



**sydney symphony orchestra**

David Robertson The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

# Spirit Realms – Sacred & Profane

*Stephen Hough plays Rachmaninoff*

2018



MEET THE MUSIC

**WED 4 JUL, 6.30PM**

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

**THU 5 JUL, 1.30PM**

TEA & SYMPHONY

**FRI 6 JUL, 11AM**



Principal Partner



CLASSICAL



**Mozart's Horn Concerto No.3 & Linz Symphony**

SCHUBERT Overture in B flat  
 MOZART Horn Concerto No.3, K447  
 MOZART Symphony No.36 (Linz)  
**Andrew Haveron** violin-director  
**Ben Jacks** horn

Mozart in the City  
**Thu 12 Jul, 7pm**  
 City Recital Hall



**Pictures at an Exhibition**

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV Russian Easter Festival Overture  
 HIGDON Violin Concerto **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**  
 MUSSORGSKY orch. Ravel Pictures at an Exhibition  
**Giancarlo Guerrero** conductor  
**Benjamin Beilman** violin

APT Master Series  
**Wed 18 Jul, 3pm**  
**Fri 20 Jul, 8pm**  
**Sat 21 Jul, 8pm**  
 Sydney Opera House



**Spanish Nights**

DEBUSSY Giggles (from Images)  
 J ANDERSON The Imaginary Museum –  
 Piano Concerto **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**  
 FALLA Nights in the Gardens of Spain,  
 for piano and orchestra  
 DEBUSSY Ibéria (from Images)  
**Ludovic Morlot** conductor  
**Steven Osborne** piano

Thursday Afternoon Symphony  
**Thu 2 Aug, 1.30pm**  
 Emirates Metro Series  
**Fri 3 Aug, 8pm**  
 Great Classics  
**Sat 4 Aug, 2pm**  
 Sydney Opera House



**Steven Osborne in Recital**

DEBUSSY Estampes  
 PROKOFIEV Sonata No.6 (War Sonata 1)  
 DEBUSSY Images, Series 2  
 PROKOFIEV Sonata No.8 (War Sonata 3)  
**Steven Osborne** piano

International Pianists in Recital  
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 Theme & Variations  
 Piano Services  
**Mon 6 Aug, 7pm**  
 City Recital Hall

SSO PRESENTS



**Funny Girl: The Musical in Concert**

The bright lights of Broadway will shine on the Opera House when SSO presents the hit musical *Funny Girl* in concert. Featuring Natalie Bassingthwaighe, Dami Im, Maggie McKenna, Caroline O'Connor, Megan Washington – among others – who will each night share the iconic role of Fanny Brice on stage.

Produced for the Broadway stage by Ray Stark. New York production supervised by Jerome Robbins. Original production directed by Garson Kann.

**Thu 12 Jul, 8pm**  
**Fri 13 Jul, 8pm**  
**Sat 14 Jul, 2pm**  
 Sydney Opera House



**Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back**

*In concert with the SSO*

Experience Star Wars on the giant screen with John Williams' epic score played live by the SSO.

**Hamish McKeich** conductor

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**Fri 27 Jul, 7.45 pm**  
**Sat 28 Jul, 4.45 pm**  
 ICC Sydney Theatre

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**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

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**TEA & SYMPHONY**

FRIDAY 6 JULY, 11AM

.....  
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

**Spirit Realms –  
Sacred and Profane**

**Julian Kuerti** *conductor*

**Celeste Lazarenko** *soprano*

**Stephen Hough** *piano*

**ROSS EDWARDS (born 1943)**

**Earth Spirit Songs – Symphony No.2**

I. *Invocation and Dance of the Holy Spirit –*

II. *The Lost Man –*

III. *Dance-Song to the Earth Mother*

Celeste Lazarenko, soprano

**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)**

**Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op.43**

Stephen Hough, piano

INTERVAL

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)**

**Symphony No.5 in D minor, Op.107, Reformation**

I. *Andante – Allegro con fuoco – Andante come I –  
Meno allegro come I*

II. *Allegro vivace –*

III. *Andante –*

IV. *Chorale. Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott (Andante con moto –  
Allegro vivace – Allegro maestoso – Più animato poco a poco)*

Friday: Rachmaninoff and Mendelssohn only, without interval



**92.9 ABC**  
Classic FM

Thursday's performance will be recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast across Australia on Sunday 15 July at noon, and again on Wednesday 8 August at 1pm.

.....  
Pre-concert talk by Scott Davie in the Northern Foyer 45 minutes before each performance (Wed, Thu only).

.....  
Estimated durations: 20 minutes, 22 minutes, 20-minute interval, 27 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 8.10pm (Wed), 3.10pm (Thu), noon (Fri)

.....  
**COVER IMAGE:**

Andrew Ostrovsky (Stained glass series) / Shutterstock.com



Stephen Hough's performances are generously supported by the Berg Family Foundation.



# PRELUDE

## Seeking the spirit of Ross Edwards

### *Ross Edwards' journey towards becoming one of Australia's most beloved and instantly recognisable composers*

For a composer whose music is so often identified by and celebrated for its dancelike elements, Ross Edwards confessing that he can't dance 'at all' forces something of a double take. 'I *can* dance internally,' he continues. Ahhh... 'It happens all the time for some reason.'

And clearly, it's been happening for a while.

Ross's evolution as a composer has been marked by several major turning points. The first came in the early 1970s, with *Monos II*, a 'dense, compact and rather savage' piano piece. 'At a certain point, quite unjustifiably...the piece dissolves abruptly into a sort of limbo and then it ends with an almost flippant gesture.' Ross experienced a great sense of release at this musical 'implosion'. 'Maybe my subconscious was voicing my growing doubt in the musical idiom that I'd grown up with,' he muses. It marked the beginnings of his explorations into a completely contrasting musical language.

