

2017 SEASON



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson

The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Young Russians

Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff & Shostakovich

APT MASTER SERIES

Wednesday 1 March, 8pm

Friday 3 March, 8pm

Saturday 4 March, 8pm





sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

CLASSICAL



Daniil Trifonov in Recital

SCHUMANN

Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood)
Toccata
Kreisleriana

SHOSTAKOVICH 24 Preludes
and Fugues: selections

STRAVINSKY Three Movements from Petrushka

Daniil Trifonov piano *(pictured)*

International Pianists in Recital
Presented by Theme & Variations
Piano Services

Mon 6 Mar 7pm

City Recital Hall



Leah's Playlist

Music by **Brahms, Tchaikovsky** and
Bernstein, and including **HERRMANN**
Love Scene from Vertigo

Andrew Haveron violin-director

Anna Goldsworthy piano

Leah Lynn Assistant Principal Cello *(pictured)*

Playlist

Tue 7 Mar 6.30pm

City Recital Hall



Symphony for the Common Man

FORD Headlong

RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No. 4[^]

COPLAND Symphony No. 3[^]

Benjamin Northey conductor

Simon Tedeschi piano *(pictured)*

Meet the Music

Wed 15 Mar 6.30pm

Tea & Symphony

Fri 17 Mar 11am[^]

complimentary morning tea from 10am

Great Classics

Sat 18 Mar 2pm



Kate-Miller Heidke and the SSO

Featuring songs by Kate Miller-Heidke,
including *Last Day on Earth, O Vertigo!, Sarah,*
and highlights from *The Rabbits*

Benjamin Northey conductor

Kate Miller-Heidke vocalist, keyboard *(pictured)*

Keir Nuttall guitar

Meet the Music

Thu 23 Mar 6.30pm

Kaleidoscope

Fri 24 Mar 8pm

Sat 25 Mar 8pm

■ A BMW Season Highlight



Olympic Orchestra: Music for Sport

An SSO Family Concert

Including:

WALDTEUFEL The Skaters' Waltz

COPLAND Fanfare for the Common Man

MILLS Countdown Fanfare

from the 2000 Sydney Olympics

RAVEL Bolero

DVOŘÁK New World Symphony: Largo

HOLST The Planets: Jupiter

R STRAUSS Thus Spake Zarathustra: Introduction

Toby Thatcher conductor

Guy Noble compere *(pictured)*

Family Concerts

Sun 26 Mar 2pm



Songs and Vistas

An Alpine Symphony

DORMAN After Brahms

BRAHMS Song of Destiny

BRAHMS Song of the Fates

R STRAUSS An Alpine Symphony

Asher Fisch conductor

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

APT Master Series

Wed 29 Mar 8pm

Fri 31 Mar 8pm

Sat 1 Apr 8pm

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Principal Partner



A BMW Season Highlight



Arts NSW

WELCOME



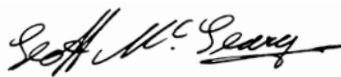
Welcome to this first concert in the APT Master Series for 2017. We are delighted to return as presenting partner of the SSO's flagship series and to be supporting what promises to be a thrilling program tonight.

The musical theme is Young Russians, with three Russian composers represented by music from the outset of their careers and a Russian pianist who, at 25 years old, is roughly the same age as Prokofiev when he composed his Classical Symphony and only a little older than Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich when they wrote their pieces on tonight's program.

It's a celebration of youthful and ambitious beginnings, and as we celebrate 90 years of unforgettable this year, we're reminded of our own beginnings at APT. In the 1920s, during a Melbourne tram strike, my father Bill seized an opportunity and converted his truck into a makeshift bus. In 1927, he bought his first real bus. In the mid-1960s we branched out from operating school bus services to running tours in the Australian Outback.

Nowadays, APT's operations encompass the globe – you can still tour the Outback (in much greater comfort!) or you can travel the world, with extraordinary destinations that include Russia, where tonight's music was written. Travelling with APT, you enjoy the benefits of decades of experience and vast expertise, and you can be sure of a truly unforgettable experience.

We hope you enjoy tonight's performance and that it leaves you inspired and energised, 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 1 MARCH, 8PM

FRIDAY 3 MARCH, 8PM

SATURDAY 4 MARCH, 8PM

.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL



YOUNG RUSSIANS

Gustavo Gimeno *conductor*

Daniil Trifonov *piano*

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)

Classical Symphony, Op.25 (Symphony No.1 in D)

Allegretto

Larghetto

Gavotte (Non troppo allegro)

Finale (Molto vivace)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)

Piano Concerto No.1 in F sharp minor, Op.1

Vivace

Andante

Allegro vivace

INTERVAL

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

Symphony No.1 in F minor, Op.10

Allegretto – Allegro non troppo

Allegro

Lento –

Allegro molto



92.9 ABC
Classic FM

Friday night's performance will be recorded for later broadcast on ABC Classic FM.

