



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Heaven is Closed

Lisa Batiashvili plays Prokofiev

2018



MEET THE MUSIC

WED 28 FEB, 6.30PM

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

THU 1 MAR, 1.30PM

EMIRATES METRO SERIES

FRI 2 MAR, 8PM



Principal Partner



CLASSICAL



Taiko and the SSO

Program to include...

BRITTEN

The Prince of the Pagodas: Highlights

WATANABE Dreams

LEE & CLEWORTH Cascading Waterfall

WATANABE Shinobu

SKIPWORTH Breath of Thunder **PREMIERE**

Gerard Salonga conductor • Taiko: taiko ensemble

Ian Cleworth Artistic Director • Riley Lee shakuhachi

Kaoru Watanabe shinobue, taiko

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Meet the Music

Thu 22 Feb, 6.30pm

Kaleidoscope

Fri 23 Feb, 8pm

Sat 24 Feb, 8pm

Sydney Opera House



Heaven is Closed

Batiashvili plays Prokofiev

KATS-CHERNIN Heaven is Closed

PROKOFIEV Violin Concerto No.2

R STRAUSS Don Juan

R STRAUSS Till Eulenspiegel

Dmitri Slobodeniouk conductor • Lisa Batiashvili violin

Meet the Music

Wed 28 Feb, 6.30pm

Thursday Afternoon Symphony

Thu 1 Mar, 1.30pm

Emirates Metro Series

Fri 2 Mar, 8pm

Sydney Opera House



Bach and Beethoven

Cocktail Hour

JS BACH trans. Constable

Violin Partita in B minor, BWV 1002, for marimba

CONSTABLE Quintet for vibraphone and

string quartet: Rondo, Timelapse **PREMIERE**

BEETHOVEN

String Quartet in F, Op.59 No.1 (Razumovsky No.1)

Musicians of the SSO

Fri 2 Mar, 6pm

Sat 17 Mar, 6pm

Utzon Room



Who Needs a Conductor Anyway?

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Includes highlights from...

TCHAIKOVSKY Piano Concerto No.1

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No.5 (Emperor)

RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No.2

Roger Benedict conductor • Simon Tedeschi piano

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Sydney Opera House

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Sydney Opera House



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Swing on This brings together some of Australia's leading stage and screen stars with their take on all-time swing classics with your SSO.

Michael Falzon, Luke Kennedy, Rob Mills,

Ben Mingay vocalists

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Principal Partner

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On that note, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Emirates Metro Series and I hope that you enjoy this world-class experience.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry Brown".

Barry Brown

Emirates' Divisional Vice President
for Australasia



**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

MEET THE MUSIC

WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY, 6.30PM

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

THURSDAY 1 MARCH, 1.30PM

EMIRATES METRO SERIES

FRIDAY 2 MARCH, 8PM

.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

Heaven is Closed

Dima Slobodeniouk *conductor*

Lisa Batiashvili *violin*

ELENA KATS-CHERNIN (born 1957)

Heaven is Closed

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)

Violin Concerto No.2 in G minor, Op.63

Allegro moderato

Andante assai – Allegretto – Andante assai

Allegro, ben marcato

INTERVAL

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

Don Juan – Symphonic Poem, Op.20

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks – Symphonic Poem, Op.28



**92.9 ABC
Classic FM**

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.....
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.....
Estimated durations:

12 minutes, 26 minutes, 20-minute interval, 17 minutes, 15 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 8.15pm (Wed), 3.15pm (Thu), 9.45pm (Fri).

.....
COVER PHOTO: The closed panels of Hieronymus Bosch's triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490–1500), showing the Third Day of the Creation of the World, when the waters were separated from the earth and earthly Paradise (Eden) created. (Prado, Madrid / Bridgeman Images)



Principal Partner



A lithograph by Viennese artist Urban Janke depicting mediæval prankster Till Eulenspiegel (1907).