His quest led him away from complexity, with *Mountain Village in a Clearing Mist* from 1973. This was to be the first of Ross's



MICHAEL MORTLOCK

## Earth Mother symbols

Earth Mother symbols abound in my work. They represent the universal feminine principle – yin as opposed to yang. In ecological terms, this means nurturing, cultivating and preserving as opposed to ruthlessly exploiting and despoiling – one of the great scourges of our time.

But it was never my intention to preach. The nature symbols started to spontaneously manifest themselves a long time ago and they've stuck. They're embedded in the texture of my music as scraps of birdsong, in insect rhythms (the sounds of cicadas, for instance) or drones, like the didgeridoo.

Also increasingly present are references to Marian plainchant – both the Virgin Mary and Guan-Yin, the East Asian goddess of compassion. There's a connection to the chants and hymns of the 12th-century Rhineland mystic Hildegard of Bingen – as in *Earth Spirit Songs*, a strong feminine presence – as well as the eco-feminist movement of the present day.

ROSS EDWARDS

pieces that the Sydney Symphony Orchestra performed. 'My music had been too dense and claustrophobic. It needed more space to breathe.' *Mountain Village* revealed a calm and deliberately understated piece in which sounds and silences were counterpoised. As a self-confessed earnest young man, Ross wrote in his program note for this static work: 'the ideal state of mind for the listener is one of calm intensity with attention focussed on each detail as it occurs.'

Was Ross prophesising the advent of mindfulness? 'Well, someone did suggest at the time that it could be thought of as more of a contemplation object than a work of art.'

This path through contemplation was a critical step, marking the birth of Ross's 'sacred style'. His violin concerto *Maninyas*, composed for and premiered by the SSO and former concertmaster Dene Olding in 1988, revealed a second, and subsequently more signature discovery. 'Ross was one of the first composers,' Dene explains, 'to re-inject rhythm as a primary force.' From the late 1970s and into the 80s, Ross, with his piano teacher wife Helen and their two children, lived in a small coastal village north of Sydney, where he experienced intensely the sounds of the Australian bush. 'I had an "up-feeling" in the piece,' says Ross. 'I'd been writing deeply introspective music and I suddenly noticed the outside world. It was just intensely ecstatic – the sky was blue, the warm air was full of shrieking parrots and an irresistible impulse to dance suddenly took over the music.'

*Maninyas* was confounding to conservative critics at its premiere, for its flouting of the academic and modernist dead ends of the

'I'd been writing deeply introspective music and I suddenly noticed the outside world. It was just intensely ecstatic – the sky was blue, the warm air was full of shrieking parrots and an irresistible impulse to dance suddenly took over the music.'

ROSS EDWARDS ON *MANINYAS*

1960s and 70s. Dene Olding was no less surprised by it: 'I think I was shocked because it was so tonal, and so different to what was being written by other composers. Composers often fall into the trap of trying to impress other composers, and not really focusing on the function of music, which is to communicate something.' Dene says Ross had found a way to reconnect. 'It obviously struck a chord, because it's still being played.'

Ross Edward's second symphony, *Earth Spirit Songs*, abounds in both his sacred and dance-chant styles. Yvonne Kenny, who sang the soprano part at the premiere in 1998, describes an extremely inclusive and collaborative involvement with Ross. 'I had many lovely afternoon teas with Ross and his wife Helen,' she recalls, 'as he described how things were evolving, gave me tapes of his compositions of dance motifs and his earlier vocal music.' He set homework for her in London and, conscientious as ever, Yvonne followed up all his recommended background reading.

In a letter, Ross wrote: 'The text is gradually coming together as a conflation of fragments from diverse sources, all of them expressing a dancing of the spirit or an ecstatic response to nature.' When the score was finally revealed, Yvonne revelled in it. 'I enjoyed studying it and performing it immensely.' Ross's dance rhythms have been known to trip up the most inveterate orchestral musician, let alone singers for whom most of his shifting-metre rhythms would have been quite unfamiliar. 'Lots of concentration was needed to sing the rhythms accurately,' she recalls, 'and I found it challenging, but rewarding and inspiring.' Indeed, Ross and Yvonne were both very happy with the initial two performances, both of which were recorded for broadcast. At the time there was talk of releasing the live performances on CD, but as Yvonne laments, 'It was a big disappointment to Ross

### **Ritual**

I think the world's music has its source in the natural environment – rhythmic patterns, melodic shapes produced by natural organisms, etc. Over centuries these were distilled or isolated from immense complexity, and organised into ritual.

Many years ago I repudiated – or, at least, suspended my dependence on – Western music and started out to create my own language from the sounds of nature. This became enriched by references to a wide variety of cultural symbols, and the 'whole' progressively ritualised, or formalised into the distinctive patterns of a musical language which, at least for me, retained the essence of its origin. This can be heard especially in the maninya [dance-chant] pieces, of which, *Dance Song to the Earth Mother* (the third movement of *Earth Spirit Songs*) is an example.

ROSS EDWARDS



and to me that this didn't happen. This piece really deserves a recording to emerge somehow!

Repeat performances are a rare thing for living composers. Co-commissions, where several orchestras pitch together to secure a new work, are one way of seeing a piece performed multiple times. But this usually only happens close to the premiere, rather than years later. In the case of Ross's oboe concerto, *Bird Spirit Dreaming*, written for Principal Oboe Diana Doherty, the conductor at the premiere took a great liking to the piece. He happened to be Lorin Maazel and together he and Diana gave the US premiere with the New York Philharmonic; Diana Doherty has since given performances around the world and other soloists have since taken it into their repertoire.

A 75th birthday is a great excuse for the SSO to perform once more this symphony of note. And a great time for Ross to reflect *and* look forward. 'I am optimistic, but not stupidly so,' he says, 'because you can see the mess that the world is in. The idea of beauty is terribly important. You can't just rail against Donald Trump and the rest of it. You've got to create an alternative, provide something that might be nurturing.'

So is writing music then, his life's calling? Or will there come a time when he hangs up his pencil and retires? 'I can't ever imagine stopping; I can't imagine life without writing music. It's an enormous privilege. It's just the most wonderful thing to do, even though it's totally exhausting, I have to say. Everything I think about or do, is in some way related to the music I will write.'

