SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The 1950s Latin Lounge 5–8 Feb Sydney Town Hall

Presenting Partner







Concert Diary

FEBRUARY



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SPECIAL EVENT WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY, 7PM THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY, 7PM SATURDAY 8 FEBRUARY, 7PM SYDNEY TOWN HALL





The 1950s Latin Lounge

Guy Noble conductor Imogen Kelly burlesque artist Ali McGregor vocalist

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898–1937) *Cuban Overture*

MOISÉS VIVANCO (1918–1998) Ataypura [arr. Joseph Twist] Malambo No.1 [arr. Bernard Rofe]

ZENQUINHA DE ABREU (1880–1935) Tico Tico no Fuba [arr. Cliff Colnot]

Imogen Kelly performs The Goddess of the Sea, accompanied by:

MALCOLM WILLIAMSON (1931-2003)

Our Man in Havana Suite III: Serenade

ALBERTO DOMÍNGUEZ (1911–1975) Perfidia [arr. Bernard Rofe]

MOZART CAMARGO GUARNIERI (1907–1993) Dansa brasileira

ARTURO MÁRQUEZ (born 1950) Danzón No.2

INTERVAL

MORTON GOULD (1913–1996) Symphonette No.4 IV: Conga

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791) Der Hölle Rache a la Mambo [arr. Joseph Twist]

MOISÉS VIVANCO (1918–1998) Taki Rari [arr. Bernard Rofe]

TOMÁS MÉNDEZ (1927–1995) Cucurrucucú Paloma [arr. Ria Villena-Osorio]

ERNESTO LECUONA (1895–1963) Jungle Drums [arr. Bernard Rofe]

ARTURO MÁRQUEZ (born 1950) Conga del Fuego

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–1990) Mambo (West Side Story)

This concert will be performed with one interval of 20 minutes and will conclude at approximately 8.40pm.

Cover image: Ali McGregor (Photo by Claudio)







Credit Suisse is thrilled to celebrate the 10th anniversary of its partnership with Sydney Symphony Orchestra by welcoming you to The 1950s Latin Lounge.

Tonight is a night of firsts: Sydney Symphony's first concert of the 2020 Season and its first performance at the Sydney Town Hall, one of the world's best acoustic venues, its new home whilst the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall undergoes renovations as part of the Sydney Opera House Renewal program.

Credit Suisse's significant partnership with the Sydney Symphony extends back a decade to 2010. Over that period our relationship has evolved and since 2018, Credit Suisse has been working in collaboration with the Orchestra to deliver a musical educational program for primary schools – the Credit Suisse Sydney Symphony Orchestra Schools Music Education Program; an initiative that reaches over one thousand students and their communities in Sydney and Melbourne.

As we celebrate tonight with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conductor Guy Noble, and the incredible Ali McGregor and Imogen Kelly, we are immensely proud of our partnership so far and look forward to an exciting future.

Thank you for joining the Orchestra in this important moment in its history, and for being part of its journey as we venture into the new decade.



Richard Gibb Chief Executive Officer Credit Suisse Australia

THE ARTISTS



Guy Noble conductor

Guy Noble has conducted the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Western Australian, Tasmanian, Queensland and Canberra symphony orchestras, the Auckland Philharmonia, and the Hong Kong Symphony and Malaysian Philharmonic orchestras. He is the host and accompanist each year for *Great Opera Hits* (Opera Australia) at the Sydney Opera House. He conducted Opera Queensland's 2014 production of *La Bohème*, is conductor and host for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra's *Classics Unwrapped* series at the Adelaide Town Hall, and for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra's *Music on Sundays* series at QPAC. He is also the host of *Concert Hall* on Qantas Radio and has presented programs on BBC Radio 3 and ABC Classic.

Guy has worked with a wide variety of international performers appearing with orchestras across Australia, including Harry Connick Jr, Ben Folds, The Beach Boys, The Pointer Sisters, Dianne Reeves, Glenn Frey, Randy Newman, Clive James, Conchita, The Two Cellos, Alfie Boe and Olivia Newton John. He was the first conductor and host for *Symphony in the City* for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. Some career highlights include doing a raffle with Princess Margaret in London, sharing a trip in a lift with John Gielgud at BBC Broadcasting House, cooking pasta live on stage with Maggie Beer, Simon Bryant and the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and possibly being the only person to ever sing the *Ghostbusters* theme with *The Whitlams* and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

He has worked with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra over many years, first appearing with them as a boy soprano soloist in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in 1977, as a solo pianist in the *Carnival of the Animals* with conductor Stuart Challender and narrators Gough and Margaret Whitlam, and numerous concerts as conductor and host including the sell-out seasons of *Last Night of the Proms*.



