

SYDNEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Simone Lamsma performs Beethoven's Violin Concerto

3, 5, 6 & 8 APRIL

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE



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sydney symphony
orchestra
David Robertson
The Lowy Chair of
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APRIL



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

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



Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix™ 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.*

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



Lisa Moore in Recital

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

Lisa Moore piano

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



MAY



Breakfast at Tiffany's in Concert

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The Sydney Symphony celebrates Paul Goodchild

***MACENS** The Space Between Stars
 ^**SIBELIUS** Finlandia
LOVELOCK Trumpet Concerto
NIELSEN Symphony No.4, The Inextinguishable

Jessica Cottis conductor
 Paul Goodchild trumpet

Meet the Music
Wed 8 May, 6.30pm*
 Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 9 May, 1.30pm^
 Emirates Metro Series
Fri 10 May, 8 pm^
 Sydney Opera House



Yulianna Avdeeva performs Chopin's Piano Concerto No.1

MEYER Hommage à Johannes Brahms
CHOPIN Piano Concerto No.1
BRAHMS orch. Schoenberg
 Piano Quartet in G minor

Andrey Boreyko conductor
 Yulianna Avdeeva piano

Abercrombie & Kent
 Masters Series
Wed 15 May, 8pm
Fri 17 May, 8pm
Sat 18 May, 8pm
 Sydney Opera House



Emma Matthews sings Mozart Arias

SCHUBERT Rosamunde: Highlights
MOZART Voi avete un cor fedele
 The Marriage of Figaro: E Susanna non vien! ... Dove sono
 Ah se in ciel, benigne stelle
SCHUBERT Symphony No.3

Umberto Clerici conductor
 Emma Matthews soprano

Mozart in the City
Thu 30 May, 7pm
 City Recital Hall

WELCOME



Welcome to this concert in the Abercrombie & Kent Masters Series.

We are delighted to have entered into a new multi-year partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, a partnership which I believe celebrates both companies' passion for excellence, for providing inspiring experiences, and for transporting, literally and figuratively, audiences and guests to other worlds.

For those of you who are not yet familiar with Abercrombie & Kent, our company was born on safari in East Africa in 1962. In the decades since, A&K has grown to become the benchmark for luxury travel adventure worldwide, taking inquisitive, cultured, discriminating travellers to the ends of the earth in inimitable A&K style. We now have a global network of 55 offices and more than 2,500 travel experts on the ground around the world, and we create hand-crafted private and small group journeys to more than 100 countries and to every continent.

Abercrombie & Kent has always believed that truly great travel – being somewhere amazing, with an open heart and an expert guide – helps make the world a bigger and a better place. Like great music, it allows us to see ourselves, to see others and to see the world through a new lens, in an ever-new light.

We're looking forward to sharing the Sydney Symphony experience with more of our travellers, and the Abercrombie & Kent experience with the Orchestra's supporters. I hope you enjoy tonight's performance.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sujata Raman" with a horizontal line underneath.

Sujata Raman
Regional Managing Director
Australia & Asia Pacific
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**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson
The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor
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WEDNESDAY 3 APRIL, 8PM
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SATURDAY 6 APRIL, 8PM
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MONDAY 8 APRIL, 7PM
.....
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

Simone Lamsma performs Beethoven's Violin Concerto

Alexander Shelley *conductor*
Simone Lamsma *violin*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Violin Concerto in D, Op.61

Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto –
Rondo (Allegro)

INTERVAL

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)
Symphony No.4 in F minor, Op.36

Andante sostenuto – *Moderato con anima* –
Moderato assai, quasi Andante – *Allegro vivo*
Andantino in modo di canzona
Scherzo (Pizzicato ostinato) – *Allegro*
Finale (Allegro con fuoco)



Monday's concert will be broadcast on
ABC Classic on Thursday 11 April at 1pm.

.....
Pre-concert talk by Zoltán Szabó
45 minutes before the performance in
the Northern Foyer.

.....
Estimated durations: 42 minutes,
20 minute interval, 44 minutes.

.....
The concert will conclude at
approximately 10pm (9pm Monday).