**The idea of beauty is terribly important.**



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## Ross Edwards

### Earth Spirit Songs – Symphony No.2

- I. *Invocation and Dance of the Holy Spirit* –
- II. *The Lost Man* –
- III. *Dance-Song to the Earth Mother*

(The three movements are performed without pause.)

#### Celeste Lazarenko *soprano*

In 2018 we celebrate the 75th birthday of Ross Edwards, one of Australia's best-loved composers. It is also 30 years since he began composing for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. For the occasion we are delighted to revisit his second symphony, *Earth Spirit Songs*, which we premiered in 1998.

The idea of a symphony for soprano and orchestra came from a conversation in 1995, when Ross Edwards and soprano Yvonne Kenny were both on tour in Europe with the SSO. There, Edwards recalls, he experienced the first impulses for what was to become *Earth Spirit Songs* as he walked on the shore of Lake Lucerne: 'a sublime setting, inspirational to Wagner, but alien to the Pacific Ocean music that was welling up inside of me.'

#### The SSO performs Ross Edwards

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra has taken more than fifteen Edwards works into its repertoire since performing *Mountain Village in a Clearing Mist* with conductor John Hopkins in the early 1980s. These have included *Enyato I*, *Enyato III*, *White Ghost Dancing*, the Piano Concerto and *Aria and Transcendental Dance* for horn and orchestra.

The SSO has also performed four of Ross Edwards' five symphonies, including *Symphony Da Pacem Domine*, a sombre work conceived as a threnody for the gravely ill Stuart Challender, then Chief Conductor of the SSO, and *Mater Magna* (Symphony No.3), which was dedicated to Peter Sculthorpe.

Over the past 20 years the SSO has premiered five works that were commissioned with the assistance of Ross Edwards' patrons, Andrew and Renata Kaldor: *Earth Spirit Songs* (Symphony No.2), the oboe concerto *Bird Spirit Dreaming*, *The Promised Land* (Symphony No.5), the saxophone concerto *Full Moon Dances*, (Sydney premiere), and *Frog and Star Cycle* for saxophone, percussion and orchestra.

But the violin concerto *Maninyas* (1988) was the first work Ross Edwards composed specifically for the SSO (and concertmaster Dene Olding) and this has proven to be a perennial favourite, with repeat performances through the 1990s, and most recently in 2010, as well as an acclaimed recording.

## Keynotes

### EDWARDS

*Born Sydney, 1943*

Ross Edwards is one of Australia's best-known and most widely performed composers. He has created a unique sound-world, seeking to restore music's traditional association with ritual and dance. His music is universal in its concern for age-old mysteries surrounding humanity. It's also deeply connected to its roots in Australia, whose cultural diversity it celebrates, and from whose natural environment it draws inspiration.

Edwards studied with Peter Sculthorpe and Richard Meale, and in Adelaide and London with Peter Maxwell Davies. His compositions include five symphonies, concertos, choral, chamber and vocal music, children's music, film scores, a chamber opera and music for dance.

### EARTH SPIRIT SONGS

This is a symphony for soprano soloist and orchestra, its transcendent texts drawn from the Latin liturgy, Australian poet Judith Wright and 12th-century mystic Hildegard of Bingen. It features Ross Edwards' distinctive 'dance-chant' style. The first movement, for example, begins as an invocation before whirling into an ecstatic dance. The contemplative second movement takes inspiration from nature, and the dance-chant impulse returns in the sensual third movement.

Vocal texts and translations begin on page 12.

He felt this contrariety most keenly in the following weeks as the orchestra progressed through Germany: 'the inevitable split, for a non-indigenous Australian, between cultural origins and birthplace. I recognised, once it was finished, that this symphony represents, in part, an attempt to reconcile these opposites as well as the ones implicit in the subtitle.'

With the presence of a singer, a text was required and, as is frequently the case in Edwards' vocal music, the text was assembled in a piecemeal fashion dictated by the musical impulse, drawing on fragments from Gregorian chant, Judith Wright's poem *The Lost Man* and a Latin text by Hildegard of Bingen.

### Listening Guide

The symphony opens with a fragment of plainchant invoking the Holy Spirit, the life force, the imagination, and this is sent whirling in an ecstatic Australian dervish dance whose rhythmic patterns and drones are modelled on those of the natural world.

The text of the Introit from the Mass of Pentecost, blazing with patriarchal fervour and treated with a degree of irony, now gets caught up in the dance until it is propelled, as if by a descending helicopter, into the mystical depths of Judith Wright's rainforest. Here the euphoria evaporates and we are confronted by the primeval forces that would efface the psyche and absorb it into the eternal cycles of nature.

The impulse to dance returns with Hildegard of Bingen, the 12th-century Rhineland mystic. The text is adapted from *O viridissima Virga*, a characteristically sensual celebration of the miracle of spring, when the earth sweats life-giving sap through its pores to germinate fresh green growth. 'My setting of Hildegard is, I think, distinctively antipodean.'

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY ROSS EDWARDS © 1998

In addition to the soprano soloist, Edwards' *Earth Spirit Songs* calls for three flutes, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; harp, piano and strings.

*Earth Spirit Songs* was commissioned for Yvonne Kenny and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra by Andrew Kaldor AM as a special gift for his wife Renata Kaldor AO, and was first performed in August 1998 with David Zinman conducting. These are our first performances of the symphony since then.

### About the composer...

One of Australia's best known and most performed composers, Ross Edwards AM has created a distinctive sound world based on deep ecology and awareness of the need to reconnect music with elemental forces and restore its traditional association with ritual.



BRIDGET ELLIOT

His music, universal in that it is concerned with age-old mysteries surrounding humanity, is at the same time deeply connected to its roots in Australia, whose cultural diversity it celebrates, and from whose natural environment it draws inspiration, especially birdsong and the mysterious patterns and drones of insects. As a composer living and working on the Pacific Rim, he is conscious of the exciting potential of this vast region.

