

SYDNEY  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

# Scheherazade

11 – 13 Mar

Sydney Town Hall



# birds of tokyo.

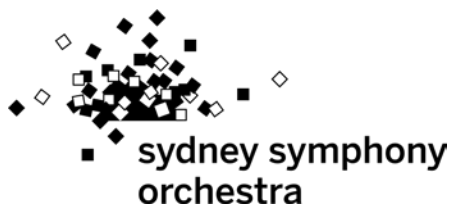
IN CONCERT WITH

Sydney Symphony  
Orchestra



THU 7 MAY & FRI 8 MAY / SYDNEY TOWN HALL  
SAT 9 MAY / SYDNEY COLISEUM THEATRE

ON SALE NOW



SYMPHONY HOUR

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH, 7PM

THURSDAY 12 MARCH, 7PM

TEA AND SYMPHONY

FRIDAY 13 MARCH, 11AM

.....  
SYDNEY TOWN HALL

# Scheherazade

*Hypnotic and Sublime*

Alexander Shelley *conductor*

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)**

*Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'*

**NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844–1908)**

*Scheherazade – Symphonic Suite, Op.35*

*Largo e maestoso – Lento – Allegro non troppo* (The Sea and Sinbad's Ship)

*Lento* (The Story of the Kalendar Prince)

*Andantino quasi allegretto* (The Young Prince and the Young Princess)

*Allegro molto – Vivo – Allegro non troppo e maestoso – Lento* (Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Ship Goes to Pieces on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior – Conclusion)

Estimated durations: 10 minutes,  
42 minutes

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The concert will conclude at  
approximately 8pm (Wednesday and  
Thursday) and 12 noon (Friday).



Cover image: Alexander Shelley  
Photo by: Thomas Dagg

PRESENTING PARTNER

**YOUNG  
HENRYS**



Principal Partner

## THE ARTISTS



### Alexander Shelley *conductor*

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Born in London in October 1979, Alexander Shelley, 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, with the press describing him as "the most exciting and gifted young conductor to have taken this highly prestigious award".

In September 2015 he succeeded Pinchas Zukerman as Music Director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra. The ensemble has since been praised as "an orchestra transformed ... hungry, bold, and unleashed" (Ottawa Citizen). In January of the same year Alexander also assumed the role of Principal Associate Conductor of

London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with whom he curates a series at Cadogan Hall and tours both nationally and internationally.

Alexander works regularly with the leading orchestras of Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australasia, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Helsinki Philharmonic, Stockholm Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Orchestre Metropolitain Montreal. This season Alexander makes his debut with Toronto Symphony and Colorado Symphony and returns to Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra, MDR Sinfonieorchester, and the Melbourne and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras.

Alexander's operatic engagements have included *The Merry Widow* and Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* (Den Kongelige Opera); *La Bohème* (Opera Lyra), *Iolanta* (Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen), *Così fan Tutte* (Opéra National de Montpellier), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera North) and a co-production of Harry Somers' *Louis Riel* in 2017 with NACO and the Canadian Opera Company.

## SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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 regularly at other venues around Sydney and tours NSW and internationally, and it is well on its way to becoming the premier orchestra of the Asia Pacific region.

Their concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres. These collaborations reflect the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. They also celebrate the role of the symphony orchestra in movies, television and video games with concerts such as *The Godfather*, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the Harry Potter film franchise, *Star Wars*, and James Bond films *Casino Royale* and *Skyfall*.

# THE ORCHESTRA



**Simone Young**  
CHIEF CONDUCTOR DESIGNATE



**Donald Runnicles**  
PRINCIPAL GUEST  
CONDUCTOR



**Vladimir Ashkenazy**  
CONDUCTOR LAUREATE



**Andrew Haveron**  
CONCERTMASTER  
SUPPORTED BY VICKI OLSSON

## FIRST VIOLINS

**Andrew Haveron**  
CONCERTMASTER  
**Harry Bennetts**  
ASSOCIATE CONCERTMASTER  
**Fiona Ziegler**  
ASSISTANT CONCERTMASTER  
Brielle Clapson  
Sophie Cole  
Claire Herrick  
Georges Lentz  
Nicola Lewis  
Emily Long  
Alexandra Mitchell  
Alexander Norton  
Anna Skálová  
Léone Ziegler  
Riikka Sintonen°  
**Sun Yi**  
ASSOCIATE CONCERTMASTER  
**Lerida Delbridge**  
ASSISTANT CONCERTMASTER  
**Kirsten Williams**  
ASSOCIATE CONCERTMASTER  
EMERITUS  
Jenny Booth

