



Gripping Shostakovich

Ashkenazy's Shostakovich Tribute

APT MASTER SERIES

Wednesday 15 November, 8pm Friday 17 November, 8pm Saturday 18 November, 8pm





VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY'S SHOSTAKOVICH TRIBUTE



Dramatic Shostakovich SHOSTAKOVICH

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

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor Rav Chen violin

Special Event Premier Partner Credit Suisse

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

Mon 13 Nov, 7pm Sydney Opera House

APT Master Series

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

Sydney Opera House

Gripping Shostakovich SHOSTAKOVICH

Cello Concerto No.1 Symphony No.8.

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor Daniel Müller-Schott cello

CLASSICAL



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Roger Benedict conductor • David Elton trumpet SSO Fellows

Sun 26 Nov, 3pm Verbrugghen Hall



Bluebeard's Castle

Opera Australia Chorus

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

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Welcome to tonight's performance in the APT Master Series, in which the SSO and Vladimir Ashkenazy continue their two-week Shostakovich Tribute. As the presenting partner of the SSO's flagship series, we are delighted to support this celebration of powerful music under the leadership of a much-admired musician.

In tonight's program, Ashkenazy will conduct Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, composed in the middle of World War II, and his Cello Concerto No.1, composed for the legendary Mstislav Rostropovich in 1959. This music can be fierce, even terrifying, but it's touched with life-affirming optimism as well, and it will be a truly special experience to hear it conducted by a musician with first-hand knowledge of the composer and his world. It's not an exaggeration to say that this is a concert that will leave you moved.

In the same way there are travel destinations and experiences that go beyond mere relaxation – rather they broaden horizons and understanding and form the basis for lifelong memories. And with APT you can travel in luxury, with expert guides who are committed to providing unforgettable experiences, wherever in the world you choose to go.

We hope you find tonight's performance inspiring and we look forward to seeing you at the final APT Master Series concert for 2017, *Bluebeard's Castle*.



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Geoff McGeary OAMAPT Company Owner

APT MASTER SERIES

WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER, 8PM FRIDAY 17 NOVEMBER, 8PM SATURDAY 18 NOVEMBER, 8PM

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Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

GRIPPING SHOSTAKOVICH

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor Daniel Müller-Schott cello

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975) Cello Concerto No.1 in E flat major, Op.107

Allegretto Moderato -

Cadenza -

Allegro non troppo

INTERVAL

Symphony No.8 in C minor, Op.65

Adagio

Allegretto

Allegro non troppo -Largo -

Allegretto



Saturday's concert will be recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast on Sunday 26 November at noon.

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

Estimated durations: 30 minutes, 20-minute interval, 62 minutes The concert will conclude at approximately 10pm.

COVER IMAGE: Portrait of Shostakovich at work with detail from a photo taken during the Battle of Stalingrad (see page 11 of the full image)

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

Dmitri Shostakovich Cello Concerto No.1 in E flat major, Op.107

Allegretto Moderato – Cadenza – Allegro non troppo

Daniel Müller-Schott cello

Mstislav Rostropovich was faced with a dilemma. He was keen for Shostakovich to compose a cello concerto but, perhaps all too aware of his friend's sensitive nature, he had first asked the composer's wife what it would take to make Dmitri write one. She advised him that one should never ask (and certainly not beg) her husband to write anything.

Rostropovich followed her advice and made no requests to the composer, but sometime later, in 1959, reading the *Sovietskaia Kultura* newspaper he discovered that Shostakovich was indeed writing a concerto. Soon the cellist was playing through the new work with pianist Alexander Dedyukhin in the presence of the composer, who asked insistently if they liked the music. Once Rostropovich was able to convince him how moved he had been from the first note, Shostakovich humbly asked permission to dedicate his first cello concerto to him. (Shostakovich's second cello concerto, overtly less virtuosic than the first, was also written specifically for the Russian master cellist, in 1966, and exploited Rostropovich's genius as an interpretive musician.)

In the E flat concerto, Shostakovich uses almost every sound the cello can make to overcome the difficulties posed by a form composers often avoid. Being a mid-range instrument, the cello is easily swamped when pitted against a full orchestra, and listening to how Shostakovich responds to this challenge affords almost as much pleasure as his passionate writing for the instrument.