Ross Edwards has composed prolifically in most musical genres, including five symphonies, concertos, choral and chamber works, vocal music, children's music, film scores, a chamber opera and music for dance. His works for the concert hall sometimes require special lighting, movement, costume and visual accompaniment – notably *Star Chant* (Symphony No.4), his oboe concerto *Bird Spirit Dreaming* and his saxophone concerto *Full Moon Dances*. His *Dawn Mantras* greeted the new millennium from the sails of the Sydney Opera House in an international telecast.

Recently completed works include *Frog and Star Cycle*, a double concerto for saxophonist Amy Dickson, percussionist Colin Currie and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, *Zodiac* for Stanton Welch and the Houston Ballet, *Entwinings* for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, *Bright Birds and Sorrows* for Amy Dickson and the (British) Elias String Quartet, *Dances of Life and Death* for the Sydney Conservatorium Wind Symphony and a piano quartet for the Australia Piano Quartet.

A recipient of the Order of Australia, Ross Edwards lives in Sydney and is married with two adult children.

[www.rossedwards.com](http://www.rossedwards.com)

## I. Invocation and Dance of the Holy Spirit

Sancti Spiritus adsit nobis gratia.

Spiritus domini replevit orbem terrarum,  
alleluia: et hoc quod continet omnia  
scientiam habet vocis, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Exsurgat deus, et dissipentur inimici eius:

et fugiant, qui oderunt eum, a facie eius.

Gloria patri, et filio, et spiritui sancto:

sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper,

et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

(Introit, Mass of Pentecost)

Sancti Spiritus adsit nobis gratia.

Gregorian chant

May the grace of the Holy Spirit be with us.

The Spirit of the Lord fills the orb of the earth,  
alleluia, and that which contains all things has  
knowledge of the voice, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Let God rise up and his enemies be scattered:

let those who hate him flee from before his face.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the

Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and

ever shall be throughout the ages. Amen.

May the grace of the Holy Spirit be with us.

## II. The Lost Man

To reach the pool you must go through the rain-forest –  
Through the bewildering midsummer of darkness  
lit with ancient fern,  
laced with poison and thorn.

You must go by the way he went – the way of the bleeding  
hands and feet, the blood on the stones like flowers,  
under the hooded flowers  
that fall on the stones like blood.

To reach the pool you must go by the black valley  
among the crowding columns made of silence,  
under the hanging clouds  
of leaves and voiceless birds.

To go by the way he went to the voice of the water,  
where the priest stinging-tree waits with his whips and fevers  
under the hooded flowers that fall from the trees like blood,  
you must forget the song of the gold bird dancing  
over tossed light; you must remember nothing  
except the drag of darkness  
that draws your weakness under.

To go by the way he went you must find beneath you  
that last and faceless pool, and fall. And falling  
find between breath and death  
the sun by which you live.

Judith Wright (1915–2000)

## III. Dance-Song to the Earth Mother

O viridissima virga, ave,  
que in ventoso flabro sciscitationis  
sanctorum prodisti.

Cum venit tempus  
quod tu floruisti in ramis tuis,  
ave, ave fuit tibi,  
quia calor solis in te sudavit  
sicut odor balsami.

Nam in te floruit pulcher flos  
qui odorem dedit  
omnibus aromatibus  
que arida erant.

Et illa apparuerunt omnia  
in viriditate plena.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

Hail, O greenest branch,  
who came forth in the windy blast  
of the saints' interrogation.

When the time came  
that you blossomed in your branches,  
hail, hail to you,  
for the sun's heat made you  
perspire with a fragrance of balsam.

For in you blossomed the beautiful flower  
that gave fragrance  
to all the spices  
parched though they were.

And all of them appeared  
clad fully in green.



*“Beilman is definitely one to watch out for: technically adept young players are legion, but artistic maturity of this calibre at such an early age is much rarer.”*

David Larkin, [BachTrack.com](http://BachTrack.com)

## Pictures at an Exhibition

*Higdon Violin Concerto with Benjamin Beilman*

The brilliant Benjamin Beilman makes his SSO debut with a new showpiece violin concerto in the classic Romantic style, tapping into the lyricism of Samuel Barber, the pastoral mood of Vaughan Williams and the energy of Prokofiev.

Then enjoy the vivid and exhilarating *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a true audience favourite!

### RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Russian Easter Festival Overture

### HIGDON

Violin Concerto [AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE]

### MUSSORGSKY orch. Ravel

Pictures at an Exhibition

**Giancarlo Guerrero** conductor

**Benjamin Beilman** violin

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Create NSW  
Arts, Screen & Culture

# Sergei Rachmaninoff

## Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op.43

Stephen Hough *piano*

On leaving Russia for good in 1917, Rachmaninoff descended into a composerly silence. While he busied himself with his self-appointed task of acquiring a concert pianist's repertoire, so that he could earn a steady income, he ceased composing altogether.

After deciding to settle in the USA, he gave 40 concerts in four months during his first concert season there. But he eventually reduced his concert commitments and, in 1925/26, took nine months off to compose. During this sabbatical he composed his first post-Russian pieces: Three Russian Songs for orchestra and chorus, which were well received, and the Fourth Piano Concerto, which, to his dismay, was greeted with widespread indifference.

Rachmaninoff was always sensitive about his own music, and his eagerness to bring a new concerto into his repertoire had been seriously rebuffed by the Fourth Concerto's failure after its 1927 debut. He did not produce another original work for four years.

When the Variations on a Theme of Corelli for solo piano appeared in 1931, they not only signalled a more astringent approach to harmonic language and musical texture – what Francis Crociata called 'a kind of personal neo-classicism' – but indicated that a large-scale variation structure might serve Rachmaninoff's musical needs better than the more traditional concerto structure in which success had so recently eluded him.