Heaven is Closed

This concert offers music that is rich in fantasy and drama – even the ‘abstract’ concerto has a storytelling air to it. When it comes to purely musical narrative, the orchestral repertoire reached a peak in the 19th century with the symphonic poem (or tone poem). This way of organising music around a narrative or scene rather than following conventional forms was championed by Franz Liszt and became the genre of choice for Richard Strauss.

In *Don Juan* the lecherous hero is run through in a duel. The music shrieks, whimpers, then stops. Unlike Mozart in *Don Giovanni*, Strauss doesn’t show the Don’s descent into hell, but you can be sure that heaven was closed to the man who’d seduced a list of women as long as your arm. Meanwhile, the reckless and subversive folk hero of *Till Eulenspiegel* meets his end at the gallows – his death drop making for a dramatic climax in Strauss’s music. No doubt the mediæval Till would have been denied entry to heaven too.

We begin with music by adopted Australian Elena Kats-Chernin – one of the few concert hall composers whose music has gone viral (*Eliza’s Aria*). As in so many of her creations, there’s wry humour, manic energy and a kind of playfulness. Heaven might be closed, but she still thinks of it as a blissful place with all the vividness of Russian fairy tale illustrations from her childhood in Tashkent and Moscow.

From that same part of the world comes Prokofiev’s Second Violin Concerto, performed by Georgian violinist Lisa Batiashvili. Of the creative artists who fled the Soviet Union, Prokofiev was the only composer to eventually return. (If ‘heaven’ for Prokofiev was pre-eminence as a Russian on the world stage, he was destined to disappointment, with competition from Rachmaninoff and Stravinsky.) This concerto was one of the last works he composed in the West, but in its tunefulness and its disarming blend of energy, wistfulness and humour, he was already thinking of the audience that awaited him in Soviet Russia, many coming to classical music for the first time.

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

Elena Kats-Chernin

Heaven is Closed

Heaven is Closed was commissioned by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra for a concert at the 2000 Adelaide Festival of music by former Soviet composers (Elena Firsova, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli and Alfred Schnittke). The orchestra wished to include a work by Elena Kats-Chernin, a composer born in Tashkent who had become an Australian. Kats-Chernin decided to draw on memories of her childhood and Russian children's story-telling, along with what might be called fairground recollections.

Around the time of the premiere, Kats-Chernin explained the inspiration for the piece and the way titles and ideas had come together in her music. 'Heaven is Closed' gave words to a concept for the new TSO piece. Musically, something seemed to be forming similar to a piece she had written for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, *Zoom and Zip*: music which was go, go, go – and you had to try to stop it somewhere.

Heaven is Closed, she explained, suggested a wry, resigned humour. Iconoclastic it may be – if New Age devotees offer heaven, this slams the door in their face. The music knocks on a door, repetitively. If that one doesn't answer, try another – but they're all closed. Perhaps heaven is full. Or it is closed for business. Heaven, it seems, could not be more closed, or perhaps just so far away.

At the time of composition, Kats-Chernin was living with the serious illness of a close family member. There was not much to look forward to. 'The mind needs to adjust. Heaven means bliss, and if it is to be found, it must be here and now, in daily being.' These were religious reflections, but not consciously those of Elena's Jewish heritage, nor any other formal religious system. When she thinks about heaven, the idea of blissful states and places often visits her in vivid images of the picture-book fairy stories of Russian childhood. Folk imagination portrays heaven as a playful place, and even if it is closed, its games can be played here, in music.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY DAVID GARRETT © 2000

KATS-CHERNIN

Born Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1957

Elena Kats-Chernin is one of Australia's busiest and most prolific composers, reaching millions of listeners worldwide through her music for theatre, ballet, orchestra and chamber ensemble. Her dramatically vivid music communicates a mixture of light-heartedness and heavy melancholy, combining strong rhythmic figures with elements of cabaret, tango, ragtime, and klezmer.

She trained at the Gnessin Musical College in Moscow before immigrating to Australia in 1975. After graduating from the Sydney Conservatorium (1980), she received a grant to study with Helmut Lachenmann in Hanover. She remained in Germany for 13 years before returning to Sydney, where she now lives.