Imogen Kelly burlesque artist

Imogen Kelly is Australia's first lady of striptease, not only renowned as Australia's Queen of Burlesque, but also crowned World Queen of Burlesque in 2012 at the Burlesque Hall of Fame, Las Vegas. Imogen's work is an infusion of her influences; from being a high-flying trapeze artist to Moulin Rouge kick lines and shows for sheiks, from high-end Japanese geisha weddings to burlesque festivals around the world.

With a BFA in Performance under her belt, a diploma in Circus Arts, a diploma in film making and a NIDA degree in directing, Imogen embarked on a career as an international artist, touring the UK, Europe, USA and Japan.

Imogen has performed at the Sydney Opera House in the grand opera *Rinaldo*, as well as directing or performing several shows in the Opera House Studio (The Studio launch, *Sleepless Beauty, Close Your Little Eyes, Music for the Eyes, La Soirée* and *Club Swizzle*). In 2019 Imogen featured in Adelaide Cabaret Festival, Vivid Festival and was the closing act at The Burlesque Hall of Fame.

In 2007 Imogen performed in Hyde Park for the Sydney Festival to an audience in the tens of thousands and the following year was married by Sydney Festival First Night in a public wedding that literally stopped the city – Macquarie Street was her altar and aisle. Imogen is also a breast cancer survivor and campaigner, a writer and film maker.



Ali McGregor vocalist

Ali started her career as a principal soprano with Opera Australia – during this time she performed over 25 roles including Zerlina, Papagena, Adele, Yum Yum, Marzelinne and an award-winning Clorinda in *La Cenerentola*. After running away with the circus in the form of hit show *La Clique (La Soiree)* in 2005, she is now an awardwinning international cabaret artist who has performed everywhere from Glastonbury to Carnegie Hall. She was nominated for an ARIA award for her children's album *Jazzamatazz* in 2014 and in 2015 was awarded a special Green Room Award for her contribution to cabaret.

Alongside Eddie Perfect, Ali was co-Artistic Director for Adelaide Cabaret Festival in 2016/2017, then returned as sole Artistic Director in 2018.

Ali was concept creator of *Lorelei*, a highly acclaimed new operatic work for Victorian Opera in 2018 and she will again star in the piece for Opera Queensland in 2020. Last year also saw Ali play the role of Desiree Armfeldt alongside Nancye Hayes & Simon Gleeson in Victorian Opera's lauded production of *A Little Night Music*.

In 2018 Ali's very personal one-woman show YMA SUMAC - The Peruvian Songbird made its debut at Adelaide Cabaret festival. She went on to perform the show at the Sydney Opera House and was awarded the prestigious Helpmann Award for Best Cabaret Performance 2019. The show is featured in Victorian Opera's 2020 season at Arts Centre Melbourne.

Ali made her Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut in 2007 for Sydney Festival's *Barber to Bernstein* under the baton of famed English conductor Charles Hazelwood. She returned in 2018 in *A Night at the Speakeasy* with Guy Noble and Burlesque queen Imogen Kelly.

ABOUT THE MUSIC



What do I love most about this music? It's honest and passionate. It is what it is, it doesn't pretend to be anything deep and meaningful, it is rhythm and melody, sunlight and sex.

- Conductor Guy Noble

New York City, Times Square & Broadway, c.1956.

Slipping out of one's wet clothes and into a dry martini in the Brazilian-themed Copacabana in the mid-fifties, you'd have thought life was pretty good. Ten years before, the USA has emerged from World War II as the world's dominant economic power, and its cultural and intellectual life had been bolstered by immigration from war-torn Europe. The Eisenhower presidency offered a model of stability and American values; consumer durables from cars to TV sets were more available than ever before; popular culture was vibrant and outward looking. By the mid-1950s the Copacabana was showcasing the talent of people, like Harry Belafonte, who hadn't been let through the door ten years before, and the music you'd likely be listening to, now known as lounge, was a relaxed and comfortable mix of Latin, jazz and popular white music.