So the Corelli Variations, still not particularly popular, might be thought of as the moodier, introspective dress rehearsal for the work that was to follow in 1934, the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. The Corelli 'theme' Rachmaninoff had chosen was actually not by Corelli at all, but was the Baroque popular tune *La Folia*, which forms the basis of a movement in Corelli's violin sonata Op.5 No.12. It was to another celebrated work for violin that Rachmaninoff turned for the Rhapsody: the 24th Caprice of Paganini that had already been mined with distinguished results by Schumann, Liszt and Brahms, not to mention Paganini himself. How confident Rachmaninoff must have felt about himself – a man so often pessimistic about his musical achievements – to be exploring the theme yet further, in a big work for piano and orchestra.

The Rhapsody is one of those works which attained an instant popularity that has never waned. Rachmaninoff finally had a new

## Keynotes

RACHMANINOFF

*Born Oneg (Novgorod region), 1873*

*Died Beverly Hills CA, 1943*

**Before leaving Russia for good in 1917, Rachmaninoff had composed two symphonies, three piano concertos, and three substantial orchestral works: *The Rock*, the *Capriccio on Gypsy Themes* and *The Isle of the Dead*, as well as the much-loved *Vocalise*. After settling in the West, Rachmaninoff shifted his attention to building a career as a concert pianist, and composed much less. The *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* dates from this period.**

### THE 'RACH PAG'

**The Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini is one of Rachmaninoff's most popular works for piano and orchestra. The Rhapsody is a set of 24 variations on a theme by the 19th-century violin virtuoso, Paganini. (The theme is heard after the first variation.) These variations are played continuously without pause, but they also fall naturally into groups: some commentators hear three groups, corresponding to the first, slow and finale movements of a traditional concerto; others hear four groups, as outlined by Phillip Sametz in his program note.**

**The Rhapsody was completed in 1934 – effectively making it Rachmaninoff's final 'concerto'. It found an instant place in the repertoire – admired by audiences and musicians for its charm, wit and satisfying showmanship.**



'concerto' to play, and was asked to do so frequently. The work has wit, charm, shapeliness, a clear sense of colour, strong rhythmic impetus and a dashing, suitably fiendish solo part that translates Paganini's legendary virtuosity into a completely different musical context.

In the Rhapsody, Rachmaninoff's quicksilver musical imagination seems to grasp the big picture and distil a sense of unity, from variation to variation, that he does not achieve in the more extended forms of the Fourth Concerto. Yet the Rhapsody's theme and 24 variations behave like a four-movement work. Variations 1 to 11 form a quick first movement with cadenza; Variations 12 to 15 supply the equivalent of a scherzo/minuet; Variations 16 to 18, the slow movement; and the final six variations, the dashing finale.

We actually hear the **first variation** – a skeletal march that evokes Paganini's bony frame – before the theme itself. The ensuing variations are increasingly animated and decorative until Variation 7 gives us a first stately glimpse, on the piano, of the 'Dies irae' plainchant, with the strings muttering the Paganini theme against it. This old funeral chant features prominently in Rachmaninoff's output. Sometimes, as in his final work, the Symphonic Dances, he uses it without irony, but its appearances in the Rhapsody are essentially sardonic.

**Variation 8** is a kind of demented 'can-can' which rushes headlong into the even more helter-skelter **Variation 9**, in which the strings begin by playing with the wood of their bows. Grimly glittering arpeggios are tossed between piano and orchestra in **Variation 10**, in which the 'Dies irae' is heard in brazen octaves on the piano, with syncopated brass commentary.

With the cadenza-like **Variation 11** forming a point of transition, we move to the exquisite, gently regal minuet of **Variation 12**.



The work has wit, charm, shapeliness, a clear sense of colour, strong rhythmic impetus and a dashing, suitably fiendish solo part that translates Paganini's legendary virtuosity into a completely different musical context.



In 1937 Rachmaninoff approached the choreographer Michel Fokine with a ballet scenario based on the Rhapsody: 'Why not recreate the legend of Paganini selling his soul to the Evil Spirit for perfection in art and also for a woman?' Fokine's response was premiered at Covent Garden in 1939.

Fokine had created the ballet while on tour in Australia in 1938–39, and it received its Sydney premiere in December 1939. Eric Landerer, who later played the work with the SSO, was the piano soloist.

The drive, directness and power of **Variation 14** are created with much bolder writing for wind and brass than Rachmaninoff employed in his earlier orchestral scores. The piano is given a very subsidiary role here, then comes instantly to the fore in the dazzling, soloistic **Variation 15**.

After a pause, **Variation 16** has an intimacy and exoticism that evokes the Arabian Dance from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, with short but telling solo phrases for oboe, horn, violin, clarinet and cor anglais. **Variation 17** is more palpably mysterious, even sinister, and the only one where the theme seems to have vanished altogether, as Rachmaninoff buries it in the harmony. But we land on very deep shag-pile indeed with the celebrated **18th Variation**, in which Rachmaninoff uses his sleight of hand to turn Paganini's theme upside down and create a luxuriant, much admired (and much imitated) melody of his own. Rachmaninoff is reported to have said of it: 'This one is for my agent.'

As if being woken suddenly from a dream, the orchestra calls the soloist and the audience to attention for six final variations that evoke Paganini's legendary left-hand pizzicato playing (**Variation 19**) and the demonic aspects of the Paganini legend, with more references to the 'Dies irae' and an increasing emphasis on pianistic and orchestral virtuosity in the last two variations. Just as a final violent outburst of the 'Dies irae' seems to be leading us to a furious crash-bang coda, we are left instead with a nudge and a wink, as Rachmaninoff's final masterpiece for piano and orchestra bids us a sly farewell.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY PHILLIP SAMETZ © 2000

The orchestra for the Rhapsody calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets and two bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, snare drum, triangle, cymbal, bass drum); harp and strings.

The Rhapsody received its world premiere in Baltimore on 7 November 1934. Rachmaninoff was the soloist and Leopold Stokowski conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra. The SSO gave the first Australian performance in 1940 with conductor Georg Schnéevoigt and soloist Eric Landerer. Our most recent performance was in 2015 with pianist Kirill Gerstein and conductor James Gaffigan.



