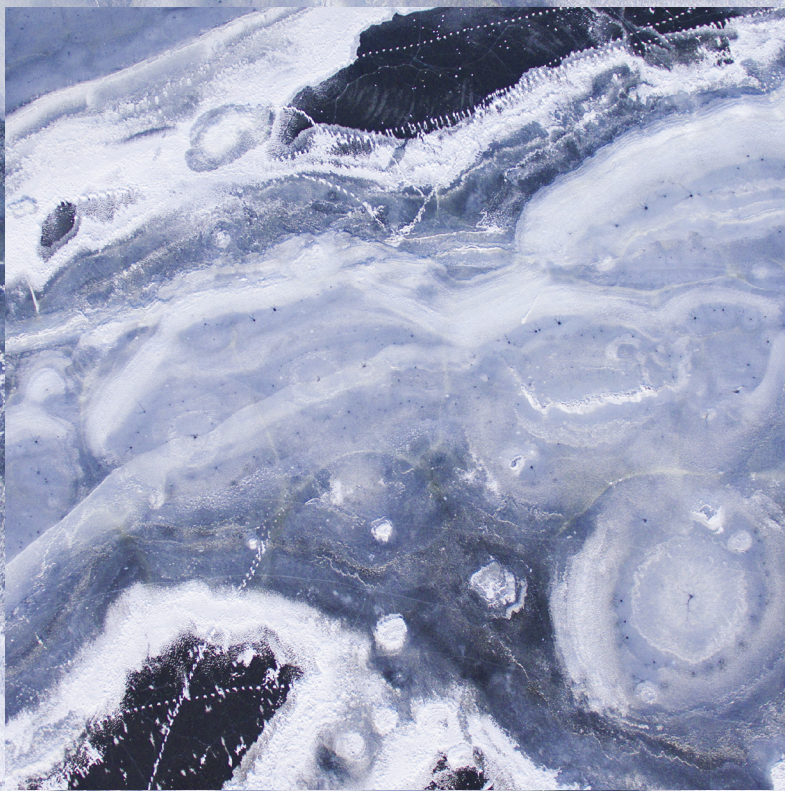


22 April
Sydney Town Hall

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO.2



Presenting Partner

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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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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 Atzman, 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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2021 CONCERT SEASON
SYMPHONY HOUR

Thursday 22 April, 7pm
Sydney Town Hall

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO.2

BENJAMIN NORTHEY conductor

MARIA GRENFELL (BORN 1969)
Gaudete Fanfare

MAX RICHTER (BORN 1966)
On the Nature of Daylight

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)
Symphony No.2 in D major, Op.43
Allegretto
Tempo andante
Vivacissimo –
Allegro moderato

Maria Grenfell’s Gaudete Fanfare was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by the Neilson Foundation.

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WELCOME

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Credit Suisse, Premier Partner of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra welcomes you to Sibelius Symphony No.2.

The cinematic style of Max Richter and Sibelius' Second Symphony feature in this evening's program, as well as Maria Grenfell's *Gaudete Fanfare*; a virtuosic work for the brass section. The piece was commissioned by Sydney Symphony Orchestra for their *50 Fanfares* project, designed to fill a gap in the Australian music landscape and affirm our country's creative position in the world.

When nurtured from a young age, creativity can grow and continue for generations. That is why Credit Suisse has worked in partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to provide access to music to young children in Sydney and Melbourne since 2018. This year, over 1,000 students and teachers will attend orchestra performances as part of the Credit Suisse Sydney Symphony Orchestra Music Education Program. The six primary schools in our program have also received teacher training in music education and new instruments to inspire the next generation of talent.

Thank you for joining the Sydney Symphony Orchestra tonight, and we hope you enjoy this performance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Gibb".

