



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Spirit of Delight

Vondráček plays Prokofiev

2018



APT MASTER SERIES

WED 16 MAY, 8PM • FRI 18 MAY, 8PM • SAT 19 MAY, 8PM



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CLASSICAL



Music for the Royal Fireworks

SSO Brass Ensemble

Program includes...

HANDEL arr. Howarth *Music for the Royal Fireworks*

ELGAR arr. Krienes *Enigma Variations: Nimrod*

Robert Johnson conductor

SSO Brass Ensemble

Tea & Symphony

Fri 18 May, 11am

Sydney Opera House



Mozart and the Piano

SUK *String Serenade*

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Andrew Haveron violin-director

Daniel de Borah piano

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Iain Grandage conductor

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Seymour Centre



Anne-Sophie Mutter plays Tchaikovsky

KALINNIKOV *Symphony No.1 [1895]*

J WILLIAMS *Markings AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE*

TCHAIKOVSKY *Violin Concerto*

David Robertson conductor

Anne-Sophie Mutter violin

Presented by Premier Partner Credit Suisse

Thu 14 Jun, 8pm

Fri 15 Jun, 8pm

Sat 16 Jun, 8pm

Sydney Opera House



SSO Percussion Stars

WESTLAKE *Kalabash*

KOPETZKI *Le Chant du Serpent*

NISHIMURA *Padma in Meditation*

GRAINGER *Arrival Platform Humlet*

GRAINGER *Random Round*

MIKI *Marimba Spiritual*

MÁRTA *A Doll's House Story*

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Tea & Symphony

Fri 15 Jun, 11am

Sydney Opera House

SSO PRESENTS



Last Night of the Proms

Wear your red, white & blue, grab your flag and head to the Sydney Opera House for a night celebrating the best of British including *Rule, Britannia!*, *Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance* and *Jerusalem*.

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Lorina Gore soprano

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Sat 9 Jun, 8pm

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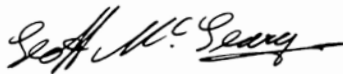


Welcome to this concert in the APT Master Series. Tonight we see two artists returning to the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall stage – conductor John Wilson and pianist Lukáš Vondráček – for a powerful program of emotionally driven music.

Born in England, John Wilson has chosen music by one of the greatest composers of his nation: Elgar's reinvention for full symphony orchestra of organ music by Bach, and his poetic and expansive Second Symphony, which reaches towards 'high and pure joy'. Prokofiev's most popular piano concerto is the centrepiece of the program – memorable and brilliant music written for the composer himself to play at a time when he was travelling the world.

Every time you experience one of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's acclaimed performances, the inspiring music allows you to travel in time and space. Similarly, if you travel the world with APT you are free to lose yourself in the moment as every detail is taken care of. Our all-inclusive luxury European River Cruise will give you an unforgettable experience, exploring the heartland of the classical music repertoire. You will also have the privilege of attending a private classical concert at the City Palace in Vienna – one of APT's exclusive Royal Signature Experiences.

We hope you will enjoy tonight's exciting and uplifting concert and hope to see you again at APT Master Series performances through the year.



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**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

APT MASTER SERIES

WEDNESDAY 16 MAY, 8PM

FRIDAY 18 MAY, 8PM

SATURDAY 19 MAY, 8PM

.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

Spirit of Delight

John Wilson *conductor*

Lukáš Vondráček *piano*

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

orchestrated by Edward Elgar

Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)

Piano Concerto No.3 in C major, Op.26

Andante – Allegro

Andantino (with variations)

Allegro non troppo

INTERVAL

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

Symphony No.2 in E flat major, Op.63

Allegro vivace e nobilmente

Larghetto

Rondo (Presto)

Moderato e maestoso



92.9 ABC
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Friday's performance will be broadcast live across Australia by ABC Classic FM, with a repeat broadcast on Sunday 20 May at 2pm.

.....
Pre-concert talk by Alastair McKean in the Northern Foyer at 7.15pm. Visit sydneysymphony.com/speaker-bios for more information.

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Estimated durations: 9 minutes, 27 minutes, 20-minute interval, 53 minutes