Cover image: Simone Lamsma
(Photo by Otto van den Toorn)



Principal Partner

THE ARTISTS



Alexander Shelley *conductor*

Alexander Shelley succeeded Pinchas Zukerman as Music Director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra in September 2015. The ensemble has since been praised as "an orchestra transformed ... hungry, bold, and unleashed" (Ottawa Citizen) and Alexander's programming credited for turning the orchestra "almost overnight ... into one of the more audacious orchestras in North America." (Maclean's Magazine). Born in London in October 1979, Alexander, the son of celebrated concert pianists, studied cello and conducting in Germany and first gained widespread attention when he was unanimously awarded first prize at the 2005 Leeds Conductors' Competition. In August 2017 Alexander concluded his tenure as Chief Conductor of the Nürnberger Symphoniker, a position he held since September 2009. The partnership was hailed by press and audience alike as a golden era for the orchestra, where he transformed the ensemble's playing, education work and international touring activities. In January 2015 he assumed the role of Principal Associate Conductor of London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with whom he curates an annual series of concerts at Cadogan Hall and tours both nationally and internationally. Described as "a natural communicator both on and off the podium" (Daily Telegraph) Alexander works regularly with the leading orchestras of Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australasia, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Gothenburg Symphony,

Stockholm Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Sao Paulo Symphony and the Melbourne and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras. This season's collaborations include debuts with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Belgique, Orchestre Metropolitain Montreal, Orquesta Sinfonica de Valencia, and Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; alongside returns to MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig, Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. He will also embark on an extensive tour of Europe with National Arts Centre Orchestra performing in cities such as London, Paris, Stockholm and Copenhagen. Alexander's operatic engagements have included *The Merry Widow* and Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* (Den Kongelige Opera); *La Bohème* (Opera Lyra/National Arts Centre), *Iolanta* (Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen), *Così fan Tutte* (Opéra National de Montpellier), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera North) in 2015 and he led a co-production of Harry Somers' *Louis Riel* in 2017 with the NACO and Canadian Opera Company.



Simone Lamsma *violin*

With an extensive repertoire of over 60 concertos, Dutch violinist Simone Lamsma has appeared with orchestras such as the Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra Washington DC, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony, Les Siècles, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, BBC Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic, and Hong Kong Philharmonic. Recent highlights have included her debut with the New York Philharmonic performing Britten's Violin Concerto under Jaap van Zweden. Past seasons have also been marked by premieres of new works, such as the world premiere of a violin concerto by Matijs de Roo during the ZaterdagMatinee series at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and the French première of Michel van der Aa's Violin Concerto with the Orchestre National de Lyon. In May 2018 Simone Lamsma was invited by King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of The Netherlands to perform during their official state visit to Luxembourg. The remainder of her 2018-19 season sees performances of Korngold's Violin Concerto with the Warsaw Philharmonic and Fabien Gabel and the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (Ireland) and Kazuki Yamada, and the Dvořák A minor concerto with the Hallé Orchestra and Sir Mark Elder.

A dedicated chamber musician, Simone Lamsma's recital appearances have included debuts in London's Wigmore Hall and New York's Carnegie Hall in March 2017 with pianist Robert Kulek.

Simone Lamsma's most recent CD features Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto and Sofia Gubaidulina's *In Tempus praesens* with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic under James Gaffigan and Reinbert de Leeuw. Her previous recording was a recital of works by Mendelssohn, Janáček and Schumann with Robert Kulek.

Simone Lamsma began studying violin at the age of five and moved to the UK at age 11 to study at the Menuhin School. She made her debut with the North Netherlands Orchestra performing Paganini's Violin Concerto No.1 and continued her studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Hu Kun and Maurice Hasson. Among her honours is an Associate of the RAM, for significant contribution to her field. Simone Lamsma plays the 'Mlynarski' Stradivarius (1718) on loan to her from an anonymous benefactor.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Ludwig van Beethoven Violin Concerto in D, Op.61

Allegro ma non troppo

Larghetto –

Rondo (Allegro)

Beethoven wrote only a small number of concertos, but his five piano concertos and the violin concerto have become, every one of them, standards of the repertoire. Beethoven's only violin concerto was preceded by a partially complete first movement for violin and orchestra from his youth in Bonn, and the two romances for violin and orchestra, from 1795 and 1800-02 (and also by the first nine of his ten sonatas for violin and piano, including the *Kreutzer Sonata*). These were Beethoven's preparation for the great concerto he was to write, apparently with speed and certainty, in 1806. The soloist for whom he wrote it, Franz Clement (1780–1842), was a child prodigy who made his debut aged nine.