Latin – that is popular music from Spanish and Portuguese-speaking America and the Caribbean – had long been closely entwined with jazz. As scholar Christopher Washburne has noted, the legendary Jelly Roll Morton insisted that 'if you can't manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for jazz', while Duke Ellington remembered how 'When I came into the world, Southern Negroes were expressing their feelings in rhythmic "blues" in which Spanish syncopations had a part.'

As well as influencing jazz in New Orleans, 'Spanish', or Latin, music found its way to the northern metropolises early in the 20th century. The tango enjoyed its first US vogue in the late 1920s, and about that time the Cuban bandleader Don Azpiazu appeared in New York with his song 'El Manisero' which, as 'The Peanut Vendor', became wildly popular. Mambo, bossa nova, samba and other genres soon followed.

Flying Down To Havana

Cuba itself was a popular holiday destination, and in 1932 George Gershwin flew down to Havana for 'two hysterical weeks' – the Caribbean country was untouched, of course, by Prohibition. Returning to New York just in time for his annual concert at Lewisohn Stadium, Gershwin wrote his 'symphonic overture which embodies the essence of Cuban dance' in three weeks, and originally titled it *Rumba*.

As in *Porgy and Bess*, Gershwin could convincingly ventriloquise 'exotic' music, helped along in this case by the collection of local percussion instruments he brought back from Cuba for this work. The ten-minute *Cuban Overture* is in three sections: a first, marked 'moderately and very rhythmically, plays off repeated dance motifs and a slower moving tune that first appears in the lower strings. Some more relaxed noodling comes in a central andante section, with a sinuous tune announced by – what else? – the clarinet. There is a gradual increase in intensity with the clarinet's restate, much louder, yet marked 'plaintively'. It doesn't last long though, and soon we are back in an Allegretto section characterised by two-beat rhythmic motifs before a final return, marked 'grandly' of the first theme.



George Gershwin, 1935

The Inca Princess

Cuba was an important source for 'Latin' music in the 1950s – no surprise that the co-star of the phenomenally successful TV series *I Love Lucy* was Desi Arnaz, playing the Cuban bandleader Ricky Ricardo. And Cuban music was happily imitated by Americans like Morton Gould, and the Anglo-Australian Malcolm Williamson.

But US audiences lapped up music from elsewhere, especially on Broadway and at the movies: in 1933 Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers made their debut as a duo (though didn't get top billing) in *Flying Down to Rio*, a film that featured such dance numbers as 'The Carioca' and 'Orchids in the Moonlight'. From 1940 a Brazilian force of nature in a Tutti Fruity Hat, Carmen Miranda, brought samba to the silver screen (with the aid, in the 1932 *The Gang's All Here*, of a marimba made entirely of bananas).

One of the most fascinating 'Latin' artists to move to the US was Yma Sumac, a woman whose looks and vocal abilities were of preternatural beauty. Speaking to *Limelight* magazine's Jo Litson in 2018, Ali McGregor remembers hearing Sumac for the first time not quite knowing what she was hearing:

In the late 90s, where there was a sort of swing music revival going on. Capra Records actually released a whole bunch of its back catalogue and got DJs to remix them, so there was a lot of electro lounge going about. Someone had recorded some for me, which is how I heard her voice. At the time I didn't know if it was a human voice or an instrument or computer trickery because it was all mixed up in this remix. I remember being intrigued by it but because it was on a mini disc there was no track listing and it wasn't until I did some digging around that I figured out it was indeed a singer.



Yma Sumac

When Guy Noble first heard Sumac he:

actually thought it was Victoria de los Angeles going through a Broadway stage! An amazing voice, from the low depths of a rich mezzo to top notes only dogs can hear.

Born in modest circumstances in Peru, Zoila Augusta Emperatriz Chavarri del Castillo's talent was recognised and nurtured early, her parents hoping that would become a classical bel canto star. She began her career in South America as a folkloric singer, stage name Imma Sumack, working with a small group led by her husband Moisés Vivanco and achieving huge success in concert and recordings in Argentina and Brazil. The US was less enthusiastic at first, when the trio of Sumac(k), Vivanco and Cholita arrived in 1946, and for some years times were tough and gigs pretty basic. A break came in the form of a recording contract with Capitol Records - who were interested in Sumac rather than the trio. Sumac would henceforth appear backed by a full orchestra in rather less 'ethnic' songs, though Capitol's sales pitch included the claim that Sumac was an Inca Princess. (It, or something, worked: she was a bigger draw than Capitol's other major star, Frank Sinatra). From then throughout the 50s her repertoire focused on Latin dance music - her 1954 album Mambo was huge, but she always retained her love for classical opera, and would sing Puccini hits such as 'Vissi d'arte' or 'O mio babbino caro'. And her Latin take on the second of the Queen of Night's arias from Mozart's The Magic Flute is unique.

