SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# Alessio Bax in Recital

25 MARCH CITY RECITAL HALL





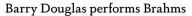
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### **CONCERT DIARY**

#### MARCH





MILLS Aeolian Caprices SIBELIUS Symphony No.7 BRAHMS Piano Concerto No.2

Lawrence Renes conductor Barry Douglas piano

Meet The Music Wed 27 Mar. 6.30pm Thursday Afternoon Symphony Thu 28 Mar. 1.30pm Emirates Metro Series Fri 29 Mar 8nm Great Classics Sat 30 Mar. 2pm

Sydney Opera House

Cocktail Hour Fri 29 Mar. 6pm

Utzon Room.

Sat 30 Mar. 6pm

APRIL









# Haydn and Beethoven

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN Improvisation on 'Ave Generosa' HAYDN arr. Oquev Cor Anglais Quintet (after the 'Gypsy Rondo' Piano Trio) BEETHOVEN arr. Boersma Serenade in D, Op.8

Musicians of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra

### Simone Lamsma performs Beethoven's Violin Concerto

**BEETHOVEN** Violin Concerto TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No.4

Alexander Shelley conductor Simone Lamsma violin

# David Drury

CONCERT HALL GRAND ORGAN RECITAL

Program includes: JS BACH Prelude and Fugue in C minor, BWV 546 SAINT-SAËNS Fantaisie No.1 SAINT-SAËNS arr. Lemare Danse macabre

David Drury organ

### Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix<sup>™</sup> in Concert

Let the wizarding world enchant you as the fifth film is projected onto a giant screen and the orchestra perform Nicholas Hooper's wonderful score. Classified M. HARRY POTTER characters, names and related indicia are © & ™ Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. Harry Potter Publishing Rights © JKR. (s19)

### Lisa Moore in Recital

GLASS Etude No.2 JANÁČEK In the Mists BEETHOVEN Sonata in E flat. Op.31 No.3 BRESNICK Ishi's Song SCHUMANN Waldszenen (Forest Scenes) **RZEWSKI** Piano Piece No.4 Lisa Moore piano

### Breakfast at Tiffany's in Concert

Audrey Hepburn dazzles in her legendary role as the deliciously eccentric Holly Golightly, a New York City socialite determined to marry a millionaire. Relive Henry Mancini's legendary score, including the beautiful Oscar® and Grammy® winning song Moon River, performed live to film.

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Sydney Opera House

Abercrombie & Kent Masters Series Wed 3 Apr. 8pm Fri 5 Apr, 8pm Sat 6 Apr. 8pm Mondays @ 7 Mon 8 Apr, 7pm Svdnev Opera House

Abercrombie & Kent

Tea & Symphony Fri 5 Apr, 11am Sydney Opera House

Wed 10 Apr, 7pm Thu 11 Apr, 7pm Fri 12 Apr. 7pm Sat 13 Apr, 2pm Sat 13 Apr, 7pm Svdnev Opera House

International Pianists in Recital Mon 29 Apr, 7pm City Recital Hall



Sat 4 May, 7pm Sun 5 May, 2pm Sydney Opera House

# WELCOME



We are very proud to present the Sydney Symphony's International Pianists in Recital series. This four-part series boasts a variety of composers that illustrate each pianist's individual style and interpretation of these classical masterpieces. We're thrilled that the pianos being used are in themselves masterpieces of great craft and ingenuity and are delighted that their acoustic beauty supports performances of such brilliance.

At Theme & Variations Piano Services we strive for excellence and work with each pianist to deliver perfection, while upholding the highest standard of technical services on the Australian concert stage. It's an honour to have prepared the magnificent Steinway Concert Grand you will hear tonight.

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Our Willoughby showroom boasts a beautiful range of upright and grand pianos to suit all means and abilities. Our team of experienced technicians are also dedicated to bringing out the best in every piano – great and small – across our musical community. We invite our Sydney Symphony guests to visit us.

These recitals will be truly unforgettable, and we hope you will be thrilled by the pianistic brilliance in this year's program. We look forward to sharing this experience with you and congratulate the Sydney Symphony Orchestra once again for bringing these fine, inspirational artists to our city.



Lun Vasta

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## **2019 CONCERT SEASON**

### INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS

MONDAY 25 MARCH, 7PM

CITY RECITAL HALL



# Alessio Bax in Recital

### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

### Concerto in D minor, BWV 974

(after Oboe Concerto in C minor by Alessandro Marcello) [Andante e spiccato]

Adagio Presto

### SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)

### Variations on a Theme of Corelli

- Theme. Andante 1. Poco piu mosso 2. L'istesso tempo 3. Tempo di Minuetto 4. Andante 5. Allegro (ma non tanto) 6. L'istesso tempo 7. Vivace 8. Adagio misterioso 9. Un poco piu mosso 10. Allegro scherzando 11. Allegro vivace
- 12. L'istesso tempo 13. Agitato Intermezzo 14. Andante (come prima) 15. L'istesso tempo 16. Allegro vivace 17. Meno mosso 18. Allegro con brio 19. Piu mosso. Agitato 20. Piu mosso Coda. Andante



# sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director



Tonight's concert will be broadcast by ABC Classic on 31 March at 5pm.