Richard Gibb
Chief Executive Officer
Credit Suisse Australia

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

BENJAMIN NORTHEY conductor

Australian conductor Benjamin Northey is the Chief Conductor of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and the Principal Conductor in Residence of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Previously Resident Guest Conductor of the Australia Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra (2002-2006) and Principal Conductor of the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra (2007-2010), *Limelight Magazine* named him *Australian Artist of the Year* in 2018.

Northey also appears regularly as a guest conductor with all major Australian symphony orchestras, Opera Australia (*Turandot*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *Carmen*), New Zealand Opera (*Sweeney Todd*) and State Opera South Australia (*La sonnambula*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*). His international appearances include concerts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia, the Malaysian Philharmonic and the New Zealand Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia and Christchurch Symphony Orchestras.

With a progressive and diverse approach to repertoire, he has collaborated with a broad range of artists including Maxim Vengerov, Julian Rachlin, Karen Gomyo, Piers Lane, Alban Gerhardt, Johannes Moser, Piers Lane, Amy Dickson, Slava Grigoryan & Marc-André Hamelin as well as popular artists Tim Minchin, KD Lang, Kate Miller-Heidke, Barry Humphries, Kurt Elling, James Morrison and Tori Amos.

In 2021, he conducts the Christchurch Symphony, the Australian Youth Orchestra and all six Australian state symphony orchestras.



Benjamin Northey
Photo: Julian Kingma

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Born in Malaysia and educated in New Zealand and the USA, Maria Grenfell is an Associate Professor at the University of Tasmania Conservatorium of Music and co-ordinates the composition stream. Her works have been performed extensively in Australia and New Zealand, as well as by the Vienna Piano Trio and members of *eighth blackbird*. She describes her new fanfare, saying:

Gaudete Fanfare for brass celebrates the excitement of musical performance. Gaudete Fanfare borrows from and re-harmonises the 16th-century carol, Gaudete Christus est natus: 'Rejoice, rejoice, Christ is born.' While not a religious piece, my fanfare seeks to create a virtuosic work for orchestral brass with antiphonal techniques used by Renaissance Italian composer Giovanni Gabrieli, where different groups of instruments engage in lively conversation with one another across the ensemble and the space.

Maria Grenfell's Gaudete Fanfare was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by the Neilson Foundation.

Grenfell provides a stage plan for her 11 brass instruments to achieve the antiphonal effects which the flanking galleries of San Marco in Venice provided for Gabrieli. The texture is dominated at first by emphatic staccato rhythms, offset by unexpected 'short' bars, into which fragments of the chant float before gradually coalescing into radiant harmony.

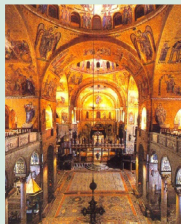
German-born British composer Max Richter has a distinguished career in electro-acoustic work, including scores for the stage and screen, and the post-minimalist aspect of his style makes for a fruitful point of contact between his music and that of the Baroque in works such as his 'recomposition' of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.

Richter is a politically engaged composer; his second album *The Blue Notebooks* (released in 2003 and re-released with various enhancements in 2018) has been described as a subtle and peaceful protest against political, social and personal brutality. It included narrated texts from Franz Kafka's 'Blue Octavo Notebooks', the composer explaining that they

reflected on my sense of the politics of the time. Facts were beginning to be replaced by subjective assertions in the build-up to the Iraq war, which seemed to be viewed as inevitable and justified in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. Kafka's use of the absurd to investigate power structures struck me as highly relevant. He is, of course, the patron saint of doubt, and doubt – about politics, and the way society was heading – was what I was looking to express. The texts were specifically picked because they refer to childhood, or the passing of time, when everything around is failing.



Maria Grenfell



The Basilica of San Marco, Venice, where Gabrieli wrote for antiphonal brass choirs



Max Richter

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The 'hit single' from the album was *On The Nature Of Daylight*, which was rapidly taken up by film directors such as Martin Scorsese in *Shutter Island*, and several others, most recently Denis Villeneuve in *Arrival* as a crucial element of the soundtrack. By definition it deals with the passing of time, reflecting in the music's structure. Like Baroque forms such as the passacaglia, in which a repeated idea underlies a texture that grows by accretion, this work begins with simple four-chord patterns, adding layers of stepwise minor-mode melody that move at different speeds in the different string voices to create a sense of massive resonance, as in some works of Arvo Pärt.

