

SYDNEY  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

# The Soldier's Tale

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH THE FELLOWS

27 – 29 SEPTEMBER

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE, UTZON ROOM



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

  
Emirates  
Principal Partner

# The Soldier's Tale

After the success of his 'Russian' works like *The Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka* Stravinsky reached something of an impasse in around 1918, which he would break by developing his neo-classical style in works like *Pulcinella*. Exploring his stylistic options led Stravinsky to write several ragtime pieces, of which this one five-minute piece is the first. He described it as a 'composite portrait of this new dance music' (well, new to him...Scott Joplin, who had just died, had been writing rags since the 1890s) and it certainly contains all the elements: a march-like speed, lots of syncopated rhythms working against the pulse, and an orchestral sound dominated by what Stephen Walsh calls the 'matter-of-fact bordello-piano twang of the cimbalom.'

Stravinsky's contemporary Béla Bartók likewise suffered a creative impasse which he too alleviated by re-examining the music of the Baroque. Around 1926 he also returned to the string quartet.

His third string quartet is a single-movement work articulated in a clear pattern of slow-fast-slow-fast sections. Bartók explores the range of 'extended techniques' which were to become the staple of later twentieth century music, among them sliding glissandos; bowing with the wood, rather than hair of the bow; bowing at the bridge to produce an eerie sound or above the fingerboard to produce a much paler tone. But none of the sounds is used merely for local effect. In the first part a tightly wound chromatic idea is treated contrapuntally though interrupted by terse chords (often built up of symmetrical intervals, in contrast to the asymmetry of a major or minor chord) and rhythmic figures and leading to more 'stable' lyrical material, despite a pervasively dissonant palette. The second part plays with fugue and variation techniques but never sounding like anything other than Bartók. The 'recapitulation of the first part' is actually a development of the opening material, and the Coda ends frenetically with material derived from the second part.

Witold Lutosławski was the most important Polish composer of the 20th century. During World War II the young man earned a living playing piano duets with fellow composer Andrzej Panufnik in a cafe, the only form of musical activity permitted by the German occupying forces. After the war, the Polish authorities enforced a restrictive, Soviet-inspired cultural policy, with an emphasis on social usefulness and folk material. Lutosławski nonetheless perfected his technique and produced several outstanding works based on Polish folk melodies. In the mid-1950s the government line became more relaxed, and in the climate of increased artistic freedom and access to Western developments, he was at last able to formulate a mature style. The Dance Preludes date from just before this key turning point in the composer's career and constitute

FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER | 6PM  
SATURDAY 28 SEPTEMBER | 6PM  
SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER | 3PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE  
UTZON ROOM



Igor Stravinsky

**IGOR STRAVINSKY**  
**(1882–1971)**  
**Ragtime for eleven**  
**instruments**



Bartók, 1927

**BÉLA BARTÓK**  
**(1881–1945)**  
**String Quartet No.3, Sz 85**  
*Prima parte: Moderato -*  
*Seconda parte: Allegro -*  
*Ricapitulazione della prima*  
*parte: Moderato -*  
*Coda: Allegro molto*

Lutosławski's 'farewell to folklore for an indefinite period', in his own words. Originally for clarinet and piano, there is also a miniature concerto version as well as the version for nine-piece chamber ensemble to be heard this evening. Musically, the work is a straightforward suite of five miniature dances, allowing the solo clarinet to shine in a number of contrasting moods and tempos.

Dating from around the same time as *Ragtime*, *The Soldier's Tale* grew out of a Russian fable of a soldier who tangles with the devil. It was the first theatrical piece Stravinsky had not composed for the Russian ballet of Diaghilev. Wartime conditions required a small ensemble, which suited Stravinsky's inclination. He chose the most representative high and low types from each of the string, wind and brass families: violin and double bass, clarinet and bassoon, cornet and trombone. A large array of percussion, with a single player, consisted of instruments which Stravinsky bought and taught himself to play. The Concerto Suite follows the outline of the stage show.

*The Soldier's March*, of the Soldier on leave, returning to his home, has prominent parts for the cornet and trombone. When he stops and gets out his violin, that instrument begins its elaborate part. Since the violin embodies the Soldier's soul, *The Soldier's Violin* has a wistful and pastoral character, using a motif Stravinsky heard as he dreamt of a young gypsy sitting by the road and playing the violin for her child. The first of the Tale's two parts relies on narration – of the devil, disguised as a butterfly collector, bartering with the Soldier for his violin in return for a book which will tell the future, spiriting the Soldier away to teach him to play; of the soldier's return – the promised three days turning out to be three years – treated with horror as one returning from the dead; of the Soldier's using the book to gain 'wealth untold', but losing all his former happiness; of his buying back his violin from the devil, disguised as an old clothes woman.