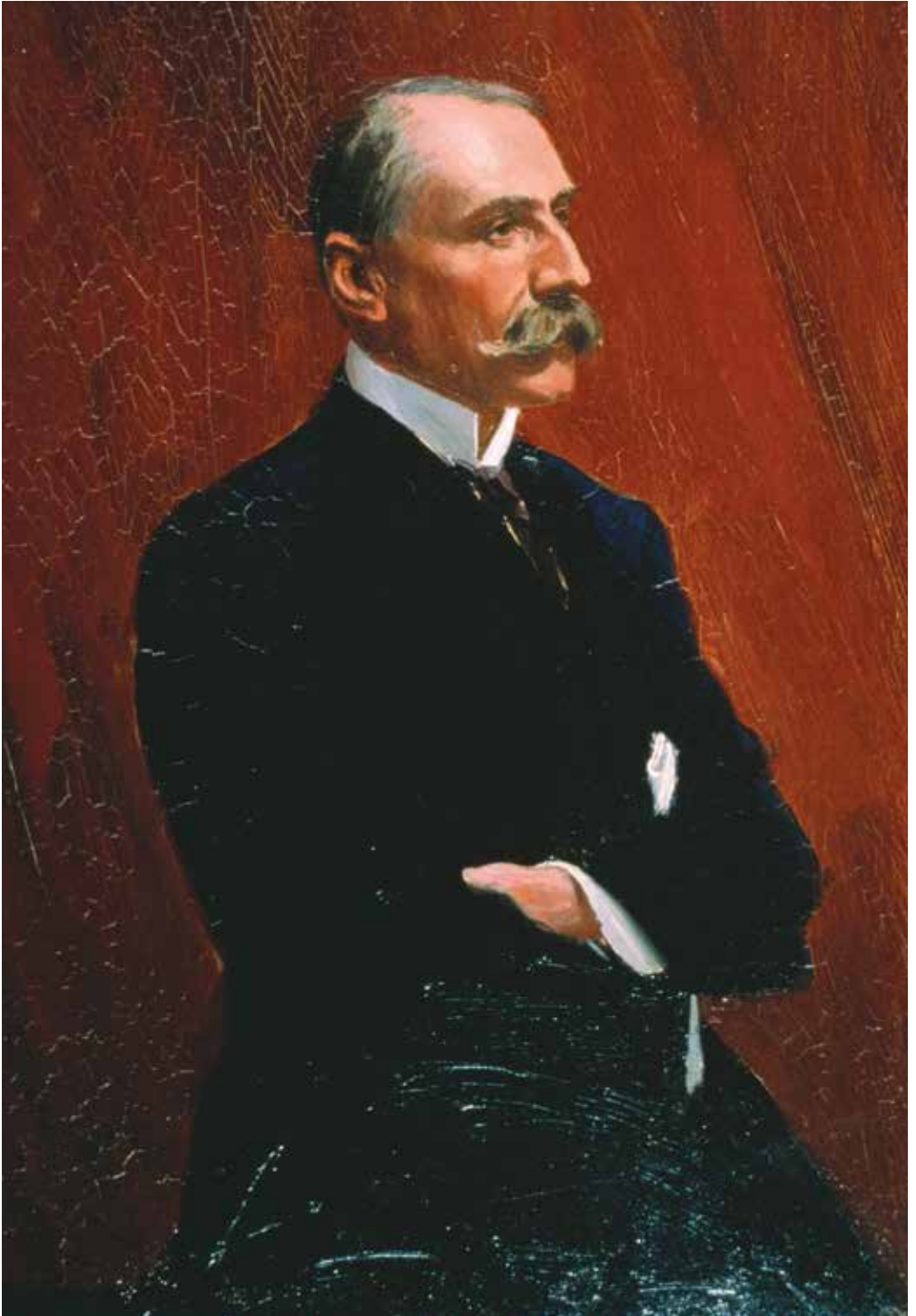
The performance will conclude at approximately 9.55pm.

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COVER PHOTO: Geert Van Hoeymissen

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Portrait of Edward Elgar by Joseph Simpson, based on Histed's photograph of the composer wearing the Order of Merit in 1911.

Spirit of Delight

Elgar's musical ambitions hinged on orchestral music, in particular the symphony, 'the highest achievement of the art'. He eventually reached that goal with his successful First Symphony [1908], preceded in 1899 by the *Enigma* variations for orchestra, which had made him famous at the age of 42.

The Second Symphony followed in 1911. At the end of the score, Elgar added two lines from Shelley's *Invocation*: 'Rarely, rarely, comest thou, /Spirit of Delight!' The music spills over with life experience and the first audiences – perhaps expecting a grand symphony full of Imperial splendour – may have been puzzled by its extremes of ecstasy and despair. As Elgar told his publisher: 'the spirit of the whole work is intended to be high and pure joy: there are retrospective passages of sadness but the whole of the sorrow is smoothed out and ennobled in the last movement, which ends in a calm and, I hope and intend, elevated mood.'

Another side of Elgar – and a reminder that he was also an organist – is represented by his transcription of music by Bach, the composer who 'heals and pacifies all men and all things'. Tonight this gorgeous orchestral transformation of organ music forms the prelude to Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto, his calling card as a concert pianist. Prokofiev may have been a master of modern momentum, wry wit and subversive melodies, but he had a profoundly Romantic streak as well, as the concerto reveals. It was intended for himself to play – he toured America with it in the 1920s and it became so popular that he once complained he had to practise it more (because his audiences knew it too well!). It remains a great virtuoso showpiece, with its perfect balance between brilliance and warmth of expression.