Her collaboration with choreographer Meryl Tankard, *Deep Sea Dreaming*, was broadcast to an audience of millions worldwide as part of the opening ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Music from a subsequent collaboration with Tankard, the ballet *Wild Swans* (2003), went viral in 2007 when Lloyd's TSB adopted 'Eliza's Aria' for an advertising campaign. Two years later her *Russian Rag* became Max's Theme in the Claymation film *Mary and Max*. Her television opera miniseries *The Divorce* was broadcast by the ABC in 2015, and since then Sydney audiences have heard *The Witching Hour* – a concerto for eight double basses, and *Singing Trees*. Other recent works include the harpsichord concerto *Ancient Letters* and *Big Rhap*.

Composing on the Road

I started *Heaven is Closed* in Sydney on the New Year's Eve (2000), according to my superstition or ritual, if that is a better word, to always start a new piece on that night, even if it is only a couple of bars. I like the idea that everyone goes crazy partying while I do my own thing, so to speak. This is a left-over peculiarity from my days in Moscow when I lived in a student hostel, with other students from Gnessin College – I was 14 years old. I remember how the sounds were coming out of all the rooms (each had a piano in it) different instruments' sounds or singing, and I had to get on with my homework for Harmony or Aural or Musicology, so I learned to disregard the noise around me. And with time I cultivated this into the ritual of working on the New Year's Eve.

It was started in Sydney and finished in Hanover while I was there rehearsing and witnessing the premiere of *Sarglos*, a chamber work of mine. I like working on pieces while 'on the road', especially parallel to some other activity, like working on a theatre play while revising another piece, etc. It seems to free the mind for very different kinds of ideas and this piece ended up soaking up some of the whirlwind energy of that time.

ELENA KATS-CHERNIN

Heaven is Closed calls for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), oboe, cor anglais, clarinet, bass clarinet and two bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; percussion; harp and strings.

The TSO and David Porcelijn gave the premiere in the 2000 Adelaide Festival and later that year toured it to Canada and the USA. This is the SSO's first performance of the piece.





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Sergei Prokofiev

Violin Concerto No.2 in G minor, Op.63

Allegro moderato

Andante assai – Allegretto – Andante assai

Allegro, ben marcato

Lisa Batiashvili *violin*

Prokofiev had left the Soviet Union in 1918 after several visits to Western Europe in the pre-revolutionary years. Musicologist Stanley Krebs points out the danger of assuming that Prokofiev's expatriation was political: 'All Russian musicians of accomplishment went abroad,' he notes, and suggests that Prokofiev had probably decided to leave even before the October revolution, at least for a time. Based in Paris, with determined forays into the musical scene of the United States, Prokofiev seems to have hoped to become more of a major figure on the world stage than ultimately proved to be the case. In the US, Rachmaninoff was established as the pre-eminent resident Russian; in Europe, Stravinsky occupied that position. With his failure to secure performances of his favourite opera, *The Fiery Angel*, Prokofiev began to consider returning to the Soviet Union. From 1927, he began a series of return visits. By mid-1936, with his only serious Soviet rival, Shostakovich, under a cloud, Prokofiev moved permanently to Moscow.

In an article published in *Izvestia* in November 1934, Prokofiev wrote:

I would describe the music needed here as 'light serious' or 'serious light' music; it is by no means easy to find the term which suits it. Above all, it must be tuneful, simply and comprehensively tuneful, and must not be repetitious or stamped with triviality.

