

2017 SEASON



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Organ Grandeur

Joseph Nolan in Recital

TEA & SYMPHONY

Friday 17 February, 11am



Principal Partner



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

CLASSICAL

Illustration: Cobby Malpas



Music under the Moon

Lantern Festival Celebration

GUAN XIA A Hundred Birds

Paying Homage to the Phoenix

BARTÓK The Miraculous Mandarin: Suite

TAN DUN Nu Shu – The Secret Songs of Women

Tan Dun conductor • Liu Wenwen suona

Louise Johnson harp

Supporting Partner
The University of Sydney
Confucius Institute

Sat 11 Feb 8pm



Organ Grandeur

Joseph Nolan in Recital

LISZT Fantasy and Fugue on 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam', S.259

WIDOR Organ Symphony No.5

Joseph Nolan organ

Tea & Symphony

Fri 17 Feb 11am

complimentary morning tea from 10am



Vengerov plays Brahms

Tchaikovsky 5

BRAHMS Violin Concerto

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No.5

David Robertson conductor • Maxim Vengerov violin

Special Event
Premier Partner Credit Suisse

Fri 17 Feb 8pm

Sat 18 Feb 8pm



Robertson conducts Tchaikovsky

LIGETI Romanian Concerto

BARTÓK Four Orchestral Pieces

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No.5

David Robertson conductor

Mondays @ 7

Mon 20 Feb 7pm



Colour & Movement

Ravel's Bolero

LIGETI Romanian Concerto

WESTLAKE Oboe Concerto **PREMIERE**

BARTÓK Four Orchestral Pieces

RAVEL Bolero

David Robertson conductor • Diana Doherty oboe

Meet the Music

Wed 22 Feb 6.30pm

Thursday Afternoon Symphony

Thu 23 Feb 1.30pm

Emirates Metro Series

Fri 24 Feb 8pm



Young Russians

Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff & Shostakovich

PROKOFIEV Classical Symphony

RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No.1

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No.1

Gustavo Gimeno conductor • Daniil Trifonov piano

APT Master Series

Wed 1 Mar 8pm

Fri 3 Mar 8pm

Sat 4 Mar 8pm

Daniil Trifonov in Recital

SCHUMANN

Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood)

Toccata

Kreisleriana

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orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

TEA & SYMPHONY

FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY, 11AM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

ORGAN GRANDEUR

Joseph Nolan *organ*

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

Fantasy and Fugue on the chorale 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam', S259

Fantasy –

Adagio –

Fugue

.....
Estimated durations:

31 minutes, 41 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 12.30pm.

CHARLES-MARIE WIDOR (1844–1937)

Organ Symphony No.5 in F minor, Op.42 No.1

Allegro vivace

Allegro cantabile

Andantino quasi allegretto

Adagio

Toccata

*Please remain in your seat at the end of the performance
for a special presentation.*



Principal Partner



Joseph Nolan

organ

Joseph Nolan enjoys a reputation as an organist and musician of international repute, and in 2016 he was nominated for *Limelight* magazine's Artist of the Year.

Upon completion of his organ studies in London and Paris with legendary organists Dame Gillian Weir and Marie Claire Alain, Joseph Nolan was appointed to Her Majesty's Chapels Royal, St James' Palace in 2004. He performed many times at Buckingham Palace, including giving the opening concert of the refurbished Grand Ballroom organ to a distinguished invited audience.

He is a prolific recording artist with a unique discography as he is the first British-Australian organist to have recorded solo organ CDs on the Grand Ballroom organ of Buckingham Palace. He has also recorded in St Sulpice, Paris (Widor) and St Etienne du Mont, Paris (Durufié).

Joseph Nolan is particularly well known for his recordings of the complete organ works of Widor, featuring the Cavallé-Coll organs of La Madeleine Paris, St Sernin Toulouse and St François De Sales, Lyon. These albums have been awarded Editor's Choice, star recording awards and multiple five-star reviews in *Limelight*, *BBC Music* magazine, *Gramophone* and *MusicWeb international* among others and they are broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3 and ABC Classic FM.