.....
Pre-concert talk by Jim Coyle at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer.

For more information visit sydneysymphony.com/speaker-bios

.....
Estimated durations:
15 minutes, 27 minutes,
20-minute interval, 28 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 9.45pm



Daniil Trifonov's performances are generously supported by the Berg Family Foundation.

PRESENTED BY



Principal Partner



Three young Russians: Prokofiev not long after he 'teased the geese' with his *Classical Symphony*; Rachmaninoff in 1892, the year he premiered his First Piano Concerto; and Shostakovich.

Young Russians

There might be three young Russians on the cover of the program, but tonight we get to enjoy the music-making of *four* young Russians. And it's a concert of firsts. Pianist Daniil Trifonov is making his Australian debut this week, performing Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto. And the concerto is framed by two first symphonies; Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* from 1917 and Shostakovich's first symphony from 1926.

Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich are represented by conservatory graduation pieces, but what an impressive 'student portfolio' they make! They may have still been teenagers but the ambition and audacity – and sheer accomplishment – of the music is undeniable. Prokofiev was a few years out of the conservatory by the time he composed his *Classical Symphony* but he too was young – the same age as tonight's soloist, 25.

Daniil Trifonov is not so far from the years of study himself, and even now, despite the demands of his international performance schedule, he still finds time to study at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he is in the class of Sergei Babayan and is taking composition lessons. And there he has something else in common with Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev and Shostakovich: he is a concert pianist who composes, and has in fact already written his own first concerto.

Tonight's program promises the freshness and vitality of youth – in music and performance.

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You can also read SSO program books on your computer or mobile device by visiting our online program library in the week leading up to the concert: sydney-symphony.com/program_library

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Sergei Prokofiev Classical Symphony, Op.25 (Symphony No.1 in D)

Allegro

Larghetto

Gavotte (Non troppo allegro)

Finale (Molto vivace)

What was Prokofiev thinking when he composed a 'classical symphony'?

In the summer of 1917, between the February and October Revolutions, Prokofiev retreated to the country outside St Petersburg. He'd decided to work on a musical project, but he deliberately left his piano in the city. His plan was to compose a whole symphony in his head because he'd noticed 'that thematic material composed without the piano was often better'.

Prokofiev had learned about Haydn's technique during the innumerable rehearsals of Tcherepnin's conducting class in the St Petersburg Conservatory:

As Tcherepnin and I were sitting side-by-side with a Haydn or Mozart score in front of us, he would say, 'Just listen how marvellous the bassoon sounds right here!' And so I gradually developed a taste for bassoon playing staccato and flute playing two octaves above it, and so on. It was because of this that I thought up the idea of the Classical Symphony...

The idea didn't occur to him for some five or six years, but when it did, the style of Haydn seemed sufficiently familiar territory for the 'difficult journey without the piano'.

The result, however, is never slavish imitation. Prokofiev aimed to write the kind of music he believed Haydn might have composed had he still been alive in 1917: retaining his style, his classical signature, but 'accepting something of the new at the same time'. Sensibly, too, Prokofiev waited until he could see that his idea was beginning to work before he called it the *Classical Symphony*: 'for the fun of it, to "tease the geese", and in the secret hope that it would prove me right if the symphony really did turn out to be a piece of classical music.'

As it happened, Prokofiev's Symphony No.1, Op.25 – his first symphony to bear an opus number – did indeed turn out to be a piece of 'classical music'; and in more ways than one. Not only is it a witty and skilful encapsulation of the Classical style of the 18th century, but it is classical (a classic, you could say) in its evident ability to withstand the destroying hand of time.

In some ways the *Classical Symphony* is *more* classical than any symphony of Haydn. With the aid of hindsight and textbooks, Prokofiev was able to adopt a style that had been thoroughly documented, analysed and codified in the intervening century.

Keynotes

PROKOFIEV

*Born Sontsovska (Ukraine), 1891
Died Moscow, 1953*

For his graduation in 1914, Prokofiev played his own piano concerto, displaying his remarkable skills as both composer and performer. As it turned out, composition became his main focus and by 1917 he was setting himself the exercise of composing a whole symphony away from the piano. This became his *Classical Symphony*. By his own admission, Prokofiev liked to 'tease the geese' – he had a laconic sense of humour and a musical wit that reminds many listeners of Joseph Haydn.

CLASSICAL SYMPHONY

As a student, Prokofiev admired the 18th-century orchestral sound world of Mozart and especially Haydn. When he came to write the *Classical Symphony* he consciously adopted Haydn as his model. He used an orchestra of Classical proportions, he followed the structure of an 18th-century symphony (including a dance for the third-movement), and while he certainly didn't imitate Haydn in a slavish way, he did try to capture the spirit of Haydn. The good-humoured character of the symphony is emphasised in part by clear textures and buoyant rhythms, and by the way Prokofiev has the woodwinds and strings play very high in their registers.