This reads like an official definition of socialist realism in music – indeed, in 1943 Gerald Abraham accused Prokofiev of pandering to the Soviet state by 'emphasising the lyrical side of his nature at the expense of the witty and grotesque and brilliant sides.' More recently, and in complete contrast, Ian McDonald has argued that this concerto contains encoded anti-Soviet messages:

Surely the childish pedantic arpeggio accompaniment to the aria-like theme of the work's slow movement [clumsily scored for flute] is tongue in cheek? In which case, what can it be but an ironic response to simple-minded demands for a

Keynotes

PROKOFIEV

Born Sontsovska (Ukraine), 1891

Died Moscow, 1953

Early in his career Prokofiev developed a compositional style that balanced four distinct characteristics: classical, modern, toccata and lyrical. Thus armed, he pushed the boundaries of the Russian Romantic tradition to its limits. He was one of many Russian artists who left their homeland after the October Revolution of 1917, but the only composer to eventually return, shortly after he composed the **Second Violin Concerto**.

VIOLIN CONCERTO NO.2

Prokofiev wanted to make his second violin concerto quite different from the first. Even so, both works share a translucency of colour and an emphasis on lyricism. This concerto is in three movements, each of which picks up Prokofiev's classical and tuneful tendencies as well as his quirky wit.

The concerto was composed during the course of a concert tour with the violinist Robert Soërens, for whom it was commissioned, and premiered in Madrid in 1935. Perhaps the prospect of a Spanish premiere prompted the distinctive use of plucked strings for a guitar-like effect and the appearance of castanets in the finale.

lyric-heroic 'symphonism of the People'? If this is so, the shadowy bass drum which drives the soloist to jump through hoops in the finale requires no explanation.

Prokofiev's stated view does, however, reflect the fact that in Soviet Russia there was a huge audience coming to 'classical' music for the first time. Prokofiev nominated the *Lieutenant Kijé* suite as one example of the 'serious light' music he meant, and other works composed at this time reflect the same aesthetic. We should be wary of imputing cynical motives to him; after all, it required no radical change in style for him to produce works of immediately engaging character. Nevertheless, it does seem that in works like *Lieutenant Kijé*, the ballet music for *Romeo and Juliet* and the Violin Concerto No.2, Prokofiev was making a special effort to write music of formal clarity and emotional directness, as if to prepare the ground for his homecoming.

In 1935, Prokofiev was approached by a group of admirers of the French violinist Robert Soëtens to write a concerto. Prokofiev had had it in mind to write a work for violin, and toyed with the idea of a 'concert sonata for violin and orchestra'. Gerald Abraham complains that 'there is no naughtiness, there is no steely glitter and there is almost no virtuosity in the solo part', but it was Prokofiev's intention to make this concerto 'altogether different from No.1 in both music and style'. It was composed during an extensive concert tour which Prokofiev and Soëtens made. As Prokofiev notes in his autobiography:



...the principal theme of the first movement was written in Paris, the first theme of the second movement in Voronezh, the orchestration I completed in Baku, while the first performance was given in Madrid [with the Madrid Symphony Orchestra under Eugene Arbos], in December 1935.

The piece stakes an immediate claim to simple, comprehensive tunefulness. The soloist, alone, establishes the key of G minor unequivocally with a disarmingly simple melody. Some busy passagework leads to a new lyrical theme in B flat, reminiscent both of *La Vie en rose* and the Gavotte from Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*. Both themes are developed in a varied central section characterised by Prokofiev's lively rhythmic manipulation and deft touches of orchestration. The movement ends curiously, with rapid virtuosic writing brought to a halt by peremptory plucked (pizzicato) chords from the soloist.

This pizzicato writing is carried over into the rocking triplet accompaniment of the second movement, which supports a long-breathed, yearning melody for the soloist who travels through a number of musical landscapes. The plucking of strings may suggest the guitars of Spain, where the work was to be premiered; in the final movement the Iberian flavour becomes explicit with the use of castanets. This grotesque waltz reminds us of Prokofiev's brilliance as a ballet composer, and he draws yet more arresting colours from the solo part, notably in the use of melodies played high on the violin's lowest string. For all Prokofiev's nomadism during the work's composition, and whatever its political subtext, the overwhelming impression is of Russianness in its balance of wild energy, humour and melancholy.

GORDON KERRY
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 2001

The orchestra for Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No.2 comprises pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; percussion and strings.

The SSO first performed the concerto in 1962 with Jascha Horenstein and conductor Thomas Matthews, and most recently in 2014 with James Ehnes and conductor Thomas Søndergård.