## SECOND VIOLINS

**Kirsty Hilton**  
PRINCIPAL  
**Marina Marsden**  
PRINCIPAL  
**Marianne Edwards**  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL  
**Emma Jezek**  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Alice Bartsch  
Victoria Bihun  
Rebecca Gill  
Emma Hayes  
Shuti Huang  
Monique Irik  
Nicole Masters  
Maja Verunica  
Benjamin Li

## VIOLAS

**Anne-Louise Comerford**  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL  
Sandro Costantino  
Rosemary Curtin  
Jane Hazelwood  
Graham Hennings  
Stuart Johnson  
Justine Marsden  
Felicity Tsai  
Amanda Verner  
Leonid Volovelsky  
**Tobias Breider**  
PRINCIPAL  
**Justin Williams**  
ACTING ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

## CELLOS

**HyungSuk Bae\***  
GUEST PRINCIPAL  
**Leah Lynn**  
ACTING ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL  
Kristy Conrau  
Fenella Gill  
Timothy Nankervis  
Elizabeth Neville  
Christopher Pidcock  
Adrian Wallis  
**Umberto Clerici**  
PRINCIPAL  
**Catherine Hewgill**  
PRINCIPAL  
David Wickham

## DOUBLE BASSES

**Kees Boersma**  
PRINCIPAL  
David Campbell  
Steven Larson  
Richard Lynn  
Jaán Pallandi  
Benjamin Ward  
**Alex Henery**  
PRINCIPAL

## FLUTES

**Joshua Batty**  
PRINCIPAL  
Carolyn Harris  
**Kim Falconer\***  
ACTING PRINCIPAL PICCOLO  
**Emma Sholl**  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

## OBOES

**Diana Doherty**  
PRINCIPAL  
**Alexandre Oguey**  
PRINCIPAL COR ANGLAIS  
Eve Osborn°  
**Shefali Pryor**  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

## CLARINETS

**James Burke**  
PRINCIPAL  
Christopher Tingay  
**Francesco Celata**  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL  
**Alexander Morris**  
PRINCIPAL BASS CLARINET

## BASSOONS

**Todd Gibson-Cornish**  
PRINCIPAL  
Fiona McNamara  
**Matthew Wilkie**  
PRINCIPAL EMERITUS  
**Noriko Shimada**  
PRINCIPAL CONTRABASSOON

## HORNS

**David Evans\***  
GUEST PRINCIPAL  
**Geoffrey O'Reilly**  
PRINCIPAL 3RD  
Euan Harvey  
Marnie Sebire  
Rachel Silver  
**Ben Jacks**  
PRINCIPAL

## TRUMPETS

**David Elton**  
PRINCIPAL  
Anthony Heinrichs

## TROMBONES

**Ronald Prussing**  
PRINCIPAL  
Nick Byrne  
**Christopher Harris**  
PRINCIPAL BASS TROMBONE  
**Scott Kinmont**  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

## TUBA

**Steve Rossé**  
PRINCIPAL

## TIMPANI

**Mark Robinson**  
ACTING PRINCIPAL

## PERCUSSION

**Rebecca Lagos**  
PRINCIPAL  
Timothy Constable  
Joshua Hill\*  
Brian Nixon\*  
Alison Pratt\*

## HARP

**Sally Pryce\***  
GUEST PRINCIPAL  
Natalie Wong\*

\* = GUEST MUSICIAN

° = CONTRACT MUSICIAN

† = SYDNEY SYMPHONY FELLOW

Grey = PERMANENT MEMBER OF  
THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA NOT APPEARING IN  
THIS CONCERT

## ABOUT THE MUSIC



**Drawing of Debussy by Ivan Thiele, Paris, 1913**

In 1912 the Ballets Russes caused a sensation in Paris (as they would with *The Rite of Spring* the following year) when choreographer and dancer Vaslav Nijinsky simulated an orgasm on stage. Clutching a veil and a *syrinx*, or pan-pipes, he was dressed as a faun – the half-man, half-goat chimera of Greek mythology – and the ballet, *L'après-midi d'un faune* (the afternoon of a faun) represented his day-dreams: erotic fantasies in the lush landscape of a hot, languid, Sicilian afternoon as he has visions of fruit and flowers and naked nymphs. The story, such as it is, comes from the poem of the same name, by Stéphane Mallarmé, eventually completed and published in 1876. It is a classic of *symbolisme*, avoiding any linear narrative in favour of vivid, sometimes disconnected images and a musical approach to language that is often obscure in meaning. It was perfect material for Debussy, a composer who rejected the formal rules of classical music because, as he said 'there is no theory. You have merely to listen. Pleasure is the law.' In 1894 he produced his *Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'* (intending to add another two pieces to make it into a suite) and it became an instant hit with audiences if not critics.