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

Johann Sebastian Bach **orchestrated by Edward Elgar** **Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537**

The death of Elgar's wife in 1920 had a devastating effect on the composer. A year later, he was just beginning to be able to enjoy music again, and reported that he was playing Bach's Preludes and Fugues – not just those from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, but the big organ fugues he had learnt 40 years earlier on the organ of St George's Catholic Church, Worcester. Elgar felt incapable of composing: 'now that my poor wife has gone I can't be original, and so I depend on people like John Sebastian for a source of inspiration.' He decided to orchestrate Bach's C minor fugue for organ 'in a *modern* way – largest orchestra,' he wrote to Ivor Atkins, 'I wanted to show how gorgeous and great and brilliant he would have made himself sound if he had our means.' The orchestration of the fugue was finished on 25 April 1921, and on 27 October it was premiered under the young conductor Eugene Goossens (later to become the first chief conductor of the SSO).

Sometime later in the year, at a luncheon for the visiting composer Richard Strauss, there was a discussion of transcribing Bach's organ music for orchestra, during which Elgar challenged Strauss to make his own version of the fantasia with which Bach had prefaced the fugue. Strauss never made a transcription, but Elgar decided to do it himself, and conducted the completed work at the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival in 1922.

Why it was felt that an orchestra could make Bach's music sound more impressive than Worcester Cathedral's organ is

Keynotes

JS BACH

Born Eisenach, 1685

Died Leipzig, 1750

In his lifetime Johann Sebastian Bach was renowned as an organist; in the century after his death his name was kept alive by enthusiasts, and then – spurred in part by Mendelssohn's revival of the *Matthew Passion* – he gained new and enduring fame as a great master of the baroque era. His career has been defined by three major periods of employment. In 1708, he became court organist in Weimar, but when he was passed over for a promotion, it was time to move on, and in 1717 Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen offered him a Kapellmeister post. It wasn't an easy departure: the Duke of Weimar briefly placed him under arrest! In 1722 he applied for the post of cantor at the school attached to the Thomas Church in Leipzig. He wasn't the town council's first choice, but he won the job and spent the remaining 27 years of his life in Leipzig: teaching, performing, organising the musical life of the church and composing his great series of church cantatas. In addition to his original works, Bach created masterly transcriptions of music by himself and others – establishing a tradition in which composers such as Elgar followed.



a good question, but the fact remains that Elgar conceived his transcription with that setting in mind. As early as 1908 his colleague Ivor Atkins had asked him for a new ending to an orchestration of Bach's Toccata in F major made in 1859 by German composer Heinrich Esser – for the Three Choirs Festival. Where there was an orchestra to accompany an oratorio, these gentlemen wanted some telling Bach for the orchestra to play, preferably with the sacred connotations of an organ original.

Much of Bach's organ music came into being when he had few outlets for vocal music with orchestral accompaniment. The Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537, has been variously dated. It may belong to Bach's time at Weimar (1708–17), like other pieces he wrote of the same kind. But a curious formal feature of the fugue, occasionally found in later works, has led some to think the music belongs to Bach's time in Leipzig, after 1723. Following an exposition of subject and counter-subject in the home key, an imperfect cadence leads to a second set of fugue subjects, featuring a rising chromatic scale, which is developed. Then, instead of combining the subjects – this is the curious feature, and the subjects are such that they *can't* be combined – Bach restates the first exposition, to create an analogue of da capo form, concluding with a brief coda. Albert Schweitzer found in this form a grand victory over the chromatic second fugue subject, 'the symbol of confident faith'.

Elgar's treatment of the mournful Fantasia, a kind of processional in triple time, with drum strokes, shows a Romantic penetration of the emotional essence of the piece, and reminds the listener of his love for the *Matthew Passion*. The heavier scoring is reserved for the climax, but the full orchestra comes into its own in the fugue, brass well to the fore, with brilliant splashes for winds, harp and percussion, ending with a tremendous orchestral equivalent of the full opening of the swell box. Later in the 1920s, there was a rash of orchestral transcriptions of Bach organ music, the most famous being Stokowski's of the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, of 1927. But Elgar's – controversial at first among organists and Bach-lovers – has been one of the few to keep a place in the concert repertoire, a tribute to its achievement, which is more than transcription – a commentary by one creative musician finding affinity in another.

DAVID GARRETT © 2005

Elgar's orchestration of BWV 537 calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; two harps and strings.

The SSO was the first ABC orchestra to perform this work, in 1938 under the baton of Joseph Post. Our most recent performance was in 1962 in a free concert conducted by Ernest Llewellyn.

'I wanted to show how gorgeous and great and brilliant [Bach] would have made himself sound if he had our means.'

ELGAR

Sergei Prokofiev

Piano Concerto No.3 in C major, Op.26

Andante – Allegro

Andantino (with variations)

Allegro non troppo

Lukáš Vondráček *piano*

Prokofiev was a virtuoso pianist, who made an authoritative recording of his own Third Concerto. One of his most successful and popular concert works, the concerto shows the most typical aspects of his mature musical style in ideal balance: a mixture of rather Romantic passages with incisive, humorous, sometimes even grotesque episodes. This is obvious right at the start: the opening **Andante** melody for clarinet is lyrical, almost wistful, and Russian-sounding. But immediately the piano comes in, the music becomes very busy, incisive, almost icy. The lyricism of the opening will return in place of a 'development' section in the middle of the first movement.

