

2017 SEASON



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Songs and Vistas

An Alpine Symphony

APT MASTER SERIES

Wednesday 29 March, 8pm

Friday 31 March, 8pm

Saturday 1 April, 8pm





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 cello *(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. OGUEY 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
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WELCOME



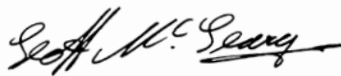
Welcome to tonight's concert in the APT Master Series. We are delighted to be the presenting partner of the SSO's flagship series and to be supporting a program that includes one of the most magnificent orchestral works in the repertoire.

Israeli conductor Asher Fisch is well known to Perth audiences as the chief conductor of the WASO and to Australian music lovers generally as the conductor of the acclaimed Adelaide *Ring* cycle in 2005. This week he makes his SSO debut, bringing with him music from the German Romantic repertoire for which he is renowned and a relatively new piece by fellow Israeli Avner Dorman, who has found inspiration in that same style.

For the two choral songs by Brahms, Asher Fisch and the SSO are joined by the magnificent Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. After interval the orchestra will return to the stage for Richard Strauss's last tone poem, which literally takes listeners on a daytrip in the Bavarian alps with some vivid musical picture painting.

You'll 'hear' waterfalls, alpine meadows and pastures, a glacier, even a storm. Who knows? Perhaps after hearing *An Alpine Symphony* you'll be inspired to take in a mountain vista in real life. In which case, APT can give you an unforgettable experience with one of our European River Cruises, taking in the Swiss and Austrian Alps – just one of the many extraordinary destinations you can experience when you travel with APT.

We hope you enjoy tonight's performance and that it leaves you inspired to make fresh explorations, in music and the world, and we look forward to seeing you at future APT Master Series concerts during the year.



Geoff McGeary OAM
APT Company Owner



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

APT MASTER SERIES

WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH, 8PM

FRIDAY 31 MARCH, 8PM

SATURDAY 1 APRIL, 8PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

SONGS & VISTAS

Asher Fisch *conductor*

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

AVNER DORMAN (born 1975)

After Brahms – Three Intermezzi for orchestra

- I. *Allegro con molto appassionato*
- II. *Delicatamente con molto espressione*
- III. *Adagio espressivo*

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Schicksalslied (Song of Destiny), Op.54

Gesang der Parzen (Song of the Fates), Op.89

INTERVAL

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

An Alpine Symphony, Op.64

- Night – Sunrise –*
- The ascent – Entry into the wood –*
- Wandering by the side of the brook –*
- At the waterfall – Apparition –*
- On flowering meadows – On the alpine pasture –*
- Through thicket and undergrowth on the wrong path*
- On the glacier – Dangerous moments –*
- On the summit – Vision – Mists rise –*
- The sun gradually becomes obscured –*
- Elegy – Calm before the storm –*
- Thunder and tempest, descent –*
- Sunset – Conclusion – Night*

[The 22 sections are played without pause]



92.9 ABC
Classic FM

Saturday night's performance will be recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast on Saturday 8 April at noon.

Pre-concert talk by David Larkin at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer.

For more information visit sydeysymphony.com/speaker-bios

Estimated durations:
7 minutes, 18 minutes, 14 minutes,
20-minute interval, 47 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 9.55pm

COVER IMAGE: The Watzmann peak in the Berchtesgaden Alps, Bavaria. Photo by Günter Seggebäing, CC BY-SA 3.0

Brahms texts and translations can be found on pages 11 and 13.

PRESENTED BY



Principal Partner

Avner Dorman (born 1975)

After Brahms – Three Intermezzi for orchestra

- I. *Allegro con molto appassionato*
- II. *Delicatamente con molto espressione*
- III. *Adagio espressivo*

The composer writes...

After Brahms – Three Intermezzi for Orchestra is inspired by the late piano compositions of Johannes Brahms (Opp. 116, 117, 118 and 119). The first intermezzo derives its structure and underlying texture from the left hand arpeggios of Brahms's Intermezzo, Op. 118 No.1, and these figures appear in the lower strings and brass. While the high strings and winds evoke the original descending melodic line, they clash with Brahms's accompanimental texture both rhythmically and harmonically. The middle and low winds contend with the accompaniment as well, providing harmonic contrast. As the piece progresses the explosive elements of the texture ultimately take over, erupting energetically in both rhythm and sound.

