

10–13 February
Sydney Town Hall

ROMANCE BEGINS

CONDUCTED BY SIMONE YOUNG



Presenting Partner



Abercrombie & Kent

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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 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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ABERCROMBIE & KENT MASTERS SERIES

Wednesday 10 February, 8pm
Thursday 11 February, 7pm
Friday 12 February, 8pm
Saturday 13 February, 8pm
Sydney Town Hall

ROMANCE BEGINS

CONDUCTED BY SIMONE YOUNG

SIMONE YOUNG conductor
DANIEL RÖHN violin

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

Violin Concerto in D, Op.35
Allegro moderato – Moderato assai
Canzonetta: Andante
Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

CONNOR D’NETTO (BORN 1994)

Uncertain Planning

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

Symphony No.9 in E minor, B.178 (Op.95) *From the New World*
Adagio – Allegro molto
Largo
Scherzo (Molto vivace)
Allegro con fuoco

Connor D'Netto's *Uncertain Planning* was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Christine Bishop.

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WELCOME

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Abercrombie & Kent

Welcome to the Abercrombie & Kent Masters Series.

Hello and welcome to the curtain raising performance of the 2021 Masters Series. As we look to a new year with renewed hope and optimism, tonight's program offers the perfect complimentary pairing of romantic energy and dreamy, bohemian influences, reminiscent of faraway lands.

Tonight, experience Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto famously originally dedicated to one of the composer's most significant partners, through the delicate brilliance of German violinist, Daniel Röhn. Composed amid the whimsical landscapes of France, Italy and Switzerland, the music swells with lush sweeping strings that inspire thoughts of romantic connections and adventures past, present and yet to come.

Romance and travel have long been intertwined, whether it be celebrating a bond between two lovers on an enchanting honeymoon to the coastal idyll of the Maldives, or commemorating a milestone on safari to the plains of Africa, revelling in the unwavering love and support forged through a lifelong partnership. Not just celebrating love between people, destinations across the world draw intrepid travellers with a love of adventure, from the ethereal wilderness of Patagonia, to the captivating icescapes of Antarctica or India's kaleidoscope of sounds, smells and culture, its Taj Mahal standing proudly as the ultimate declaration of love.

Even if Tchaikovsky's European countryside seems a long way off right now, we can keep the passion of travel and adventure alive and start planning for future explorations. Consider spending some time with loved ones closer to home, perhaps on a Loire Valley-inspired walking tour in the Barossa, or paying homage to the wilds of Africa on a glamping safari through Kakadu.

This year at A&K we resolved to continue exploring, and whatever your adventure, we hope we can help you embark on an unforgettable journey. Because great travel, much like a great love, leaves you with memories for years to come.

Enjoy your listening and exploring!

Sujata Raman

Regional Managing Director
Australia & Asia Pacific
Abercrombie & Kent

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIMONE YOUNG conductor

Simone Young AM, General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg from 2005 – 2015 is currently Principal Guest Conductor of the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. She has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Vienna Staatsoper, the Staatsoper Berlin and Staatsoper Hamburg. Her Hamburg recordings include the *Ring* cycle, *Mathis der Maler* (Hindemith), and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. Her 2012 Hamburg Opera and Ballet tour to Brisbane, (*Das Rheingold* in concert, and Mahler *Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection"*), won her the 2013 Helpmann Award for the Best Individual Classical Music Performance.

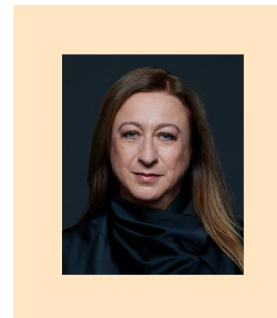
Simone Young's most recent engagements have included return invitations to the New York and Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestras; the Helsinki, Barcelona, Cincinnati, and Minnesota Orchestras; Orchestre de Paris; and the West Australian and Queensland Symphony Orchestras.

The BBC Symphony, Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Dresden, and London Philharmonic Orchestras, the Staatskapelle Dresden, the Bruckner Orchestra, Linz, City of Birmingham Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and the Wiener Symphoniker, are among the leading orchestras Simone Young also regularly conducts.

Maintaining her passionate interest in and understanding of the voice, her recent invitations to conduct opera have included Reimann's *Lear* (Madrid), *Fidelio*, a Verdi Gala and *Der Rosenkavalier* (Berlin State Opera), *Lohengrin* and *Elektra* (Zürich), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Henze's *Das verurteilte Meer* (Vienna State Opera), and *Tannhäuser* (Munich).