Portrait of Paganini by Ingres, 1819

### What tune is that?

The 18th variation from the Rhapsody has become one of Rachmaninoff's most famous melodies, and it has turned up in movies such as the 1995 remake of *Sabrina*, *Groundhog Day* where Bill Murray learns to play it (1993), *Dead Again* (1991), *Somewhere in Time* (1980) and *Rhapsody* (1954).

Pianist and Rachmaninoff scholar Scott Davie has examined the composer's sketch books in Moscow and points out that the inversion of the Paganini theme in this famous 18th Variation is one of the first ideas that Rachmaninoff had for the Rhapsody.

## Felix Mendelssohn

### Symphony No.5 in D minor, Op.107, Reformation

- I. *Andante – Allegro con fuoco – Andante come I –  
Meno allegro come I*
- II. *Allegro vivace –*
- III. *Andante –*
- IV. *Chorale. Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott (Andante con moto –  
Allegro vivace – Allegro maestoso – Più animato poco a poco)*

In 1830 Mendelssohn sent a copy of his new untitled symphony to his sister, Fanny, asking her to:

*Try to collect opinions as to the title I ought to select: "Reformation" Symphony, "Confession" Symphony, Symphony for a Church Festival, "Juvenile" Symphony or whatever you like. Write to me about it and instead of all the stupid suggestions, send me one clever one; but I also want to hear all the nonsensical ones that are sure to be produced.*

Whether or not he considered 'Reformation' Symphony a stupid name, it was the name that stuck, with the full title 'Symphony for the Festival of the Reformation of the Church' appearing on the title page. The symphony was intended for the 300th anniversary celebrations of the Augsburg Confession – the moment that signifies the birth of the Protestant church – but the celebrations went ahead with music by another composer. (Among other things, Mendelssohn came down with the measles, which delayed completion of the symphony.) To make matters worse, the orchestra of the Paris Conservatoire, who were the next to consider giving the premiere, rejected the symphony as 'dry and scholastic,' citing 'too much counterpoint, too little melody'. This was something of a shock for the young composer: an attack not just on himself, but on counterpoint itself, which was his homage to his beloved Bach. The first performance did not take place until 1832, at the Singakademie in Berlin; and the work was not published until after Mendelssohn's death, which explains why this his second symphony is now known as No.5.

Pianist and writer on music Charles Rosen claims that 'Mendelssohn is the inventor of religious kitsch in music'. He defines this as music that 'substitutes for religion itself the emotional shell of religion'. Such comments tend to recall the Nazi attempts to remove Mendelssohn from the canon: 'Mendelssohn was an Ersatz for German master,' wrote critic Karl Grunsky, in 1935. [For a different view see *Mendelssohn and the Reformation* at the end of this note.] For Rosen, the 'pseudo-religious' or 'hyper-religious' in Mendelssohn is an important part of his legacy. Mendelssohn, Rosen maintains, begat Franck and Saint-Saëns at their most pious, and even Wagner.

## Keynotes

### MENDELSSOHN

*Born Hamburg, 1809  
Died Leipzig, 1847*

Felix Mendelssohn was called the 19th-century Mozart. His youthful genius resulted in masterpieces such as the Octet and the *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture, composed while he was still a teenager, and he died in his 30s, his tremendous activity as composer, pianist, conductor and administrator having taken its toll on a fragile constitution. The son of a banker and grandson of one of Europe's most famous philosophers, Mendelssohn enjoyed both financial and cultural privileges: he travelled widely, studied with some of the most respected teachers of his day, and while still a boy had the privilege of meeting Goethe.

### REFORMATION SYMPHONY

The designation of this symphony as No.5 is misleading; it was in fact the second of Mendelssohn's symphonies, begun at the end of 1829, after his first visit to the British Isles, and completed in 1830. It was intended for the celebration in 1830 of the 300th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, a document setting out the key tenets of the Lutheran faith, but wasn't performed until 1832. The first movement quotes the 'Dresden Amen', still sung today, and the finale draws on the famous hymn attributed to Martin Luther himself, 'A mighty fortress is our God'.



◀ Luther's hymn *Ein' Feste Burg*, 2nd edition (held in the Lutherhaus Museum Wittenberg)

Much has been made of the similarity between the chief musical idea in the 'Reformation' Symphony and Wagner's 'Grail' motif in *Parsifal*. Both composers made a version of the well-known 'Dresden Amen' (still sung today). Wagner's friend Wilhelm Tappert defended Wagner against allegations of plagiarism, suggesting that Mendelssohn and Wagner were independently exposed to the 'Amen' in Dresden (where it originated as part of Luther's Saxon Liturgy). Rosen, however, believes the debt runs deeper: in *Parsifal*, Wagner wanted the audience to feel like participants in a religious experience, and 'Mendelssohn's technique of turning his listeners into devout worshippers lay conveniently at hand'.

So how does a composer turn his 'listeners into devout worshippers'? One way of inducing a 'hyper-religious' experience is to draw on familiar religious material. The initial section of the 'Reformation' Symphony suggests religious music, hinting at the plainchants of the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimittis, then gathering prayerfully into an explicit concluding statement of the 'Dresden Amen'. This rises by intervals of a tone adding up to a fifth and creates a feeling of ascent, as if the music itself were nudging the listener heavenward. The motif of a rising fifth is revealed as the germ of much heard thus far, as it will be of many later passages in the symphony. Mendelssohn then launches into a dramatic *Allegro con fuoco* which develops this material. Some commentators have found in this movement suggestions of the Reformers' 'joy in combat, their firmness of belief and trust in God.' We hear a religious fervour that verges on ferocity, and then a return of the 'Dresden Amen' heralds an abbreviated recapitulation – as if the affairs of humanity were interrupted for a moment by God. The movement comes to a dramatic and



Mendelssohn

Whether or not Mendelssohn considered 'Reformation' Symphony a stupid name, it was the name that stuck.

glorious conclusion, arriving at the distinctive progression of chords that marks the traditional 'Amen'.

