



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Cocktail Hour

Chamber Music in the Utzon Room

2018



Marsalis and
Korngold
SAT 14 APR, 6PM

Debussy and
Shostakovich
SAT 21 JUL, 6PM

Mozart and
Wagner
SAT 22 SEP, 6PM



Principal Partner

Marsalis and Korngold

The names of tonight's composers bring 'crossover' to mind, but it's not so simple. Korngold is most famous for his Hollywood film scores and Wynton Marsalis is right up there amongst jazz musicians. But Korngold's string sextet was composed long before he went to Hollywood, and Marsalis has played and composed 'classical' music from the start of his career, alongside or mingled with jazz. The luscious Romanticism of the teenage Korngold's piece is not that far from what he composed for films such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), starring Australia's Errol Flynn. And Marsalis's *Meelaan* is not far from what early 20th-century composers came up with when 'referencing' jazz idioms.

The bassoon lets its hair down

'Meelaan' is Milan Turković, a Croatian-born Austrian and famous exponent of historical and modern forms of the bassoon. The title of the quintet is a phonetic spelling of his first name, to give the correct pronunciation. Marsalis composed the piece in 1999. In addition to musical pleasures, its acrobatic technical demands have been greeted by bassoonists as a welcome challenge.

Australian Errol Buddle, who died this year, was regarded as the world's first jazz bassoonist – still a rarity. Marsalis shows how well jazz ideas suit the bassoon. But he begins *Blues* with a subtle salute to the most famous bassoon solo of all, the opening of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. And he continues like a latter-day Stravinsky – who wrote jazz inspired pieces. In *Blues*, the flutter growl Marsalis asks the bassoon to make is 'like a holler', and this black music also goes to 'church'..

Still channelling the 1920s, *Tango* begins with the dancers sizing each other up. Once they get going, the mood is fiery (*con fuego*) then sultry (*habanera*). Modern jazz has its day in *Bebop*, a style of the 40s and 50s now receding into history. Here the

SATURDAY 14 APRIL | 6PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

UTZON ROOM

WYNTON MARSALIS (born 1961)

Meelaan

for bassoon and string quartet

Blues

Tango

Bebop

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897–1957)

String Sextet in D major, Op.10

Moderato – Allegro

Adagio

*Intermezzo (Moderato,
con grazia)*

Finale (Presto)

PHOTO: JOE MARTINEZ



Wynton Marsalis

bassoon gets to riff, Charlie Parker-like, on a typically terse phrase. Swing and call-and-response choruses vary the recipe, and the cello is asked to slap like a bass.

Wunderkind who knew everything

Erich Wolfgang Korngold's music critic father named him after Mozart – with a bet each way. He needn't have worried: when the 11-year-old's pantomime *Der Schneemann* (The Snowman) was produced at Vienna's main opera house there was consent that the boy was the greatest composing prodigy since Mendelssohn, or even since Mozart. By the time he wrote this string sextet, on the eve of World War I, the 17-year-old was a fully fledged composer, so much so that his former teacher Alexander von Zemlinsky sent him a postcard from Prague asking his former pupil if his new teacher was making any progress learning!



Erich Wolfgang Korngold as a teenager

No allowances need be made for Korngold's youth. His Sextet is a very accomplished and inventive piece of late-Romantic music, recognisably Viennese in idiom. The models for string sextets were two by Brahms and the more recent *Transfigured Night* [1899]. Unlike Schoenberg, Korngold revealed no underlying poetic program; he does, however, go some way towards Schoenberg's fluid and restless tonality, and seems eager to show that he, even more than Brahms, can vary the textures available from pairs of violins, violas and cellos. The passionate, maybe erotic, *Adagio* (the first movement to be written) most anticipates Korngold's greatest success, the opera *Die tote Stadt* (The Dead City, 1920), while the *Intermezzo* is the most Viennese in character, with occasional reminders of Mahler. After cyclical references to the other movements, the *Finale* returns, just before the conclusion, to the opening theme of the first movement.