Nothing had been written for the violin on this scale before, no work in which the soloist and orchestra shared in so elaborate and symphonic a discourse. Even now, when the greatness of Beethoven's Violin Concerto is not in question, it remains a supreme challenge for violinists. At first the audience and critics in Vienna failed to understand the concerto, perhaps not surprisingly given the circumstances in which it was first performed in 1806. Franz Clement played the first movement in the first part of the program, and the slow movement and finale in the second. In between he played a sonata of his own, on one string with the violin held upside down. The concerto can hardly have been adequately rehearsed, since Beethoven was late with the manuscript, and Clement virtually had to read it at sight (although not entirely, because he had probably advised the composer on the technicalities of the solo part).

Beethoven, making a dreadful pun, offered it as a 'concerto per clemenza pour Clement', meaning either that he presented it with apologies, or that he had mercy ('clemency') on the violinist! Beethoven's Violin Concerto established itself as a supreme masterpiece only when later soloists, from Joseph Joachim in the mid-19th century onwards, made its case with the thorough preparation it deserved.

There are affinities in this concerto with Beethoven's Fifth and Seventh Symphonies. The opening contains a motif which runs right through the movement: the four quiet drum taps which are heard before the woodwind enter with the first theme. (Actually there are five taps: the fifth is heard under the first wind note.) The figure recurs both in its four-note form (in which it seems to move the music on), and as five notes, with the fifth emphasised as it sounds the first beat of the next bar, giving a feeling of finality.

Keynotes



Beethoven in 1806

BEETHOVEN

Born Bonn, 1770

Died Vienna, 1827

Beethoven wrote only a small number of solo concertos, but his five concertos for piano (his own instrument) and the violin concerto have become repertoire standards. He also completed the Triple Concerto for violin, cello and piano, and during his youth in Bonn he began a violin concerto and composed two romances for violin and orchestra. These works, together with his violin sonatas, laid the groundwork for the great masterpiece that he composed with such assurance in 1806.

VIOLIN CONCERTO

Beethoven's Violin Concerto was composed for its first soloist, Franz Clement (1780–1842). After the premiere, the critics praised the concerto's originality and beauty, but they were puzzled too. They were used to the brilliantly virtuosic concertos of composer-violinists such as Viotti and Spohr, and Beethoven's elegant concerto tends to highlight the inherent drama of its lyrical themes rather than the expected confrontation between virtuoso and orchestra. The concerto begins with five taps from the timpani, and this motif turns out to be an important gesture, dominating the radiant first movement. The second movement is a set of variations on a theme, and Beethoven links it seamlessly to the finale with a transition for the soloist. Tradition has it that Clement suggested the leaping main theme for the finale himself.

The three themes which follow are each derived from the basic idea of a rising scale. The solo violin's wonderful first entry comes, in contrast, in a rising arpeggio, each note preceded by a grace note an octave below. Beethoven is in an expansive mood: even when the music is at its most forceful, it is serene, ordered and of elevated beauty. This is in contrast with the concentrated power and dynamism of – say – the Fifth Symphony of 1807-08. Perhaps the most typical passage of the first movement of the Violin Concerto comes just before the recapitulation, where an episode in G minor, in the words of one admirer, 'distils the quintessence of the concerto's subjective poetry.'

In the recapitulation itself, the subtlety of Beethoven's orchestration, especially for the bassoons and horns, can be appreciated as it could not in the exposition, when the listener's attention was on the themes themselves. Beethoven did not compose a cadenza himself, but many great violinists, including Joachim and Kreisler, have remedied the deficiency. The coda which follows presents the theme in all its simplicity, played by the soloist over plucked strings, then wafts it to the heights, both literally and metaphorically, in increasingly rhapsodic arabesques.

The secret of the stillness Beethoven achieves in the slow movement is exposed with superb insight by Sir Donald Tovey: the use of varied repetition to express a sublime inaction. The muting of the strings and the soft interventions of the orchestra, particularly the bassoons and horns, put the improvisatory musings of the solo violin in timbral high relief.