Simone Young has been Music Director of Opera Australia, Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon. Her many accolades include a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, Honorary Doctorates from Griffith University, University of Western Australia, Monash University and the University of New South Wales; the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from France, the Goethe Institute Medal and the Sir Bernard Heinze Award.

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.



Simone Young
Photo: Nic Walker

Simone Young's appearances are generously supported by Bob Magid OAM & Ruth Magid.

Supporting Simone Young in 2021



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DANIEL RÖHN violin

Widely acclaimed as one of the leading violinists on stage today, Daniel Röhn comes from a remarkable lineage of artists: both his grandfather Erich Röhn and his father Andreas Röhn helped shape the universally unique German orchestral sound as concertmasters of the Berlin Philharmonic's Furtwängler era and the postwar Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Daniel's own playing is rooted in these stylistic traditions and he has earned praise from critics and audiences worldwide for his evocation of the violin's golden age.

Recent and upcoming highlights include performances with the London Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. Röhn has appeared at Carnegie Hall New York, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Wigmore Hall London, and at all major venues in his native Germany, with conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Gustavo Dudamel, Lorin Maazel, and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

As a frequent guest at Europe's major summer festivals, his chamber music partners include Lisa Batiashvili, Gautier Capuçon, Nils Mönkemeyer, and Jörg Widmann.

His award-winning discography presents not only standard repertoire, but special projects like "The Kreisler Story", a masterful celebration of one of the violin's most treasured virtuosos Fritz Kreisler, or "The Golden Violin – Music of the 20's," Röhn's homage to the culturally unparalleled period between the two world wars.

Daniel Röhn received early musical training from his father and studied under Ana Chumachenco at Munich University of Music and Performing Arts. Daniel now resides in Australia for the foreseeable future with his wife, renowned flutist Ana de la Vega, and their daughter. A passionate teacher himself, and a former guest professor at the Hamburg University of Music, he is deeply devoted to passing on the German tradition of his artistic heritage to the next generation of violinists and violists in Australia.



Daniel Röhn
Photo: Andy Baker

ABOUT THE MUSIC

In the winter of 1877 Tchaikovsky was in love, with a passion of 'unimaginable force' for a young violinist and student at the Moscow Conservatorium, Iosif Kotek whom Tchaikovsky had known for about six years. Kotek was a devoted and affectionate but platonic friend to Tchaikovsky, but soon became besotted with a fellow (female) student. The composer's ardour cooled quickly, and within three weeks of discovering Kotek's new relationship, Tchaikovsky had made his fateful proposal to Antonina Milyukova, a former Conservatorium student who had fallen in love with him.

Kotek and Tchaikovsky remained friends, however, and the Violin Concerto seems to have grown out of a promise that the composer made to write a piece for one of Kotek's upcoming concerts. While Kotek was not, ultimately, the dedicatee or first performer of the work, he was of enormous help to Tchaikovsky in playing through sections of the piece as the composer finished them.

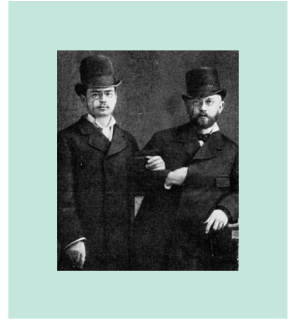
After leaving his wife, Tchaikovsky travelled extensively in western Europe and worked on the Violin Concerto in Switzerland in early 1878, not long after completing the Fourth Symphony and the opera *Eugene Onegin*. It seems that Tchaikovsky found the conventions of the violin concerto offered a way of writing a large-scale work without the personal and emotional investment of the opera and symphony.

Like Beethoven's and Brahms', Tchaikovsky's concerto is in the key of D major and in three substantial movements. The first develops two characteristic themes within a tracery of brilliant virtuoso writing for the violin, and like Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky places the solo cadenza before the recapitulation of the opening material. As in the slow movement of the Fourth Symphony, the central *Canzonetta* works its magic by the deceptively simple repetition of its material. The work concludes with a bravura, 'Slavic' finale which is interrupted only by a motif for solo oboe which for one writer recalls, nostalgically, a moment in the 'Letter Scene' from *Onegin* (which itself parallels the relationship between Tchaikovsky and his wife Antonina).

The work was initially dedicated to the virtuoso Leopold Auer, who thought it far too difficult and refused to play it. In 1881 Adolf Brodsky gave the premiere in Vienna. That city's most feared critic, Eduard Hanslick, tore the piece to shreds in frankly racist terms but, like many a music critic, he made a bad call; Tchaikovsky had written one of the best-loved works of the concerto repertoire.