Also an acclaimed choral conductor, Joseph Nolan moved to Australia in 2008 to take up the position of Master of Music at St George's Cathedral, Perth. The world-class cathedral music program has attracted critical acclaim. Last year, Joseph Nolan was awarded the medal of Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture and Communication for services to French music.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

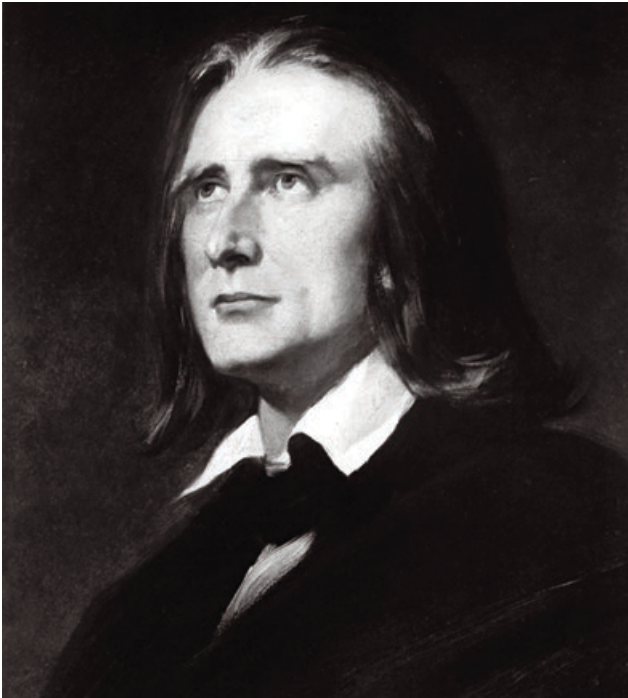
Organ Grandeur: Liszt and Widor

FRANZ LISZT: concert pianist, composer, conductor, philanthropist, teacher, enfant terrible, and priest. He stands as a fountainhead of musical life in the 19th century, a protean musical innovator whose colourful world would not be out of place in a Hollywood film.

At one end of the historical scale, his father was employed as cellist in the Esterházy summer orchestra under Joseph Haydn. At the other, his impressionist tendencies prefigured the music of Debussy and Ravel, and the radical tonal ambiguity of his later works anticipated many of the musical developments of the first half of the 20th century. Hugely supportive of and generous to his contemporaries – including Berlioz, Chopin, Wagner and Saint-Saëns – his influence over the younger generation, from Mahler and Richard Strauss to Sibelius, was enormous. His pupils, and their pupils, dominated the European musical landscape for generations.

As a performer, Liszt revolutionised 19th-century concert life. Touring extensively throughout Europe during the 1840s, he effectively invented the modern solo recital. Many of the solo piano works he composed during this period were thrillingly virtuosic, with extraordinary sonorities that made unprecedented physical demands on both player and instrument. Highly flamboyant, he brought a radical theatricality to his performances:

Franz Liszt, the Phenomenon



◀ Franz Liszt in 1856, after his retirement from concert life (portrait by Wilhelm Kaulbach)

always playing without a score, and moving the piano 180 degrees mid-concert so that his profile could be admired from both sides. Two instruments were often provided, in order to mitigate the extraordinary (and destructive) power of his playing. While viewed by his peers as the greatest virtuoso of his time, it was the public who went crazy for his proto-rock star persona. Heinrich Heine described the phenomenon as 'Lisztomania'. Discarded cigar butts became potent mementos to be tucked into the clothing of his adulating fans; piano strings broken under the dramatic intensity of his playing were remodelled into bracelets. By the height of his piano career, such was the frenzied excitement over his playing that physicians considered it a contagious condition and in some instances took measures to protect the public.

By the late 1840s, however, with the constant travelling impeding his work as composer, Liszt decided to renounce his solo career. Encouraged by the Polish Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, who persuaded him to concentrate on composition, he retired from the concert platform, aged 35, and settled in Weimar where he took up an offer from the Grand Duke of Weimar, as Kapellmeister Extraordinaire, a position he would hold for the next 13 years. Here he could concentrate fully on conducting and composing, and here he first became properly acquainted with the organ.

