

Mozart and Mendelssohn



MOZART IN THE CITY
THU 5 APR, 7PM

TEA & SYMPHONY
FRI 6 APR, 11AM





CLASSICAL



Beethoven's Mass in C

HAYDN Symphony No.95 **BEETHOVEN** Mass in C

Masaaki Suzuki conductor • Sara Macliver soprano Anna Dowsley mezzo-soprano • Benjamin Bruns tenor Christian Immler bass • Sydney Philharmonia Choirs APT Master Series Wed 11 Apr, 8pm Fri 13 Apr, 8pm Sat 14 Apr, 8pm



Marsalis and Korngold

Cocktail Hour

MARSALIS Meeelaan – Bassoon Quintet KORNGOLD String Sextet Musicians of the SSO Sat 14 Apr, 6pm Utzon Room



Playlist with Matthew Wilkie

SSO bassoonist Matthew Wilkie introduces a program of music that has inspired him and which highlights the rich and varied sounds of his instrument. Including music by Brahms, Elgar, Schubert, Zelenka, Stravinsky and Shostakovich.

Roger Benedict conductor
Matthew Wilkie bassoon and presenter

Tue 1 May, 6.30pm City Recital Hall



The Bernstein Songbook A Musical Theatre Celebration

BERNSTEIN Highlights from On the Town, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Wonderful Town, On the Waterfront. Trouble in Tahiti. Peter Pan. Candide.

John Wilson conductor • Lorina Gore soprano Kim Criswell mezzo-soprano • Julian Ovenden tenor Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Meet the Music
Thu 10 May, 6.30pm
Kaleidoscope
Fri 11 May, 8pm
Sat 12 May, 8pm

SSO PRESENTS



Paloma Faith with the SSO

Brit Award-winning and multi-platinum artist Paloma Faith makes her debut with your SSO in this exclusive Australian performance. Featuring songs from her new album The Architect such as Guilty, Cry Baby and 'Til I'm Done, as well as her greatest hits.

Presented by Wilson Parking Fri 6 Apr, 8pm Sat 7 Apr, 8pm



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86TH SEASON | 2018

MOZART IN THE CITY

THURSDAY 5 APRIL. 7PM

CITY RECITAL HALL

TEA & SYMPHONY

FRIDAY 6 APRIL, 11AM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL



David Robertson

Chief Conductor and Artistic Director



Mozart and Mendelssohn

Roger Benedict conductor
Todd Gibson-Cornish bassoon

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Prelude to the opera *Capriccio*arranged for string orchestra by Roger Benedict

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791) Bassoon Concerto in B flat major, K191

Allegro Andante ma adagio Rondo (Tempo di menuetto)

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847) Symphony No.4 in A major, Op.90, Italian

Allegro vivace
Andante con moto
Con moto moderato
Saltarello (Presto)

Pre-concert talk by David Garrett on Thursday 5 April at 6.15pm in the First Floor Reception Room. Visit sydneysymphony.com/speaker-bios for more information.

Thursday's program will conclude with a MOZART MYSTERY MOMENT, to be announced the following Friday:



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Estimated durations:

10 minutes, 20 minutes, 27 minutes, 5 minutes (Thursday only) The concert will conclude at approximately 8.15pm (Thursday), 12.05pm (Friday).

COVER IMAGE: Watercolour of Amalfi, painted by Felix Mendelssohn (1839) after a pencil sketch made during his travels in 1831.



Richard Strauss Prelude to the opera *Capriccio*

arranged for string orchestra by Roger Benedict

Capriccio is an opera about opera, in the way that A Chorus Line is a musical about musicals and Noises Off is a play about the theatre. There's no real plot, and Strauss himself described it as 'a conversation piece for music in one act'.

The opera doesn't begin with an overture or prelude of the conventional kind; there's no dramatic opening to grab your attention, no rollicking medley of tunes, although the prelude does hint at the musical material to come. Instead Strauss begins with chamber music from inside the opera itself, using just two violins, two violas and two cellos. In the theatre the sound of the six string players emerges from the pit, but once the curtain rises it becomes apparent that this prelude is being played 'offstage' in an adjoining room, the music is an intrinsic part of the action.