Dvořák had an ambivalent relationship with Tchaikovsky and his music, saying that the Fourth Symphony was 'terrible' but that *Eugene Onegin's* music 'penetrates our hearts so deeply that we cannot forget it. Whenever I go to hear it I feel myself transported into another world.'

In 1892, Dvořák set sail for another world – New York – to take up the position of director of the National Conservatory of Music of America, founded by the indefatigable Jeanette M Thurber only a decade before.



Tchaikovsky (right)
with Iosif Kotek

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Dvořák felt very strongly that composers needed to look to their own vernacular musics for ideas. He argued that music by Native Americans, African-Americans (introduced to him by Harry Burleigh, a Black student at the Academy) and the songs of Stephen Foster, which derive from them, as well as the folk heritage of immigrant groups – such as the Czech community of Spillville, Iowa – could be the basis for a distinctly American classical music. As he said in the Harper’s article:

"Nothing must be too low or insignificant for the musician. When he walks he should listen to every whistling boy, every street singer or blind organ grinder..."

Dvořák’s Symphony From the New World premiered at Carnegie Hall in 1893, and seems like an illustration of that encompassing principle. Many of its themes are clearly rooted in folk idioms, though Dvořák noted that he had tried to capture the spirit of Native- and African-American music without actual appropriation. And the use of the ‘black-note’ pentatonic scale is common the world over.

The symphony’s first movement has a slow introduction, which gradually links short motifs together to produce a sense of growing tension that is released in the allegro. This section’s angular first theme for horns is answered by a crisp rhythm that suggests any number of Slavic dances. Flutes and oboes sound a bridging tune sometimes said (though not by Dvořák) to be ‘Indian’. The second major theme of the piece, heard first on solo flute, uses the same sequence of notes that sets the words ‘...chariot, comin’ for to carry me home’ in the spiritual *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* though with quite different mood and speed, so possibly not a conscious quotation. Dvořák weaves a complex and dramatic sonata movement out of these themes.

The celebrated Largo begins with a quiet but harmonically audacious sequence of chords before launching into the famous first theme. Given out by the cor anglais, the theme was later (though not by Dvořák) used for the song ‘Goin’ home’, but is not of African-American provenance. We do know that Dvořák associated some of the symphony’s music with a projected cantata or opera (as suggested by Jeanette Thurber) based on Longfellow’s epic of Native America, *The Song of Hiawatha*, and that the cor anglais theme was related to Hiawatha’s wooing. Commentators have generally agreed that the funereal central section relates to the death of Minnehaha, Hiawatha’s bride, and its echoes of the first movement suggest some extra-musical intent in that movement as well.

Dvořák also noted that the scherzo is based on Hiawatha’s wedding ‘scene at the feast where the Indians dance’. The central trio section of the scherzo has the kind of theme that became commonplace in filmed depictions of the American west.



Antonín Dvořák



Jeanette Thurber

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The finale is a tour-de-force in its energy and scoring, but also reimagines themes from the previous three movements, and combines them, breathtakingly, in the closing coda.

Gordon Kerry © 2021

CONNOR D’NETTO (BORN 1994)

Uncertain Planning

The composer writes...

I acknowledge the Jagera and Turrbal people, Traditional Custodians of the lands where I live, work and create, and the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation on whose land this concert takes place. I pay my respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

Uncertain Planning was written in the midst of 2020. Though my work rarely explicitly intends to convey any message, meaning or certain evocation, it’s hard not to let living through a year like 2020 influence your art – for your own inner workings to not colour ever-so-slightly your work. Knowing my new commission would be premiered alongside Dvorak’s “New World” Symphony, a work which looked forward with a joyous sense of optimism, strangely brought these feelings into stark relief. Spending my days in my writing studio became an escape from the new world, as did creating art; these also became spaces for catharsis. While diving deeper and deeper into the music itself, in the day-to-day practice of writing’s beautifully abstract ways, taking small musical ideas and obsessively reworking and exploring permutations, unfolding floral fractal-esque layers that all-encompass gestures and whole structures, searching for systems to carve out imagined spaces with sound, a broken world continued to turn outside my window and the uncertainty outside inevitably spread in – anxious stillness, distant, constant uneasiness and unknowing; overwhelming frustration, searing anger; gentle hope and burning determination.

This work was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Christine Bishop.

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