The second intermezzo draws its inspiration from Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 119 No.1. The original descending arpeggios change in a series of meter shifts – each bar is one pulse longer or shorter than its predecessor, creating a pendulum-like pattern. Following an ABA' form, the middle (B) section is reminiscent of popular music of the day, much like in Brahms's original intermezzo. In Brahms's case that piece could be a waltz, and in *After Brahms*, it evokes a pop song of the early 21st century. The final A section includes more syncopation and a wider palette of orchestral colour. The end of the piece utilizes Brahms's original harmony while expanding the range and colours of the orchestra, closing in the deep register of the tuba.

While the last intermezzo, elegiac in its character, is not directly inspired by a specific Brahms piece, it is perhaps the most like Brahms in its emotional expression and musical content. The continual descending lines, the suspended lyrical inner voice, and the variety of expressive cross-rhythms all recall Brahms's style. This piece explores these devices in the context of present-day compositional techniques, while calling on the kind of introspection and reflection so often found in Brahms's music.

AVNER DORMAN © 2016

After Brahms calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons with alto and tenor saxophone; four horns, two trumpets, trombone and tuba; timpani and strings.

The original version of *After Brahms*, for solo piano, was composed for Orli Shaham (she will perform it in recital for the SSO in July). The orchestral version was commissioned and premiered by the Lexington Philharmonic in 2016; this is the first Australian performance.



FELIX GRÜNSCHLOSS



About the composer...

A native of Israel now living in the United States, Avner Dorman draws on a variety of cultural and historical influences in composing, resulting in music that achieves a rare combination of rigorous compositional construction while preserving the sense of excitement and spontaneity usually associated with jazz, rock or ethnic music. His works utilise an exciting and complex rhythmic vocabulary, as well as unique colours in orchestral, chamber and solo settings, and many have become contemporary staples in the repertoire.

Dorman's music is championed by conductors such as Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Chailly, Andris Nelsons and David Robertson as well as Asher Fisch, and by soloists Gil Shaham, Orli Shaham, Martin Grubinger and Hilary Hahn. His music has been heard by audiences of the New York Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Vienna Musikverein, Los Angeles Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, and the Salzburg, Lucerne and Cabrillo festivals, among others.

In the 2015–16 season, works of his were performed by the Cleveland Orchestra and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and highlights included chamber music premieres at Carnegie Hall in New York and the Phillips Collection in Washington DC. In January his first opera, *Wahnfried* was premiered at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, and in the 2016–17 season the Israel Philharmonic and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra will perform his music.

Dorman is also a conductor, and he is the current music director of the chamber orchestra CityMusic Cleveland. He holds a doctorate in composition from the Juilliard School and serves as Associate Professor of Music Theory and Composition at the Sunderman Conservatory of Music at Gettysburg College.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Two songs for chorus and orchestra

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

While Brahms is often regarded as a composer who came at the end rather than the beginning of a tradition, he did develop one musical genre which was highly distinctive. No other composer made such a specialty out of short works for choral voices and orchestra. Pieces such as the *Alto Rhapsody*, *Nänie*, the *Gesang der Parzen* and the *Schicksalslied* gave this highly literate composer the opportunity to respond with extreme intensity to his beloved German poetry. Poetry by Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin all came in for the Brahms treatment in these works and inspired some of his greatest, most moving music.

***Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny), Op.54**

Text by Friedrich Hölderlin

For a short work that rates among Brahms's most nakedly emotional utterances, the *Schicksalslied* or *Song of Destiny* had decidedly protracted origins. It began in the summer of 1868 (the time of *A German Requiem*), when the composer was staying



with his friends the Dietrichs in Bonn. His hosts found him one morning in the library, visibly moved after reading Friedrich Hölderlin's great poem, *the Song of Destiny*. In the poem, Hölderlin – in two contrasting sections – describes the pleasures of heaven and then the torments of mortal, earthly existence. Soon afterwards, when his hosts took the distracted Brahms to the beach, they witnessed him a long way distant, all by himself, sketching the first few phrases of what would become the *Schicksalslied*. But it would be three years before the finished work would see the light of day and Brahms would agonise over the ending.