Listening Guide

Shostakovich begins, for example, by toning down the orchestra, using only double woodwind with piccolo and contrabassoon, one horn, celeste, timpani and strings, and the way he writes for this ensemble is reminiscent of his chamber music. The opening has touches of Stravinsky's early neoclassical works. The cello announces the four-note theme that will bind the entire concerto together, and is answered by the winds in a Baroque figure in the home key. The main cello motif (G – E – B – B flat) contains two notes (E and B) not in the key of E flat, thus reinforcing the feeling of Stravinskian 'wrong-note' harmony.

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. After Stalin's death in 1953, the harassment of Soviet artists abated: Shostakovich was made People's Artist of the USSR in 1954 and performances were given of works that had formerly been suppressed, such as the Eighth Symphony of 1943. Even so, Shostakovich wrote relatively little during the 1950s, and the First Cello Concerto is one of his few major works from this period.

CELLO CONCERTO NO.1

Shostakovich composed his first cello concerto in 1959 after hearing Prokofiev's Symphonie-Concertante for cello and orchestra. Its dedicatee, Mstislav Rostropovich, gave the premiere the same year. The music 'feeds on grim memories', says Michael Steinberg, and the finale plays with a heavily distorted version of one of Stalin's favourite songs – a risky gesture even then.

The First Cello Concerto is in four movements, the third of which is an extended cadenza for the soloist alone. The second, third and fourth movements are played without pause.

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 Rostropovich (left) and Shostakovich study a score together.

Shostakovich's own unmistakable musical personality, however, is soon in evidence. Allowing room for the soloist, the orchestral textures are widely spaced, with high woodwind and deep double basses and contrabassoon creating a dark and distinctly Russian feel. The absence of heavy brass highlights the lone horn whose solo roles throughout the concerto provide a beautiful timbral counterpoint to the cello, often reiterating the soloist's themes.

The **second movement** – an A minor *moderato* – begins with strings in a more Romantic, almost Mahlerian vein. This chromatic, smoothly contoured theme is heard only three times, virtually unchanged and acting as a hinge upon which the movement turns. Its initial exposition is halted by the horn, whose repeated melodic fragment turns out to be a gentle fanfare announcing the solo cello. The subsequent lyrical, drawn-out melody inevitably leads back to the string theme, transposed higher and this time reaching a kind of climax. It will return once more before we hear the movement's highlight: the soloist's stratospheric harmonics accompanied by quiet, shimmering strings and the celeste in its only appearance in the score. A solo clarinet takes over from the celeste in an ethereal duet with the cello over plucked bass notes leading straight into the cadenza.

Essentially a link between the slow movement and the finale, the **cadenza** appropriately has the feel of an improvisation.

'...the idea for this concerto goes back a comparatively long way. The original impulse sprang from hearing the Symphonie-Concertante for cello and orchestra by Sergei Prokofiev. This work fascinates me and has made me want to try the genre out for myself.'

SHOSTAKOVICH IN AN INTERVIEW FOR *Sovietskaia Kultura* (6 June 1959) The soloist shows off a dazzling array of cello techniques in the midst of rapid runs and double stops punctuated by still pizzicato chords. From here, Shostakovich builds cleverly towards the **finale**, the orchestra entering suddenly with huge chords. They set the dramatic pace for the music ahead which gallops with a folk-like energy towards a final combination of the opening motif from the first movement with the finale's own two themes. The whole work comes to a crashing end with the timpani, repeating what was once the Baroque answering figure in the woodwinds, and transforming it into an emphatic full-stop.

Rostropovich's premiere of the concerto in October 1959 was an unqualified success, and he toured it in the following months to the UK, the US and Australia where it met with popular and critical acclaim, despite its Soviet origins (this was still the Fifties, after all). Undaunted by the Russian cellist's reputation, other soloists have since taken it up eagerly, cementing its place in both the repertoire, and in audiences' hearts.

DREW CRAWFORD © 1998

The orchestra for this concerto calls for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets and two bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon); one horn; timpani, celesta and strings.

Mstislav Rostropovich, the dedicatee, gave the premiere of Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto on 4 October 1959 with Yevgeny Mravinsky conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic. Rostropovich also gave the first Australian performance, with conductor Igor Markevitch and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 1960. The SSO first performed it in 1976 with soloist Janos Starker and conductor Paavo Berglund, and most recently in 2009 with Han-Na Chang and conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Being Australians in the 21st century we are fated to miss the hidden references and the wry (and sometimes twisted) jokes that Shostakovich's contemporaries would have recognised in his music.

The opening of the First Cello Concerto, for example, quotes music from Shostakovich's soundtrack to *The Young Guard*, a funeral scene called 'Death of Heroes'. But the theme is given a twist, a grotesque transformation that reminds one writer of a popular Russian print showing mice burying a cat.