The middle two movements are foils to the religious gravitas of the outer two. The second movement, if it is to fitted into the overall theme, may be a gracious expression of joy, and grows in exultation and celebration. Musically, this scherzo recalls some of the fairy music of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The third movement, *Andante*, is simple in conception, but deeply felt, meditative, and in a vein familiar from some of its composer's songs without words. The theme for the finale appears at the end of the third movement, intoned by flute alone. It is a chorale melody, that of the Lutheran hymn – 'Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott' [A mighty fortress is our God] – whose words and music are attributed to Luther himself. From simple beginnings, Mendelssohn builds a mighty fortress indeed, drawing on all the resources of counterpoint. The work concludes with a triumphant statement of the chorale, which has been called the battle hymn of the Reformation. Perhaps the symphony's title is apt.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY ANNA GOLDSWORTHY © 2001

Mendelssohn's *Reformation* Symphony calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons and contrabassoon; two horns, two trumpets, three trombones and serpent (a distant ancestor of the tuba with a distinctive S-shape, played in these concerts by Scott Kinmont); timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the *Reformation* Symphony in 1950 with Eugene Goossens; and most recently in the 2017 tour to Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo, conducted by Toby Thatcher. The most recent performance in a subscription concert was in 2011, with Bruno Weil.



Portrait of Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach the Elder

In 1730, exactly 100 years earlier, J.S. Bach had written his Cantata No.80, *Ein' feste Burg*, for the bicentennial of the Lutheran Church.

### Mendelssohn and the Reformation

2017 marked another centenary of Luther's dramatic challenge to the church in 1517. When Mendelssohn was a young man also his church was remembering the decisive events that established it. Yes – this bearer of a famous Jewish name was baptised a Christian, and his fervour as a devout Lutheran was all the greater since his parents were converts. As well as dramatising such a conversion in his oratorio *St Paul*, Mendelssohn wrote church music reflecting the importance and rich variety of music in Lutheran worship. The *Reformation* Symphony, intended to celebrate the 1830 Augsburg Confession, is not the only Mendelssohn symphony with a Reformation theme. The *Lobgesang*, or 'Song of Praise' [Symphony No.2], marked the 400th anniversary in 1840 of Gutenberg's invention of printing, which helped make the Reformation possible. Mendelssohn prefaced that score with words from Martin Luther himself:

*'Above all, I should like all the arts, in particular music, to be of service to God, who gave and created it all.'* Doctor Martin Luther

DAVID GARRETT © 2018

## MORE MUSIC

### ROSS EDWARDS

*Earth Spirit Songs* has yet to be commercially recorded, but an arrangement with piano of the middle movement, *The Lost Man*, has been recorded by sopranos such as Jane Sheldon (in her album *Nature* with pianist Nicole Panizza) and Elizabeth Campbell (in *Woman's Song*, which also includes settings of Judith Wright's poetry by Margaret Sutherland, Richard Mills, Moya Henderson and Ian Munro, who also plays piano).

PHOSPHOR RECORDS (Nature)  
TALL POPPIES TP179 (Woman's Song)

ABC Classics has re-released a classic SSO recording of signature music by Ross Edwards. The album features Dene Olding as soloist in the *Maninyas* violin concerto, conducted by Stuart Challender, and Ian Cleworth in *Yarrageh* for solo percussion and orchestra. *Yarrageh* and the symphony *Da Pacem Domine* are conducted by David Porcelijn. If you don't own any Edwards recordings, seek out this one for amusical experience that's both enlivening and profoundly meditative.

ABC CLASSICS 438 6102

More at [www.rossedwards.com](http://www.rossedwards.com)

### STEPHEN HOUGH PLAYS RACHMANINOFF

Stephen Hough's recording of the four Rachmaninoff piano concertos and the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, made in 2004 with Andrew Litton and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, is acclaimed for its intelligence and brilliance. If you're looking to add these pieces to your library, this is a winner.

HYPERION 67501/2

Or you can hear him play the Rhapsody with Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic in the DVD recording of the 2007 Waldbühne 'Rhapsodies' concert.

EUROARTS 25623

If you're interested in Rachmaninoff's own interpretation look for *Rachmaninoff Plays Rachmaninoff* – the four piano concertos and the Rhapsody with the Philadelphia Orchestra and conductors Eugene Ormandy and Leopold Stokowski.

RCA VICTOR GOLD SEAL 61658

Rachmaninoff's recordings are also available on the excellent Naxos Historical label: Piano Concerto No.1 (1939–40) and No.4 (1941), and the Rhapsody (1934).

NAXOS HISTORICAL 8.110602

### MENDELSSOHN SYMPHONIES

Among the recent recordings of Mendelssohn's five symphonies is Yannick Nézet-Séguin's with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and RIAS Chamber Choir. The 3-CD set was released in 2017 to mark the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, and includes Symphony No.2, *Lobgesang* (Song of Praise) as well as the *Reformation* Symphony.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 7337

## Broadcast Diary

### July



92.9 ABC  
Classic FM

[abc.net.au/classic](http://abc.net.au/classic)

Sunday 15 July, noon

Wednesday 8 August, 1pm (repeat)

**SPIRIT REALMS – SACRED & PROFANE**

See this program for details.

Friday 20 July, 8pm

Sunday 22 July, 2pm (repeat)

**PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION**

**Giancarlo Guerrero** conductor

**Benjamin Beilman** violin

Rimsky-Korsakov, Higdon, Mussorgsky/Ravel

Saturday 28 July, 2pm

**SIMON TRPČESKI IN RECITAL**

**Simon Trpčeski** piano

Grieg, Mendelssohn, Rimsky-Korsakov/Gilson



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Box Office (02) 8215 4600  
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DARIO ACOSTA

## **Julian Kuerti** *conductor*

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Julian Kuerti was born in Toronto into one of Canada's most distinguished musical families; his father is pianist Anton Kuerti. He began his instrumental training on the violin, and continued to perform – appearing as concertmaster and soloist with various Canadian orchestras – while completing an honours degree in engineering and physics at the University of Toronto. After touring Brazil with Kahana, a Toronto-based world-music band, in 2000 he began his conducting studies at the University of Toronto and was accepted as a student at the renowned Pierre Monteux School for Conductors in Maine, where he studied for two years with Michael Jinbo and Claude Monteux.