As in so many of his works, Beethoven leads directly from the slow movement through a cadential passage to the finale. At first this is a complete contrast to what has gone before, with a boisterous, good-humoured theme leaping through wide intervals whereas most of the concerto's melodies up to then had moved step by step. But the episodes, in this *Rondo* poised on the edge of jocularly, have the breadth and lyricism of the earlier parts of the concerto – thus Beethoven maintains the mood of this supremely well-balanced work.

DAVID GARRETT © 1999

Beethoven's Violin Concerto calls for solo violin with an orchestra of single flute, with pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto on 31 May 1938, with George Szell conducting and Nathan 'Tosy' Spivakovsky as soloist, and most recently on 30 and 31 March 2012, with Vladimir Ashkenazy and violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter.

At first the audience and critics in Vienna failed to understand the concerto, perhaps not surprisingly given the circumstances in which it was first performed in 1806...

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Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Symphony No.4 in F minor, Op.36

*Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima – Moderato assai,
quasi Andante – Allegro vivo*

Andantino in modo di canzone

Scherzo (Pizzicato ostinato) – Allegro

Finale (Allegro con fuoco)

You know the old story. In 1877, Tchaikovsky received a declaration of love from Antonina Milyukova, who, being a nymphomaniacal psychopath, threatened suicide if Tchaikovsky refused to marry her. The composer, hoping to save Antonina and cure his homosexuality, accepted the proposal, but within minutes of being married realised that he had made a terrible mistake. Within two months he had attempted suicide himself before fleeing Moscow; Antonina quickly descended into madness and Tchaikovsky poured his anguish into his Fourth Symphony and the opera *Eugene Onegin*.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, archival material pertaining to Tchaikovsky has recently become available. Thanks to scholars like Alexander Poznansky we can now see the scenario outlined above – retailed for much of the last century in program notes – for the load of fantastic rubbish that it is. The composer seems at no time to have been anguished by his sexuality and his decision to marry Antonina stems from other causes.

First, there was the issue of social propriety, but Tchaikovsky made it clear to Antonina that the relationship would be platonic. Antonina's threatened suicide seems to have been nothing more than a literary device, along the lines of 'I'll die without...'; her mental illness only developed after Tchaikovsky's death, and in the 16 years between their marriage and the composer's death she had lived in a long-term relationship which produced three children.

Second, the then chronically impecunious Tchaikovsky was aware that Antonina would shortly inherit a respectable sum; indeed, she effectively offered this as a dowry. In later years, Tchaikovsky admitted that his treatment of Antonina had been inexcusable, and supported her financially; she scrupulously avoided making any public criticism of her husband even after his death. It is true that Tchaikovsky realised the mistake he had made within a day of the marriage, but from the correspondence between him and his two younger brothers, it is clear that the incompatibility of the composer and his wife was the result of 'cultural differences' rather than sexual horror. There is no evidence that he attempted suicide at this time or, for that matter, at any other, and Poznansky debunks the various suicide myths that surround Tchaikovsky's death in 1893.

None of which is to say that the Fourth Symphony is not 'about' serious emotional and psychological states, nor that the experience of a disastrous marriage didn't affect Tchaikovsky's emotional equilibrium.

Keynotes

TCHAIKOVSKY

Born Kamsko-Votkinsk, 1840

Died St Petersburg, 1893

Tchaikovsky represented a new direction for Russian music in the late 19th century: fully professional and cosmopolitan in outlook. He embraced the genres and forms of the Western European concert tradition – symphonies, concertos and overtures – bringing to them his extraordinary dramatic sense and an unrivalled gift for melody. Many music lovers, however, would argue that it's his ballets that count among his masterpieces. Of his concertos, the violin concerto and the first of his three piano concertos enjoy the greatest fame and popularity today, together with his *Rococo Variations* for cello. But he also composed and arranged shorter pieces for soloist and orchestra that bring the elegance and refinement of the salon into the concert hall.