The grotesquerie returns in the final movement. We can only imagine the audacity of the first theme, which caricatures a Georgian tune that was a favourite of Stalin's. The second theme – perhaps to us simply a cocky dance melody – was based on a derisory tune, famous among musicians, with indecent words. (In an English version from the 1920s the listener is told to 'Go to hell!')

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Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No.8 in C minor, Op.65

Adagio Allegretto Allegro non troppo – Largo – Allegretto

In 1942, Shostakovich's seventh symphony (subtitled the 'Leningrad') had brought him to the height of his worldwide fame. The symphony was first performed in a Leningrad still under siege, with a Russian artillery bombardment of German positions beforehand to ensure that the performance could proceed. A microfilm copy of the score was rushed to the west, with Toscanini conducting the US premiere; there were more than sixty performances in the US in the following season. Shostakovich even made it to the cover of *Time* magazine, in a notorious image of him in fireman's uniform. While his popular success was immense, the critical response was mixed: figures such as Virgil Thomson derided the work, with composer Béla Bartók even subjecting it to scathing satirical treatment in his Concerto for Orchestra. Then came the battle of Stalingrad, the turning point of Russia's war with Germany; and not long after that another Shostakovich symphony, which indeed for a time bore the subtitle 'Stalingrad'.

The Eighth is debatably Shostakovich's finest symphony in traditional terms: subtler, for example, than the Fifth or Tenth, more coherent than the sprawling but unforgettable Fourth, more symphonic than the chilling death-obsessed song cycle he called his fourteenth symphony. It is for the most part a bleak work, firmly in the lineage of the Romantic tragic symphony. Its tonality of C minor has carried connotations of darkness since Bach and Haydn, and was the choice of Beethoven and Brahms for works leading through struggle from darkness to light. Shostakovich, however, denies us the blazing C major that ends Beethoven's Fifth and Brahms's First symphonies: the symphony ends in ambiguity and doubt, as indeed did his previous C minor symphony (the Fourth, which had been withdrawn before its scheduled 1936 premiere and would not see the light of day until 1961).

He had produced the affirmative Seventh Symphony while the war was at its darkest. Now he produced a pessimistic (or at least ambiguous) work just as the tide of the war was turning. Shostakovich seems to have foreseen a mixed critical reception, writing in typically sardonic fashion to Isaak Glikman: 'I am sure that it will give rise to valuable critical observations which will

Keynotes

EIGHTH SYMPHONY

This symphony belongs to Shostakovich's 'war symphonies' - a trilogy beginning with the Leningrad Symphony (No.7), which brought its composer credit as 'the chronicler of the People's heroism' in 1942. The Eighth Symphony, composed in 1943, was singled out for criticism because its mournful reflections undermined the compulsory spirit (or illusion) of triumph demanded of Soviet artists. (Put simply, it ends not in a blaze of optimism but quietly.) The music of the Eighth Symphony was an echo of that difficult war-time period, and in Shostakovich's opinion 'quite in the order of things'. The symphony is in five movements, the last three played without pause.

both inspire me to future creative work and provide insights enabling me to review that which I have created in the past. Rather than take a step backward I shall thus succeed in taking one forward. The symphony was already criticised at a composers' plenary meeting in 1944 for its lack of jubilant affirmation; after the war it would for many years be effectively banned under the cultural doctrine of Central Committee Secretary Andrei Zhdanov

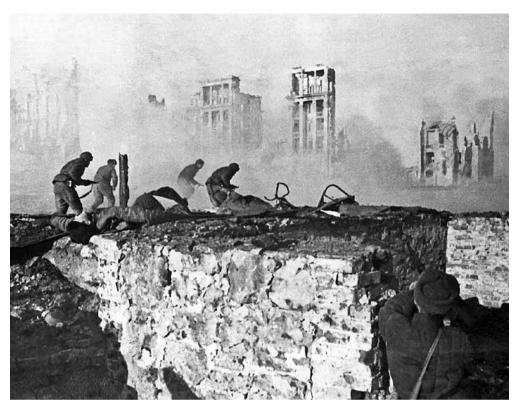
Listening Guide

The symphony begins **Adagio** with a sharply dotted, propulsive rhythm in the lower strings, gradually giving way to a lyrical melody in the violins. The opening few notes are crucial to the work's construction. The *fortissimo* beginning moves down a step from its initial sustained note, then returns; it soon leaps to another held note a fifth above. Both of these intervals appear throughout the first movement: the *pianissimo* violin melody which soon appears presents them immediately in different guise. This opening motion by a step and then back again is of particular importance, present (either right side up or inverted) throughout not only the movement but the entire symphony. Like certain similar motifs in Mahler, even when not heard in the foreground it binds the principal material throughout, giving the symphony a stronger motivic coherence than in perhaps any other major Shostakovich work.