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Pre-concert talk by Scott Davie at 6.15pm in the First Floor Reception Room.

Estimated durations: 10 minutes, 19 minutes, 20 minute interval, 16 minutes, 8 minutes, 18 minutes.

The concert will conclude at approximately 8.45pm.

Cover image: Alessio Bax (Photo by Lisa-Marie Mazzucco)

### INTERVAL

### LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA (1904–1975)

### Quaderno musicale di Annalibera

Simbolo Accenti Contrapunctus primus Linee Contrapunctus secondus Fregi Andantino amoroso e Contrapunctus tertius Ritmi Color Ombre Quartina

### FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

St François d'Assise: La prédication aux oiseaux Après une Lecture de Dante: Fantasia quasi sonata (from Années de Pèlerinage: Deuxijeme Année: Italie, S161)







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# THE ARTISTS



### Alessio Bax piano

Alessio Bax came to world prominence with First Prize wins at both the Leeds and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions. He is known now on four continents, not only as a recitalist and chamber musician, but as a concerto soloist who has appeared with more than 100 orchestras, including the London and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Dallas Symphony, NHK Symphony in Japan, St. Petersburg Philharmonic with Yuri Temirkanov, and the City of Birmingham Symphony with Sir Simon Rattle. Recent appearances have included Brahms' Second Piano Concerto with the Fort Worth Symphony under Miguel Harth-Bedoya and Samuel Barber's concerto with the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra and Edo de Waart.

This season, Bax revisits the two concertos heard on his album, *Alessio Bax Plays Mozart*. He made his Boston Symphony Orchestra debut in January playing Mozart's C minor concerto (K.491) with Sir Andrew Davis. On this tour, he leads Mozart's B flat concerto (K.595) from the keyboard in his first performances with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Bax completes his Australia-NZ tour with solo recitals and the Grieg concerto with Tadaaki Otaka

that marks his Auckland Philharmonia debut. Other forthcoming appearances include four-hand recitals with Lucille Chung in Connecticut and São Paulo, Brazil, a chamber concert at Alice Tully Hall for the Chamber Society of Lincoln Center, New York, and a concerto appearance with the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra, Florida (Grieg Piano Concerto). Summer sees his appearance at Tuscany's Incontri in Terra di Siena festival, where he serves as Artistic Director.

Alessio Bax's recordings include Beethoven's Emperor Concerto with the Southbank Sinfonia, a four-hand piano recording of music by Poulenc with Lucille Chung, and Lullabies for Mila (works by Bach, Beethoven, Grieg, Mozart, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin).

Alessio Bax graduated with top honors at the age of 14 from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, where his teacher was Angela Montemurro. He studied in France with Francois-Joël Thiollier and attended the Chigiana Academy in Siena under Joaquín Achúcarro. In 1994 he moved to Dallas to continue his studies with Achúcarro at Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts, where he is now the Johnson-Prothro Artist-in-Residence.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Bach hardly ventured outside his native Saxony, yet wrote some of the greatest Italian music ever. While employed by the Duke of Weimar (1708–1717), Bach made an intensive study of the music of Venetian composers, transcribing for keyboard versions of scores brought from Amsterdam. The greatest of these composers was Antonio Vivaldi, but Bach also made transcriptions of works by the brothers Alessandro and Benedetto Marcello.

The D minor concerto for solo harpsichord, BWV974, is based on a work attributed at various times to Albinoni, Vivaldi, and Benedetto Marcello; research in the mid-20th century has established it as based on a C minor Oboe Concerto by Alessandro Marcello. The piece follows the Vivaldian concerto design, which Bach would make his own, and which would become standard, of two fast(ish) movements framing a lyrical slow one.

The opening has a tensile momentum provided by a unison *ritornello* that consists of wide-leaping intervals. This is answered by more elaborate, harmonised material that, naturally derives from the oboe part. This is even starker in the *Adagio*, where simple repeated chords in the left hand support an ever more ornate and ecstatic song sounded in the right. The piece concludes with a lively gigue in which Bach distributes the rapid passagework equally between the two hands.

