

SYDNEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Cocktail Hour
Chamber music of

Boccherini and Glazunov

21 – 23 JUNE

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
UTZON ROOM




sydney symphony
orchestra
David Robertson
The Lowy Chair of
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Boccherini and Glazunov

Next time you're in Melbourne look in on Boccherini at the National Gallery of Victoria, where, as you can see, he is portrayed in his 20s with his cello. Born in Lucca, by the time of his portrait he had established himself as both cellist and composer. Boccherini was educated in music at first by his father, a singer and bass-player, and then by a prominent cellist; by his 20s, he had established himself as both cellist and composer. He settled in Madrid in 1770, engaged as 'chamber composer and virtuoso' by the King's brother Don Luis at the palace of Aranjuez; when Luis married a much-younger commoner and was effectively exiled to the provinces, Boccherini (as part of a considerable music staff) went too, and, like Haydn at Esterhazy, found in isolation the perfect environment for composition.

Luis had retained a full time string quartet for which Boccherini composed prolifically, though dismissed by some as 'Haydn's wife' for the overall gentle and charming tone that he most often adopts. He is best known today for his celebrated Minuet (old-movie tragi-comics will know it from Ealing's *The Ladykillers*) and his evocation of urban nightfall in his *La musica notturna delle strade di Madrid*, and its famous 'Ritirata' ending, which makes an appearance in *Master and Commander*. He was especially fond of string quintets with two cellos, of which he wrote about 150. But in 1900, violinist Johann Lauterbach (1832–1918) felt there was always room for one more, so made this pastiche by borrowing movements from four different quintets by Boccherini. Lauterbach took the first movement of Quintet in C, G.349 (1789), a relatively restrained *Andante con moto* that exploits the richness of the two cellos. The Menuetto is the third movement (transposed) from Quintet in C minor, G.314 with a trio section taken from 3rd movement of Quintet in G minor, G.318 (both 1779); while the slow movement comes from the third movement of the Quintet in E flat, G.325 (1780). Both give the first cello some prominence, reminding us that Boccherini wrote these for himself to play with the Prince's in-house quartet, though in the slow movement there is a beautiful duet with the first violin. The finale is that of the Quintet in C, G.310 (1779), a rondo, with contrasting episodes between repeated statements of the main theme.

FRIDAY 21 JUNE | 6PM
SATURDAY 22 JUNE | 6PM
SUNDAY 23 JUNE | 3PM

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Luigi Boccherini in the National Gallery of Victoria (Everard Studley Miller Bequest 1962)

**LUIGI BOCCHERINI
(1743–1805)
String Quintet in C, G.378**

Andante con moto
Menuet and Trio
Grave
Rondo (Allegro con moto)
assembled by Johann
Lauterbach



This portrait of Boccherini – painted when he was in his early 20s and enjoying his first successes as a virtuoso – can be seen in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (Everard Studley Miller Bequest, 1962). A painting from the Italian school, it is often wrongly attributed to Pompeo Batoni. It is perhaps most interesting for its representation of cello technique in the 1760s – there is no spike, instead the cello is supported on the calves, and the convex-shaped bow is held closer to the centre, well away from the frog.

In 1882, the fiercely nationalist composer Mili Balakirev conducted a new symphony in St Petersburg that was warmly received, especially when the composer, in school uniform, took a bow. Balakirev had sent Alexander Glazunov to his colleague Rimsky-Korsakov for private lessons in 1879. Rimsky-Korsakov later described Glazunov as 'a charming boy with beautiful eyes, who played the piano very clumsily'. By contrast, he described Glazunov's development in composition as taking place 'not from day to day but by the hour'.

The First Symphony and First String Quartet (written later the same year) were immediately published by the philanthropist Mitrofan Belyayev, who ploughed a fortune made as a timber merchant into supporting Russian artists. Belyayev became a leading figure in Russian music, publishing the works of 35 composers and promoting concerts of Russian music both at home and abroad; Glazunov travelled with Belyayev to the West in 1884, meeting, among others, Liszt, and attending the Western European premiere of his own First Symphony. A rapprochement between Western and Russian music emerges in Glazunov's music. And as a distinguished teacher, and later director of the St Petersburg Conservatory, he had major influence on composers such as Shostakovich and Prokofiev.

Belyayev hosted a regular series of Friday night concerts, and commissioned a number of chamber works from Glazunov for these events. The String Quintet, Op.39, was composed in 1891 when the 26 year-old composer was recovering from a creative crisis brought on, perhaps, by his considerable youthful successes, and it introduces a new period of fertility.

Like Schubert and Boccherini, Glazunov's quintet has a second cello, and the piece, in four substantial movements, follows the formal scheme of a late classical chamber work. The first movement is in sonata design, allowing for a dramatically wide range of musical moods (expressed by sudden tempo changes and bold contrasts of colour). Glazunov lightens the mood by placing the *Scherzo* second; the cheerful pizzicato violin figurations over the viola's drone may evoke folk music, but the sound-world of this movement resonates in the subsequent quartets of Debussy and Ravel. The *Andante sostenuto* is a beautiful elegy, featuring, at first, the second cello, and concluding with seraphic harmonics. The *Finale* is a rondo, whose energetic 'Slavic' theme is contrasted with more lyrical, reflective episodes before a frenzied coda.



**ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV
(1865–1936)**

**String Quintet in A major,
op.39**

Allegro

Scherzo: Allegro moderato

Andante sostenuto

Finale: Allegro moderato

About the 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 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 groundbreaking 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.

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