Richard Strauss

Don Juan – Symphonic Poem, Op.20

A thrilling opening – an uprush of thrusting figures, then a string theme launched over pulsing chords for winds and brass. This music's blood is up.

Even a listener unaware of the title and subject might suspect that it was about masculine ardour, even sexual conquest. And knowing that the subject is Don Juan, the legendary libertine lover, seems to give the key to the music. When Strauss composed it, at the age of 24, he was in the midst of an intense emotional attachment to a married woman, and had just met Pauline de Ahna, whom he was to marry. No wonder this subject appealed to him.

But the way Strauss ends his symphonic poem should give us pause. This Don Juan neither satisfies his desires, nor is he dragged down to hell by a stone guest in divine retribution for his sins as in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The music swells towards climax, but is cut off by a sudden pause, without reaching fulfilment. The music fades away in a minor key, very quietly, but is crossed by one, jarring trumpet note.

Strauss prefaced the score of *Don Juan* with 32 lines of poetry, drawn from the unfinished verse drama of the same name by Nikolaus Lenau, who died in 1851. 'My Don Juan,' wrote Lenau, 'is no hot-blooded man eternally pursuing women. It is the longing in him to find a woman who is to him incarnate womanhood, and to enjoy.' In Lenau's play, the Don is challenged to a duel, but, on the verge of subduing yet another adversary, loses interest, throws away his sword, and allows his opponent to run him through. Don Juan's disgust at his failure to achieve his idealised quest is typical of the Romantic idealism of Lenau's poetry. This author was one of the prophets of *Weltschmerz* – world-weariness, even disgust.

Strauss's *Don Juan* is young man's music, and although the quiet ending is daring, spurning cheap musical success, what precedes it is far from world-weariness. Lenau's poem was the direct inspiration for his music, along with a play by Paul Heyse, *Don Juan's End*, and both were in Strauss's mind as he jotted down his first ideas for the symphonic poem, on a visit to Italy in May 1888. Some of the incidents in the music seem to come from Lenau. As the music unfolds, hints may be found of weariness, dejection and satiation, though these are overwhelmed by the forward thrust which keeps animating the music.

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 composing operas and with the evocative and storytelling possibilities of the symphonic poem (or orchestral 'tone poem', as he preferred to call it) that had been invented by Franz Liszt.

DON JUAN

This is young man's music – exuberant and audacious, and not just in predictable ways. Unlike Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (whose influences included Molière's *Don Juan*) Strauss's music was inspired by the verse drama of Nikolaus Lenau. This switches the dramatic emphasis from Don Juan as incorrigible philanderer to Don Juan in search of the woman 'who is to him incarnate womanhood'. The conclusion sees not brimstone and fire, but weariness at his failure in this idealised quest. Strauss's correspondingly subdued ending is just one sign of his daring.

Don Juan is full of vivid musical pictures – with horns conveying virility (as they so often do in Strauss), a solo violin for the ardent lover and the oboe's love song representing the object of his quest. But more important, the music itself follows a dramatic arc as convincing as the narrative that inspired it.



Strauss asked that the lines from Lenau be printed in the program book to indicate the music's poetic inspiration, but well-meaning friends were quick to provide 'analyses' showing how the music illustrated a 'program'. Strauss was surely teasing when he claimed it should be obvious from the famous oboe melody that the woman in Don Juan's sights has red hair!

Don Juan is one of the most successful and best-loved of all symphonic poems, because Strauss has succeeded in making a self-sufficient and satisfying artistic form from the poetic subject. 'The poetic program,' he wrote, 'is not merely a musical description of certain events in real life,' wrote Strauss. 'But if music is not to seep away in pure wilfulness, it needs certain boundaries to define the form, and a program serves as a canal bank.'

