

SYDNEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

A Russian Gala

BEHZOD ABDURAIMOV
PERFORMS TCHAIKOVSKY

8 & 9 NOVEMBER

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE





**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor
and Artistic Director

FRIDAY 8 NOVEMBER, 8PM
SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER, 8PM
.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL



A Russian Gala

Behzod Abduraimov plays Tchaikovsky

Lionel Bringuier *conductor*

Behzod Abduraimov *piano*

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

Piano Concerto No.1 in B flat minor

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito

Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Andantino semplice

Allegro con fuoco

INTERVAL

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)

Symphony No.2 in E minor

Largo - Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Adagio

Finale: Allegro vivace



Saturday's concert will be broadcast
on ABC Classic on 24 November at 12
noon, and on 1 January 2020 at 1pm.

.....
Pre-concert talk by Zoltán Szabó at
7.15pm in the Northern Foyer.

.....
Estimated durations: 32 minutes;
20 minute interval; 60 minutes.

.....
The concert will conclude at
approximately 10pm.

.....
Behzod Abduraimov's appearances are
generously supported by Brian Abel.



Principal Partner



The Composer is Dead

A SYDNEY SYMPHONY FAMILY EVENT

STOOKEY & SNICKET The Composer is Dead

Brett Kelly conductor

Brendon Taylor The Inspector

Sun 10 Nov, 1pm
Sun 10 Nov, 2.45pm
Sydney Opera House



Andrew Haveron performs Mozart

BEETHOVEN The Ruins of Athens: Overture

MOZART Violin Concerto No.5 in A, K219 (Turkish)

HAYDN Symphony No.100 (Military)

Andrew Haveron violin-director

Mozart in the City
Thu 14 Nov, 7pm
City Recital Hall
Tea & Symphony
Fri 15 Nov, 11am
Sydney Opera House



Lea Salonga in Concert

WITH THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Award-winning Broadway star and Disney legend, Lea Salonga, returns to Sydney following her 2017 sold out tour, performing songs from *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Aladdin*, *Frozen*, *The Greatest Showman* and more.

Lea Salonga

Gerard Salonga conductor

Sydney Symphony Presents
Fri 15 Nov, 8pm
Sat 16 Nov, 2pm
Sat 16 Nov, 8pm
Sydney Opera House



Paul Lewis in Recital

SCHUBERT Sonata in G, D894

BEETHOVEN Diabelli Variations

Paul Lewis piano

International Pianists in Recital
Mon 18 Nov, 7pm
City Recital Hall



Turangalila-Symphonie

CELEBRATING DAVID ROBERTSON

MESSIAEN Turangalila-Symphonie

David Robertson conductor

Tengku Irfan piano

Jacob Abela ondes martenot

Thu 21 Nov, 7pm
Sydney Opera House



Skyfall in Concert

James Bond on the big screen accompanied by the Sydney Symphony performing Thomas Newman's BAFTA-winning score live to the film!

Nicholas Buc conductor

Sydney Symphony Presents
Fri 22 Nov, 8pm
Sat 23 Nov, 2pm
Sat 23 Nov, 8pm
Sydney Opera House

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American Harmonies

CELEBRATING DAVID ROBERTSON

COPLAND Appalachian Spring: Suite

ROUSE Bassoon Concerto *Australian premiere*

ADAMS Harmonielehre

David Robertson conductor

Todd Gibson-Cornish bassoon

Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 28 Nov, 1.30pm
Emirates Metro Series
Fri 29 Nov, 8pm
Great Classics
Sat 30 Nov, 5pm
Sydney Opera House



Principal Partner

THE ARTISTS



Lionel Bringuier *conductor*

The 2019/20 season sees Lionel Bringuier return to his hometown as Artist Associate for Opéra de Nice. He began his 2019/20 season conducting the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. Future engagements alongside conducting the Orchestra Philharmonique de Nice include debuts with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande (in Geneva and Paris) and the Tonkünstler-Orchester (in Vienna and St. Pölten, Austria), also conducting the North German Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Janáček Philharmonic, Cologne's Gürzenich-Orchester, and the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra.