In January 1871, with Bismarck at the helm, the German states were united and Brahms – who kept the politician's bust in his study just beneath that of Beethoven – was thrilled. He ended up composing the *Song of Triumph*, a brash, sabre-rattling piece which is the direct opposite of the *Song of Destiny*'s hushed, hymn-like qualities. But whatever their differences, the one work seemed to inspire the other and by the May of that year the *Schicksalslied* was at last completed in Baden-Baden, where Brahms would work on the manuscript by day and listen to Johann Strauss's dance band in the Kurpark at night.

The *Schicksalslied* begins with one of the great moments in all Brahms's music, hushed, mystical, with muted strings and a heartbeat on the timpani as the E flat major tonic gives way now and again to the minor. The choir enters with the altos first, their word-painting conjuring up a glorious vision of the sensual joy of heaven. The hymn unfolds as the full choir enters, with music of an intense beauty unrivalled since Beethoven and Bach.

Then, almost as if there is too much sublimity to bear, we're plunged back to earth with rushing quavers in the strings and a violent lunge from the key of C minor into D minor. Here is Hölderlin's worldly place of suffering where there can be no rest and where the end of every endeavour is simply exhaustion.

Where to go from here? That was the problem which, over literally years, Brahms confronted as he attempted to end the work. Should he leave the listener in despair? Should he repeat the sublime opening? Should he make the chorus look again to the heavens? Sketch after sketch reveal that Brahms himself didn't know the answer.

In the end Brahms consulted his friend Hermann Levi, whose orchestra would give the premiere in October 1871. On Levi's advice, Brahms removed the choir altogether from the conclusion and threw the whole thing into the key of C major – something of an innovation in an age when such pieces were meant to conclude in their original key.

...Brahms would work on the *Song of Destiny* by day and listen to Johann Strauss's dance band at night.



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The ending, then, is ambiguous, with the timpani still prominent, the opening prelude revisited, and neither hope nor despair triumphant. 'Here's the receipt for my heart's blood,' Brahms wrote to his publisher on receiving his fee for the work. 'Also, my thanks for the purchase of the poor little piece of my soul.'

MARTIN BUZACOTT © 2000

In addition to the four-part chorus, Brahms's *Song of Destiny* calls for an orchestra comprising pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; two horns, two trumpets and three trombones (but no tuba); timpani and strings.

These are the first performances of the *Song of Destiny* by the SSO. It is also the first time Sydney Philharmonia Choirs has performed this work.

Schicksalslied

*Ihr wandelt droben im Licht
Auf weichem Boden, selige Genien!
Glänzende Götterlüfte
Rühren Euch leicht,
Wie die Finger der Künstlerin
Heilige Saiten.*

*Schicksallos, wie der schlafende
Säugling, atmen die Himmlischen;
Keusch bewahrt
In bescheidner Knospe
Blühet ewig
Ihnen der Geist,
Und die seligen Augen
Blicken in stiller,
Ewiger Klarheit.*

*Doch uns ist gegeben
Auf keiner Stätte zu ruhn;
Es schwinden, es fallen
Die leidenden Menschen
Blindlings von einer
Stunde zur andern,
Wie Wasser von Klippe
Zu Klippe geworfen,
Jahrlang ins Ungewisse hinab.*

FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN

Song of Destiny

You wander above in the light
on soft ground, blessed spirits!
Shining breezes of the gods
touch you lightly,
as the fingers of the artist
touch sacred strings.

Free of fate, like the sleeping
infant, breathe the heavenly ones;
chastely guarded
in modest bud,
their spirit
blossoms eternally,
and their blessed eyes
gaze in hushed,
eternal clarity.

But to us it is given
to rest in no place;
suffering humanity
fades, falls
blindly from one
hour to the next,
as water thrown
from crag to crag,
downward into the unknown, year after year.

TRANSLATION BY NATALIE SHEA
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 2005

Gesang der Parzen (Song of the Fates), Op.89

Text by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The beginning of the *Song of the Fates* gives impression that you've stumbled on a playlist halfway through a track, landing in some fragment of a grand orchestral fugue – a 19th-century nod to Handel. The harmonies of this powerful opening are restless and searching, resisting any sense of resolution, clarity or 'home'. Such ambiguity 'pained' the 'modern ears' of Brahms's contemporaries but was entirely deliberate on his part. For Clara Schumann it was precisely what stirred her the most: 'Words fail me to tell of the joy I have had from the piece – the gloomy beauty of its harmonies.'