He has since established himself as a significant interpreter of orchestral and operatic music, combining a confident style, artistic integrity and passion for collaboration. Through his work as Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal (2013–16) and Principal Conductor of the Orquesta Sinfónica Universidad de Concepción in Chile (2012–14), he has made a reputation for himself both in the Americas and further afield.

The 2017–18 season has seen him conduct Vasteras Sinfonietta in a program of Tally, Haydn and Mozart with cellist Jakob Koranyi; a new production of *Rusalka* with Teatro Colon; Hindemith, Barber and Beethoven with Deutsche Radio

Symphony and violinist Nemanja Radulović; and a concert of Beethoven and Prokofiev with Kalamazoo Symphony.

In the 2016–17 season he returned to the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, conducting Tchaikovsky, Glière, Morel and Haydn's *Seven last Words of Christ*. And he continued to be a global presence, conducting the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra in Norway with pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, symphonic concerts at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, and returning to Fundación Excelentia to conduct Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

In Europe, his guest engagements have included numerous performances with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Frankfurt Radio Symphony and Stavanger Symphony. He has also conducted concerts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Aarhus Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Bournemouth Symphony, Monte Carlo Philharmonic and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra.

In Asia and Australasia Julian Kuerti has conducted the Malaysian Philharmonic and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. This is his Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut.

[www.juliankuerti.com](http://www.juliankuerti.com)



LOUIS DILLON SAVAGE

## Celeste Lazarenko

*soprano*

---

Celeste Lazarenko is a graduate of the Guildhall Opera Course in London and from the Sydney Conservatorium Opera School. She has a Masters degree in Performance from both institutions and a Bachelor of Visual Arts degree majoring in Painting from the University of Sydney.

Her European engagements have included Ninfa (*L'Orfeo*) for Opera North, *Hydrogen Jukebox* by Philip Glass for Angers Nantes Opéra, Celia (*Lucio Silla*) for Angers Nantes and Opera de Rennes, *The Seasons* for Dijon Opera, Morgana (*Alcina*) for English Touring Opera, Sandrina (*La finta giardiniera*) for Opera de Bauge and Mary in Vaughan Williams' *Hugh the Drover* for East Sussex Opera Company.

She also worked extensively for English National Opera while living in London, covering the title role of *Partenope*, the role of Nora (*Riders to the Sea*), Clémence (*L'Amour de loin*), Polissena (*Radamisto*) and the soprano solo in *Luonnotar* by Sibelius.

Since returning to Australia, she has performed Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Pamina in *The Magic Flute* and Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera Australia touring productions); and for Pinchgut Opera she has sung Téraire in Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, Medea in Cavalli's *Giasone* and Léonore in *L'amant jaloux* by André Grétry. She has also appeared as a soloist with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs in Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, and in concert with the Australian Haydn Ensemble.

Recent performances include the title role in *The Cunning Little Vixen* for Victorian Opera, Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* at Dark MOFO in Tasmania (a Victorian Opera and Sydney Chamber Opera co-production) and *Messiah* with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

This is Celeste Lazarenko's Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut.



SIM CANETTY-CLARKE

## Stephen Hough

*piano*

---

One of the most distinctive artists of his generation, Stephen Hough combines a distinguished career as a pianist with those of composer and writer. Named by *The Economist* as one of Twenty Living Polymaths, he was the first classical performer to be awarded a MacArthur Fellowship and was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2014 New Year's Honours.

Since taking first prize at the 1983 Naumburg Competition in New York, he has performed with many of the world's major orchestras and has given recitals at the most prestigious concert halls. Recent highlights have included performances with the New York Philharmonic, St Louis Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Staatskapelle Weimar, the Hallé, and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and the Hong Kong and Malaysian philharmonic orchestras, as well as recitals at London's Barbican Hall and New York's Carnegie Hall.

Stephen Hough's extensive discography has garnered international awards including the Diapason d'Or de l'Année, several Grammy nominations and eight Gramophone Awards, including Record of the Year and the Gold Disc. Recent releases include a live recording of the Schumann and Dvořák piano concertos with

Andris Nelsons and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and a solo album of Scriabin and Janáček. His award-winning iPad app, *The Liszt Sonata*, was released in 2013.

As a composer, Stephen Hough has been commissioned by Wigmore Hall, Musée du Louvre, London's National Gallery, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, and the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet. He premiered his latest work, the song cycle *Dappled Things*, at Wigmore Hall in 2016.

As a writer, he has been published by *The Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. He is a Governor of the Royal Ballet companies, a Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, and the International Chair of Piano Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, and is on the faculty of the Juilliard School in New York.

An Australian citizen since 2005, Stephen Hough is a regular visitor to Sydney and his most recent appearances for the SSO were in 2014, when he performed the Dvořák Piano Concerto and gave a solo recital of music by Chopin and Debussy.

[www.stephenhough.com](http://www.stephenhough.com)

# SYDNEY SYMPHONY 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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Perry Hoogendijk (tuba) is on exchange from the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra



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PHOTO: JAYFRAM

*David Robertson*

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PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

*Associate Principal Trombone Scott Kinmont with  
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# SSO PATRONS

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PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS



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#### SSO Commissions

Each year – both alone and in collaboration with other orchestras worldwide – the SSO commissions new works for the mainstage concert season. These commissions represent Australian and international composers, established and new voices, and reflect our commitment to the nurturing of orchestral music.

#### *Forthcoming premieres...*

JULIAN ANDERSON *The Imaginary Museum* – Piano Concerto with soloist Steven Osborne  
2, 3, 4 August (Australian premiere)  
BRETT DEAN *Cello Concerto* with soloist Alban Gerhardt  
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 Emil Hilton,  
 who introduced me to music  
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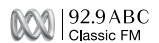
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