

12 June 2021
Sydney Town Hall

GRIEG'S PIANO CONCERTO



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«SYMPHONY»
«ORCHESTRA»

Principal Partner



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC

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.

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. Australia-born Simone Young has been the Orchestra’s Chief Conductor Designate since 2020. She commences her role as Chief Conductor in 2022 as the Orchestra returns to the renewed Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra’s versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

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not appearing in
this concert

2021 CONCERT SEASON
GREAT CLASSICS

Saturday 12 June 2021, 2pm
Sydney Town Hall

GRIEG'S PIANO CONCERTO

NICHOLAS CARTER conductor
PIERS LANE piano

PROGRAM

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)
Le Tombeau de Couperin

Prélude
Forlane
Menuet
Rigaudon

EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)
Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.16

Allegro molto moderato
Adagio –
Allegro moderato molto e marcato

INTERVAL

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)
Symphony No.104 in D, *London*

Adagio – Allegro
Andante
Menuetto (Allegretto)
Finale (Spiritoso)

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

17 minutes, 30 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
29 minutes.

The concert will conclude
at approximately 3.35pm.

COVER IMAGE

Photo by Keith Saunders

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NICHOLAS CARTER conductor

Now in his final season as Chief Conductor of the Stadttheater Klagenfurt and the Kärntner Sinfonieorchester, Nicholas Carter will take up the Chief Conductor position of the Konzert Theater Bern from the beginning of the 2021-22 season. In addition to his conducting duties there, Nicholas will also assume the role of Opera Director.

His tenure in Klagenfurt has seen Nicholas lead three new productions per season and appearing regularly in the orchestra's concert series. His repertoire there has included widely celebrated productions of *Tannhäuser*, *Pelleas et Melisande*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Rusalka*, *Elektra*, and *La Clemenza di Tito* among others.

In recent seasons, Nicholas's guest engagements have included the Wiener Staatsoper (*Die Fledermaus*), return visits to the Radio Symphonieorchester Berlin, Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Dallas Symphony, Orchestre Metropolitain (Montreal) plus invitations to Glyndebourne Opera (*Entführung aus dem Serail*), the Seoul Philharmonic and Atlanta Symphony, which were all postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Born in Melbourne, Nicholas enjoys an ongoing relationship with all the major Australian orchestras, particularly with the Adelaide Symphony, where he served as Principal Conductor from 2016-2019.

The 2021-22 season will see his New York Metropolitan Opera debut with Brett Dean's *Hamlet*.



Nicholas Carter
Photo: Annette Koroll

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

PIERS LANE piano

London-based Australian pianist Piers Lane has a worldwide reputation as an engaging, searching and highly versatile performer, at home equally in solo, chamber and concerto repertoire. Five times soloist at the BBC Proms, Piers Lane's wide-ranging concerto repertoire exceeds one hundred works and has led to engagements with many of the world's great orchestras, working recently with conductors like Sir Andrew Davis, Andrew Litton, Vassily Sinaisky, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Brett Dean. Festival appearances have included Aldeburgh, Seattle, Bard, Bath Mostly Mozart, Bergen, Cheltenham, Como Autumn Music, La Roque d'Anthéron, Rockport, Prague Spring, Ruhr Klavierfestival, Schloss vor Husum and the Chopin festivals in Warsaw, Duszyni-Zdrój, Mallorca and Paris.

Highlights of the 2020-21 season include engagements with the Melbourne and Queensland Symphony Orchestras, a Musica Viva national tour of Australia with the Goldner String Quartet, an Australian tour with the Maltese tenor Josef Calleja, appearances at several US festivals, including Bard Music, a January 2nd recital at Wigmore Hall, duo performances with violinist Tasmin Little and further performances with actress Dame Patricia Routledge.

In recent seasons Piers Lane performed three concerti at Carnegie Hall, and world premieres of Carl Vine's second Piano Concerto and Double Piano Concerto Improbable Gifts, both written for him.