After little more than a minute of this disorienting music, the orchestra seems to have ground to a halt. And then the choir makes its entry above ominous drum beats to begin what Michael Steinberg memorably described as its 'repressed but fiercely urgent march through the text'.

That text comes from Goethe's reworking of the ancient Greek tragedy *Iphigenia auf Tauris*, which Brahms had recently seen. The *Song of the Fates* concludes Act 4 as Iphigenia – daughter of Agamemnon and priestess of Diana – contemplates what the Fates had in store for her, recalling unwillingly the ancient song she'd heard as a child. It's easy to understand why she'd been so glad to forget such a bleak and horrifying poem.

The dark mood is mirrored in the vocal and orchestral colours. In the orchestra Brahms now includes contrabassoon and tuba. The chorus is divided into six rather than four parts and it's the lower voices (altos and basses) who are doubled for a weighty texture. The six voices also gives Brahms an opportunity to divide the chorus into subgroups (high and low) for question-and-answer effects, as he does in the first stanza ('Es fürchte die Götter das Menschengeschlecht!') and again when he brings those lines back, about six minutes in, before the final stanzas.

With the words 'Es wenden die Herrscher' Brahms transforms the music from an inexorable, spikey march to something flowing and lyrical, from a minor tonality to major. 'Just the appearance of the major key alone,' wrote Brahms, 'should soften the heart and moisten the eye of the innocent listener. Only then does humanity's whole misery get to him.' In the final stanza ('So sang die Parzen') Brahms returns once more to the minor key and his opening music but with entirely different orchestral colours – muted and silvery – as the choir murmurs, in unison, of the old man, the exile, remembering his children and grandchildren and shaking his head.

In addition to the six-part chorus (SAATBB), Brahms's *Song of the Fates* calls for an orchestra of two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and strings.

As with the *Song of Destiny*, this week's performances of *Song of the Fates* are the first for both the SSO and Sydney Philharmonia Choirs.

YVONNE FRINDLE

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA © 2017

*Es fürchte die Götter
Das Menschengeschlecht!
Sie halten die Herrschaft
In ewigen Händen,
Und können sie brauchen,
Wie's ihnen gefällt.*

*Der fürchte sie doppelt
Den je sie erheben!
Auf Klippen und Wolken
Sind Stühle bereitet
Um goldene Tische.*

*Erhebet ein Zwist sich,
So stürzen die Gäste,
Geschmäht und geschändet
In nächtliche Tiefen,
Und harren vergebens,
Im Finstern gebunden,
Gerechten Gerichtes.*

*Sie aber, sie bleiben
In ewigen Festen
An goldenen Tischen.
Sie schreiten vom Berge
Zu Bergen hinüber:
Aus Schlünden der Tiefe
Dampft ihnen der Atem
Erstickter Titanen,
Gleich Opfergerüchen,
Ein leichtes Gewölke.*

*Es fürchte die Götter
Das Menschengeschlecht!...*

*Es wenden die Herrscher
Ihr segnendes Auge
Von ganzen Geschlechtern
Und meiden, im Enkel
Die ehemals geliebten,
Still redenden Züge
Des Ahnherrn zu sehn.*

*So sangen die Parzen;
Es horcht der Verbannte,
In nächtlichen Höhlen
Der Alte die Lieder,
Denkt Kinder und Enkel
Und schüttelt das Haupt.*

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE
FROM *IPHIGENIE AUF TAURIS*, ACT 4

Let the race of mankind
fear the gods!
For they hold dominion
over them in their eternal hands,
and can demand
what they please of us.

Doubly so should those fear them
who have been exalted by them!
On cliffs and clouds
stools stand ready
around golden tables.

If a dispute arises,
the guests are pitched down,
abused and shamed,
into the deep dark of night;
and they wait futilely,
bound in the dark,
for justice to be served.

But they [the gods] remain
at their eternal feast
at the golden tables.
They step from mountain
to mountain, up above:
from the abysses of the deep
steams the breath
of suffocating Titans,
like a burnt offering,
a light mist.