The form of *Don Juan* is shaped by Liszt's idea of the symphonic poem. Strauss's music can be heard as an expanded first-movement sonata form, with major independent episodes in the development – the first, with its love song for the oboe, plays the part of a slow movement, and after the irruption of the rousing horn theme comes the so-called carnival episode, which is like a scherzo (noteworthy among other things for a glockenspiel solo). The return of the opening music marks the beginning of a condensed recapitulation where, in truly Lisztian fashion, the themes are further combined and transformed. The exhausted, resigned ending is a coda.

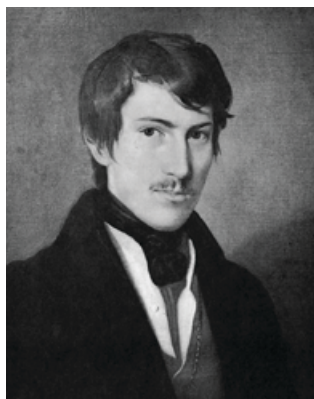
For the first audiences of *Don Juan*, the idea that the music represented episodes in the reprobate lover's career probably

helped, when so much was new about the music. The orchestral players, at the premiere in Weimar on 11 November 1889, were mainly concerned with the unprecedented difficulties of execution. Strauss, who conducted, felt sorry for the poor horns and trumpets: ‘...they blew till they were blue in the face. In the performance...the orchestra wheezed and panted, but did their part capitally. They seemed to be enjoying the whole affair, in spite of their understandable amazement at such novelties.’ The novelty has worn off, but the excitement hasn’t. *Don Juan* was Strauss’s first great international success, and has remained one of his most played orchestral works.

DAVID GARRETT
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 1998

Don Juan calls for three flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; harp and strings.

The SSO first performed *Don Juan* in 1938 with Malcolm Sargent, and most recently in 2010, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.



Portrait of Nikolaus Lenau by
Friedrich von Amerling



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Richard Strauss

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks – Symphonic Poem, Op.28

Strauss drew on legend for this, his fourth symphonic poem. He had already based symphonic poems on Lenau (*Don Juan*), Shakespeare (*Macbeth*) and a vision of the passage of the human soul through the last moments of life and beyond (*Death and Transfiguration*).

There is evidence to suggest that the legendary Tyll Eulenspiegel did exist: a peasant who lived and died (of the Black Death, by some accounts) in the 14th century. His exploits reflect the growing self-assertiveness of the peasants against the authority of the upper classes at that time, and he became the hero of an expanding pool of anecdotes. The first published account of his tale appeared around 1500, and the first version published in English was Wyllyam Copland's *A Merry Jest of a man called Howleglass* ('Owl-glass' being the English translation of *Eulenspiegel*) in the 16th century.

Strauss had originally intended to use the character of Till as the subject of an opera. He had seen an earlier opera on the subject by Kistler, and possibly several new published editions of the legend had drawn Strauss's further attention. The opera never eventuated and a couple of reasons have been advanced. For one thing, Strauss's theatrical ambitions had been temporarily blunted by the recent failure of his Wagnerian-style opera *Guntram*. And on a practical level, Strauss found difficulty in seeing Till in sufficient detail to put him on stage. While still working on the opera, Strauss wrote an entirely orchestral treatment of the story, finishing it on 6 May 1895.

Strauss cast his symphonic poem in the form of a Classical rondo, revealing how closely he was still attached to the traditional forms. The choice works ingeniously, as Till's adventures provide the episodes which contrast with the reappearing signature material. Strauss at first seemed unwilling to reveal a program for the work, but when Wilhelm Mauke later wrote a guide to the piece, Strauss marked into his score some of the more important references. Over the opening phrases, for example, he wrote, 'Once upon a time there was a roguish jester'; above the horn call: 'whose name was Till Eulenspiegel.'

KEYNOTES

TILL EULENSPIEGEL

Richard Strauss conceived *Till Eulenspiegel* for the stage, but after the failure of his opera *Guntram* he decided he had no gift for that genre. This was a rash judgement, and – happily – one that he later revised, but as a symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegel* is wholly delightful.