The sextet is part of a concert for the Countess Madeleine. She listens, rapt. The composer, Flamand, and his friend the poet, Olivier, eavesdrop by the door – they are both in love with the widowed Countess. La Roche, the impresario – a character loosely modelled on the great director Max Reinhardt – sleeps. ('Soft music is the best soporific' in his opinion.) If you experience this poised and serene music as the Countess does then it becomes a stream of sounds to carry you away to distant enchantments.

The title of the 18th-century libretto which inspired *Capriccio* provides the clue to the subject matter of Strauss's conversation piece: *Prima la musica, poi le parole*. First the music, then the words. It's phrased as a statement but it's an ancient dispute that goes to the heart of the relationship between words and music and their status in opera, and ponders the nature of musical expression and the power of emotion. The centrepiece

Prima la musica...poi il capriccio

Prima la musica, poi le parole was a libretto by Giovanni Battista Casti, for which Antonio Salieri composed a setting. This famously formed a pair with Mozart's Schauspieldirektor (The Impresario) commissioned by the Emperor Joseph in a cordial contest between Italian opera (Salieri) and German Singspiel (Mozart). Both works were premiered on 7 February 1786 in the palace Orangerie: after the first opera, the audience turned their chairs to face the stage at the opposite end.

Strauss didn't follow Casti's libretto closely, instead he riffed on its themes. 'I do not want to write just another opera,' he wrote to Clemens Krauss, his collaborator at the Munich State Opera. 'With Casti I would like to do something unusual, a treatise on dramaturgy, a theatrical fugue.'

Keynotes

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 with the evocative and storytelling possibilities of the symphonic poem (or orchestral 'tone poem', as he preferred to call it) and in opera. He composed 15 operas, of which *Capriccio* was his last. ('I can make only one testament,' he said.)

CAPRICCIO

The opera Capriccio - a conversation piece for music in one act - was begun in 1940 and completed in 1941. It was premiered in Munich on 28 October 1942, under the direction of Clemens Krauss. Strauss's collaborator on the opera. It takes its inspiration from an 18th-century libretto that addresses the status of music and words in opera and personifies the debate with a composer and a poet, both in love with the widowed Countess. The exquisite Prelude which begins the opera reveals Strauss's mastery of atmosphere and the refinement and fluidity of his late style.

YOUSUF KARSH / CAMERA PRESS

 Richard Strauss in the last year of his life (photo by Yousuf Karsh)

of the opera, as devised by Strauss, is a sonnet by a poet and set to music by a composer for a countess they both love.

Sitting here in a concert hall, the question might seem settled. First the music. Of course! A natural bias, you might say, of a symphony orchestra and its audiences. Another bias of ours emerges in the arrangement for this concert. Roger Benedict has always felt that when this music is liberated from its theatrical function, it benefits from expansion into a fuller, richer piece for string orchestra, with the double basses adding vibrancy and depth. The big climaxes, he says, have always felt 'a bit underwhelming as a sextet in concert' – hearing the Prelude played by a larger ensemble puts the music firmly centre-stage and 'confirms the superior power of music!'

For Strauss-the-composer, the opera had to end with a question mark – artists know that the question of music and words can never be resolved – but it's been observed that the Countess makes her exit humming the melody which Flamand has composed for Olivier's sonnet. Perhaps the music doesn't come first, but Strauss seems to be suggesting that it has the final word.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY YVONNE FRINDLE © 2008

Even before the premiere of *Capriccio* in 1942, its Prelude received a private performance in Vienna, literally as chamber music. The SSO first performed music from *Capriccio* in 1981, when Jessye Norman sang the closing scene in a concert conducted by Franz-Paul Decker. More recently the *Moonlight Music* was included in the 1997 Symphony under the Stars conducted by Sir William Southgate. And in 2010 the Prelude and the *Moonlight Music* opened concerts with Mozart's Clarinet Concerto and Mahler's Fourth Symphony, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Bassoon Concerto in B flat major, K191

Allegro Andante ma adagio Rondo (Tempo di menuetto)

Todd Gibson-Cornish bassoon

Mozart completed his Bassoon Concerto K191 on 4 June 1774, when he was 18 years old. This was one of his earliest concertos, and his first for a wind instrument. Mozart received a commission from an amateur bassoonist, Baron Thaddaus von Dürnitz of Munich. Some sources suggest that Dürnitz ordered five bassoon concertos, and six piano sonatas (the Baron was also a pianist). Mozart completed for Dürnitz the sonata for piano (K284), and one for two bassoons (now known in its published version for cello and bassoon, K292). If indeed he did complete the bassoon concertos, at least three of them are lost, and the authenticity of another is doubtful.