Sibelius, like Brahms, came relatively late to writing symphonies, producing his First at the age of thirty-three and premiering it in 1899. Like Brahms, though, Sibelius had accrued considerable experience in writing for orchestra. The 1890s saw the composition of works like *Kullervo*, *En saga*, movements which later became the *Karelia* Suite and the original version of the *Lemminkäinen Suite* which depicts heroic tales from the Finnish mythological cycle, the *Kalevala*.

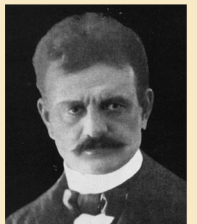
What all these works have in common, of course, is their preoccupation with the myths and legends of Finland, which remained until 1917 a satellite of Imperial Russia. As a member of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, Sibelius hadn't given much thought to the traditional mythology of the Finns until his engagement in 1890 to Aino Järnefelt, whose family were very pro-Finnish. At the time he was studying in Vienna, where the music of Anton Bruckner made a deep impact on him. While Sibelius' enthusiasm for Bruckner cooled over the years, the influence of the Austrian composer – particularly his ability to structure large-scale symphonic movements – remained crucial.

Sibelius' nationalist music was related to a growing political consciousness: by 1899 the Russians were actively discriminating against Finns and suppressing their language. The work we know as *Finlandia* was banned by the Russians and had to be performed under the politically inoffensive title of 'Prelude', though no Finn in the audience was unaware of the work's significance. Sibelius' enterprise in the 1890s, then, was to create a Finnish musical language out of the drama of its legends, the typical modal patterns of its folk-song (though he never quoted actual folk-tunes) and the rhythmic imprint of its verse, and to blend these elements with the contemporary idioms of Bruckner, Liszt and Tchaikovsky.

Sibelius always denied that the Second Symphony, which appeared in 1902, had any extra-musical significance. The journey it enacts from darkness to light relates it to works of 'absolute' music such as certain Beethoven symphonies, but commentators – particularly in Finland – have often argued for its having an implicit program of national liberation. The audiences at its premiere



Franz Kafka



Jean Sibelius

ABOUT THE MUSIC

performances certainly thought so: the concerts were sold-out, the audiences ecstatic and the composer acclaimed as a national hero.

Its first movement seems to evoke the pastoral landscapes of Finland, shot through with a sense of incipient grief. During its course the symphony passes through often fragmentary stages of deep melancholy and conflict before emerging in the final movement with one of Sibelius’ most stirring and memorable tunes.

In fact, Sibelius began writing music which ended up in the symphony while holidaying in Italy, leading some writers to comment on the more than usually warm textures that he draws from a modestly constituted orchestra. From his correspondence we know he was contemplating at least two projects: a set of tone-poems called *Festivals* and a single movement work – inspired perhaps by Richard Strauss, whom Sibelius had recently met – on the story of *Don Juan*. Out of the sketches for these works, Sibelius fashioned some of his most memorable gestures: the sinister opening of the second movement, with its soft pizzicato opening, horn calls and bassoon solo was originally to have evoked the figure of Death arriving at Don Juan’s castle.

The work may be a document of national liberation, but it is also about the process of unifying and reconciling diverse, often fragmentary, musical gestures, so that the expansive melody of the finale seems the inevitable outcome of all that went before. Five years later, Sibelius would have his much reported meeting with Mahler where he advocated a ‘severity of style and the profound logic that creates an inner connection between all the motifs’. Mahler’s response, ‘No, the symphony must be like the world and embrace everything’ missed the point. In their different ways, they were saying the same thing.

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