◀ It had been Prokofiev's habit to compose at the keyboard, but he noticed that thematic music composed *without* the piano was often better.

The conformation of the orchestra – pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings – and the proportions and structure of the music are all within the classical tradition. The only anachronistic touch is the inclusion of a gavotte in the place of a third-movement minuet.

The first movement (*Allegro*) introduces us almost immediately to Prokofiev's delight in wind and string instruments playing at the tops of their registers (the flute playing, it seems, two octaves higher than everyone!). The musical effect is one of delicacy and transparency, conveying the graciousness of a time and style past, even though such extremes would have been unheard of in Haydn's time.

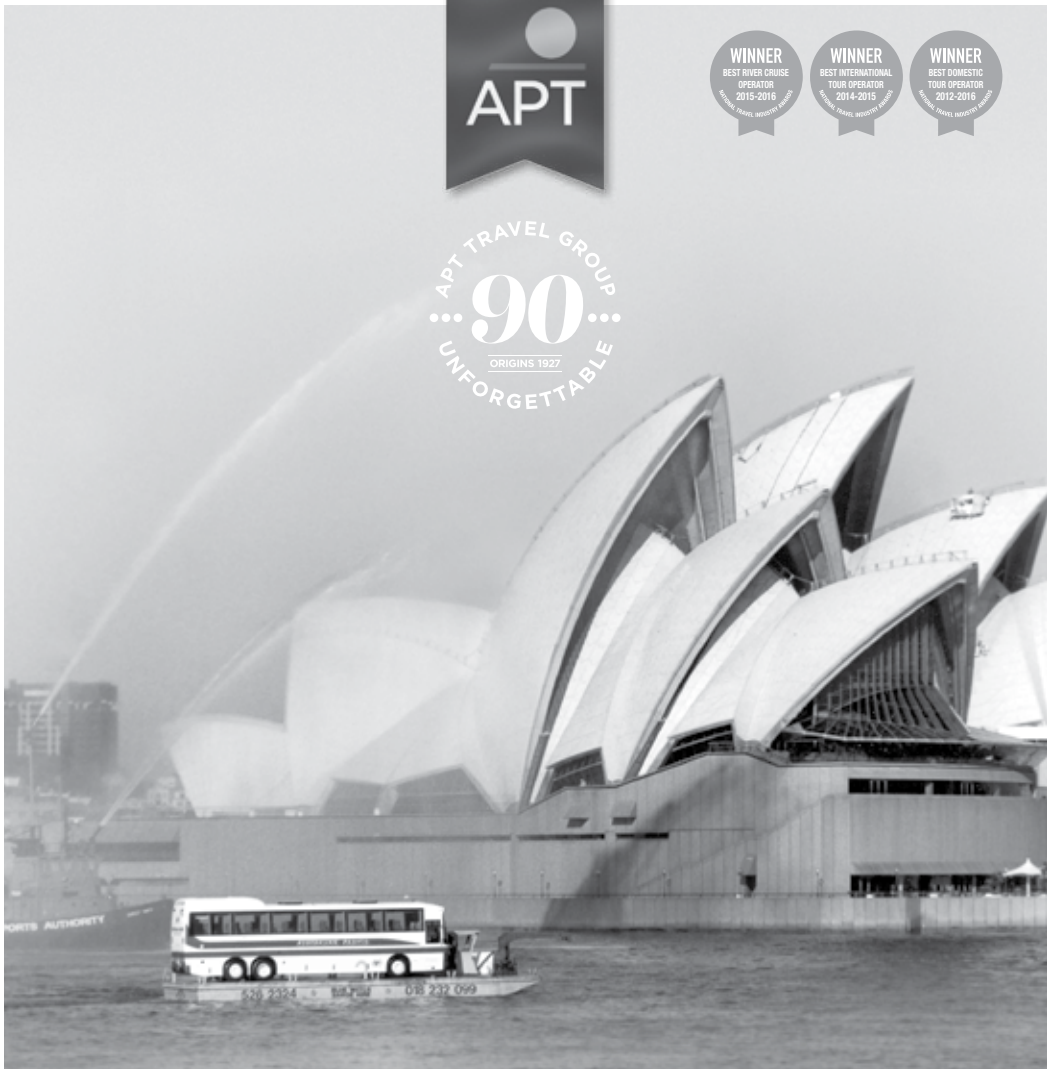
The intricate *Larghetto* owes much to the sarabandes of Debussy, paving the way for the French rococo flavour of the third movement. The sprightly *Gavotte* – each phrase beginning, true to form, halfway through the bar – was the first movement to have been composed, dating from 1916. Prokofiev must have been fond of it, for he transcribed it for piano (his usual method of composition thus reversed) and later included it in his *Romeo and Juliet* ballet score. The symphony then ends with the fast and furious *Finale*, emphasising that this was no student exercise (although Prokofiev did later declare it to belong to a 'passing phase') but a skilfully crafted work that rejoices in its wit and levity. Haydn circa 1917 would have recognised a kindred spirit.