Prokofiev conceived musical materials for his first three concertos in the years before he left Russia at the time of the 1917 Revolution. The first two concertos, in their driving rhythms and crunching discords, illustrate Prokofiev's not altogether unwelcome casting as the 'enfant terrible' of Russian music, and evoked a corresponding critical reaction ('cats on a roof make better music,' wrote one Russian critic of Concerto No.2). No.3, on the other hand, shows much more of the tunefulness and accessibility which it is wrong to regard as having entered Prokofiev's music only after he returned to Russia in the early 1930s. The lyrical opening of this piano concerto, completed in 1921, recalls that of the First Violin Concerto of 1916–17. Even earlier, the great Russian impresario Diaghilev had perceived Prokofiev's true musical nature: 'Few composers today have Prokofiev's gift of inventing personal melodies, and even fewer have a genuine flair for a fresh use of simple tonal harmonies... he doesn't need to hide behind inane theories and absurd noises.'

The Third Piano Concerto reflects Prokofiev's world-travelling existence around the time of its creation. He had been collecting its themes for over ten years by the time he put them together in 1921. Prokofiev rarely threw away anything that might come in handy later on. He began the concerto in Russia in 1917, completed it in France in 1921, and gave the premiere later that year in Chicago, where his opera *The Love for Three Oranges* was premiered. An American critic wrote of the concerto, 'It is greatly a matter of slewed harmony, neither adventurous enough to win

Keynotes

PROKOFIEV

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

For his graduation in 1914, Prokofiev played his own piano concerto, displaying remarkable skills as both composer and performer. At this point his career could have gone either way and it's possible his teachers were expecting him to become a concert pianist, since his marks for composition were poor. As it turned out, composition became his focus as he nurtured a distinctive and often quirky style, although he continued to perform and tour as a virtuoso.

PIANO CONCERTO NO.3

Prokofiev began setting down his ideas for the Third Piano Concerto in 1917, while he was still in Russia; he completed it in 1921, giving the premiere in Chicago. It soon became his calling card as a virtuoso pianist. Its lyrical opening is interrupted by an impish piano theme, immediately establishing the mercurial contrasts of mood that characterise so much of Prokofiev's music. The second movement is a set of five variations on a song-like theme he'd noted down eight years before, and its form is essentially slow with fast interludes. The finale is fast (but interspersed with slower interludes), its spiky opening shifting into an 'unabashedly Romantic' theme that evokes the world of Rachmaninoff.

the affection nor modernist enough to be annoying.' You can't win! A New York critic was wrong, but more perceptive, when he wrote, 'It is hard to imagine any other pianist than Mr Prokofiev playing it.' Prokofiev's own playing pioneered a new kind of piano virtuosity. A rewarding piece for any virtuoso, this concerto is formally clear and satisfying, full of memorable tunes harmonised and orchestrated with a peculiarly personal piquancy, and sufficiently of our time to be bracing and refreshing.

The **second movement** is a set of five variations on a theme Prokofiev had composed in 1913, intending it even then for variation treatment. This theme has an old-world, rather gavotte-like character, which in the first variation is treated solo by the piano in what Prokofiev describes as 'quasi-sentimental fashion'. Then the tempo changes to a furious allegro, one of the abrupt contrasts in which the concerto abounds. After a quiet, meditative fourth variation, and an energetic fifth one, the theme returns on flutes and clarinets in its original form and at its old speed, while the piano continues at top speed but more quietly. This has been compared to a sprinter viewed from the window of a train.

Prokofiev's own program note describes the **finale** as beginning with a staccato theme for bassoons and pizzicato strings, interrupted by the blustering entry of the piano:

The orchestra holds its own with the opening theme, however, and there is a good deal of argument, with frequent differences of opinion as regards key. Eventually the piano takes up the first theme and develops it to a climax. With a reduction of tone and slackening of tempo, an alternative theme is introduced in the woodwinds. The piano replies with a theme that is more in keeping with the caustic humour of the work.

The unabashedly Romantic 'alternative theme' is worked up to an emotional pitch that shows Prokofiev as having more in common with Rachmaninoff than is usually suspected, and both as owing much to Tchaikovsky. Then the opening returns in a brilliant coda.

DAVID GARRETT © 2003

The orchestra for Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No.3 calls for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets and two bassoons; four horns, two trumpets and three trombones; timpani and percussion; and strings.

The SSO first performed this concerto in 1941 with soloist Raymond Lambert and conductor Edgar L Bainton and most recently in 2012 with Behzod Abduraimov and Vladimir Ashkenazy conducting.