The opening is given completely to sombre string colour, apart from discreet reinforcement of the violin line from flutes and trumpets at one important climax. When the winds enter in their own right it is in a distinctively snarling, funereal orchestration: bassoons and bass clarinet in the bass, oboes in the middle and the clarinets on top, dominated by the penetrating 'piccolo' tone of the E flat clarinet. The movement's second subject is again in the violins, in a gently flowing five-beat metre over a pulsing accompaniment in the lower strings: again the basic motive and the perfect fifth are prominent, this time appearing in reverse order.

Shostakovich's development of this material is in one sense quite classical: everything which follows springs from this initial material. What is not so classical is the sheer heat which the development accumulates. The dynamic inexorably works up to the full force of the large orchestra; the tempo is accelerated and the winds and brass are driven to the top of their range. There seems room to doubt if there can be any genuinely satisfying resolution here – and indeed in a sense there is none. After accelerating to a brutal march in Stravinskian rhythms, the tempo returns abruptly to the opening *Adagio*. Trumpets blast out the movement's opening material but the tutti can go

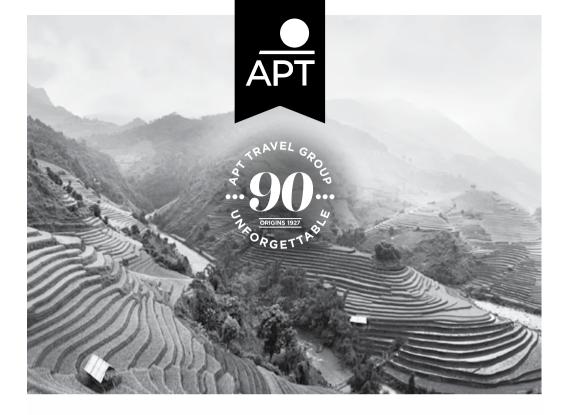
The symphony was criticised for its lack of jubilant affirmation and was effectively banned. In 1956 Shostakovich wrote: 'I greatly regret that the Eighth Symphony has not been performed in the Soviet Union for many years – a symphony into which I put so much thought and feeling.'



The Eighth Symphony was completed in 1943 following the decisive Battle of Stalingrad and, for a time, bore the subtitle 'Stalingrad'. In this photo, Soviet soldiers advance on a German position in the city's ruins.

no further: it is not the full orchestral mass but a single voice which will lead the movement towards its end, in a long, bleak soliloquy for the cor anglais. The movement ends in the hushed strings, the muted brass a distant reminder of questions still unanswered.

After the immense opening Adagio come two scherzos: the first a stylised march, the second a brutal moto perpetuo movement. The march (Allegretto) commences with the symphony's basic motive in the basses (it will also be hammered out in the timpani at the end). It is frequently wrong-footed by changes in time signature – its D flat major itself comes as a shock, shifting up a semitone from the first movement's key. Indeed the semitonal shifts continue: the bass line continues the upward chromatic movement while the harmony frequently slips sideways by a semitone alongside more traditional tonic-dominant progressions. The march's trio section appears in a jaunty piccolo tune, accompanied by the strings in a drum-like texture. The chromatic motion of the movement's beginning is here again in disguised form: the 'wedge' shape of the piccolo tune is built from two chromatic lines, one moving upward, the



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other downward. The tune moves to the bassoons and to the E flat clarinet, gradually spreading throughout the orchestra before the march dies away in fragments.

The **Allegro ma non troppo** is dominated throughout by a dogged moto perpetuo beginning in the violas. The basic motive appears this time not in the bass, but in oboes and clarinets at the top of their range, in a line moving up a semitone and then plunging back to the initial note in the octave below. In the central section the momentum is divided among the lower brass instruments, in a caricatured military band accompaniment to the fanfare of the trumpet solo. The original moto perpetuo returns after the trumpet fanfare, still in a forte dynamic but with the instruments muted: even the timpani are directed to be played 'coperto' or covered (a technique originating in funeral music, where the drums were draped with a cloth, although the modern orchestral equivalent is often simply a small patch of heavy felt on the drumhead).