Guy Noble reckons that:

Mozart would have loved it, he would have laughed and laughed. The thing is it is incredibly accurate – she nails each of the top notes where some legitimate opera singers miss by a small margin. Having said that, I think she sings it down a third, which is cheating, but who cares.

Star Cross'd Lovers

In 1949 choreographer Jerome Robbins, writer Arthur Laurents and composer Leonard Bernstein had hatched an idea: to make an updated musical version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and set it in New York. The star-cross'd lovers would come, not from warring aristocratic houses, but from two hostile ethnic communities: the Jews and the Catholics. Just how *East Side Story* would have panned out, and what its musical legacy might have been we'll never know, though as Guy Noble says:

It would have been a much less vibrant score. Incorporating the rhythms of Puerto Rico meant that Bernstein could channel the amazing energetic part of his creativity, rather than perhaps the more agonised Jewish part of himself that composed pieces like the Kaddish Symphony. It always amazes me that while other musicals sound dated, West Side Story is as fresh as the day it was written.

But by the time Stephen Sondheim agreed to come on board as lyricist the scenario had changed. The lovers would be, respectively, a boy from the Polish-American gang the Jets and a girl from Puerto Rico allied with the Sharks. The rest, of course, is history, and in addition to being one of the masterpieces of the 20th century stage, *West Side Story* gives us some of the best-loved concert music based on Latin dances. The muscular *Mambo* is central to the scene of the dance held in the gym, as depicts the gangs' growing and menacing competition.



Leonard Bernstein, 1950s

South Of The Border

Latin music has retained its fascination as music for dance and concert, especially – naturally – the music of composers from Latin American countries, such as Lecuona, Cugat and Méndez.

Mexican composer Arturo Márquez, born during the heyday of Latin Lounge, was educated in Mexico and California, and in the 1990s turned his attention to the traditional *danzón* genre (a descendent of the contradanse imported centuries before from France). Its 'apparent lightness', he wrote:

is only like a visiting card for a type of music full of sensuality and qualitative seriousness, a genre which old Mexican people continue to dance with a touch of nostalgia and a jubilant escape towards their own emotional world.

Márquez's Danzón No.2, completed in 1994, has become wildly popular since being take up by Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel. Márquez says that:

It endeavours to get as close as possible to the dance, to its nostalgic melodies, to its wild rhythms, and although it violates its intimacy, its form and its harmonic language, it is a very personal way of paying my respects and expressing my emotions towards truly popular music.

The Danzón's main theme is a supple tune stated at first by the clarinet over a deceptively simple piano and percussion accompaniment, that adds oboe and then a fuller statement of the tune in the violas and horns. An urgent bridge passage pushes the music towards a lively section marked 'with fire', its full texture relieved by an otherworldly duet for piccolo and piano. The first tune returns in the violins, clarinet and bassoon, once again becomes more energetic and sumptuous before a lull that introduces a new section that features trumpet (the composer's father was a mariachi musician). The piece returns to the original material and ends with an overpowering account of the 'fire' music.

Guy Noble notes that Gershwin's:

Cuban Overture is a sort of Broadway version of Cuban rhythms, whereas the Danzón by Arturo Márquez is the real deal – a Mexican composer writing in a Mexican dance style. Having said that – they are both great pieces.

Márquez's more recent *Conga del Fuego Nuevo* returns us to the Afro-Cuban tradition. Inspired by Gustavo Dudamel it is relatively short, pushed on by relentless rhythms and long melodies from trumpet and winds, and briefly relaxing in a sentimental central section.

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Arturo Márquez, 2012



Chita Rivera and Ken Leroy in a scene from West Side Story, 1957.



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sydney symphony orchestra

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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Founded in 1932 by the ABC, 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.

In 2020, as the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall undergoes renovations as part of the Sydney Opera House Renewal program, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra returns to their original home, the Sydney Town Hall – one of the best acoustic venues in the heart of the city. 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, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. 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.

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