

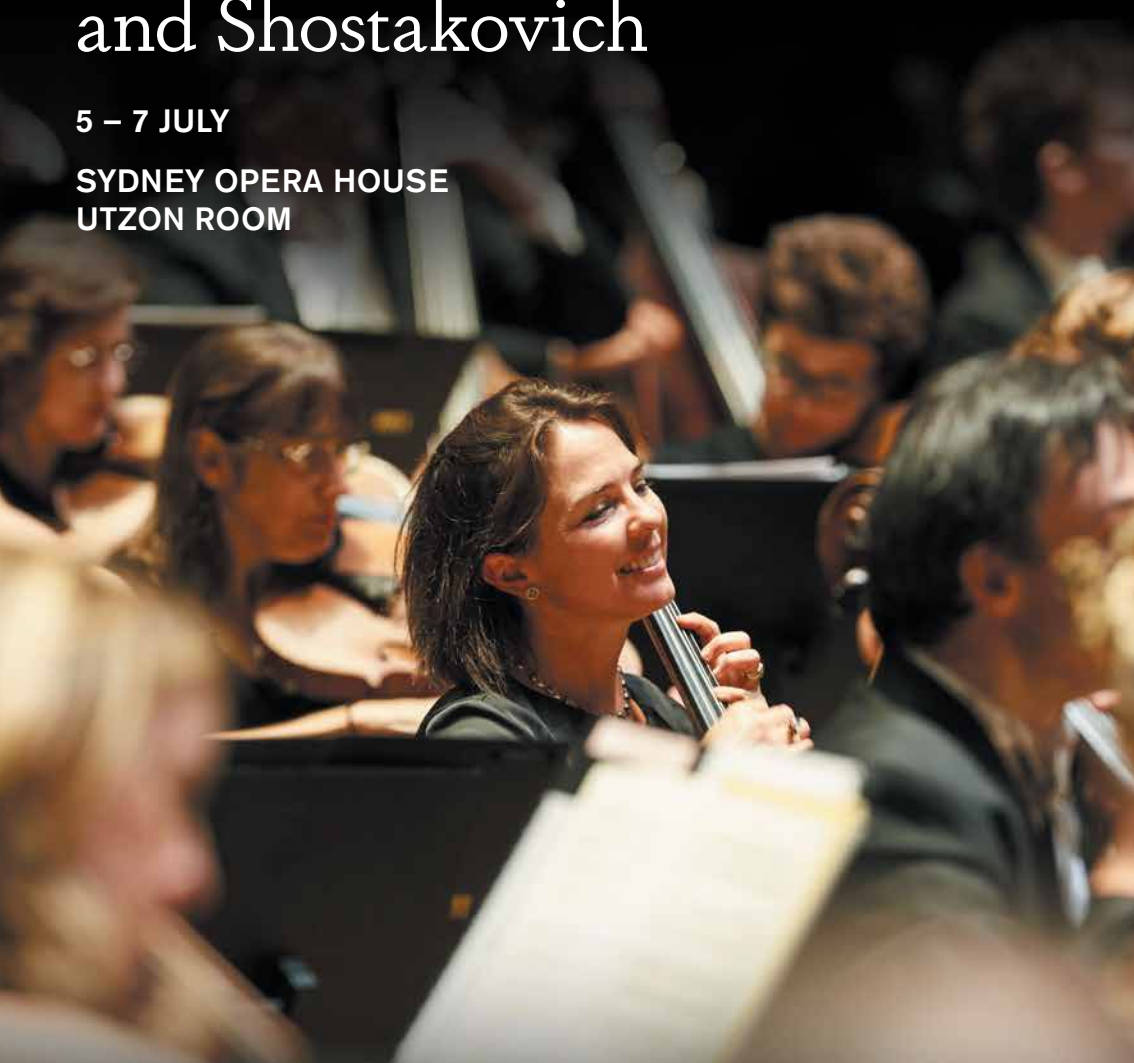
SYDNEY  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

Cocktail Hour  
Chamber music of

# Dohnányi and Shostakovich

5 – 7 JULY

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE  
UTZON ROOM



  
sydney symphony  
orchestra  
David Robertson  
The Lowy Chair of  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

  
Emirates  
Principal Partner

# Dohnányi and Shostakovich

Born in the city known as Pozsony to Hungarians, Pressburg to German speakers and Bratislava to Slovaks (of whose republic it is currently the capital) Dohnányi's first musical training was from his father, an amateur cellist. It rapidly became clear that the boy was preternaturally gifted as a pianist, but rather than travel to Vienna or Berlin, the young Dohnányi set a precedent by deciding to study at the Budapest Academy. His friend and colleague, the younger Bela Bartók followed his example, and in doing so helped to establish the Academy as a major musical institution.

He was appointed head of the Academy by a left-wing government in 1919 and sacked later that year by its right-wing successor. In the 1930s he was reappointed to the Academy, resigning in 1941 in protest at the Nazi race laws then in force in Hungary. In 1945 he left Europe, eventually settling in Florida.