His extensive discography for Hyperion includes much admired recordings of rare romantic piano concertos, including his 2020 release of Bliss, Rubbra and Bax concertos with The Orchestra Now, the complete Malcolm Williamson piano concertos, the complete Preludes and Etudes by Scriabin, transcriptions of Bach and Strauss, along with complete collections of Concert Etudes by Saint-Saëns, Moscheles and Henselt, and transcriptions by Grainger. He has also recorded eleven volumes of piano quintets with the Goldner String Quartet for Hyperion, many cds with Tasmin Little and Michael Collins for Chandos and further solo and chamber cds for EMI, Phillips, Dutton, Unicorn Kanchana and ABC Classics.

Piers Lane is Artistic Director of the Sydney International Piano Competition. He was Artistic Director of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music from 2006 to 2017, and from 2006 to 2013 he also directed the annual Myra Hess Day at the National Gallery in London. He has written and presented over 100 programmes for BBC Radio 3, including the popular 54-part series The Piano.

In the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Birthday Honours he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished services to the arts. In 1994 he was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music, where he was a professor from 1989 to 2007. Piers holds Honorary Doctorates from two Australian Universities: Griffith and James Cook.



Piers Lane
Photo: Keith Saunders

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Le Tombeau de Couperin was begun, as a 'French Suite', in 1914, though, as Ravel assured his friends, '*La Marseillaise* will not be in it, but it will have a *forlane* and a *gigue*, no tango though...' (There would, finally, be no *gigue*, either.) Despite his characteristically jovial tone, and a tendency to cool irony when discussing his life, the outbreak of World War I deeply upset him.

His 'French Suite' for solo piano appeared in 1917 with a new title that proclaimed it as a memorial to the great French Baroque composer and keyboard virtuoso, François Couperin (1668–1733) – hence Ravel's use of French Baroque dance forms. Each movement was dedicated to a friend who died defending France and its culture. (Ravel himself served in World War I as a truck driver near the battlefield at Verdun.) Shortly after the first performance in 1919, Ravel orchestrated four of the six movements in an orchestral suite claimed by many to surpass the original in its ingenuity and variety.

The *Prélude* has an improvisatory flourish, with subtle changes of register and colour. The *Forlane*, in a stately 6/8 is characterised by quirky 'wrong-note' harmony (though based on a work of Couperin's) and steady ascension into higher realms of the ensemble. This provides contrast with more steady rhythm and limpid modal harmony of the *Menuet*. The folk-song influenced *Rigaudon*, in a fast 2/4 time, provides an exciting finish.

After hearing a performance of Grieg's piano concerto, Arnold Schoenberg is supposed to have remarked: 'That's the kind of music I'd really like to write', and one can't help but feel that there was a wistful sincerity buried in the remark.

Grieg composed the concerto at the age of 25 while relatively inexperienced in orchestral writing and tinkered endlessly with the orchestration between the time of the work's (triumphant) premiere and his death in 1907. He had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory from the age of 15 with the initial intent of becoming a concert pianist. Dissatisfied with his first teacher, Grieg began lessons with E F Wenzel, a friend and supporter of Schumann.

The influence on Grieg of Schumann's Piano Concerto, also in A minor, has been remarked on frequently, but apart from their similar three-movement design and opening gesture the style of each is markedly different. Grieg's Concerto is replete with exquisite tunes. Many of these echo the Norwegian folk music with which Grieg had become familiar in 1864.

The piano's opening gesture, for instance, recalls folk music in its use of a 'gapped' scale, and the origins of the finale in folk dance are clear.

Grieg was unable to attend the premiere of his concerto in Copenhagen in 1869, but it was an outstanding success and was recognised as a youthful masterpiece. Anton Rubinstein, for instance, described it as a 'work of genius'. A year later, Grieg met Liszt for the second time. Liszt allegedly sight-read Grieg's concerto and said 'you have the real stuff in you. And don't ever let them frighten you!'