Let the race of mankind
fear the gods!...

The rulers turn away
their blessed eyes
from entire races of people,
shunning the sight in their descendants
of those formerly beloved and
silently speaking features
of our ancestors.

So sang the Fates;
*the banished one listens
in his night-dark lair
to the songs of the ancient ones,
thinks of his children and grandchildren
and shakes his head.*

TRANSLATION © BY EMILY EZUST
FROM THE LIEDERNET ARCHIVE WWW.LIEDER.NET

Richard Strauss

An Alpine Symphony, Op.64

Night –

Sunrise –

The ascent –

Entry into the wood –

Wandering by the side of the brook –

At the waterfall –

Apparition –

On flowering meadows –

On the alpine pasture –

Through thicket and undergrowth on the wrong path

On the glacier –

Dangerous moments –

On the summit –

Vision –

Mists rise –

The sun gradually becomes obscured –

Elegy –

Calm before the storm –

Thunder and tempest, descent –

Sunset –

Conclusion –

Night

Around the time Strauss wrote *An Alpine Symphony*, he boasted that his powers of expression were such that he could, if necessary, describe a knife and fork in music. Indeed *An Alpine Symphony* finally marks the limit in Strauss's nearly 30-year quest to extend music's capacity for illustration and representation – an effort that began with *Don Juan* in 1888 and reached another, earlier, highpoint with *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, which attempted to express in music the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Strauss turned to *An Alpine Symphony* after writing the opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*, with its classical forces. In one of history's ironies, critics had just remarked on the Mozartean turn in his music when he produced this piece of orchestral gigantism. The orchestra calls for around 120 players, but what would you expect? Strauss is attempting nothing less than a portrait of a mountain.

Strauss composed this work at his studio in Garmisch, where he could look out over the Zugspitze and the Wettersteingebirge. It was completed in 100 days during the winter of 1914–15, but the work had been long in gestation. The idea of it had occurred

Keynotes

R STRAUSS

Born Munich, 1864

Died Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 1949

Richard Strauss wrote two symphonies as a teenager, but this was not the musical genre that captured his imagination. Instead he made his name in the theatre and with the evocative and storytelling possibilities of the symphonic poem (or 'tone poem', as he preferred to call it) as invented by Liszt. Don't be misled by the presence of the word 'symphony' in Strauss's titles. Even the '*Sinfonia domestica*' is large-scale tone poem with an underlying narrative.

AN ALPINE SYMPHONY

This is not a symphony, although some have tried to analyse it in that way. Instead it traces an alpine daytrip in 22 seamless musical sections, each with a descriptive title. At one level it evokes the glorious power of nature, at another it is a tribute to individual strength of will. The music itself is huge: more than a hundred musicians on stage, with a few more behind the scenes, and the 'journey' takes the best part of an hour. As Strauss's final tone poem, composed in 1915, it makes a monumental farewell to the genre.

to Strauss as a boy, after he and a party of climbers got lost during a mountain hike and were overtaken by a storm on their return. Impressed by the experience, Richard had sat at the piano on arriving home and, as he said, 'conjured up a lot of nonsense and giant Wagnerian tone painting'.

The idea of *An Alpine Symphony* is spectacularly simple: the ascent and descent of a mountain. The timeframe is a 24-hour period, and with its 22 continuous sections, the structure avoids the conventions of the traditional multi-movement symphony. This format guarantees Strauss certain musical highlights: yet another opportunity to depict an opening sunrise (as impressive in its own way as *Zarathustra's*), and a sunset sequence, eminently suited to Strauss in one of his autumnal moods. Strauss ingeniously avoids the obvious at 'the summit' (which could have been one of the pitfalls in such an explicit form), instead, after the predictable big statement of one of the earlier themes, he shifts focus to a halting oboe, as if we are suddenly made aware of the impact of the stupendous view on an awestruck human. And the predictability of the descent is offset by one of the most graphic storms in musical literature.

Strauss is attempting nothing less than a literal portrait of a mountain.



The façade of the Villa Strauss on the outskirts of Garmisch, Bavaria. Strauss set up home in Garmisch when he was in his mid-40s and most of his major works were written here. The alpine view from the villa is magnificent, looking out to the Alpspitze and the Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany.