SYMPHONY NO.4

The choreographer George Balanchine liked to tell a joke from his student days at the St Petersburg Conservatory: a student is asked how many symphonies Tchaikovsky wrote, and he replies, 'Three – the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth'. Certainly these three continue to be the most frequently performed of Tchaikovsky's symphonies. Their appeal lies partly in Tchaikovsky's supreme melodic gift, partly in the almost theatrical sense of drama that he brings to the 'abstract' form of the symphony. Tchaikovsky's patron, Nadezhda von Meck, recognised drama in the Fourth Symphony's 'profound, terrifying despair'. He in turn told her that 'where words finish, music begins', and that any attempt to outline the meaning of the music in words would be necessarily imprecise. Nevertheless, he did offer her a kind of map of the work's emotional journey, indicating that the main idea 'is expressive of the idea of fate'.

The other woman in Tchaikovsky's life, Nadezhda von Meck, who became his patron and, by letter, his confidante late in 1876, wrote to him of the work's 'profound, terrifying despair'. The composer, famously, insisted in his correspondence with Meck that 'where words finish, music begins' and that a program explaining the meaning of the music would necessarily be imprecise. Nonetheless he did offer a kind of map of the work's emotional journey (never dreaming that it would be published), saying:

the main idea...is expressive of the idea of fate, that ominous power which prevents the success of our search for happiness. This power hangs constantly over our heads, like Damocles' sword. There is no alternative but to submit to fate.

The theme of 'fate' is the powerful brass fanfare which opens the first movement, and which returns at climactic moments in this and the last movement. Contrasting with this is a conventional pair of 'subjects' or thematic groupings. The first, marked *moderato*, is characterised by a waltz tempo kept on its toes by a pervasive use of cross-rhythm; the second, according to Tchaikovsky, represents the world of dreams into which we are tempted to escape. Scholar Leon Botstein has argued that Tchaikovsky's use of repetition in the course of this movement is emblematic of the state of mind that the music depicts: the obsessive statement and restatement of material is relieved by Tchaikovsky's deftness in subtly changing certain details each time. But fate, with its ambivalent minor/major tonality, keeps obtruding (undermining the principles of sonata design) and eventually disperses the imagery of dreams.

In the second movement, Tchaikovsky again uses seemingly literal repetition of the thematic material to suggest the obsessive nature of memory, but as Botstein notes, 'despite repetition, the background and foreground changes' as different dialogues between theme and counter melody are explored.

The *Scherzo* has been interpreted as the reassertion of reality. Its celebrated pizzicato-dominated string writing has an implacable character, but it also serves to provide a bridge between the introspection of the second movement and the extrovert nature of the *Finale*. The composer's explanation for the festive nature of the *Finale* was: 'If you find no cause for joy within yourself, look for it in others. Look, they know how to enjoy themselves, giving themselves up to undivided feelings of pleasure.' This has obscured an important aspect of the *Finale*. Where much of the symphony uses thematic material redolent of folk music, in the *Finale* Tchaikovsky quotes the tune 'In the field a little birch tree stood'. As Roland John Wiley notes in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*:

both words and setting are significant. The birch tree is solitary, and it is the image of a woman...The crowd that gathers is of unmarried women who perform a round dance and then throw their wreaths into the stream. Those whose wreaths float on the surface of the water will marry; those whose wreaths sink will not.



Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky's view of Antonina was clearly not unsympathetic, despite the baleful intrusion of the Fate music.

Importantly, however, we should remember that the 'profound, terrifying despair' of this work is created by an artist in full control of his technical forces. Tchaikovsky, a consummate professional, was careful to point out to Meck that 'anyone who believes that the creative person is capable of expressing what he feels out of a momentary effect aided by the means of art, is mistaken.'

Interpretation of this symphony has inevitably been compromised by the fatuous rehashing of 'biographical' details, making it a document of hysteria and despair. A contemporary critic, George Bernard Shaw, got it right, though, when he said, 'The most notable merit of the symphony is its freedom from the frightful effeminacy of most modern works of the Romantic school.'

GORDON KERRY © 2002

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets and two bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (triangle, bass drum, cymbal); and strings.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony on 8 February 1941 with Percy Code conducting, and most recently on 10 and 12 November 2016, under Pinchas Zukerman.

'A good folk tune is more valuable than 200 created works of art.'



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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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 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.

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The Hon Jane Mathews AO pictured with percussionist Timothy Constable, who says "the Orchestra is very lucky to have a dear friend like Jane! For many years she has been our champion, commissioning new music and personally supporting my chair. What a legend!"

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