

26 February  
Sydney Town Hall

# DANE LAM CONDUCTS SAINT-SAËNS



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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 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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2021 CONCERT SEASON  
TEA & SYMPHONY

Friday 26 February, 11am  
Sydney Town Hall

# DANE LAM CONDUCTS SAINT-SAËNS

**DANE LAM** conductor  
**DAVID DRURY** organ

**ESTIMATED DURATIONS**  
8 minutes, 36 minutes.

**COVER IMAGE**  
Photo by Jay Patel

**LYLE CHAN** (BORN 1967)  
Gravity and Levity on the Sunbreathing Earth

**CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS** (1835–1921)  
Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op.78 (‘Organ’ Symphony)  
*I Adagio – allegro moderato – poco adagio*  
*II Allegro moderato – presto – maestoso – allegro*

Lyle Chan’s Gravity and Levity on the Sunbreathing Earth was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### DANE LAM conductor

Australian-Chinese conductor, Dane Lam, is Principal Conductor of the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra. Operatically, he enjoys a close relationship with London's Opera Holland Park and companies including Opera Queensland, Opera Australia and Scottish Opera. He was recently appointed Resident Conductor and Associate Music Director of Opera Queensland.

Dane made his debut, aged eighteen, with the Sydney Symphony and has since conducted the Queensland, Adelaide, Canberra, Dunedin, Kunming, Shandong, and Suzhou symphony orchestras, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Het Residentie Orkest, City of London Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata, South Bank Sinfonia, Liverpool Philharmonic Ensemble 10/10, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Verbier Festival Orchestra, and the Juilliard Orchestra.

Recent engagements include Angela Hewitt, Stephen Hough, Ning Feng, Barry Douglas, and Kirill Gerstein with XSO; *La bohème* and *Don Giovanni* at Opera Australia, *L'arlesiana* and *Così fan tutte* for Opera Holland Park, *Giulio Cesare* for Bury Court Opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice* for Opera Queensland, *The Rake's Progress* and *La traviata* for Scottish Opera.

In 2021, Dane Lam will lead seasons of *Le nozze di Figaro* in Brisbane, *La clemenza di Tito* in Canberra and will conduct the Xi'an Symphony (with Martha Argerich as soloist) and the Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland and Adelaide symphony orchestras.

A graduate of The Juilliard School, Royal Northern College of Music, and the University of Queensland, Dane was assistant conductor to Kurt Masur at the Orchestre National de France and Principal Conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. He was a finalist in the 2018 International Opera Awards in the Best Newcomer Category.



Dane Lam



## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### DAVID DRURY organ

Born in 1961, David Drury is well known to Australian audiences as an organist, choral conductor and composer of choral music. A graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, he became the first and only Australian to win the Tournemire Prize for improvisation at the St Alban's International Organ Competition in 1987.

Since then he has toured England, France, Germany, Canada, USA and New Zealand as a recitalist, and appeared as soloist with the Sydney, Adelaide and West Australian symphony orchestras, the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 2018, David played for the Choir of The Pilgrim Church, Adelaide on a tour of 10 English Cathedrals. In June he played recitals in Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris and Southwark Cathedral, London. He also played in the Bach B minor Mass with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and solo recitals in the Sydney Symphony's Tea and Symphony series and for the Sydney Town Hall and the Brisbane City Hall.

In 2019 he played in the Bach St Matthew Passion for the Royal School of Church Music Winter School, and the Bach Magnificat with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. David has also performed with the Australian Baroque Brass in the Bowral Autumn Music Festival and with Camerata Antica in the Ballarat Festival.

During December 2019 and January 2020 he toured England, France and Italy with the choir of St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney; completed before the COVID-19 pandemic. David is Director of Music at St Paul's College at the University of Sydney. His choral music is published by Crescendo Music Publications.



David Drury

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### LYLE CHAN (BORN 1967)

Gravity and Levity on the Sunbreathing Earth

#### The composer writes...

Gravity and Levity on the Sunbreathing Earth is the name of everything I compose while the COVID-19 epidemic lasts. This work was composed mid-October to mid-December 2020.

COVID has really made me ask that question again: what is the point of art?

Every work of art is a beacon. It is an opinion piece; if an artist doesn't have a point of view about something, they have no business making art.

Art is also eyewitness testimony. Artists put on record life as it is lived, known and experienced, each artform recording aspects according to what it's best at. Music is best at emotion. Music is the sound that feelings make, I frequently say. I am writing music during COVID in order to have a firsthand account of what it feels like living during COVID. One thing that has kept apace with the fast-changing epidemic is our fast-changing psychological reaction. One day happy, next moment heavy, one day lousy, next moment light.