Prokofiev in New York (c.1918)



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Edward Elgar

Symphony No.2 in E flat major, Op.63

Allegro vivace e nobilmente

Larghetto

Rondo (Presto)

Moderato e maestoso

No matter how eloquently the Elgar symphonies may be championed, there will always be those listeners for whom the pieces act too potently as musical memoirs of the British Empire at its sunset. In the 1940s and 50s, when these works were not much played in Britain, they were programmed regularly by the ABC, in concert and on radio. The idea that they represent a musical branch of official Imperialism is not helpful if we are to listen to them again without prejudice; even less so now, in Australia.

In Britain by the 1920s, the opulence that forms so crucial a component of Elgar's musical language had already become a victim of musical fashion. From the distance created by World War I and the subsequent toppling of empires and dynasties, Elgar's music was seen as symbolic of post-Victorian complacency. The symphonies came in for particularly harsh criticism for their 'triviality and tawdriness' (Cecil Gray's words) and perceived structural weaknesses.

It may be facile to note that every generation hears what it wants to hear in the music of the past. Perhaps it is more useful to realise that Mahler's symphonies were also in eclipse in the years Elgar's lay in the darkness; that Elgar's feelings of isolation within his society – by virtue of his working-class origins, his Catholicism, his disdain for the academic musical establishment – were akin to, if less severe than, Mahler's sense of alienation.

The reputation of Elgar's first symphony had quite some journey to make to the dark side. It is – and was – recognised as the first great English symphony, and its popularity surged after its premiere in 1908. Within 15 months, the work had been played in places as far-flung as St Petersburg and Sydney. Elgar hoped the Second Symphony would be equally successful. On his completion of it, Elgar's devoted wife Alice noted in her diary: 'It seems one of his greatest works, vast in design and supremely beautiful...It is really sublime...it resembles our human life, delight, regrets, farewell, the saddest mood & then the strong man's triumph.' Elgar himself wrote to a friend: 'I have worked at fever heat and the thing is tremendous in energy.'

That this symphony failed to make the impact of its predecessor is due to the more emotionally complex world it inhabits and the circumstances of its first performances. Elgar conducted

Keynotes

ELGAR

Born Broadheath, 1857

Died Worcester, 1934

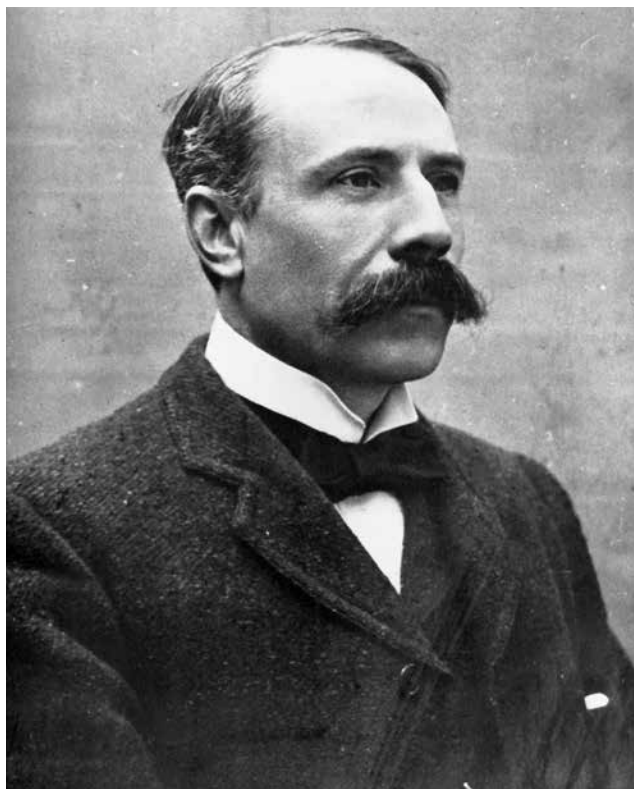
Edward Elgar was arguably the first major British composer after Henry Purcell in the 17th century. He came to prominence at the age of 42 with the *Enigma Variations*; this was followed by *The Dream of Gerontius*, the finest oratorio by an English-born composer, the violin and cello concertos, and two symphonies – powerful and inventive works that combined the inspiration of his homeland with the technique and musical vision of his European peers.

SYMPHONY NO.2

Elgar's Second Symphony was written in what the composer described as a 'fever heat' and was premiered in 1911, three years after the extremely well-received First Symphony. It was premiered on the eve of the coronation of George V, which may have led the first audience to expect straightforward Imperial splendour rather than an epic scope and emotional extremes.

It contains a tiny unifying motif, sometimes called the 'Spirit of Delight', that emerges in different guises through all four movements, even in the funeral march of the second movement, where it makes a 'consoling' appearance. There are darker moments in the symphony, too, which led Elgar to agree with one description of the work as the 'passionate pilgrimage' of a soul.

In writing about the music, Elgar frequently quoted poetry (included in the main program note), and in the score itself he quotes two lines from Shelley.