Among Liszt's pupils were Julius Reubke, son of an organ builder, and Alexander Gottschalg, a young church organist at nearby Tiefurt. The latter was the first to properly pique Liszt's interest in the great organ-playing tradition of the towns and villages in Thuringia that had flourished since the time of J.S. Bach. The two visited and played numerous instruments in the Weimar area and accordingly Liszt became steeped in the latest developments in organ playing. While there is evidence he had occasionally played in liturgical settings during the late 1830s (choosing repertoire from keyboard collections such as Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* in order to bypass his lack of fluency on pedals), his knowledge of the instrument and its music up until then was limited. Gottschalg's description of a visit to Dehnstedt is illuminating: 'In order that I could hear how a Bach fugue should sound, he would reach over my shoulders to play on the manuals while I would play the pedals because he had no great fluency on them. Since he usually took very fast tempi it was often an effort for me to keep up with him.'

Of Liszt's three large-scale works for the organ, two were composed at Weimar. The most inspired and grandest in scope is today's *Fantasie und Fuge über den Choral 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam'*. Composed during the winter of 1850, it is not only his

Liszt and the Organ

The Fantasy and Fugue

first composition for the instrument but, running at half an hour or more, his longest. An undisputed cornerstone of 19th-century organ repertoire, this monumental work implants Liszt's titanic piano technique, penchant for extreme dynamics, mastery of orchestral colour, and ideas regarding thematic transformation into the formal structures of Bach's organ music. So challenging was it to play, Liszt entrusted the work's premiere to one of the most fiendishly talented young organists in Weimar at the time, Alexander Winterberger, who performed it in a concert at Merseburg Cathedral in 1855. It calls on a vast range of the organ's resources and, even when considering other key works of this era – Mendelssohn's six Organ Sonatas and Schumann's six Fugues on B.A.C.H., for example – it stands without peer. Saint-Saëns proclaimed it 'the most extraordinary composition in the literature of the organ'.

The chorale itself was taken from the opera *Le Prophète* by Giacomo Meyerbeer, to whom Liszt dedicated the work. He already had a close relationship with the German composer and his music, having previously composed paraphrases on themes from *Les Huguenots* and *Robert le Diable*. Premiered in Paris in April 1849, *Le Prophète* was an enormous success and shortly afterwards the publishing house Breitkopf & Härtel commissioned a series of transcriptions of the opera. Liszt, who initially only knew the work through its piano reduction, completed three for solo piano, published under the title *Illustrations du Prophète* in January 1850. Later that year, he heard the opera live in Dresden, and was inspired to use one short theme (the rousing call to repentance sung by the three Anabaptists in Act I) as the basis of his fourth 'illustration': 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam' (To us, to the water of salvation).

This monothematic work is a remarkable example of the cyclical form that permeates so many of Liszt's works. Building on formal experiments by Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, he looked to revolutionise sonata form, seen here in the Fantasy and Fugue as well as in his later pianistic masterpiece, the Sonata in B minor (1853). The writing is rhapsodic and free, with pervasive use of thematic fragmentation and metamorphosis: the unifying chorale theme itself is not heard in its entirety until well into the Fantasy. Dividing the music into three sections, Liszt imposes a modified sonata form over the basic binary structure, with the energetic double Fugue serving as both finale and recapitulation after the Fantasy's exposition and the remote modulations of the Adagio's development. Indeed, the work as a whole is tonally adventurous: augmented triads, diminished sevenths, and whole-tone scales abound right up until the blazing C major of the final page.

The Chorale

Listening Guide



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CHARLES-MARIE WIDOR was, together with Franck and Saint-Saëns, one of a handful of composers of the French organ tradition who were deeply indebted to Liszt. Mutual admirers, the two were well acquainted, first when Widor was a student, and later through Liszt's numerous visits to the French capital, most notably in 1878 when Widor introduced him to the new Cavallé-Coll organ of the Trocadéro. In return, Widor was invited to visit the Maison Erard where Liszt stayed and practised whenever in Paris. Every morning he attended the older composer's three-hour-long study sessions: 'The most extraordinary memory of my artistic life,' Widor would later write.

Widor, like Liszt, was a musical visionary. Widely regarded as the 'father of the organ symphony', he sought to rejuvenate the musical language of the instrument: 'the modern organ is essentially symphonic; the new instrument needs a new language, a different ideal from that of textbook polyphony.'