YVONNE FRINDLE © 1999/2014

Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the *Classical Symphony* in 1943 with Percy Code, and most recently in 2012, conducted by David Robertson.

In some ways the *Classical Symphony* is *more* classical than any symphony of Haydn.



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Sergei Rachmaninoff

Piano Concerto No.1 in F sharp minor, Op.1

Vivace

Andante

Allegro vivace

Daniil Trifonov piano

'It's incredible how many stupid things I did at the age of 19. All composers do it.' That was Rachmaninoff's view, in 1931, of the piano concerto – his first – that he had written 40 years earlier.

It's true that, hearing the opening minutes of the First Concerto today, the name 'Rachmaninoff' does not immediately come to mind. Tchaikovsky or Arensky, perhaps, but not necessarily the composer of the Second Symphony or the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. Even so, it was not the 'spot the influences' issue that bothered him; Rachmaninoff was always proud of Tchaikovsky's interest in his early career and of his period as one of Arensky's composition pupils. Clumsiness bothered him more than admiring imitation.

If we look at the title of the work we see 'Opus 1' and assume that we have before us the first official fruit of Rachmaninoff's musical imagination. It was a graduation piece and he played the first movement with some success as part of a very long student concert conducted by the Moscow Conservatory's director V.I. Safonov. Not in Safonov's good books at the time, Rachmaninoff still felt sufficiently confident about the piece to challenge some of the maestro's interpretative ideas.

The work was published immediately – and therein lay the seed of Rachmaninoff's growing concern. Had the work remained in manuscript it would probably not have haunted him so, but its status as his first opus number began to irritate him more and more, so that by 1908 he could write: 'There are so many requests for this concerto, and it's so terrible in its present form, that I should like to work at it and, if possible, get it into decent shape. Of course it will have to be written all over again, for its orchestration is worse than its music.'

How hard on himself Rachmaninoff could be when he was in a dark mood! His embarrassment lay in what he saw as the concerto's structural weaknesses, its technical clumsiness and the formal problems that compromised the presentation of his melodic ideas, particularly in the finale.

The moment Rachmaninoff chose to undertake his long-awaited revision of the concerto was, to say the least, historically charged. In the Russian summer of 1917 he experienced some unpleasant encounters with Bolshevik agitators at his country estate, Ivanovka.

Keynotes

RACHMANINOFF

*Born Oneg (Novgorod region),
1873*

Died Beverly Hills CA, 1943

In 1892 Rachmaninoff graduated from the Moscow Conservatory with the Great Gold Medal. His graduation piece – the First Piano Concerto – suggested a golden future as both pianist and composer. At first he focused on composing, writing two symphonies, three piano concertos and several substantial orchestral works. It was only after he left Russia for good in 1917 and settled in the West that he shifted his attention – largely through necessity – to building a career as a concert pianist.

PIANO CONCERTO NO.1

This concerto is the official Opus 1 of a 19 year old. But as Rachmaninoff matured as a composer, he was increasingly bothered by its youthful inadequacies, and finally (a quarter of a century later) he decided to make the revisions that would 'get it into decent shape'. He left its themes more or less alone, but improved the piano part, changing many details, and created a work with great subtlety and polish.

(After the revolution his house would be virtually destroyed.) His deep sorrow at the political turmoil in his homeland was a major preoccupation, and he found it impossible to concentrate on new composition. Returning to Moscow, he shut himself up in his flat and decided that this was the moment to put the First Concerto's demons to rest. In so doing he kept himself oblivious to the shouting and sounds of gunfire in the surrounding streets. By the time he completed his revision in November, Russia's revolutionary government was in place. Only a few weeks later Rachmaninoff and his family would leave Russia for the last time.

Rachmaninoff's re-examination of his teenage concerto did not result in an overhaul of the work's musical language. Those passages that do suggest the Rachmaninoff of the Op.39 *Etudes-Tableaux* (1916–17) – and this is principally in sections of the finale – do not alter the status of the work as a young man's achievement. He altered many aspects of the piece, making thematic presentation, orchestration and the solo part more subtle and sophisticated (yet still very demanding and virtuosic – tailor-made for a pianist of Rachmaninoff's fearsomely complete technique and romantic disposition). But some things he left alone; the concerto has a freshness and impulsiveness Rachmaninoff was not to capture again. These qualities are evident throughout the revised version.