'Once upon a time there was a roguish jester,' wrote Strauss in the score. The music follows rondo form, describing Till's adventures in between each recurrence of the main theme. He commits any number of pranks, but each time the theme returns, and Till is restored to where he started. He resembles nothing so much as an indestructible cartoon character, always ready for new trouble, and the work could be a preposterously sophisticated cartoon soundtrack. Finally, Till's antics catch up with him. He is confronted with the full force of the law, and punished in a rather terminal way: 'There he dangles, the breath leaves his body, the last convulsion and Till's mortal self is finished.' A gory ending, but we sense the composer's delight even in this, as he leaves us, smiling, with Till's death throes, and an echo of the beginning.

Listening Guide

To omit the storyline is to obscure Strauss's undeniable illustrative genius. After the introduction, Till rides through a crowded market place. The point is marked by a cymbal clash ('Hop! On horseback straight through the market women,' wrote Strauss in the score). Next, Till poses as a monk to deliver a mock sermon. He tires of this and flirts with girls, possibly getting in deeper than he would wish. Outraged by being rejected, he 'vows he will take his revenge on all mankind.' Coming across a group of pedants (bassoons and bass clarinet) he sets them arguing amongst themselves (their floundering expertly depicted by Strauss's fugato writing). A climax is reached with a piercing trill from the whole orchestra, which Strauss called Till's 'Great Grimace'. Pleased with the trouble he has caused, Till whistles jauntily as he goes off down the street. The recall of earlier material at this point has no literal significance but could suggest Till's growing recklessness. Eventually the authorities have had enough! Till is arrested, tried and sentenced to hang. The death drop is marked by a downward leap in the heavy brass. Finally Strauss brings back the opening material in the manner of closing a folk-tale.

Strauss biographer Norman Del Mar has claimed Till as Strauss's masterpiece. Certainly, this work set new standards for orchestral writing. (The 'perfect casting' of the high-pitched E flat clarinet which brilliantly registers Till's changing demeanour in outbursts during his sentencing is but one example.) But it is the perfect balance between vivid illustration and musical proportion, the concision and humour, which really set this work high among Strauss's achievements.

GORDON KALTON WILLIAMS

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KEYNOTES ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY ANNA GOLDSWORTHY

Till Eulenspiegel calls for a large orchestra of three flutes, piccolo, three oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, E flat clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon; four or eight horns, three or six trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (bass drum, cymbal, ratchet, snare drum and triangle); and strings.

The SSO first performed *Till Eulenspiegel* in 1939 conducted by Antal Doráti, and most recently in 2008 with Thomas Dausgaard.



Frontispiece from one of the earliest editions of the Till Eulenspiegel story (1515). He holds a mirror in his left hand, an owl in his right.

Broadcast Diary
February–March



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Friday 2 March, 1pm

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François Leleux oboe, cor anglais, conductor

Fauré, Debussy arr. Silvestrini, Mozart, Bizet

Saturday 10 March, 8pm

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Michelle DeYoung, Topi Lehtipuu,

Peter Coleman-Wright vocal soloists

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

TSO Chorus

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Sunday 11 March, noon

HEAVEN IS CLOSED

Dmitri Slobodeniouk conductor

Lisa Batiashvili violin

Kats-Chernin, Prokofiev, R Strauss

Friday 16 March, 8pm

BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

David Robertson conductor

Michelle DeYoung, John Relyea,

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Opera Australia Chorus

Brahms, JS Bach, Bartók



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 13 March, 6pm

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

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Clocktower Square,
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Sydney NSW 2001
Telephone (02) 8215 4644
Box Office (02) 8215 4600
Facsimile (02) 8215 4646
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Telephone: +61 2 9921 5353

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PAPER
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K.W.DOGGETT Fine Paper



PHOTO: MARCO BORGREVE

Dima Slobodeniouk *conductor*

Dima Slobodeniouk is Principal Conductor of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and Artistic Director of the Sibelius Festival. Lauded for his deeply informed and intelligent artistic leadership, he has also been Music Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia since 2013. Linking his native Russian roots with his musical studies in Finland, he draws on the powerful musical heritage of these countries.