'At last I have learnt to orchestrate,' Strauss said at the general rehearsal in October 1915. Some of the more obvious orchestral highlights include the exhilarating depiction of spray at the waterfall (listen for a theme highly reminiscent of a famous sighing phrase from Max Bruch's Violin Concerto). Strauss uses cowbells in *On the alpine pasture*, an idea taken from Mahler's Sixth Symphony, but, as Strauss authority Norman del Mar says, here they are 'so apt...that one might think this to be their first employment in the symphony orchestra'. Then there is the strange colouring of the 'Sun theme' mixed with organ reeds to depict rising mists ('perhaps the most brilliantly clever section of the work', writes Del Mar), and the aggravating high D flats on the oboe getting one's nerves on edge in the still before the storm, not to mention the subtle use of the organ during the waning moments.

The work has often been dismissed as just a piece of 'orchestriana', but is it more than a shallow display? Del Mar points to Strauss's 'curiously detached attitude to the Nature subject...giving it a de-humanised majestic quality reminiscent, in a unique way, of Bruckner.' The sense of the great mass of the mountain, barely discernible in the gloom, at the very end of the work, certainly has a Brucknerian scale and aspect. Yet Del Mar also says: 'It is thus not hard to understand how Strauss [for whom composing came as easily as a cow gives milk] came... idly to sketch out an orchestral fantasy on the subject of the beautiful mountains amongst which he had so recently built the luxurious villa which was to be his home for the rest of his life.'

The work should also be seen, however, in the context of the mystical importance mountains held for Germans in the 19th century. As Timothy Calnin, a former artistic administrator of the SSO, has said, 'the lofty altitudes possess a sense of mystery and spiritual rejuvenation which were an inspiration...to German Romantics'. And it is probable that Strauss would have understood the remarks of his philosophical model Nietzsche when he said:

He who knows how to breathe the air of my writings knows that it is an air of the heights, a robust air...The ice is near, the solitude is terrible – but how peacefully all things lie in the light!...Philosophy as I have hitherto understood and lived it, is a voluntary living in ice and high mountains – a seeking after everything that is strange and questionable in existence, all that has hitherto been excommunicated by morality.

Unlike his philosophical model, Strauss could lapse into banality when he attempted to express Eternal and Absolute



Richard Strauss by Leonhard Fanto, 1919

...the predictability of the descent is offset by one of the most graphic storms in musical literature.

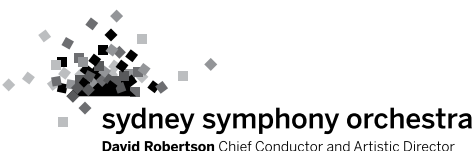
Truths. But whether he did so here or not, he never risked another tone poem. After *An Alpine Symphony*, he turned decisively to the stage, where his skills in musical depiction were a decided asset.

GORDON KALTON WILLIAMS
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 1998

An Alpine Symphony calls for a huge orchestra comprising four flutes (two doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling cor anglais), lupophone [a new, modern version of the hecklephone, with a lower range, played tonight by Shefali Pryor], three clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet), E flat clarinet, and four bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon); eight horns (four doubling Wagner tuba), four trumpets, four trombones and two tubas; timpani (two players) and percussion (glockenspiel, cymbals, bass drum, snare drum, triangle, cowbells, tam-tam, wind machine, thunder machine); two harps, organ and celesta; and 60 strings. Strauss also calls for an offstage band; in this performance nine horns, two trumpets and two trombones.

The SSO gave the first Australian performance of *An Alpine Symphony* in 1951 under the baton of Eugene Goossens. Our most recent performance was in 2012, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

An Alpine Symphony was composed for the Dresden Hofkapelle, and we can imagine that it was intended as a virtuoso showpiece for the orchestra that had premiered several of Strauss's prior works. This 'Strauss orchestra' premiered *An Alpine Symphony* also – not in Dresden as it happened, but at the Philharmonie in Berlin on 28 October 1915, with Strauss conducting.



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MORE MUSIC

AVNER DORMAN

The orchestral version of *After Brahms* has yet to be recorded, but you can hear the original piano version in Orli Shaham's 2-CD album *Brahms Inspired*, which matches Brahms intermezzos and other short piano pieces with music that takes Brahms as inspiration. (You can also hear her perform it here in Sydney on 3 July.)