At one point Mallarmé refers to the pan-pipes' 'sonorous, airy, monotonous line', and Debussy lit on this, writing a sinuous solo flute melody that opens and punctuates the piece. In keeping with his view that 'pleasure is the law', the melody is in no particular key, and the washes of sound that answer, and occasionally accompany it, glinting the sound of harps and tiny 'antique' cymbals, are not there to advance the musical story, but to provide individual moments of sensual beauty. In classical music, dissonance must be resolved onto consonant harmony, and this tension is used to direct the music towards a climax where that tension is released. Debussy's faun (despite Nijinsky's self-pleasuring) is kept in a state of mild arousal; the objects of desire are only glimpsed. Climaxes, when they do occur, are approached by simple repetition of motifs, rather than an increase of dissonance or speed; the most extended melody is a rich, Romantic tune at the work's midpoint, sung by unison strings and accompanied by layered, rocking ostinatos, or repeated motifs, in the woodwinds. These serve not to push the music forward but to keep it in gently pulsating suspense. Finally, the faun is



**Nijinsky as the faun, 1912**

overcome by sleep and the 'proud silence of noon', and the piece ends with flutes, muted horns and the glitter of harp and antique cymbals, fading to nothingness.

Debussy's evanescent, sensual musical language was partly a reaction to the dominance of German and Austrian composers (especially Wagner). Many Russian composers of the later 19th century similarly wanted to avoid sounding German – or indeed, 'Western', and one group, known variously as The Five, or the Mighty Handful, tried to create a tradition of Russian music distinct from, and uninfluenced by, that of the West. The greatest of these, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov eventually realised that a close study of Western forms and, especially, orchestration would enhance his musical vision. He became a superb technician and teacher (of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and one or two others), and literally wrote the book



**Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov**

on orchestration. Rimsky-Korsakov completed and polished the works of other members of The Five, like Mussorgsky and Borodin, who both died before completing their best work. Borodin died in 1887 leaving his major opera *Prince Igor* unfinished. Rimsky-Korsakov undertook to complete and orchestrate the opera, it has been suggested that in immersing himself in the world of central Asia, whose people and music it depicts, inspired his own foray into Orientalism, the orchestral suite *Scheherazade*.

Before turning to composition, Rimsky-Korsakov had been in the Russian navy and had sailed extensively in that role, but his vision of the 'Orient' in *Scheherazade* is wholly imaginary. A tour de force of orchestration, its musical language owes a lot to the fairy-tale tradition in Russian opera and ballet, and is frequently powerfully evocative of natural phenomena such as the sea.

The inspiration for the piece is, of course, the some of the tales known in English as *The 1001 (or Arabian) Nights* and *Scheherazade*, the woman who tells them. *Scheherazade* finds herself married to the Sultan Shahriyar, who has become convinced that all women are duplicitous and unfaithful and so has each of his wives executed the morning after their wedding. Like Debussy and his faun, *Scheherazade* keeps the Sultan in suspense, brilliantly exploiting that staple of the magazine or TV serial: the cliff-hanger. The Sultan is enthralled with her tales over 1001 nights, at which point he abandons his murderous ways.

As he grew older, the composer disavowed that his suite was meant to be directly illustrative of specific tales, and removed the descriptive headings from the four movements in the second edition of the score. But he did acknowledge that the violin solo represented *Scheherazade* herself, spinning out the endless stories. Before she does so, however, we hear a forbidding, angular melody given out in octaves by strings, brass and low woodwinds: this is commonly believed to represent the Sultan himself, though it appears at least once – the story of the *kalendar*, or beggar, prince – in a context not associated with him. Similarly, other material can be heard from movement to movement, treated, as in a symphony, to purely music development – extended or compressed, given different colouring or mood. The Sultan's music at the star of the finale, for instance, is transformed by *Scheherazade's* violin, into dance music. Rimsky-Korsakov also evokes exotic music and places in several ways, notably, in the second movement, with strumming pizzicato and a long 'arabesque' melody for solo clarinet to suggest the music of Middle-Eastern streets.

It is hard not to visualise seas and festivals, and to feel the passion and adventure of the stories.

Gordon Kerry © 2020

# SALUTE

## PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Principal Partner

## GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



The Sydney Symphony Orchestra is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



The Sydney Symphony Orchestra is assisted by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

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