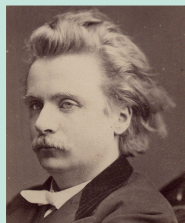
Grieg didn't let them frighten him, and the Piano Concerto went on to establish his reputation throughout the musical world. Audiences responded, as they still do, to what Tchaikovsky, who adored the work, described as the work's 'fascinating melancholy which seems to reflect in itself all the



Ravel at the piano



François Couperin



The young Edvard Grieg

beauty of Norwegian scenery'. One of Grieg's greatest admirers, Percy Grainger, became one of the Concerto's most celebrated exponents and one of the dearest friends of Grieg's last years.

Haydn's work became increasingly available to musicians throughout Europe from the early 1780s when he began publishing his works abroad. He himself, however, was obliged to remain, most of the time, at the splendid but isolated Eszterháza Castle in rural Hungary, overseeing the huge amount of music performed there for his employer, Prince Nikolaus. Nikolaus died in 1790, and his successor, Prince Anton, was not overly fond of music. So, in 1791-92 the sexagenarian composer was able to visit London at the request of the impresario Johann Peter Salomon and was feted as the greatest composer of his day.

For his second visit during the 1794-95 concert seasons Haydn composed six symphonies which are the crowning achievement of his work in that genre. Indeed, in some respects they represent the apex of the music of the Classical style. On one hand they are works whose great technical sophistication could only have occurred after years of experimentation; by contrast they immediately achieved overwhelming popular success. Scholar Charles Rosen has pointed out that Haydn's style in the London symphonies 'became not less, but more learned, as it became more popular,' and rightly draws a parallel with the 'brief glory of late Elizabethan drama' where groundling and nobleman alike were entranced by the works of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

The first of four movements opens with a solemn slow introduction that offsets the wit and energy of the main allegro, with its occasional joyful sequences à la Vivaldi. The slow(ish) movement's apparent simplicity gives way, briefly, to some emotive, unstable music before calm is restored.

In the Menuetto Haydn plays with the dance's regular metre, accenting the 'wrong' beats to give it some completely illusory rustic charm. The Finale is perhaps more genuinely folksy. It uses a drone bass and a tune based on a Croatian song that Haydn might have remembered from his childhood in upper Austria, but which becomes the basis for an expansive and tightly argued piece. One audience member described the symphony as 'grand but very noisy'.



Joseph Haydn



King's Theatre Haymarket

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– Andrew Haveron, Concertmaster



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in memory of Carolyn Clampett*

Claire Herrick
Violin
Russell & Mary McMurray Chair

Catherine Hewgill
Principal Cello
*The Hon. Justice AJ &
Mrs Fran Meagher Chair*

Kirsty Hilton
Principal Second Violin
Drs Keith & Eileen Ong Chair

Scott Kinmont
Associate Principal Trombone
Audrey Blunden Chair

Emily Long
Violin
Dr Margot Harris Chair

Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal Cello
*Sydney Symphony Orchestra
Vanguard Chair (lead
support from Seamus R Quick)*

Nicole Masters
Violin
Nora Goodridge OAM Chair

Fiona McNamara
Bassoon
Nelson Meers Foundation Chair

Timothy Nankervis
Cello
Dr Rebecca Chin & Family Chair

Elizabeth Neville
Cello
Bob Magid OAM & Ruth Magid Chair

Alexandre Oguey
Principal Cor Anglais
Mackenzie's Friend Chair

Mark Robinson
Acting Principal Timpani
*Sylvia Rosenblum Chair
in memory of Rodney Rosenblum*

Rachel Silver
Horn
Sue Milliken AO Chair

Emma Sholl
Associate Principal Flute
Robert & Janet Constable Chair

Matthew Wilkie
Principal Emeritus Bassoon
Nelson Meers Foundation Chair

Justin Williams
Assistant Principal Viola
Robert & L Alison Carr Chair

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