CANARY CLASSICS 12

Four of Dorman's concertos (for mandolin, piccolo, piano and string quartet) have been collected in the Naxos American Classics series, in performances by the Metropolis Ensemble with conductor Andrew Cyr.

NAXOS 8.559620

CHORAL BRAHMS

If you'd like to hear more of Brahms's choral music, including a *cappella* works and works with piano, look for the Deutsche Grammophon Collectors Edition, *Brahms Complete Choral Works*: a seven-disc set with some superb performances from the Vienna State Opera Chorus, Prague Philharmonic Chorus and North German Radio Chorus. In addition to tonight's pieces (sung by the Prague choir with the Czech Philharmonic conducted by Giuseppe Sinopoli), the collection includes the Alto Rhapsody with Brigitte Fassbaender as soloist and *A German Requiem*.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 4220

STRAUSS TONE POEMS

In June the SSO will perform another Richard Strauss tone poem, the marvellous *Don Quixote*, with SSO principals Umberto Clerici and Tobias Breider playing the leading roles of the Don and his squire. David Robertson conducts it in a program with Elliott Carter's Variations and Haydn's quirky *Il distratto* symphony.

15, 16, 17 JUNE

Among the most impressive of recent recordings of *An Alpine Symphony* is one by Mariss Jansons and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, which pairs Strauss's final tone poem with the relatively early *Death and Transfiguration*.

BR KLASSIK 900148

ASHER FISCH CONDUCTS BRAHMS

Much of Asher Fisch's discography is operatic: complete works and highlights. Among his orchestral recordings, look for the complete Brahms symphonies, recorded with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and released just last year.

ABC CLASSICS 481 4413

And for another recording with an Australian connection, there's the 2-CD highlights album from his complete Adelaide *Ring* cycle, recorded for Melba.

MELBA 301133

Broadcast Diary

April



92.9 ABC
Classic FM

abc.net.au/classic

Saturday 8 April, noon

SONGS & VISTAS

See this program for details.

Sunday 9 April, noon

SYMPHONY, SUITE & SLIDES

Mark Wigglesworth conductor

Michael Mulcahy trombone

Rachmaninoff, Vine, Wagner

Saturday 15 April, noon

YOUNG RUSSIANS

Gustavo Gimeno conductor

Daniil Trifonov piano

Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich

Friday 21 April, noon

SYMPHONY FOR THE COMMON MAN

Benjamin Northey conductor

Simon Tedeschi piano

Ford, Rachmaninoff, Copland

Tuesday 25 April, 8pm

ANZAC DAY SALUTE (2015)

Richard Gill conductor

Ayşe Göknur Shanal soprano

Michael McStay narrator

Gondwana Centenary Chorale and guests

Copland, MF Williams, Liturgical chant, Saygun, Parry, Ledger, Tallis, Vaughan Williams

SSO Radio

Selected SSO performances, as recorded by the ABC, are available on demand:

sydneyssosymphony.com/SSO_radio



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 11 April, 6pm

Musicians and staff of the SSO talk about the life of the orchestra and forthcoming concerts.

Hosted by Andrew Bukenya.

finemusicfm.com



NIK BABIĆ

Asher Fisch *conductor*

Renowned in both the operatic and symphonic worlds, Asher Fisch is especially celebrated for his interpretative command of German and Italian repertoire of the Romantic and post-Romantic era, in particular Wagner, Brahms, Strauss and Verdi. He also serves as an advocate of living composers such as Avner Dorman and others.

Asher Fisch made his first Australian appearance in 2005 conducting the State Opera of South Australia's acclaimed *Ring* cycle. He is now in his fourth season as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. Former posts include Principal Guest Conductor of Seattle Opera (2007–2013), Music Director of the New Israeli Opera (1998–2008) and Music Director of the Wiener Volksoper (1995–2000).

Highlights of the 2016–17 season include his debut with the New Japan Philharmonic and a tour to China with the WASO, as well as guest engagements with the Stuttgart Philharmonic. He returns to the Metropolitan Opera for performances of *Tristan und Isolde* and to the Teatro Regio di Torino to conduct *The Magic Flute*. He maintains strong ties to the Bavarian State Opera in Munich and this season conducts *The Magic Flute* and four Verdi operas: *La Traviata*, *Falstaff*, *A Masked Ball* and *The Force of Destiny*.