...epic in scope and
wild in its emotional
extremes...

the premiere during the glittering London 'season' of 1911, to an audience mindful of the symphony's dedication to the late Edward VII, and filled with excitement at the prospect of the forthcoming coronation of the new king, George V, less than a month away. No doubt many in the audience were expecting a grand symphony of loyal tribute, perhaps even a paean to Imperial splendour. What they heard was epic in scope and wild in its emotional extremes, doubting its own exuberance, exploding its own vivid tales of conquest, battling to regain ground lost in a tumult of its own devising.

That in itself probably flummoxed the symphony's first listeners considerably. But what sort of performance did they hear that evening?

It has been said that Elgar, among the greatest of all writers for orchestra, writes to the limit of a good musician's technical capacity and never beyond it. But some commentators have questioned the extent to which this limit was successfully reached by the British orchestras of the era in which this symphony was new. The work did not really begin to have any success with audiences until after World War I, but by then it sounded to the younger British critics like music from another planet.

The passionate expressiveness of Elgar's music inevitably suggests a play of personal meanings at work. But Elgar often used musical red herrings to shield his inner purpose. (The movement headings to the *Enigma* Variations are a good example.) His dedication of this symphony to the late King, for example, should not be taken as an explanation of his musical purpose. To his friend Alice Stuart-Wortley he referred to this work, the Violin Concerto and the Ode *The Music Makers* (all completed between 1910 and 1912) as works in which 'I have written out my soul...and you know it...in these works I have *shewn* myself.' To another friend, he described his feelings about this symphony by amending a quotation from Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo* to read:

*I do but hide
Under these notes, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me.*

Finally, we have the enigmatic extract from Shelley's *Invocation*, which Elgar wrote at the end of the score:

*Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!*

Listening Guide

The beginning of the **first movement** at once proclaims the 'tremendous energy' Elgar described. The viola player Bernard Shore likened the first bars to a dive off a high springboard. The wide-ranging restlessness of this music is born of the swift sequence of short, bounding themes presented with a virtuoso orchestrator's panache, and a plethora of detailed expression and tempo markings.

The very first theme contains a two-bar melodic cell that acts as a presence throughout the work's four movements; sometimes called the 'Spirit of Delight', it gives way to three equally short themes. All four are then modified and juxtaposed, leading gradually to the tenderly lyrical ideas that form the movement's second melodic group. Passion soon overcomes the music, particularly when Elgar enfolds these new ideas with themes from the first group. The strong element of fantasy in the writing is already apparent; one of the lyrical themes, played by the cellos, features a gentle accompaniment on violas and then woodwind. This seemingly incidental motif later figures heroically, even gaudily, in the movement's climax.

It is possible to talk about this movement in conventional sonata form terminology, but for Elgar the recapitulation, resplendent though it is, is not as crucial as the beautiful and sinister episode that haunts the centre of the movement. 'I have

The viola player
Bernard Shore
likened the opening
of the symphony to
a dive off a high
springboard.

written the *most extraordinary* passage,' he wrote to Alice Stuart-Wortley, '...a sort of malign influence wandering thro' the summer night in the garden.' Eight bell-like notes on the harp, muted strings and horns introduce a theme, high in the cellos, to which the surrounding accompaniment lends an almost supernatural glow. In a completely different guise, this theme returns in the third movement to devastating effect.

When the climax does come, Elgar dangles the 'Spirit of Delight' theme over the precipice of a Mahlerian *Luftpause*. The elaborate recapitulation that follows allows for a brief moment of calm but we are then thrown tumultuously on to the movement's conclusion, a dizzying upward rush for the whole orchestra.

The grief of the **second movement** – a funeral march in the manner of another great symphony in E flat major, Beethoven's *Eroica* – is immense and, until the last bars, inconsolable. A yearning introduction gives way to a solemn and beautiful theme scored to give the effect of public mourning – the melody, on flutes, clarinets, trumpet, trombone and first violin, is played over the muffled tread of bassoons, horns, tuba, timpani, harp and strings. In the movement's central episode, this theme's return is embellished by an improvised-sounding oboe lament, as if the cries of one person could be heard in a vast crowd. Elgar used to tell the principal oboe in rehearsals: 'Play your lament entirely free... Don't worry about me or the rest of the orchestra. It must sound as if it belonged outside somewhere.' The final climax, scored passionately high on the violins, is almost feverishly sad, the benediction-like appearance of the 'Spirit of Delight' theme offering some consolation before the movement shudders to a close.

The **scherzo** (*Rondo. Presto*) is feverish music requiring tremendous virtuosity. The movement opens with apparent jollity, but the darkening harmonies and darting cross-rhythms together produce a feeling of impending danger. After a more lyrical section, introducing a wistful new woodwind theme, a pulsating version of the 'unearthly' theme from the first movement is given out by the violins with insistent timpani commentary. Suddenly the music takes on an aspect of thundering terror. At this point the percussion, according to Elgar at rehearsals, should 'completely overwhelm everything'. The composer explained this section by way of a quotation from Tennyson's *Maud*:

*Dead, long dead...
And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust...
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
Beat into my scalp and brain...*

The passage disappears with the swiftness of waking from a nightmare; the movement then hastens to a brilliant coda.