Modern scholars also believe that the bassoon concerto which is known to be definitely by Mozart was not written for Dürnitz. The concerto's solo writing certainly makes no concessions to amateurism. One of its leading modern interpreters, Milan Turkovic, observes that it must have seemed a bold composition to contemporary bassoonists, and it exploits all the notes available on the instrument at that time – a five-keyed bassoon requiring complicated fingering. Mozart must have heard it played with virtuosity, because this was a period when notable



Keynotes

MOZART

Born Salzburg, 1756 Died Vienna, 1791

Although Mozart claimed to dislike the flute, he clearly adored the clarinet, he chose the bassoon when he came to write his first concerto for a woodwind instrument, and he seemed to eniov nothing more than writing horn concertos for his longsuffering friend Ignaz Leutgeb (the victim of many Mozartian pranks). Mozart's music for wind instruments is one of the most wonderful aspects of his legacy. Alongside the various solo concertos - for flute, oboe. clarinet, and bassoon as well as horn - there are marvellous wind serenades (the Gran Partita is a masterpiece of its kind) and incomparable orchestral writing for winds, especially in his piano concertos.

BASSOON CONCERTO

Following Strauss's prelude from Capriccio (his last opera, composed in his 70s) we hear a concerto by an 18 year old: his first for any woodwind instrument. It takes the bassoon seriously, exploiting the expressive range and technique of the 18th century instrument, and remains the most popular bassoon concerto of all.

The ambitious first movement shows off the soloist in leaps and runs; the second reveals its capacity to evoke a singing style. The finale is a dance-like rondo with the orchestra providing the recurring rondo theme while the bassoon is given the contrasting episodes in between (the 'verses' to the rondo's 'chorus').

soloists on wind instruments were emerging. Mozart's concerto remains satisfying to players with more user-friendly instruments, and is still the most often played bassoon concerto.

The bassoon has acquired a reputation for jocularity, and there is indeed something humorous in its wide leaps from register to contrasting register, and the plaintiveness of its tone in its higher reaches. Mozart does not miss the possibilities this offers, but he is also fully awake to the expressiveness of the bassoon, liberated for once from having to reinforce the bass line in the orchestra. He exploits the full range of the instrument, and often makes it sing eloquently in its tenor register.

Writing for solo bassoon and orchestra presents some challenges, because the solo instrument's natural register lies in the middle range, so that the orchestral accompaniment must confine itself to the bass and treble parts, leaving the middle as clear as possible. Mozart, as his biographer Alfred Einstein has written, always moved comfortably and freely within any limitations, and turned them to positive advantage. Here he employs only strings, oboes and horns. He reserves the use of the full orchestra for those moments when the bassoon is silent. F major is the most natural key for the bassoon, and Mozart resorts to it in the slow movement. The key of the flanking movements, however, B flat, brings into play the highest and the lowest notes available on the bassoon of the time, and Mozart goes to both extremes, though he always approaches the top B flat with a rising scale rather than a leap. The key of B flat, as will be heard at the very beginning, puts the orchestral horns very high in their range, keeping them out of the bassoon territory.

The first movement (**Allegro**) is the most ambitious: the orchestra providing quite a powerful framework for the bassoon's leaps and runs. The second movement (**Andante ma adagio**) makes the most of the soloist's capacity for singing cantabile. With phrases prophetic of the Countess' aria 'Porgi amor' from *The Marriage of Figaro* the bassoon sings a romance in tones described by the English critic Michael Whewell as those of 'a superhuman baritone ranging from deep Russian bass to the coolest falsetto'. The finale is a **Rondo** minuet. The bassoon provides the episodes between the main statements of the rondo theme, varying the theme, but only once, towards the end, playing the theme itself.

DAVID GARRETT © 2003

Mozart's Bassoon Concerto calls for an orchestra of two oboes, two horns and strings.