The 2018/19 season saw Lionel Bringuier touring extensively, his international reach stretching into New Zealand, Korea, Singapore and Austria where he led world class artists including his friend and collaborator Yuja Wang. Over the last 12 months he has appeared with the Dresden Staatskapelle where he led the orchestra in works by Bartók, Schumann and Eötvös. He also led legendary violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra in an evening of Paris-inspired works. Most recently, Lionel Bringuier travelled to the USA, conducting orchestras such as the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Lionel Bringuier has conducted numerous operatic works. This has recently included a new production of *Rigoletto* at the Royal Swedish Opera in 2018 in addition to earlier work across Europe, at the Mariinsky in Russia and the opera house in Valladolid. Additionally, he has conducted numerous premieres, including Bernard Rands' Concerto for English Horn and Orchestra, Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Karawane*, as well as the Swiss premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *Trans* for Harp and Orchestra. His discography includes two Ravel compilations.

Lionel Bringuier was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite by the French government, and has been lauded with the Médaille d'or à l'unanimité avec les félicitations du jury à l'Académie Prince Rainier III de Monaco and the Médaille d'or from the City of Nice.



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Behzod Abduraimov

piano

Behzod Abduraimov performs with leading orchestras worldwide. He has collaborated with conductors such as Valery Gergiev, Vladimir Ashkenazy, James Gaffigan, and Jakub Hrůša.

In his 2019/20 season Behzod Abduraimov returns to Carnegie Hall for two performances: his second Stern Auditorium recital, with a program of Chopin, Debussy and Mussorgsky; and performing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 with the Munich Philharmonic under Valery Gergiev following their concerts in Munich. He also serves as Artist-in-Residence with the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, appearing under Lorenzo Viotti and in recital.

Other highlights this season include the Orchestre National de France, Philharmonia Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and the Cincinnati Symphony. He will perform in concerto and recital at the Alte Oper Frankfurt. Further recitals include the International Piano Series in London, the Meesterpianisten Series at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and Spivey Hall in Atlanta.

In 2020 Behzod Abduraimov and regular recital partner, cellist Truls Mørk, present Beethoven, Franck and Prokofiev at Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and at Kings Place, London. Behzod Abduraimov has also established a relationship with the English Chamber Orchestra, whom he directed from the piano in 2019. In 2019/20 he will direct Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.2 with the Camerata RCO at the İş Sanat Concert Hall, Istanbul.

Behzod Abduraimov's 2012 debut CD of Liszt, Saint-Saëns and Prokofiev won the Choc de Classica and Diapason Découverte. A film of his BBC Proms debut in 2016 was released as a DVD in 2018.

Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Behzod Abduraimov began the piano aged five as a pupil of Tamara Popovich at Uspensky State Central Lyceum. In 2009, he won First Prize at the London International Piano Competition with Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No.3. He studied with Stanislav Ioudenitch at the International Center for Music at Park University, Missouri, where he is Artist-in-Residence.

Behzod Abduraimov's appearances are generously supported by Brian Abel.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Occasionally we need to remind ourselves of how 'new' classical music was in 19th century Russia. Aristocrats there, as in Western Europe, had maintained their own musical establishments but usually with foreign performers, and the list of Tsar's court Kapellmeisters in the 18th century is a string of often distinguished Italian names. In the later 18th century societies of largely amateur music-lovers began presenting public concerts, and toward the end of that century a home genre of stage works based in folk-song with spoken dialogue in Russian began to appear. In the 1830s Glinka produced his *A Life for Tsar*, the first opera sung completely in Russian. But Russian music only reached critical mass with the foundation of the great conservatories in St Petersburg, by Anton Rubinstein in 1862, and Moscow, by his brother Nikolai in 1866. In 1865, Tchaikovsky was in the first graduating class from the Moscow Conservatory, and was one of the first teachers appointed to the Moscow foundation the next year.

Tchaikovsky benefitted from the formal discipline, based in Western techniques, of the Conservatory which put him at odds with the group of composers called the *kuchka*, which we know in English as 'The Five', or 'Mighty Handful'. These composers, Mussorgsky, Balakirev, Borodin, Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov, were implacably opposed to 'conservatory' notions of good technique which they regarded as a Western imposition. (Rimsky-Korsakov saw the error of his ways, and went on to become one of the greatest teachers in Russian musical history).