Dohnányi was one of the *troika* of composers, along with Bartók and Kodály, who laid the foundation for modern Hungarian music. The more senior Dohnányi, especially in his role as conductor, was a great supporter of his younger colleagues. His own work, however, is less steeped in the idioms of Hungarian and Balkan folk music than the others'; rather he attempted to bring together the harmonic expressivity of Romantics like Liszt and Wagner with the classical forms which Brahms had successfully revived.

His early *Serenade*, like those of Brahms, resurrects the late classical idea of the multi-movement suite of contrasting lyrical and dance like movements framed by marches. His musical language is based in the rich harmony of late Romanticism, and like Beethoven and Mozart, Dohnányi includes a movement in variation form. The whole piece is inflected with the accents of Hungarian folk-music from time to time.

The vernacular music for the tango – the result of a mixture, perhaps, of African slave music and dances from the Iberian peninsula – became the most popular dance form in the Argentinian capital in the early 20th century and, thanks for composers like Astor Piazzolla, influenced 'classical' music as well. Half a world away, the tango established itself in the Finland as early as 1913 thanks to the ballet dancer, Toivo Niskanen, who learned the dance in Paris. Over the succeeding decades Finnish tango became astoundingly popular; today the annual tango festival at Seinajoki draws a crowd of

FRIDAY 5 JULY | 6PM  
SATURDAY 6 JULY | 6PM  
SUNDAY 7 JULY | 3PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE  
UTZON ROOM



**Ernő Dohnányi**

**ERNŐ DOHNÁNYI**  
**(1877–1960)**

**Serenade in C Major, Op.10**  
**for string trio**

*Marcia*

*Romanza*

*Scherzo*

*Tema con variazioni*

*Rondo (finale)*

**Finnish Tango**  
**(arr. Peter Grans after**  
**traditional tunes)**

*Baden-Baden Potpourri*

*Memories from the City of Turku*

150,000 people. Fintango developed its own distinctive characteristics, both in its dance steps and in the original music composed and performed figures such as Eino Grön.

Conductor Jukka-Pekka Saraste recently said that 'Tango is a mirror of the Finnish soul, giving direct access to the melancholy that is an essential part of our nature. We like to drink alone on the long nights.'

Dmitri Shostakovich entered the Conservatory in St Petersburg (briefly Leningrad) in 1919, where he was a student of Maximilian Steinberg, a traditionalist who emphasised technical proficiency. Towards the end of his student years Shostakovich produced two works, in tandem, that formed the foundations of his later work: his graduation piece, the Symphony No.1, which made him almost instantly famous worldwide, and the Two Pieces for String Octet. Steinberg had serious reservations about both works – though he encouraged Shostakovich to keep at them, despite 'pulling a sour face and expressing the hope that when I am 30 I will no longer write such wild music.'

The Octet was originally to have been a multi-movement suite, and Shostakovich began by composing the Prelude and a fugue, later discarded, in 1924. He set it aside briefly until January 1925 when it was recast in its present form and was published the following year. The composer joked to a friend that it showed he 'was becoming more of a modernist', but, more seriously, regarded the Scherzo at the time as 'the best thing I've ever written'.

The D minor Prelude, like those of many a Baroque suite, is a substantial overture marked Adagio in several contrasting sections. Its opening gesture of sombre chords gives way to a solo violin arabesque and tentative counterpoint. A faster central section with fragmentary melodies and insistently repeated motifs gives way to a short passage of virtuosic violin writing supported by isolated chords, and a return to the adagio tempo of the opening for a quiet close.

The G minor Scherzo even more clearly looks ahead. Insistent and even obsessive, it is full of deliberately grotesque or sardonic sounds using extremes of register and timbre. Sadly for Steinberg, Shostakovich would go on to write just such wild music, but doing so would help bring about his first fall from grace in 1936.

GORDON KERRY © 2019



**Dmitri Shostakovich in 1950**

**DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH  
(1906–1975)  
Two Pieces for String Octet,  
Op.11**

*Prelude  
Scherzo*



*Where service takes*  
**CENTRE STAGE**



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PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS



## DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PATRON Professor The Hon. Dame Marie Bashir *AD CVO*

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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# Musicians of the Sydney Symphony

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## Dohnányi

Andrew Haveron *violin*  
Tobias Breider *viola*  
Umberto Clerici *cello*

## Gran

David Campbell *double bass*  
Steven Larson *double bass*  
Richard Lynn *double bass*  
Jaen Pallandi *double bass*

## Shostakovich

Claire Herrick *violin*  
Emma Jezek *violin*  
Marianne Edwards *violin*  
Alexandra Mitchell *violin*  
Tobias Breider *viola*  
Sandro Costantino *viola*  
Umberto Clerici *cello*  
Kristy Conrau *cello*

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*Karen Moses Chair*

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*Council Chair*

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