Debussy and Shostakovich

Don Juan in France

The first three pieces in this concert feature an instrument favoured by many French composers, the harp. Ibert's Interludes were composed to be played between the acts of *Le Burlador* (The Jester), a feminine take on the Don Juan myth by Belgian playwright Suzanne Lilar, staged in Paris in 1946. The period setting explains the presence of harpsichord in the original ensemble; Ibert gave an alternative: harp, minus its trademark gliding slides. Don Juan is from Spain, as the second interlude often reminds us.

French music's champion

Claude Debussy was lying low during World War I, depressed and ill, when his publisher persuaded him to commit to writing six sonatas for various instrumental combinations. In the sonatas Debussy paid tribute to the spirit of France's pre-classical masters, especially Rameau, and he signed himself 'Claude Debussy, French musician' – a wartime patriotic gesture. Only three sonatas were completed: for cello and piano (summer 1915), for violin and piano (early 1917) and, in between, the sonata for flute, viola and harp (autumn 1915).

Debussy's first idea for the trio sonata included oboe, but he replaced it with a more melancholic instrument, viola, for music somewhere between laughter and tears. The opening movement sets the tone: a pastoral idyll, but slightly sad. The minuet tempo of the *Interlude* salutes music from the past. In the summery, lively *Finale* all kinds of harmonic subtleties are heard, leading



SATURDAY 21 JULY | 6PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
UTZON ROOM

JACQUES IBERT **(1890–1962)**

Two Interludes

for flute, violin and harp

Andante espressivo

Allegro vivo

CLAUDE DEBUSSY **(1862–1918)**

Sonata in F major

for flute, viola and harp

Pastorale (Lento, dolce rubato)

Interlude (Tempo di Menuetto)

Finale (Allegro moderato ma risoluto)

JULES MASSENET **(1842–1912)**

***Sous les tilleuls* (Under the linden trees)**

arranged for violin, viola

and harp by Beldon Leonard

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH **(1906–1975)**

String Quartet No.8 in C minor, Op.110

Largo

Allegro molto –

Allegretto

Largo

Largo

Jacques Ibert

to a nostalgic recall, near the end, of the very beginning of the sonata. Signs of creative decline used to be found in Debussy other two sonatas, whose originality and beauty took longer to be recognised, but this trio was hailed from the beginning, subtle and deliciously evocative.

A musical postcard

Massenet – one of Debussy’s teachers, and an early influence – was a composer of pliant sensibility, especially obvious in his memorable and sensitive treatment of the heroines in his operas *Manon* (1884) and *Werther* (1892). Massenet’s suites for orchestra are musical picture postcards. *Sous les tilleuls* (Under the linden trees) comes from Suite No.7 – *Scènes alsaciennes* (Scenes of Alsace) – composed in 1881 when France was grieving the loss of Alsace to Germany. Imagine a pair of lovers in a shady tree-lined alley, a distant church bell. A passionate dialogue for violin and viola, in Beldon Leonard’s arrangement, accompanied by the harp.

DSCH

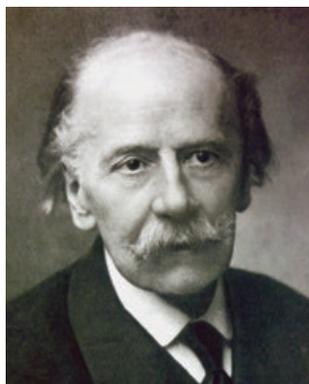
Of all Shostakovich’s 15 string quartets the eighth is most often played – its powerful message seemingly easy to grasp. It begins with Shostakovich’s musical signature. The notes are D, E flat, C and B natural (in German D, Es, C and H). DSCH – short for Dmitri S**CH**ostakowitsch (again, in German transliteration). ‘This is about me’ – the music seems to say – and the signature is heard throughout the quartet, with many quotations from Shostakovich’s own music.