Rachmaninoff studied at both the St Petersburg and Moscow conservatories; as a final year student at Moscow he so impressed Tchaikovsky that the senior composer offered to conduct his symphonic poem, *The Rock* in 1893. Sadly, Tchaikovsky's untimely death intervened, but it gives us a sense of how highly Rachmaninoff's original work was regarded, even though he was frequently seen as a pianist who composed. His response to Tchaikovsky's death was his second *Trio élégiaque*, modelled on Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio which itself was a memorial to Nikolai Rubinstein.

Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff were internationalist in outlook, yet their musics are suffused with 'Russianness' through the use of folk-melody, the sounds of orthodox chant and reference to the great works of Russian literature. In Rachmaninoff's case, his Russianness was sharpened by his long exile (he only took out US citizenship in the final months of his life despite having lived there from 1918).

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Piano Concerto No.1 in B flat minor, Op.23

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito
Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Andantino semplice
Allegro con fuoco

If it was fortuitous that Tchaikovsky succeeded at his first attempt, writing perhaps the ‘greatest piano concerto of all time’, then it is remarkable that he simultaneously created a new Russian genre. Excepting the earlier examples by his teacher, Anton Rubinstein (of whose works critics noted a lack of ‘Russianness’), Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto established a model renowned for drama and lyricism, marked by extraordinary virtuosity. Such attributes can be noted in later compositions by Rachmaninoff, Medtner, Scriabin and Prokofiev, to name just a few. The relative lateness in establishing a Russian concerto genre was a result of the Europe-leaning tastes of the Imperial court, art-music being an imported commodity until the middle of the 19th century. In Russian music, as in other disciplines, the distinctive characteristics of the land and its people were yet to be fully explored. It was not until Rubinstein created a music school in St Petersburg in the 1860s that native composers were able to receive professional training, and it was a young Tchaikovsky who achieved the title of ‘free artist’ in its first graduating year.

Written over six weeks late in 1874, the concerto is not Tchaikovsky’s only youthful work to find a permanent place in the repertoire – *Romeo and Juliet* (1869, later revised) and *Swan Lake* (1876) are distinguished inclusions – but it was the first to receive an international premiere. The dedicatee of the concerto, Hans von Bülow, performed the work in Boston, Massachusetts in 1875 to positive reviews, yet one wonders if the small band, consisting of only four first violins, were a match for the music’s potential. (A critic noted that, after a missed entry of the trombones in the first movement, von Bülow cried out ‘the brass may go to hell!’) Rather, it is likely that the potential of the new concerto was first realised in a performance in Moscow by Sergei Taneyev later that year, following an apparently mediocre performance by Gustav Kross in St Petersburg. Of Taneyev, the composer noted that he ‘could not wish to hear a better performance’, and he was touched that his Moscow student had dedicated himself to mastering the work.

And ‘mastery’ is what is required here of pianists. It had been to Anton Rubinstein’s younger brother, Nikolai – equally as gifted by all accounts – that Tchaikovsky had turned within days of the score’s completion, seeking advice about piano composition that only a professional could offer. Instead, and quite notoriously, he savaged the composition, devastating its composer with comments suggesting that, in all, only a few pages could be



Tchaikovsky in 1875

IN BRIEF

Composed in 1874, Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto remains a cornerstone of Russian music and of the broader Romantic repertoire. It is designed on an unprecedented scale and requires extraordinary technical prowess. And it is replete with wonderful music. Just why the pianist Nikolai Rubinstein initially told Tchaikovsky that it was rubbish is a mystery; the piece took no time to make an international sensation.

salvaged and that the remainder should be discarded. There has been speculation ever since over the reason for Rubinstein's reaction – ranging from jealousy to a tempestuous personality – but the defiant young composer remained true to his word, publishing the work exactly as it stood. In any event, Nikolai Rubinstein was soon to recant his position: as well as conducting the first Moscow performance with Taneyev, he performed it often as soloist in the years before his early death.