Listening Guide

Rachmaninoff was always a rhapsodic composer but, in its outer movements, this concerto is distinguished by the high level of contrast in tempo between its major musical statements. After the grim call to action which opens the work, the bravura flourish which follows it and the lyrical opening idea for the strings, the second major theme sets off at a scampering *Vivace*. The first movement continues in this way, each theme – and its development – given its own very distinct setting until the cadenza, a brilliant, lengthy showpiece that takes up around a quarter of the movement. Here all the important melodic material reaches a point of bravura summation before the orchestra joins for the breathless final bars.

The **slow movement** (*Andante*) emerged largely intact from Rachmaninoff's revisions. It is an oasis of lyrical simplicity, in which the lovely theme is presented by the soloist without accompaniment, before the orchestra takes it up, now accompanied with decorative figurations from the piano. Throughout the concerto, Chopin's influence is very evident in the voicing of the slower music for the piano, and this movement is the closest Rachmaninoff came to inhabiting the world of a Chopin nocturne.

Like the first movement, the **finale** opens with an orchestral call to arms, but the results are more dashing, as the piano leaps



◀ After Rachmaninoff fled Russia his primary source of income came from his engagements as a concert pianist. He was disappointed that his First Concerto attracted little attention, despite its youthful freshness: 'When I tell them in America that I will play the First Concerto, they do not protest, but I can see by their faces they would prefer the Second or Third...' (Rachmaninoff at a Steinway grand in 1925)

in almost immediately with a playful response that turns out to be the movement's major theme. This idea develops by way of incisive dialogue between piano and orchestra, much of it the result of Rachmaninoff's revisions. In fact this movement received the greatest overhaul. The languorous central episode for the strings, with filigree commentary from the piano at the end of each phrase, was originally transformed into a grandiose final statement to conclude the movement. Now the closing section is a highly accented Russian dance of great rhythmic exhilaration.

* * *

In refining the concerto's structure and technique, Rachmaninoff hoped the piece would enter the repertoire as assuredly as his second and third concertos had. But it was not to be. 'I have re-written my first Concerto; it is really good now,' he told a friend during his years in the United States. 'All the youthful freshness is there and yet it plays itself so much more easily. And nobody pays any attention. When I tell them in America that I will play the First Concerto, they do not protest, but I can see by their faces they would prefer the Second or Third...'

PHILLIP SAMETZ © 2003

The orchestra for the Rachmaninoff's First Piano Concerto comprises pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (cymbal, triangle); and strings.

The SSO first performed this concerto in Sydney, Canberra and Wagga Wagga in 1952, with pianist Leone Stredwick and conductor Eugene Goossens; and most recently in 2006 with pianist Alexey Yemtsov and Vladimir Ashkenazy conducting.

'I have re-written
my first Concerto;
it is really good now...'
RACHMANINOFF

Russian Furore

In his recent profile-review of Daniil Trifonov in *The New Yorker*, Alex Ross made a nice distinction between furore and sensation. Trifonov, he says, creates a furore, placing him in illustrious company going back to Vladimir Horowitz at least.

Tonight this 25-year-old Russian pianist finds himself in the company of three Russian composers, themselves creators of furore. (And, like Trifonov, composer-pianists.)

Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, Shostakovich – each one graduated with flying colours, each one created a stir. And their prodigious achievements as young men shape tonight’s program.

Sergei Rachmaninoff graduated from the Moscow Conservatory twice: as a pianist in 1891, as a composer as 1892. His composition portfolio included *Aleko*, a short opera that won him the Great Gold Medal, and his first piano concerto – his Opus 1. Technically speaking, what you’ll hear tonight was revised in 1917 (Rachmaninoff being unable to resist improving on the efforts of his 19-year-old self) but the concerto retains all its youthful freshness and audacity.

Prokofiev also graduated with a prize in hand. Medals had been abolished at the St Petersburg Conservatory, but there was a Shreder grand piano for the best of the piano students and Prokofiev was determined to win it. Exactly how this ‘bad boy’ of Russian music did that is the story of his Piano Concerto No.1 (and another concert), but it was the Shreder grand that Prokofiev decided to leave behind in St Petersburg when he later retreated to the countryside to write his *Classical Symphony* – his first symphony to bear an opus number. (There are two earlier symphonies among his juvenilia, including his first attempt as an 11 year old.)

Prokofiev composed the *Classical Symphony* in 1917, the same year Rachmaninoff was fine-tuning his concerto. That makes both pieces a century old. More important, their work was taking place in the shadow of the Russian Revolution, and within a year both composers had fled to the West.

In 1919 the 13-year-old Dmitri Shostakovich entered the conservatory in St Petersburg, except now it was Petrograd (and by the time he graduated it had been renamed Leningrad). But while the politics might have changed, there was still ample opportunity for a brilliant young composer to astound his listeners. Shostakovich’s First Symphony is quite possibly the most impressive graduation piece in all music. Its premiere in 1926 attracted wide attention in Soviet Russia, and soon the symphony had won him international acclaim. As with Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev, there would be no looking back.