The Eighth String Quartet was composed in 1960 under the impact of a visit to the city of Dresden, then in Communist East Germany, still far from rebuilt after wartime bombing. The quartet – the official story goes – was composed in three days, dedicated ‘to the victims of fascism and war’. The fourth movement is repeatedly interrupted by three peremptory, drastic chords. Then Shostakovich quotes an old prison song ‘Oppressed by heavy bondage’. Perhaps the bondage didn’t end when the war ended and Fascism was overcome? Are the terrifying chords the dreaded knocks on the door of the secret police? Shostakovich had also discovered he had an incurable illness; the quartet may be a testament.

Did the dedication conceal Shostakovich’s protest against oppression by the Soviet state? In 1960 Shostakovich had joined the Communist Party. Was he perhaps disgusted, at himself? ‘It is a pseudo-tragic quartet,’ Shostakovich wrote to a friend, ‘while I was composing it I shed the same amount of tears as I would have to pee after half a dozen beers. When I got home, I tried a couple of times to play it through, but always ended up in tears.’ The message of this quartet is loudly proclaimed, but its meaning is elusive.



Claude Debussy



Jules Massenet



Dmitri Shostakovich

Mozart and Wagner

'Mozart' in the title of this concert comes with a question mark and Roman Benedict has every license to make something different out of this Sinfonia concertante for four wind instruments and orchestra. It's a case, probably, of arranging an arrangement. Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, on the other hand, is most often heard blown-up to orchestral scale. The original is large-scale chamber music, a surprise birthday present. Gems by Max Reger, such as his Lyric Andante, belie his reputation for Germanic pedantry and prolixity.

The Wagners at home

The original full title of the *Siegfried Idyll* was 'Tribtschen Idyll, with Fidi's Birdsong and Orange Sunrise, as a Symphonic Birthday Greeting from Richard to Cosima'. Tribtschen is the villa near Lucerne where Wagner was living with Cosima. In 1869 a son was born, Siegfried, known as Fidi. On Christmas Day 1870, Cosima's birthday, she awoke to music played by 13 musicians standing on various levels of the staircase. They had been rehearsed secretly by the young Hans Richter, who played horn as well as the brief trumpet part. Richter, later a famous conductor, almost gave the game away to Cosima, who wondered what on earth he was doing practising the trumpet!

Many of the themes from the *Siegfried Idyll* are from the music drama *Siegfried* – the third opera in *The Ring* cycle on which Wagner had been working. The peaceful opening melody is associated with Brünnhilde's renunciation of immortality for love of Siegfried, a second theme is based on an old German lullaby, wind instruments play the music for the words 'Siegfried, Treasure of the World'. We hear young Siegfried's horn, and the woodbird who leads Siegfried to Brünnhilde's fire-surrounded rock.

Reger in love?

A musical dictionary sums up Max Reger as 'German composer of highly developed polyphonic music, believer in the absolute value of contrapuntal logic' (sound forbidding? Reger often was) 'yet at heart a romantic' – as the Lyric Andante proves. Another music guidebook claims Reger 'never caters for the sweet tooth'. Never? Well, hardly ever. Reger composed it for string orchestra in 1898, when he was in his mid-20s, giving it the title 'Liebestraum' – a dream of love – and at the core of this gentle reverie a solo cello individualises the emotion.

SATURDAY 22 SEPTEMBER | 6PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

UTZON ROOM

RICHARD WAGNER (1813–1883)

Siegfried Idyll

original version for 13 instruments

MIRIAM YOUNG (born 1975) New Work

Commissioned for the SSO Fellows by the SSO with the generous assistance of Dr Janet Merewether and dedicated to the memory of her mother, Tempe Merewether OAM.

MAX REGER (1873–1916) Lyric Andante (*Liebestraum*)

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Grand Nonet

arranged by Roman Benedict after the Sinfonia concertante in E flat, K297b
Allegro
Adagio
Andantino con variazioni



Cosima and Richard Wagner

Lost Mozart recovered, differently?