The SSO first performed the concerto in 1968 in a concert conducted by Ferdinand Leitner. John Cran was the soloist, and again in 1970, 1975 and 1990. Our most recent performances of the concerto both featured Matthew Wilkie as soloist, conducted by Edo de Waart in 2001 and Dene Olding in 2008.

Mozart is fully awake to the expressiveness of the bassoon...

Felix Mendelssohn Symphony No.4 in A, Op.90, *Italian*

Allegro vivace Andante con moto Con moto moderato Saltarello (Presto)

Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony expresses a northern European's love of the sun-drenched south. 'Blue sky in A major', it has been called. The ideas for the symphony came to Mendelssohn as he spent the winter of 1830–31 in Italy, and he wrote to his parents that Naples 'must play a part in it'. Indeed it did, in the leaping dance of the *Saltarello* finale.

Fresh and youthful, this symphony is also one of Mendelssohn's supreme achievements. He himself considered it 'the most mature thing I have ever done'. Yet for some reason, he was dissatisfied with this symphony, and always intended to revise it. He never got around to doing so, and it was published only after his death, edited by his friend Ignaz Moscheles. Meanwhile, Mendelssohn had submitted this symphony in response to a request from the London Philharmonic Society for 'a symphony, an overture, and a vocal piece' (along with the concert aria *Infelice*, the overture *The Hebrides* and perhaps the *Trumpet* Overture). The *Italian* Symphony was performed in a concert of the Society in London, in which Mendelssohn also played Mozart's Piano Concerto in D minor, K466, on 13 May 1833.

Mendelssohn's anxiety about his symphonies had a lot to do with his sense of responsibility, imposed by what Beethoven had done. An energetic symphony in A major was bound to put listeners in mind of Beethoven's Seventh, and the processional character of Mendelssohn's second movement inevitably recalls the same movement in Beethoven's symphony. Perhaps also Mendelssohn was bothered by the challenge which faces interpreters of his *Italian* Symphony: how to avoid making all but one of the four movements sound like a *moto perpetuo*.

Posterity considers that Mendelssohn should have remained satisfied with a masterpiece in which, far from being a pale reflection of Beethoven, he was entirely himself in the lightness of touch, the polished elegance of scoring, and the sureness of form which mark every movement of the *Italian* Symphony. Mendelssohn sometimes spoke convincingly of weightier things, but it is no accident that, along with the Violin Concerto, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, several overtures and the Octet for strings, the *Italian* Symphony is among those works of his which have never gone out of fashion.

The opening of the symphony, like much of what follows, is

Keynotes

MENDELSSOHN

Born Hamburg, 1809 Died Leipzig, 1847

The son of a banker and grandson of one of Europe's most famous philosophers, Mendelssohn enjoyed both financial and cultural privileges, and as a young man he took a three-year Grand Tour of Britain and Europe. His travels inspired his two most popular symphonies: the Scottish (No.3) and the Italian (No.4), as well as music such as The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave).

ITALIAN SYMPHONY

The Italian Symphony was begun around 1830 in Italy, and completed in 1833 in Berlin, the 'blue skies' of the music banishing the grey ones of Germany. The symphony is like a picture postcard, evoking the atmosphere of the Roman carnival, a sombre religious procession, tourist nostalgia and the vitality of peasant dancers. The Italian Symphony received its premiere in London in 1833.





Mendelssohn's sketch of the Spanish Steps in Rome

notable for its brilliant and imaginative scoring. The bounding theme for the violins is presented to the accompaniment of repeated chords for the woodwinds, which at least doubles its effect of almost breathless energy. The string theme migrates to the winds in a masterly preparation of the second subject, in which the first subject returns, fortissimo. The second subject is a rocking figure for clarinets and bassoons, which, as Tovey says, is obviously in no hurry. After further development of the opening theme, a quiet close leads back to the beginning. The important material this contains is present only in the 'first time bars', so the repeat of the exposition should really not be omitted. The development soon presents a fugato on a wholly new theme, then the two main subjects are elaborately worked out, and the recapitulation is approached through a long crescendo beginning under a long-held A for the first oboe - another memorably original idea.