The **finale** begins as if it is going to be the most conventional movement of the four, resolving the tremendous conflicts depicted in the earlier movements. There is a Brahmsian inflection to the stately first theme played by cellos, horns, clarinets and bassoons, and to the grander one given to the violins. These themes are given majestic treatment; we then hear a new, gentle theme for the strings, which carries Elgar's characteristic direction, *nobilmente* (nobly). The *poco animato* section that follows contains some of the most virtuosic writing of the symphony. We are plunged into the thick of battle, a piercing trumpet cry leading the charge.

The introduction of a more peaceful theme high on the violins at the conclusion of this episode does not settle the music for long. The mood is restless, and although the martial atmosphere gradually recedes to make way for a return of the main theme, the recapitulation makes us realise that the likelihood of a Brahms-like darkness-to-light symphonic outcome is remote. Just as Elgar seems to prepare us for a victorious peroration, the music quietens, we hear the finale's main theme again on the cellos, the 'Spirit of Delight' appears once more and all is radiantly still. At the close there is hope, consolation perhaps, but not triumph.

The last lines of Shelley's *Invocation*, surely known by Elgar, form a fitting postscript to the Symphony's complex emotional journey:

*Spirit, I love thee –
Thou art love and life! Oh, come,
Make once more my heart thy home.*

PHILLIP SAMETZ ©2001/2003

Elgar's Second Symphony is scored for three flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, E flat clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (snare drum, tambourine, cymbals, bass drum); two harps and strings.

The SSO first performed Elgar's Second Symphony in 1938 with conductor Malcolm Sargent, and most recently in 2008 under Vladimir Ashkenazy.

At the close there is hope, consolation perhaps, but not triumph.

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MORE MUSIC

ELGAR'S BACH

For tonight's transcription of Bach's Fantasy and Fugue [BWV 537] look for the recording by Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. The rest of the album showcases transcriptions of Bach's music by Ottorino Respighi

NAXOS 857 2741

PROKOFIEV PIANO CONCERTOS

Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto is the most frequently recorded of all his concertos, echoing its popularity in the concert hall. The catalogue includes the SSO's own recording on the Triton label of the complete piano concertos with pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk, made during Vladimir Ashkenazy's Prodigal Russian festival in 2009. Available as a download or as streamed audio.

ELGAR SYMPHONIES

Elgar's own recording of his Second Symphony from 1927 with the London Symphony Orchestra can easily claim to be definitive. The most recent remastering was released in 2016 in a 4-CD collection *Elgar Remastered*. It also includes the 1928 studio sessions from his recording of his cello concerto with Beatrice Harrison and a new, unused take of Symphony No.1

SOMM 261

Among more recent interpretations, look for Vernon Handley's recording of the Second Symphony, available in a 5-CD set from the London Philharmonic Orchestra. This comprehensive collection of Elgar's orchestral music also includes Symphony No.1 (conducted by Georg Solti) and the *Enigma* Variations (Charles Mackerras).

LPO 16

JOHN WILSON CONDUCTS ELGAR

John Wilson's discography includes three albums featuring Elgar's music. Most recent (in which he conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra) is *Spirit of England* with soprano Judith Howarth as soloist in the title work. The album also includes the first complete recording of Elgar's incidental music for *Arthur - A Tragedy*, performed by the Orchestra of St Paul and conductor Ben Palmer.

SOMM 255

Also on the Somm label is *The Longed-for Light: Elgar's Music in Wartime*, which John Wilson recorded with the BBC Concerto Orchestra, soprano Susan Gritton and speaker Simon Callow.

SOMM 247

And with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, he has recorded *Made in Britain*, an attractive collection of popular music, including Walton's comedy overture

Scapino, The Lark Ascending by Vaughan Williams, and music by Delius, Bax, German and Butterworth, as well as Elgar's *Salut d'amour*.

AVIE 2194

LUKÁŠ VONDRÁČEK PLAYS PROKOFIEV

Lukáš Vondráček plays Prokofiev's Sonata No.7 in his 2013 solo recital album, which also includes Haydn's Sonata in C major, Hob.XVI:50 and Rachmaninoff's Corelli Variations.

TWOPIANISTS 103 9176

Broadcast Diary

May-June



92.9 ABC
Classic FM

abc.net.au/classic

Friday 18 May, 8pm

Sunday 20 May, 2pm (repeat)

SPIRIT OF DELIGHT

See this program for details.