Born in Lyon, Widor's musical studies took an unorthodox path. Precociously talented, he received his first lessons from his father, organist of the church of Saint François-de-Sales, and at age 11 had become chapel organist of his school. By 16, he had replaced his father as principal organist at St François. In 1863 the French organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll encouraged his protégé to study organ with the virtuoso Jacques Lemmens and composition with François-Joseph Fétis, director of the Brussels Conservatoire, rather than going to the Paris Conservatoire.

Widor's Organ Symphony No.5

Charles-Marie Widor at the organ of Saint-Sulpice in Paris



Widor emerged from these studies as one of the preeminent virtuoso organist-composers of the time: he was immediately appointed Saint-Saëns's assistant at La Madeleine and invited to participate in the prestigious inaugurations of the organs at Notre-Dame and La Trinité. One year later, in 1870, and on the combined recommendation of Cavallé-Coll, Saint-Saëns and Charles Gounod, he was appointed Lefébure-Wély's successor as organiste titulaire of Saint-Sulpice. The appointment of a 25 year old to this celebrated post – the most prominent position for a French organist at the time – was highly controversial. However, Cavallé-Coll, profoundly influential within Parisian organ circles, believed that Widor's talents were best placed to carry forward the modern French 'symphonic' school of composition.

Cavallé-Coll's instruments allowed an enormous range of volume, with an unprecedented capacity for evenly graded crescendos and diminuendos, and the vast array of stops extended the colouristic resources of the instrument far beyond that of the earlier French Baroque and Classical instruments, which were built for clarity of contrapuntal writing. This truly orchestral range of possibilities inspired Widor and his contemporaries to write music that was properly symphonic in scope. This development was not limited to France, and was also in evidence in Germany through the organs of Eberhard Friedrich Walcker and the works of Liszt, Julius Reubke and Max Reger. Indeed, Widor and Franck both thought Liszt's symphonic organ music was ideally suited to Cavallé-Coll instruments.

The organ at St-Sulpice was Cavallé-Coll's magnum opus, and its extraordinary capabilities proved an inspiration to the young Widor who, through his ten subsequent organ symphonies composed between 1876 and 1900, refocused the art of organ playing and composition in France. The most famous of these is his Symphony for Organ No.5 in F minor, Op.42, best known for the pyrotechnics of its concluding Toccata ('Widor's Toccata', now a favourite voluntary for church organists everywhere!). Premiered by the composer at the Palais du Trocadéro in October 1879 to widespread acclaim, the work – in the remarkable last movement especially – displays an impressive combination of Lisztian piano technique and bravura foot work, and draws upon an extraordinary orchestral palette of sound of truly symphonic proportions.

JESSICA COTTIS © 2017

Before Jessica Cottis took up conducting she was an organist, studying with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris and performing in Westminster Cathedral in 2003. From 2012 to 2014 she was Assistant Conductor of the SSO.

Cavallé-Coll's instruments inspired Widor and his contemporaries to write music that was properly symphonic in scope.

ABOUT THE ORGAN

The Grand Organ of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall is believed to be the world's largest mechanical action pipe organ, with 10,154 pipes. It was built by Ronald Sharp, who is on record as saying: 'I set out to build a musical instrument, not a piece of machinery.' Despite its ambitious size (many doubted that such a huge organ, especially one with a mechanical action could be built), *sound* was Sharp's main concern. When it was completed in 1979, he said 'I hope music lovers will like it'.

The organ's mechanical tracker action contributes to something of a baroque character – articulated and sensitive – and the instrument has a warm but relatively gentle sound that most agree is extremely well-suited to earlier music by composers such as Bach. At the same time, the organ's distinctive sound is also very effective in French music. Among its repertoire of colours is one that's very close to the harmonic flute stop (a distinctive breathy, open, but singing sound), invented by Cavaillé-Coll in the mid-19th century and favoured in French music.

Read more about the organ's construction and specifications in the Sydney Opera House information sheet (PDF file) at bit.ly/GrandOrganSOH



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Clocktower Square, Argyle Street, The Rocks NSW 2000
GPO Box 4972, Sydney NSW 2001

Telephone (02) 8215 4644 Box Office (02) 8215 4600
Facsimile (02) 8215 4646 www.sydneyssymphony.com

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