The second movement may have been suggested by a religious procession Mendelssohn is known to have seen in Naples (though Moscheles claimed it was based on a Czech pilgrims' song). It begins with plainchant-like intonation, then the 'marching' starts in the cellos and basses, over which the cantus firmus is sounded by oboes, bassoons and violas. One particularly delightful instance of the many felicitous instrumental combinations here is the weaving in counterpoint between flutes and violins. The chromatic subsidiary theme is a development of the opening intonation.



Portrait of Mendelssohn in 1835 by Theodor Hildebrandt

Although not called a minuet and trio, this is in effect what the third movement is. There is little suggestion of the dance in this graceful music, which is more like a song without words, and the trio, with its solemn horns and bassoons (a low note for the second of which is tricky to balance audibly) sounds a deeply Romantic, poetic note.

Pedants point out that one of the rhythms in the movement Mendelssohn calls Saltarello is in fact that of the even more furious tarantella! The energy here is even more irresistible than in the first movement, so much so that it may pass unnoticed that the movement remains in A minor until the end. Mendelssohn said this symphony was composed at one of the bitterest moments of his life, when he was most troubled by his hypercritical attitude towards his own music. It is good to be reminded of this artistic struggle by a 'driven' personality, because his art so transcends the struggle that we can hardly guess that it ever existed.

ABRIDGED FROM A NOTE BY DAVID GARRETT © 2003

Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the symphony in 1945 in a concert conducted by Percy Code, and most recently in 2011, conducted by Nicholas McGegan. Fresh and youthful, this symphony is at the same time one of Mendelssohn's supreme achievements. He himself considered it 'the most mature thing I have ever done'.



David Robertson Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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THE ARTISTS



Roger Benedict conductor

PRINCIPAL VIOLA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE SSO FELLOWSHIP

Roger Benedict's career as a conductor has been informed and enriched by more than two decades as a principal player in some of the world's leading orchestras, his work as a soloist and chamber musician, and his involvement in orchestral training and development. He is currently Principal Viola of the SSO and Artistic Director of the SSO Fellowship program. Previously he was Principal Viola in the Philharmonia Orchestra in London (1991–2000).

He has conducted the SSO in subscription concerts at the Sydney Opera House, City Recital Hall and in regional centres, as well as for special events. He regularly conducts the SSO's Fellowship ensembles, including concerts at the Sydney Opera House and on tour. He has also collaborated with the Auckland Philharmonia, and many other orchestras throughout Australasia. Heavily involved in nurturing emerging talent, he has coached the European Union Youth Orchestra since 2000, and conducted many youth and young professional orchestras, including the Southbank Sinfonia (London) and UK National Youth Orchestra (Aldeburgh).

Recent engagements include subscription concerts with the Sydney and Adelaide symphony orchestras, as Associate Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra (UK) and the Young Symphonists programs of the Australian Youth Orchestra. In his work with the SSO Fellows, he has gained admiration for his adventurous and imaginative programming and also for his dedication to outreach and community activity.



Todd Gibson-Cornish bassoon

PRINCIPAL BASSOON

New Zealander Todd Gibson-Cornish was appointed principal bassoon of the SSO in 2016 at the age of 21. He began lessons on the mini-bassoon, progressing to the tenoroon and then full-size bassoon, with Selena Orwin at the Pettman National Junior Academy of Music. He was an NZSO Fellowship student and freelanced with the New Zealand and Christchurch symphony orchestras.

In 2016 he graduated from the Royal College of Music in London with a first class honours degree, as a Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Scholar supported by a Douglas and Hilda Simmonds Award. His teachers were Joost Bosdijk, Andrea de Flammineis and Julie Price. He was awarded the Tagore Gold Medal for outstanding musical contribution to the RCM, which was presented to him by HRH The Prince of Wales. Since graduating, he has returned to the RCM to give masterclasses and mentoring sessions.

Todd Gibson-Cornish has played guest principal with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London (including at the BBC Proms), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and as an extra with the London Symphony Orchestra. He has also taken part in the Aldeburgh Winds, Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme UK. Later this year he will perform the Jolivet Concerto with the NZSO National Youth Orchestra.

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA



DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PATRON Professor The Hon. Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

Well on its way to becoming the premier orchestra of the Asia Pacific region, the SSO has toured China on 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.

THE ORCHESTRA



David Robertson
THE LOWY CHAIR OF
CHIEF CONDUCTOR
AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



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