Born in Moscow, he studied violin at the Central Music School (under Zinaida Gilels and J Chugajev), the Middle Finland Conservatory and the Sibelius Academy (Olga Parhomenko). He continued his Sibelius Academy studies in conducting with Atso Almila and mentors Leif Segerstam and Jorma Panula, and has also studied under Ilya Musin and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Striving to inspire young musicians of the future, in recent years he has worked with students at the Verbier Festival Academy as well as initiating a student conducting program with Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia.

In the 2017–18 season he will make debuts with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. He returns to the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig with Viktoria Mullova and Matthew Barley for the premiere of Pascal Dusapin's *At-swim-two-birds*, and will conduct the Dutch premiere of Sofia

Gubaidulina's Triple Concerto for violin, cello and bayan (accordion) with soloists Baiba Skride, Harriet Krijgh and Elsbeth Moser and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. He also returns to the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre National de Lyon. Recent highlights include the London Symphony Orchestra's Nordic tour, when he stood in for an indisposed Michael Tilson Thomas, bringing both orchestra and the Lahti audience to its feet after a performance that included Nielsen's Fifth Symphony.

He will open the 2018–19 season in Lahti with the premiere of Kerkko Koskinen's concerto for two saxophones, and in Galicia with Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony followed by a national tour with Ivo Pogorelich.

Dima Slobodeniouk's discography includes music by Lotta Wennäkoski with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Finnish composer Sebastian Fagerlund with Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. Future releases will include music by Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Kalevi Aho.

This is his first appearance with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.



PHOTO: SAMMY HART

Lisa Batiashvili

violin

Lisa Batiashvili is the 2017–18 season's Artist-in-Residence with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome. Praised by audiences and fellow musicians for her virtuosity and sensitivity, the Georgian-born violinist, who has lived in Germany for more than 25 years, has developed long-standing relationships with some of the world's leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Berlin, Berlin Philharmonic, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and London Symphony Orchestra.

In the 2017–18 season she will perform the UK premiere of Anders Hillborg's *Violin Concerto No.2* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Sakari Oramo. As part of her residency with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, she will perform concertos by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev, as well as Bach's *Concerto for violin and oboe* with François Leleux. She will make her debut with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in Carnegie Hall, and tour Europe with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Staatskapelle Dresden. Other performance highlights include concerts with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and Munich Philharmonic. In the 2016–17 season she was Artist-in-Residence with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra as well as Portrait

Artist of the Bamberger Symphoniker.

Her latest album – a recording of the Tchaikovsky and Sibelius violin concertos with Daniel Barenboim and Staatskapelle Berlin – received international critical acclaim. Previous recordings include the Brahms *Violin Concerto* with Staatskapelle Dresden and Christian Thielemann, Shostakovich's *Violin Concerto No.1* with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Esa-Pekka Salonen, and a DVD of her performance in Berlin's *Waldbühne* of Bartok's *Violin Concerto No.1* with the Berlin Philharmonic and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

She has received two ECHO Klassik awards, the MIDEM Classical Award, the Choc de l'année, the Accademia Musicale Chigiana International Prize, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival's Leonard Bernstein Award and the Beethoven-Ring. In 2015 *Musical America* named her Instrumentalist of the Year.

Lisa Batiashvili's most recent appearance with the SSO was in 2012, when she performed the Brahms concerto with Vladimir Ashkenazy. She lives in Munich and plays a Joseph Guarneri 'del Gesù' from 1739, generously loaned by a private collector.

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS



DAVID ROBERTSON

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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 five 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.

2018 is David Robertson's fifth season as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

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PHOTO: CHRISTIE BREWSTER

Nora Goodridge with Tutti Second Violin Nicole Masters. Nicole says she feels incredibly privileged to have this connection with someone who wants to support her chair in the orchestra. 'I feel really grateful that there are people like Nora still in this world.' For her part, Nora sums it up: 'It's my choice, and it's a joy!'

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