Bach's Italian influence was mainly Venetian and Vivaldian, while his great colleague, Handel, had worked in Rome with Arcangelo Corelli, the second most influential composer of his generation. Corelli's D minor Violin Sonata, Op.5 No.12 (1700) is based on contrasting movements, each derived from a popular repetitive dance tune (known by the Portuguese name La folia) in triple metre with a simple series of chords that outline four-bar phrases. Violinist Fritz Kreisler introduced the sonata to Rachmaninoff, who, in 1931 produced his last original solo work for piano, the 'Corelli Variations'. Like Corelli and numerous Baroque composers, and later Liszt, Rachmaninoff used La folia as a musical cell to generate a huge number of often tiny, but strongly profiled variations. Rachmaninoff himself affected to hate the piece, describing it to his colleague Nikolai Medtner as 'boring' and admitting that he freely left out variations if the audience coughed or was otherwise restive. This rather spoils the architectural effect that the composer no doubt intended: the theme and first 13 variations are in D minor, but an Intermezzo, which begins like a Bach toccata and morphs into Lisztian cascades, modulates into the distant key of D flat, from which the work makes its way back to the original key and theme.

In his compendious *The Art of Fugue*, Bach famously used the letters of his name (which in English correspond to the notes B flat-A-C-B natural) to create a musical motif. Numerous composers, such as Schumann, Liszt and Brahms, used the motif in homage, but its tightly wound semitone-tone-semitone shape made an especially perfect fit for composers of atonal and serial music in the 20th century.



Bach by Elias Gottlob Haussmann, 1746



Rachmaninoff

In 1935 Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccola heard a performance of Webern's Concerto, Op.24. He was stunned that there was an artist who could 'express the greatest number of ideas in the fewest possible words'. Twelve-note serialism, he decided was not a 'blind chain, as so many say...but rather a language that comprises in itself the possibility of the most diverse differentiations'. The composer once wrote that 'if one side of my nature demanded tragedy, the other attempted an escape towards serenity' and musical serenity for him included not only the lapidary textures of Webern but the music of the Barogue. His absorption of twelve-note technique had been gradual, but by the early 1950s he was composing confidently by fusing serialism and his own native lyricism. The title of his *Musical Notebook* for Annalibera of 1952 is a reference to Bach's Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach, and the musical material that underpins the whole work stresses the B-A-C-H motif. The pieces that make up the set are all short, averaging a minute or so to play, and mostly crystallise a single image or idea. The opening 'Symbols' is in a ternary form, using a rhetoric of repeated motifs. The title of 'Accents' is self-explanatory, while the third movement is one of three abstract pieces in canon. This one, as scholar Jacqueline Ravensbergen has noted, is a mensuration canon: at first we hear the 12-note theme stated in lines. that move in parallel but at different speeds to create a sense of echoing space. The play of lines is the subject of the following movement, and this is followed by a canon in inversion. The immobility of 'Friezes' forms a foil to the hybrid seventh movement, whose form is a 'crab canon', where the themes move in seemingly opposite directions. 'Rhythms', 'Colours' and 'Shadows' are evoked in techniques which range from forceful to Debussyan delicacy, and the set concludes with a reflective 'Quatrain'.

In later life Franz Liszt forwent his career as a virtuoso, and his then-scandalous domestic arrangements, and in 1863, after the untimely deaths of two of his children he retreated to the monastery of Madonna del Rosario outside of Rome. He experienced the revival of his childhood Catholicism (and would in due course take minor orders in the Church) and was visited in his cell by none other than Pope Pius IX soon after moving in. When asked to play something, Liszt obliged with the first of his two 'Franciscan' Legends, which depicts St Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds. (The Pope responded by singing 'Casta Diva' from Norma to Liszt's accompaniment.) Scholar Alan Walker retails the story that Liszt was inspired by the clouds of sparrows that frequented the mountain nearby; Liszt's imaginary birdsong, which we hear at the start of the piece, is much more euphonious, before some recitative, and then more chorale-like textures, represent the saint's admonition to the birds to praise God all the time.



Luigi Dallapiccola

What happens to those who don't, and those who do, is evoked in Liszt's 'Dante Sonata' begun in Italy in 1839. Here Liszt provides musical expression of isolated imagery from Dante's account of his voyage through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise in his Commedia. Reflecting the grim 'Abandon hope all ye that enter here' inscribed above the gates of Hell, Liszt offers a baleful fanfare stressing the tritone (A-E flat), which theorists once regarded as 'the devil in music.' Liszt left no descriptive program, but the music might evoke the raining fire, the endless gales, the various tortures of hell, the hope of Purgatory and the serene beauty of heaven. After the fanfare, which recurs structurally, we hear 'horrible cries' of the damned in a presto agitato - notionally in D minor but using all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. The second theme, or subject, is in complete contrast, a chorale, sounded first among deafening cascades in octaves. This, Walker speculates, is a vision of Hell's Monarch, 'the creature eminent in beauty once'. This theme later seems to depict, after much roiling anguish, a glimpse of heaven. The piece closes with the fanfare, now in a stable D major.



Liszt by Henri Lehmann ca 1839

GORDON KERRY © 2019





The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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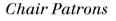
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