YVONNE FRINDLE

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA © 2017

Further reading: Daniil Trifonov’s Sleight of Hand (Alex Ross, The New Yorker, 9 January 2017)

Dmitri Shostakovich

Symphony No.1 in F minor, Op.10

Allegretto – Allegro non troppo

Allegro

Lento –

Allegro molto

'Without discovering an America, without pursuing any new combinations of sounds, the young composer Shostakovich made his debut with his First Symphony. It is a symphony which reflects all that a composition can give of the most important in the artist.'

So said the Moscow Evening Radio after the 1926 premiere of Dmitri Shostakovich's first foray into what would become a very familiar genre. (Destined to compose 15 symphonies throughout his life, he wrote his first when he was just 19 years old, and it remains one of his most enduring works.) In a very real sense, though, the 'America' Shostakovich and his audience did discover was the composer himself: hallmarks of his highly individual style are present, if in embryo, and within months he was a rising star on the international stage.

The public and critical reception of the premiere was overwhelmingly positive (his younger sister didn't care much for it, though delighted at her brother's sudden success). Written as a final thesis for his undergraduate composition studies, the First Symphony was first presented to the examiners at the Leningrad Conservatory in piano duet form in the spring of 1925. It was swiftly decided that the orchestral premiere should occur as soon as possible, and in May 1926 at the Great Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic, Shostakovich's rise to international prominence began.

Nicolai Malko conducted the first performance of the strikingly orchestrated symphony, and regional Soviet performances and a broadcast by Moscow Radio soon followed. Conducting in Leningrad that season, Bruno Walter heard the work and added it to his Berlin schedule for the following year. Leopold Stokowski and Artur Rodzinski introduced the work to Philadelphia and New York respectively in 1928, and by the 1930s it was being performed regularly across Britain. Such a meteoric rise for a new work – let alone a new composer – would be unheard of today, and was outstanding even for its time. As Malko wrote in his journal the night before the premiere: 'I have the feeling I have turned over a new page in the history of symphonic music and of a new and great composer.'

This 'new and great composer' had received his earliest musical training at age nine from his mother, who had studied piano at the Conservatory. Graduating from the same piano course in 1923,

Keynotes

SHOSTAKOVICH

Born St Petersburg, 1906

Died Moscow, 1975

By the time he graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory in the mid-1920s, 'Mitya' Shostakovich's colleagues were already characterising him as determined and difficult. While he composed his graduation test piece, he supported himself by playing piano for silent films at the Piccadilly Cinema. Tubercular and nervy, like other Russians often not eating properly, belligerent toward his unsympathetic college authorities, and subjected to the jealousy of fellow students, he developed a touchy and demanding musical persona, increasingly reflected in sardonic and provocative scores that both he and his critics dubbed 'grotesque'. He was to become one of the great symphonic composers of the 20th century.

SYMPHONY NO.1

This symphony began life as a graduation piece, the ambitious work of a 19-year-old. But the overwhelmingly positive reception of its 1926 premiere in Leningrad made the young Shostakovich a rising star on the world stage. It may be a 'student' work, but the distinctive aspects of Shostakovich's signature style and brilliant imagination are already evident. And, as Carl Rosman has written, it certainly does not diminish the achievement of the work to note a few features which proved a little over-ambitious for the teenage composer to control: notably its strikingly eclectic style and its slightly overloaded harmony, with virtually every main melody so sinuously chromatic it can be hard to tell them apart.

Dmitri did not know for a time whether his career would focus on performance or composition. After the triumph of his First Symphony, the decision was made significantly easier, as he earned his living solely from composition from that time onwards, initially from film and theatre scores and later from opera and concert works. Since his father's death in 1922, Shostakovich had worked on and off in a number of silent cinemas as a pianist-improviser, playing along to the films showing on the screen, trying (unsuccessfully) to earn enough money to keep his family out of debt. The family also needed the money to improve Dmitri's abysmally fragile health by sending him to sanatoriums. His mother would not hear of him postponing his full-time studies to work more regularly, and took work in a shop as a cashier herself.

These early experiences with silent films informed his music greatly. Shostakovich was a huge fan of Charlie Chaplin, so the satirical and humorous nature of much of his music should come as no surprise. Soon after his startling debut, he became greatly involved in the Soviet re-popularisation of theatre and cinema, again not surprising as the drive of the First Symphony is undeniably dramatic. In fact, some parts of his First Symphony have even been criticised for sounding like Hollywood movie music (for example, the excessive chromaticism in the melodies of the third movement).