With hindsight, it might have been over the demanding solo part that Rubinstein voiced concerns, or about sections where piano textures might be lost beneath the orchestration. Similarly, it could have been about structural matters that are still difficult to explain today, chief of which is the famous melody that begins the concerto but which, inexplicably, never returns. (A melody which, furthermore, is technically in the 'wrong' key.) In this opening passage, Tchaikovsky eventually relented to advice, replacing the lightweight arpeggios that had previously accompanied the soaring melody with the now-famous double-octave chords (revised version, 1889). In terms of structure, it is the brisk, dotted theme that quietly follows which is the real first subject in this sonata-form movement. And here, as if to indicate to the world the ethnic authenticity of his music, Tchaikovsky follows in the style of the newly formed nationalist group of composers – the so-called *kuchka* – by using a Ukrainian folksong, 'Oy, kryatshe, kryatshe'.

The simple theme that opens the second movement typifies Tchaikovsky's innate gift for melody, the solo flute conjuring folk-like affinities. A central section – originally marked *Allegro vivace assai* but later escalated to *Prestissimo*, no doubt capitalising on the concerto's virtuosic appeal – briefly quotes a café waltz, *Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire*, well-known to the composer's circle of friends. And it is to another Ukrainian folksong, 'Vidy, vıdy, Ivan'ku', that Tchaikovsky turns for the principal theme of the finale, its dance-like cross-rhythms again evoking national character. The broadly lyrical melody that contrasts with this material twice succeeds in holding back the momentum, before the concerto arrives at a seemingly inevitable conclusion: a forceful octave cadenza traverses the entire keyboard, and moves head-long into an apotheosised statement of the movement's lyrical theme. With the pianist indefatigably leading the entire orchestra with fortissimo treble chords, it is a famous and satisfying ending. (And for more than a few of the composers who followed, one that proved irresistible to copy!)

SCOTT DAVIE © 2011/2013

Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto requires solo piano and an orchestra of pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in June 1938 under George Szell with soloist Allen McCristal and most recently in July 2015 under Vasily Petrenko with Simon Trpčeski, soloist.



Nikolai Rubinstein, who initially savaged the work.



Sergei Taneyev, of whom Tchaikovsky said he 'could not wish to hear a better performance'.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) Symphony No.2 in E minor, Op.27

Largo - Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Adagio

Finale: Allegro vivace

Rachmaninoff's symphonic debut was a disaster. In March 1897 the premiere of his First Symphony was so bad that critic Cesar Cui described it as sounding like 'a program symphony on the seven plagues of Egypt', and Rachmaninoff asked himself how the conductor, composer Alexander Glazunov, 'can conduct so badly. I am not speaking now of his conducting technique [one can't ask that of him] but about his musicianship. He feels nothing when he conducts. It's as if he understands nothing'. In fact it would seem that the fiasco was caused by Glazunov's being drunk, but whatever the reason, the experience plunged Rachmaninoff into a period of depression. As a result, he consulted well-known hypnotist Nikolai Dahl. He composed, or rather completed, nothing substantial for some three years.

The composer later recalled that 'my relations had told Dr Dahl that he must at all costs cure me of my apathetic condition and achieve such results that I would again begin to compose'. By the turn of the century Rachmaninoff's confidence had largely returned, and he was able to compose the Piano Concerto No.2 in 1901. The success of that work in turn inaugurated a string of major pieces: the Cello Sonata, Second Suite for Piano Duo, a number of choral works and two operas – *The Miserly Knight* and *Francesca da Rimini*, based on Dante, and one of many instances where Rachmaninoff's music seems preoccupied with notions of death and judgement in the hereafter.

In 1906, Rachmaninoff began work on his Second Symphony – though why he wanted to, given his experience with the First, is a mystery, and it cost him a great deal of effort. But its premiere in St Petersburg in 1908, with Rachmaninoff conducting, was a triumph. Moreover, the work won him his second Glinka Prize.

Until comparatively recently it was common for this substantial work to be given in a form which dispensed with up to a third of the music, and while the composer was partly responsible, his attitude to such butchery is clear from the story of his encounter with Eugene Ormandy in Philadelphia. The conductor asked Rachmaninoff to make some cuts to the work; after several hours the composer returned the score with two bars crossed out.