After a dissonant climax, the **Largo** arrives without a break: it is one of Shostakovich's major essays in the Baroque passacaglia form, built on a repeating bass line. This form would reappear in many of his most important works: it had already appeared in his second opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, and would reappear in the first violin concerto as well as the second piano trio, the tenth string quartet and the fifteenth symphony. The repeating theme again begins with the symphony's basic motive; the lower strings play it throughout, supporting bleak solo meanderings from horn, piccolo and clarinet. The movement is in G sharp minor, quite some distance from the symphony's home key – but the clarinets deftly ease the harmony into C major for the bassoon solo which begins the finale, again with the symphony's basic motive.

Even though C major here arrives not in a blaze of glory but in a gentle woodwind solo, things seem initially to proceed along classical lines as the finale builds up strength through a series of episodes in accelerating tempo. But the first movement's questions remain – and in a reversal of the classical darkness-to-light trajectory, it is the first movement's minor-key tutti which finally arrives to crown the movement. Is a genuine resolution possible this time? Certainly none arrives. Again solo voices find their own way forward: first the unusual solo voice of the bass clarinet (in one of its most extended solo utterances in the orchestral repertoire), then cello, bassoon, piccolo and violin in turn. Then an ending of sorts: no triumphant blaze of glory or even a reposeful *Adagio* but a gentle *Andante*, the basic motif ringing out in the bass while the violins hold a C major chord far above.

But the first movement's questions remain...



For Shostakovich, and indeed for the Russian people, the war would indeed hold no real triumph: survival would have to do. The Seventh Symphony would thus remain the last symphonic triumph Shostakovich would offer Stalin. In the Eighth it was time to honour the victims in mournful reflection. A few years later, for his last war symphony, the Ninth, all Shostakovich would offer Stalin was farce.

CARL ROSMAN © 2008

Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony calls for four flutes (two doubling piccolo), two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, E flat clarinet, and three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon); four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (xylophone, tambourine, snare drum, suspended cymbal, cymbals, bass drum, tamtam, triangle); and strings.

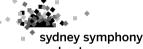
The Eighth Symphony was first performed in Moscow to an invited audience on 3 November 1943 and received its first public performance the following evening; Yevgeny Mravinsky, the dedicatee, conducted. The SSO gave the Australian premiere in 1985 under Nicholas Braithwaite, and performed it most recently in 2008, conducted by Steven Sloane.



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ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor

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 chorusmaster 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.



Daniel Müller-Schott cello

Born in Munich, Daniel Müller-Schott studied with Walter Nothas, Heinrich Schiff and Steven Isserlis, and benefitted early on from sponsorship by the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation. Through this support he studied privately for a year with Mstislav Rostropovich, the dedicatee of tonight's concerto. In 1992, aged 15, he won the Moscow International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians. He now ranks among the best cellists of his generation and can be heard delighting audiences on the foremost international concert stages.

He has been guest soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic (conducted by Alan Gilbert), New York Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra (Charles Dutoit), and National Symphony Orchestra, Washington (Christoph Eschenbach). He is also a regular guest of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Proms, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the radio orchestras of Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Hamburg and Paris; in the United States with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras; and with the NHK Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra Taiwan and Seoul Philharmonic. Many years of musical collaboration linked him with conductors Kurt Masur, Lorin Maazel and Yakov Kreizberg.

In addition to performances of the great cello concertos, he has a special interest in extending the cello repertoire and has premiered concertos dedicated to him by André Previn and Peter Ruzicka, and chamber works by Sebastian Currier, Olli Mustonen and Jonathan Berger.

Highlights of the 2017–18 season include the Homage to Rostropovich with Anne-Sophie Mutter in Berlin, and Brahms's Double Concerto with violinist Julia Fischer in Munich and on tour in Hamburg and New York (Bavarian State Orchestra and Kirill Petrenko).

His sizeable discography includes both Shostakovich concertos (Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Yakov Kreizberg), the Dvořák concerto (NDR Symphony Orchestra and Michael Sanderling), and Prokofiev and Britten (WDR Cologne Orchestra and Jukka-Pekka Saraste). Recent chamber music recordings include the award-winning *Duo Sessions* with Julia Fischer (music by Kodály, Schulhoff, Ravel and Halvorsen) and sonatas by Britten, Prokofiev and Shostakovich with pianist Francesco Piemontesi.

Daniel Müller-Schott made his SSO debut in 2015 performing Schumann. He plays the 'Ex Shapiro' Matteo Goffriller cello (Venice, 1727).

www.thecellist.com

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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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SSO Patrons pages correct as of September 2017

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A membership program for a dynamic group of Gen X & Y SSO fans and future philanthropists

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