It is nevertheless a piece which evidences a remarkable artistic maturity in its composer. Shostakovich wasn't always of this opinion, however. In 1961 he was to call it 'an attempt at profound content....Although the work is immature it is from my point of view valuable because of the sincere desire to reflect life and reality'. Perhaps it is this that has kept the piece an audience favourite since the 1920s, and why the Moscow *Evening Radio* called it 'a symphony which reflects all that a composition can give of the most important in the artist'.

The **first movement** begins with what many consider a blatant reference to the ballet *Petrushka*, the first trumpet notes recalling Stravinsky's music for the most tragic clown of them all. The movement mainly consists of a juxtaposition between the march-like first subject (nominally in F minor but so chromatic as to obliterate any real 'tonal' relationships within the theme), and the slower, waltz second subject, itself reminiscent of the Ballerina's music from *Petrushka*.

The **scherzo** second movement is introduced by cellos and basses, whose own private theme they never manage to play simultaneously, but always out of step with each other. The musical high spirits continue with a lively theme, again highly chromatic but ostensibly in A minor. In contrast, a sombre, folk-like second theme in a meter of three against four appears first



Portrait of Shostakovich as a young man (1923) by Boris Kustodiev

in the flutes, played against a gently persistent E in the violins. This theme later returns in double time, belted out by the brass and overlaid with the first theme racing around the rest of the orchestra. Pungently voiced piano chords bring the movement under control, and to a gentle, if unsettling end.

The melancholic **third movement** in D flat major features the oboe in the exposition of the main theme, a full string section eventually taking over. Again chromatic and with a tendency towards falling, sliding phrases, this music sails close to the emotional wind, with the listener exhausted by more idyllic conclusion. Then suddenly, a thundering snare roll propels the music straight into the final movement.

The first bar of the finale is marked **Allegro molto** (very fast). But the second is marked *Lento* (slow), introducing the most successful theme of the whole movement, beautifully balanced in its phrases. Semi-quaver runs of chromatic scales both up and down liven up proceedings, with flashes of brilliance in the piano. Listen out for the slower, lyrical second subject in the solo violin, a strict inversion of the previous movement's second theme. The same chromatic runs then bring us to a false finish. A timpani solo provides the turning point toward the real thing, a recapitulation of the solo violin melody before the strings bring about the rousing finale, whose hammered out repetitions settle finally in F major, leaving an indelible mark on the listener.

DREW CRAWFORD

SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 2008

KEYNOTES ADAPTED IN PART FROM A NOTE BY CARL ROSMAN

Shostakovich's First Symphony calls for three flutes (two doubling piccolo) with pairs of oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, alto trumpet, three trombones and tuba; timpani and a large percussion section; piano and strings.

The SSO first performed this symphony in 1954, conducted by Walter Susskind, and most recently in Sydney and Newcastle in 2002, conducted by Alexander Lazarev.

...some parts of his First Symphony have even been criticised for sounding like Hollywood movie music...

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MORE MUSIC

YOUNG PROKOFIEV

For music by an even younger Sergei Prokofiev, look for his First Piano Concerto [1911]. In his graduation year [1914] he was determined to win the Rubinstein Prize for performance and decided the way to do this was to perform his own piano concerto. His rationale? Unlike a classical concerto, a new concerto might impress the examiners by its novelty of technique and they might not be able to judge whether he was playing it well or not! Also, if he didn't win, defeat would be less mortifying since no one would be able to say whether it was because the concerto was bad or his performance faulty. Evgeny Kissin pairs it with the Third Concerto in a recording with the Berlin Philharmonic and Claudio Abbado.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 439 8982

There's young Prokofiev and then there's Prokofiev for the young: works such as his *Music for Children* (12 easy piano pieces, composed in 1935) and the related orchestral suite *Summer Day*. Or from the very next year the ultimate in orchestral works for children: *Peter and the Wolf*. Sting is the narrator of Prokofiev's classic tale in a recording with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Claudio Abbado. The disc also includes the *Classical Symphony*.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 429 3962

YOUNG RACHMANINOFF

Rachmaninoff's other graduation piece is a marvellous short opera called *Aleko*, with a libretto adapted from Pushkin's poem *The Gypsies*. The SSO has recorded the orchestral dances from the opera with Ashkenazy, for an album on the Exton label that also included the Scherzo [1887] and five of Rachmaninoff's Etudes Tableaux as orchestrated by Respighi.

EXTON OVCL-00405

You can find the complete opera in a recording from 1990 conducted by Yevgeny Svetlanov with the Russian State Academic Symphony Orchestra and bass Arthur Eisen singing Aleko.

