria since 2012.

Harriet Krijgh was born in the Netherlands in 1991 and studied in the class of Lenian Benjamins in Utrecht. Later she continued her studies with Lilia Schulz-Bayrova and Jontscho Bayrov at the Vienna Conservatory and at the Kronberg Academy with Frans Helmerson (made possible by the Casals scholarship).

Harriet plays a Giovanni Paolo Maggini cello from 1620, which is generously loaned to her privately. This is her first appearance with the SSO.

www.harrietskrijgh.com

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DAVID ROBERTSON

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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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Kirsten Williams
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KEITH SAUNDERS

Long-term SSO subscriber Audrey Blunden first met Associate Principal Trombone Scott Kinmont when in search of a euphonium for her grandson to play. Since then the pair have become the best of friends, who love discussing the ins and outs of the trombone repertoire.



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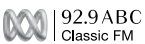
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