The second part is told largely in music. Coming to a country where the Princess lies ill, the Soldier is persuaded to try his luck at curing her. Meeting the devil again on the way to the palace, the soldier plays cards in order to lose all his new wealth, freeing himself from the devil's thrall. The Soldier takes back his violin, and plays *The Little Concert*, which revives the Princess (most of the themes of the piece are used in this number). In *Three Dances: Tango, Waltz, and Ragtime*, the couple's happiness is expressed. The Tango was already a dance craze in Europe, and Ragtime was a novelty to Stravinsky, who had studied sheet music brought back from the USA from Ernest Ansermet. 'Jazz', he remembered later, 'meant wholly new sound in my music; and *The Soldier's Tale* marks my final break with the Russian orchestral school in which I had been fostered.'



**Witold Lutosławski**

**WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI  
(1913–1994)**

**Dance Preludes (1954/5)**

*Allegro molto*

*Andantino*

*Allegro giocoso*

*Andante*

*Allegro molto*

**IGOR STRAVINSKY**

***The Soldier's Tale* Concert Suite**

*The Soldier's March*

*The Soldier's Violin*

*Royal March*

*The Little Concert*

*Three Dances: Tango, Waltz, Ragtime*

*The Devil's Dance*

*Chorale*

*The Devil's Triumphal March*

The Devil reappears, and the Soldier plays *The Devil's Dance*, causing his opponent to fall exhausted. He is not vanquished, and swears revenge if ever the Soldier should once again cross the frontier. The *Chorale*, based on the Lutheran chorales of the German Protestant Church, is a reflection on happiness, during which the narrator warns against seeking to have more than one had already. The Princess pleads with the Soldier to return to his homeland, and on the frontier the Devil triumphs. The echoes of the *Faust* and *Orpheus* legends are strongest here. *The Devil's Triumphant March*, finally dominated by the receding sound of the drums, exemplifies as well as any part of the music Stravinsky's brilliant and virtuosic handling of each of his instruments, emphasising their individuality yet laying the ground work for a new kind of ensemble – mastery the first time in a manner which has had many imitators.

ADAPTED FROM NOTES BY GORDON KERRY, ELLIOTT GYGER,  
DAVID GARRETT

# Sydney Symphony Fellowship

PHOTO: ANTHONY GEERNAERT



## ROGER BENEDICT

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellowship is recognised as one of the world's leading orchestral training programs. Each year, exceptional young musicians are selected through a national audition process to participate in the intensive, year-long program. During this time, they are immersed in the world of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, to learn from those who are already making their living as professional orchestral musicians.

Under the guidance of Sydney Symphony Orchestra Principal Viola and Fellowship Artistic Director Roger Benedict, the Fellows are provided with the training and experience they need to secure full-time positions in professional orchestras. This training includes rehearsing and

performing with the orchestra, coaching from touring international artists in masterclasses and professional development workshops. The Fellows also perform together in extensive chamber music series and participate in a variety of outreach projects.

Each of the Fellows receives a scholarship and professional support to allow them to fully commit to their year with the Sydney Symphony. Since the program's beginnings in 2001, Fellowship alumni have won positions in some of the finest orchestras in Europe, Asia and Australia, including 12 former Fellows who now hold permanent positions with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

The Fellowship has doubled in size in recent years and in 2019 we welcome 12 Fellows in strings, winds, brass and percussion.

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# Musicians

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## Stravinsky

### **Ragtime**

Tobias Aan† *violin*

Jessica Oddie† *violin*

Beth Condon† *viola*

David Barlow† *double bass*

Emma Sholl *Associate Principal*

*Flute, Sydney Symphony*

James Julian† *clarinet*

Aidan Gabriels† *horn*

David Johnson† *trumpet*

Dale Vail† *trombone*

Adam Cooper-Stanbury† *percussion*

Rebecca Lagos *Principal Percussion,*  
*Sydney Symphony\**

## Bartók

Tobias Aan† *violin*

Jessica Oddie† *violin*

Beth Condon† *viola*

Eliza Sdrauligt† *cello*

## Lutosławski

Tobias Aan† *violin*

Beth Condon† *viola*

Eliza Sdrauligt† *cello*

David Barlow† *double bass*

Emma Sholl *Associate*

*Principal Flute, Sydney Symphony*

Eve Osborn† *oboe*

James Julian† *clarinet*

Jordy Meulenbroeks† *bassoon*

Aidan Gabriels† *horn*

## Stravinsky

### **The Soldier's Tale**

**Roger Benedict** *conductor*

Jessica Oddie† *violin*

David Barlow† *double bass*

James Julian† *clarinet*

Jordy Meulenbroeks† *bassoon*

David Johnson† *trumpet*

Dale Vail† *trombone*

Adam Cooper-Stanbury† *percussion*

† = SYDNEY SYMPHONY FELLOW

\*Rebecca Lagos will be playing the cimbalom for this performance.

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