MELODIYA 1001703

YOUNG SHOSTAKOVICH

For more music from the period of Shostakovich's First Symphony, look for the First Piano Sonata [1926]. Or, from just two years later, the piece he wrote on a wager the conductor Nicolai Malko bet Shostakovich 100 roubles that he wouldn't be able to orchestrate a pop song from memory in under an hour. The song was Vincent Youmans' 'Tea for Two' and the result is *Tahiti Trot*, completed in 45 minutes! Find it on *Shostakovich: The Jazz Album*, with his First Piano Concerto [1933] and the two Jazz Suites. Riccardo Chailly conducts the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

DECCA 475 9983

Shostakovich's *Children's Notebook* is a set of piano pieces composed in 1944 for his eight-year-old daughter Galina to play. The fanfare that begins 'Birthday' (written for her ninth birthday and later appended to the collection) was reworked for the opening of his Festive Overture. Rimma Bobritskaya includes the set in her album *Russian Piano Miniatures for Children*, alongside Tchaikovsky's *Album pour enfants* and Prokofiev's *Music for Children*.

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abc.net.au/classic

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Sunday 5 March, 2pm

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Maxim Vengerov violin

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SSO Radio

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

sydneyphilharmonics.com/SSO_radio



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finemusicfm.com



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MARCO BORGGREVE

Gustavo Gimeno *conductor*

Born in Valencia, Spain, Gustavo Gimeno was the principal percussionist with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam for more than a decade. His conducting career took off in 2012 when he was named assistant to Mariss Jansons, and subsequently Bernard Haitink and Claudio Abbado, with whom he forged an intense and influential mentorship. In 2015 he took up the post of Music Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg.

In addition to his commitments in Luxembourg, Gustavo Gimeno has conducted such orchestras as the Munich Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Rotterdam Philharmonic and the Philharmonia Zurich. In 2015 he led the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra on tour to Asia.

That same year he made his opera debut conducting Bellini's *Norma* at the Opera House in Valencia. Later this month he will conduct his first opera production in Luxembourg: Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*.

Highlights of the 2016–17 season include debuts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra (Washington DC), Tokyo's NHK Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Academy of Santa Cecilia, as well as two appearances in Vienna: with his Luxembourg orchestra at the Wiener Konzerthaus and with Vienna Symphony at the Musikverein.

Many of the works that have been at the centre of Gustavo Gimeno's programming in Luxembourg have also formed the focus of his programs as a guest conductor: Bruckner's Symphony No.1 for a return visit to the Munich Philharmonic, Schumann's Symphony No.1 with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mahler's Symphony No.1 with the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall in London, and Shostakovich's Symphony No.1 in this, his Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut.

www.gustavogimeno.com



DARIO ACOSTA - DEUTSCHEGRAMMOPHON

Daniil Trifonov

piano

Born in Nizhny Novgorod in 1991, Daniil Trifonov studied at the Moscow Gnesin School of Music (class of Tatiana Zelikman), and from 2006 to 2009 he also studied composition. He has continued to compose, premiering his own piano concerto in 2014 in Cleveland. Since 2009, he has studied piano with Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

He attracted wide attention during the 2010–11 season, when he won medals at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw (Third Prize), the Rubinstein Competition in Tel Aviv (First Prize) and the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow (First Prize and Grand Prix).

Since then he has appeared with the world's most illustrious orchestras and conductors, including the Vienna Philharmonic, Mariinsky and London Symphony orchestras (Valery Gergiev), Israel Philharmonic (Zubin Mehta), Philharmonia Orchestra (Lorin Maazel), Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony and Minnesota Orchestra (Osmo Vänskä), Russian National Orchestra (Mikhail Pletnev), New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the Chicago Symphony and Royal Philharmonic orchestras (Charles Dutoit).

He has given recitals at leading venues worldwide and appeared for the major festivals in Europe and the USA. As a chamber musician he has collaborated with Nicholas Angelich,

Renaud Capuçon, Gautier Capuçon, Yuri Bashmet, Vilde Frang, Sergei Babayan and the Pavel Haas Quartet.

In the 2015–16 season he performed the complete Rachmaninoff concertos with the New York Philharmonic and with the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall. This season he performs the concertos with the Mariinsky and Munich Philharmonic orchestras and Valery Gergiev. In the 2016–17 season he is also Capell-Virtuos with the Staatskapelle Dresden – a residency including concerts at the BBC Proms, Salzburg Easter Festival and Vienna Musikverein – and he was resident at the 2016 Edinburgh Festival.

His solo recordings include the Grammy-nominated *Trifonov: The Carnegie Recital, Transcendental* (Liszt études), a Chopin recital album and *Rachmaninov Variations*, which includes the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. He has also recorded Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with Gergiev and the Mariinsky Orchestra.

On this first visit to Australia he makes debut appearances with the Melbourne and West Australian symphony orchestras as well as the SSO and will give recitals at City Recital Hall Angel Place (6 March) and the Melbourne Recital Centre.

daniiltrifonov.com

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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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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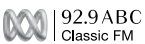
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