In 1778, Mozart wrote from Paris to his father: 'I am about to compose a symphonie concertante for flute, Wendling; oboe, Ramm; horn, Punto; and bassoon, Ritter.' The musicians were new friends from the famous Mannheim orchestra, and symphonies concertantes – orchestral pieces with multiple soloists – were all the rage in Paris. But if Mozart did compose the work, it was never performed and the music was lost. In the 1860s a piece turned up which seemed to be Mozart, but with clarinet instead of flute among the four soloists. There is no proof this is the piece Mozart mentions in his letter. Some scholars think the orchestral sections are by Mozart, others not. All agree that the solo passages have been adapted. The three movements are all in the same key, something Mozart never did. But whether its Mozart birth-line is in order or not, this music has always seemed way too good to be neglected. Enter the arranger. Another Sinfonia concertante by Mozart, with violin and viola soloists (K364), exists in an anonymous arrangement as a Grand Sextet for strings. Why not turn K297b into a large chamber music piece too?

The musical source is neither a concerto for four wind instruments with orchestra nor a symphony in which four wind instruments have prominent parts, but somewhere between the two. Roman Benedict's arrangement adopts the wind instrumentation of the 1860s version, with five string players to make a nonet. He treats the winds less as a body of soloists, and has them enrich what was originally orchestral material. The original feels somewhat sectional; many of the arranger's solutions could be considered improvements. The winds, as often in a nonet, have opportunities to feature, with constant reminders of the concerto-like conception, as in the fully written-out joint cadenza in the first movement.

DAVID GARRETT © 2018

Miriama Young

Miriama Young is a composer and sound artist whose work is performed by ensembles from Norway to New Zealand. She writes instrumental chamber music and collaborates across disciplines such as dance, film, radio and electro-acoustic media.

A New Zealand–Australian dual national, Miriama Young is a Fulbright scholar and the recipient of numerous awards. She attained her PhD from Princeton University, and now teaches at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

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Max Reger



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



Miriama Young

THE MUSICIANS

APRIL

Marsalis

Matthew Wilkie *bassoon*

Fiona Ziegler *violin*

Leoné Ziegler *violin*

Jane Hazelwood *viola*

Adrian Wallis *cello*

Korngold

Andrew Haveron *violin*

Kirsty Hilton *violin*

Tobias Breider *viola*

Justin Williams *viola*

Umberto Clerici *cello*

Catherine Hewgill *cello*

JULY

Ibert, Debussy & Massenet

Carolyn Harris *flute*

Marina Marsden *violin*

Justin Marsden *viola*

Louise Johnson *harp*

Shostakovich

Anna Skálová *violin*

Alexander Norton *violin*

Stuart Johnson *viola*

Leah Lynn *cello*

SEPTEMBER

2018 SSO Fellows

Roger Benedict

Artistic Director

Rachel Howie *flute*

Eve Osborn *oboe*

Magdalenna Krstevska *clarinet*

Alison Wormell *bassoon*

Aidan Gabriels *horn*

Jenna Smith *trumpet*

Amanda Tillett *trombone*

Sami Butler *percussion*

Tobias Aan *violin*

Rollin Zhao *violin*

Justin Julian *viola*

Daniel Pini *cello*

Alanna Jones *double bass*

with SSO musicians (Wagner)

Christopher Tingay *clarinet*

Marnie Sebire *horn*

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

David Robertson *The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director*

Founded in 1932 by the ABC, the SSO evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the Sydney Opera House, the SSO gives more than a hundred performances throughout Sydney and NSW each year, and its international tours have earned it worldwide recognition.

The SSO's orchestral performances encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, special events, and collaborations with guest artists and ensembles from all genres, reflecting the orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal.

The musicians of the orchestra also perform in chamber music, both in independent presentations

as well as under the auspices of the SSO, appearing over the years in concerts at City Recital Hall Angel Place, the Sydney Opera House, Verbruggen Hall at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, in venues on tour and in suburban Sydney, and in regular lunchtime concerts at St James' King Street.

The SSO Fellowship is an acclaimed one-year program that immerses talented young musicians in the day-to-day workings of the orchestra, giving them the training and performance experience they need to secure full-time positions in professional orchestras.

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