Friday 25 May, 8pm

Saturday 30 June, 8pm (repeat)

ROYAL FIREWORKS MUSIC

Robert Johnson conductor

SSO Brass Ensemble

Britten, Gabrieli, Debussy, Elgar, Hartley, Handel

Saturday 26 May, 2pm

Friday 22 June, 1pm (repeat)

YULIANNA AVDEEVA IN RECITAL

Yulianna Avdeeva piano

Chopin, Liszt

Wednesday 13 June, 8pm

TAIKOZ AND THE SSO

Gerard Salonga conductor

Riley Lee shakuhachi

Kaoru Watanabe shinobie, taiko

Taikoz (Ian Cleworth, Artistic Director)

Cleworth, Watanabe, Britten, Lee, Skipworth



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 12 June, 6pm

Musicians and staff of the SSO talk about the life of the orchestra and forthcoming concerts. Hosted by Andrew Bukenya.

finemusicfm.com

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



SIM CANETTY-CLARKE

John Wilson *conductor*

English conductor John Wilson is known for the vivid nature of his interpretations and is applauded for the rich and colourful sounds that he draws from orchestras in repertoire ranging from core classical through to the 20th century. An outstanding communicator and a recognised builder of audiences, he has developed long-term affiliations with many of the UK's major orchestras and festivals, and is increasingly working at the highest level across Europe, Asia and Australia.

In the 2016 he took up the post of Associate Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducting them at the BBC Proms last year. In 1994 he formed his own orchestra, the John Wilson Orchestra, dedicated to performing music from the golden age of Hollywood and Broadway. For the past decade he has been performing with them annually at the BBC Proms and touring across the UK.

In the 2017–18 season John Wilson makes debut appearances with the Oslo Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Malmö Symphony, Budapest Festival and Hong Kong Philharmonic orchestras, and with the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin. He also returns to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Highlights of the 2016–17 season included debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (in an all-Bernstein program), London Symphony Orchestra and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. In 2016 he made his Glyndebourne opera debut conducting *Madama Butterfly*, and in coming seasons he will return to Glyndebourne and make his English National Opera debut.

He has a catalogue of recordings, with recent releases including three albums of symphonic works by Copland (BBC Philhamonic), representing the start of a complete Copland cycle, and his first recording with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra of music by Richard Rodney Bennett.

Born in Gateshead, John Wilson studied composition and conducting at the Royal College of Music, where he was taught by Joseph Horowitz and Neil Thomson, and where he won all the major conducting prizes. In 2011 was made a Fellow of the RCM.

John Wilson made his SSO debut in 2016 and last week conducted an all-Bernstein program.



Lukáš Vondráček

piano

Lukáš Vondráček's natural and assured musicality and remarkable technique have long marked him out as a gifted and mature musician and in 2016 he was the indisputable winner of the Queen Elisabeth International Piano Competition.

He began the 2017–18 season with a tour of recitals and concerto performances in Brazil, and highlights have included debuts with the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra, Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra. He returns to the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra with Marin Alsop and Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra with Vasily Petrenko, as well as the National Orchestra of Belgium and the Prague and Bournemouth and symphony orchestras among others. Recital appearances take him to the Vienna Konzerthaus, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, the Louvre, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Philharmonie Luxembourg, Portland and Chicago, as well as festivals such as PianoEspoo in Finland and the Rheingau Musik Festival.

Recent highlights have included concerts with the Philadelphia Orchestra, St Petersburg Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Orchestra and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra as well as recitals at the Mariinsky Theatre, in Mumbai, Singapore, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Brussels' Flagey and the Menuhin Festival Gstaad.

Lukáš Vondráček made his first public appearance at the age of four. His debut as a 15-year-old in 2002 with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and Vladimir Ashkenazy was followed by a major US tour in 2003. Following studies at the Academy of Music in Katowice and the Vienna Conservatoire, he studied with Hung-Kuan Chen at Boston's New England Conservatory, graduating with an Artist's Diploma (Honours) in 2012.

International awards include first prizes at the Hilton Head and San Marino International piano competitions and the Unisa International Piano Competition in Pretoria, South Africa, as well as the Raymond E Buck Jury Discretionary Award at the 2009 International Van Cliburn Piano Competition.

His first solo album was released in 2004, followed by a second in 2012, and more recently a recital program of Haydn, Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff.

Lukáš Vondráček's most recent appearances for the SSO were in 2014 when he performed Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.3 and gave a solo recital.

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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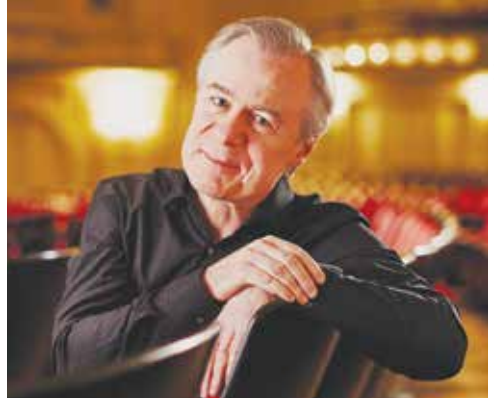


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PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

Associate Principal Trombone Scott Kinmont with
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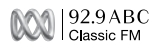
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