You'll hear both seriousness and not-seriousness in this music. You'll hear a jocularity that is quicksilver but jittery, perhaps the kind of nervous humour you might have to alleviate a bad situation. At the heart of the work is a limitless melody that sounds like eternity and wisdom, but along the way it forms connections with sounds that agree with it and sounds that don't, like an ancient idea going through the stages of being discovered, resisted and accepted.

Whatever else it has shown, COVID has also shown humanity at its best. We can make proven vaccines in less than a year. It thrills me, and sobers me too because now I know that the last viral crisis that I lived through, the AIDS epidemic, could have been solved this way but wasn't – 3 vaccines and counting in under 1 year versus no vaccine at all after 40 years. Was this time really so different that it generated action so swift and determined? Recognising the difference between how we regarded these epidemics might mean being prepared for – maybe even not causing – the next crisis on this earth.

Ours is an earth that breathes the sun, to borrow Mackay's image. Our life here is predicated on how we treat it. The two crises of nature we saw in Australia this year, bushfires and viral epidemics, are the product of disrespect. When we pollute, we get fire. When we deforest and put villages where wildlife live, viruses will jump species. It's a warning to respect all the planet's inhabitants, not just the ones we like or find cuddly or tasty.

Ours is an earth clothed with the sun, to misborrow the Book of Revelations' apocalyptic image. Think of how beautiful the earth is, and then think of how beautiful we need to be to deserve to live on it.

Lyle Chan, Sydney, December 2020

*Lyle Chan's Gravity and Levity on the Sunbreathing Earth was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.*

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

**CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS** (1835–1921)  
Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op.78 (‘Organ’ Symphony)  
*I Adagio – allegro moderato – poco adagio*  
*II Allegro moderato – presto – maestoso – allegro*

In 1887 Charles Gounod heard the Parisian premiere of Saint-Saëns’ ‘Symphony No.3 in C minor, with Organ and Two Pianos’ and famously gushed, ‘there goes the French Beethoven’.

Saint-Saëns believed that ‘the time has come for the symphony to benefit by the progress of modern instrumentation’ and his orchestration is masterly, with a dramatic range of sounds from the diaphanous to the massive. The ‘Organ’ Symphony is, moreover, replete with memorable tunes and intricate counterpoint, traversing an emotional landscape from deepest melancholy to sheer joy.

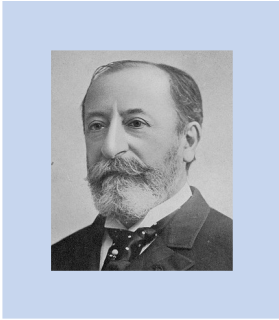
It was commissioned and first performed under the composer’s baton by the London Philharmonic Society in 1886. It is dedicated to the memory of Liszt, a great mentor ever since 1857 when, hearing Saint-Saëns improvising at the organ of the Madeleine church, he had declared the young Frenchman to be ‘the finest organist in the world’. Saint-Saëns for his part fought for the due recognition of the older man as composer as well as pianist.

There is more than just hyperbole to the Beethoven comparison. Like many a symphony of Beethoven’s, especially the Fifth, the ‘Organ’ Symphony begins in darkness and turbulence and only toward the end does it reach the bright affirmation of C major. And like Beethoven in the Fifth, Saint-Saëns is remarkably economical with his thematic material: it is possible to trace almost all his melodies back to the motifs heard in the work’s introduction and the opening of the following *allegro moderato*. How the composer elaborates these into such a contrasting abundance of melodies is by the principle of thematic transformation developed by Liszt. The work’s four movements are grouped in pairs, with the main dramatic weight carried by the second of each.

The opening *Adagio* is deliberately vague in direction, containing almost inconsequential motifs that become transformed in the course of the work. The static nature of the introduction enhances the release of energy in the *Allegro moderato* whose febrile theme begins with the same notes as the plainchant for the *Dies irae*. Saint-Saëns had, after all, been trained as a church musician and taught at the Ecole Niedermeyer, a school whose founder was an authority on how ‘modern harmony is submitted to the form of the ancient modes’. This fast music, however, seems to peter out, subsiding into the beautifully sombre and emotionally searching *Poco adagio*. It is here that the organ makes an appearance, providing a velvet backdrop for the questing second theme of the movement.

Part II opens with a turbulent scherzo punctuated by timpani. It too builds in sound and fury but mysteriously winds down to a quiet, simple texture built on another chant-like motif. Only now does Saint-Saëns unleash the full power of the organ. A shattering C major chord opens onto a world of sparkling piano figurations, chorale melodies and an overpoweringly joyful final peroration.

Gordon Kerry © 2021



Camille Saint-Saëns

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Every gift makes a difference. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of our community, including those who wish to remain anonymous.

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