Born in Israel, Asher Fisch began his conducting career as Daniel Barenboim's assistant and kapellmeister at the Berlin State Opera. He made his United States debut with Los Angeles Opera in 1995, and has since conducted at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera. He has conducted at all the major German and Austrian opera houses, as well as Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Paris Opera and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

In North America he has conducted the orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, Seattle, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Houston, St Louis, Montreal and Toronto, and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC. In Europe he has appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Gewandhaus Orchestra and Orchestre National de France, among others.

Also an accomplished pianist, Asher Fisch has recorded piano transcriptions of Wagner and often conducts from the keyboard as well as frequently performing in chamber music and vocal recitals. This is his SSO debut.



Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs is devoted to presenting the art of choral singing at the highest standard, and fostering the singing community in Sydney and beyond. Founded in 1920, it has become Australia's finest choral organisation and now regularly performs at the Sydney Opera House and other leading concert halls around the country.

Led by Music Director Brett Weymark since 2003, the SPC community comprises 1500 choristers, across four choirs, who volunteer their time and talents to rehearsals and performances, not only in the organisation's own concerts but in collaborations with leading conductors and soloists and orchestras in Australia and overseas. In 2002, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs was the first Australian choir to sing at the BBC Proms (Mahler's Eighth Symphony under Simon Rattle), returning again in 2010.

The Choirs perform regularly in the SSO's subscription series. In 2016 the Chamber Singers and Brett Weymark appeared in a Haydn and Mozart program and the Symphony Chorus sang in performances of Haydn's *Creation*, Beethoven's Ninth and a semi-staged presentation of *Porgy and Bess*. Performances with the SSO this year will include *Pelléas et Mélisande* under Charles Dutoit, and, with David Robertson, Mahler's Third Symphony, *Belshazzar's Feast* and a new oratorio by Péter Eötvös. SPC also presents its own concert series each year and highlights of the 2017 season include Bach's *St Matthew Passion* (in April), Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and Handel's *Messiah*.

sydneyphilharmonia.com.au



Brett Weymark *Music Director*

Brett Weymark is one of the foremost choral conductors in Australia. He studied singing at the University of Sydney and conducting at the Sydney Conservatorium alongside studies in Europe and America. He has held positions with the Song Company, Opera Australia, Pacific Opera, Sounds Baroque, Cantillation and the University of Western Sydney, as well as working for many of Australia's major musical organisations, and in 2002 he was awarded a Centenary Award for services to music.

In 2003 he was appointed Music Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. Since then he has conducted the Choirs in performances throughout Australia and internationally in a repertoire ranging from classical works and premieres of music by composers such as Elena Kats-Chernin, Andrew Schultz and Peter Sculthorpe, to programs with a contemporary flavour. He has led the Choirs to accolades such the Helpmann Award-winning performances of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, directed by Peter Sellars, and also prepared them for conductors such as Simon Rattle, Charles Mackerras, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Edo de Waart, Charles Dutoit and David Robertson. In 2005 he initiated the annual ChorusOz event, and he has developed programs such as Singing at the House and Festival Chorus.

He has also conducted the West Australian and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, Orchestra of the Antipodes, Sydney Youth Orchestra, and productions for WAAPA, Pacific Opera and OzOpera. Conducting highlights with the SSO have included the premiere of *Jandamarra* by Paul Stanhope and Steve Hawke.

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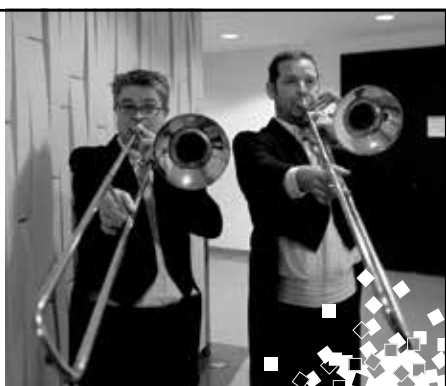
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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

.....
PATRON Professor The Hon. Dame Marie Bashir AD cvo
.....

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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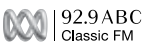
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