Sergei Rachmaninoff

IN BRIEF

It has been said that for Rachmaninoff that the second of anything came out better than the first. The Second Symphony only emerged after a period of depressive silence brought on by the fiasco of his first. A work of epic scale, it was often considered too long and played in cut version; restored to the composer's intentions it reveals a vast panorama of Romantic vistas.

It is a truism that cutting great works only makes them seem longer as the proportions of a work are distorted by too much material being removed. The Second Symphony is long but its structure is beautifully proportioned, and precisely as long as it needs to be.

The overall effect is spaciousness, in which long melodies unfurl at a relatively leisurely pace to give the impression of ultra-Romantic spontaneity. It is in four movements, beginning with a slow introduction that serves to build expectation and whet the appetite for the main material of the allegro to which it leads. It is almost always described as mysterious, with one writer suggesting that it 'surely' evokes the Russian steppe. The transition into the main allegro body of the movement is made by solo cor anglais, establishing a pattern in the work, where structural transitions are often announced by wind solos. The allegro is a study in contrasts, ranging between passages of intensely turbulent and serene music.

Rachmaninoff places the scherzo, or dance movement, second. This serves the important purpose of restoring an air of musical regularity and emotional predictability after the rollercoaster ride of the first movement. What could be more upbeat than the colourful wind scoring and bright horn calls of this scherzo, or its contrastingly long, songful melody? And in the central trio section, commentators are generally agreed that Rachmaninoff is evoking the bustle of village life complete with the deep tolling of church bells and a hymnal procession. But at the end of the movement, which is also the turning-point of the symphony, there is an unsettling moment: the lively music of the scherzo comes apart through the interventions of a brass chorale based on the *Dies irae*. This Gregorian chant describes the 'day of wrath' when humanity will be judged by God at the end of history when the dead shall rise from the ashes. Here the effect is a little like those religious images where the Grim Reaper stands unseen near a crowd of happy people.

Much of what has gone before has been derived from this theme. From the very opening gesture, the melodic material is dominated by notes whose contours outline a stepwise fall, a stepwise rise and wider fall. Rachmaninoff's structural sense is matched by an economy of thematic material.



Rachmaninoff at work

'The Second Symphony is long but its structure is beautifully proportioned, and precisely as long as it needs to be.'

Commentators have noted similarities between the adagio third movement and the love scene from Rachmaninoff's *Francesca da Rimini*, yet in this frank eroticism the *Dies irae* is never far below the music's surface. The movement begins with one of Rachmaninoff's most inspired, soaring themes (which has been prefigured in the first movement) for the first violins, full of unexpected yearning dissonances. This is succeeded by an equally gorgeous tune for clarinet solo and yet one more for strings and oboe. The climax of the movement, which grows out of the elaboration of these three melodies, is arguably the most powerful in the whole work and it dispels any pessimism in favour of a Tchaikovskian finale.

In the last movement Rachmaninoff achieves a kind of Beethovenian triumph. While the music revisits certain themes and moods from earlier in the work, it is clear that a watershed has been reached. The mood is buoyant, the tonality predominantly major and the down-up-down contour of the *Dies irae* is often turned literally upside down. Whether the work is programmatic in any real sense is unclear, and we can assume that Rachmaninoff, like Tchaikovsky, was suspicious of attempts to 'translate' his music. And Rachmaninoff was by no means religious, but in view of the 'Francesca' link and the references to the *Dies irae* it seems to be a work in which anguish and the ominous presence of death are dispelled by the power of love.

GORDON KERRY © 2007/2014

Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony calls for an orchestra of 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling cor anglais), 3 clarinets (1 bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 3 percussion and strings.

Bernard Heinze conducted the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's first performance of Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony in August 1939; the Orchestra's most recent performance was in September 2016 under Marcelo Lehninger.




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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS



DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC

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 Sydney Symphony Orchestra 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 Sydney Symphony Orchestra 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 Sydney Symphony'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.

2019 is David Robertson's sixth season as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

THE ORCHESTRA



David Robertson

THE LOWY CHAIR OF CHIEF
CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC
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