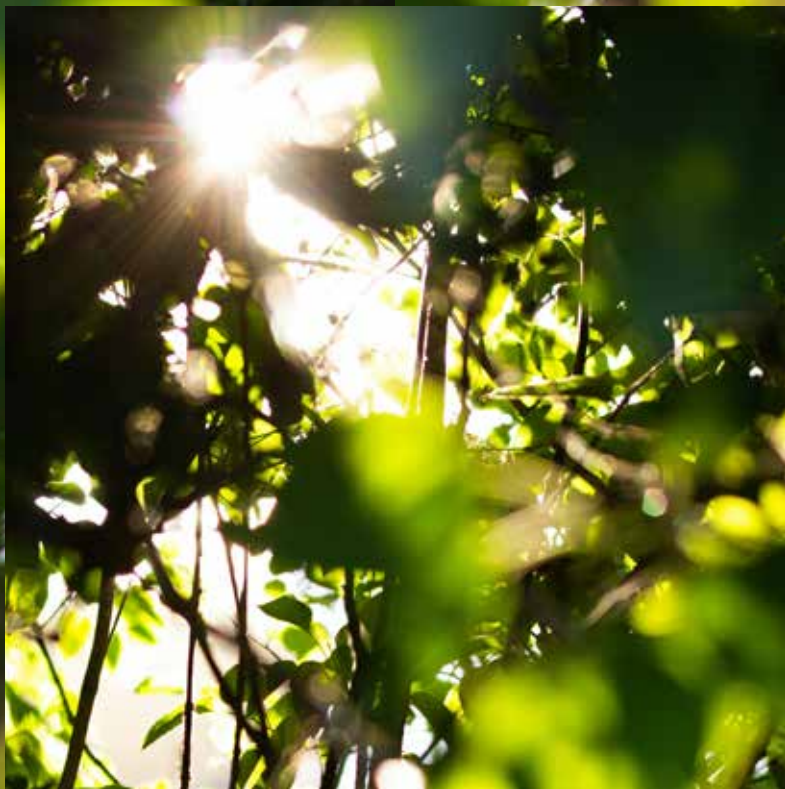


12-15 May
Sydney Town Hall

BEETHOVEN'S PASTORAL SYMPHONY



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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
ABERCROMBIE & KENT MASTERS SERIES

Wednesday 12 May, 8pm
Friday 14 May, 8pm
Saturday 15 May, 8pm
Sydney Town Hall

BEETHOVEN'S PASTORAL SYMPHONY

JOHANNES FRITZSCH conductor
JOSHUA BATTY flute

JULIAN YU (Born 1957)
Fanfaresso

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Egmont: Incidental music, Op.84
Overture

CARL NIELSEN (1865-1931)
Concerto for Flute and Orchestra, FS 119
Allegro moderato
Allegretto un poco – Adagio ma non troppo – Allegretto –
Poco adagio – Tempo di marcia

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

4 minutes, 9 minutes,
20 minutes, interval 20
minutes, 39 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 9.45pm

COVER IMAGE

Photo by Natali Panichkina

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No.6 in F major Op.68, Pastoral
Awakening of happy feelings on arrival in the country
(Allegro ma non troppo)
Scene by the brook (Andante molto mosso)
Peasants' merrymaking (Allegro) –
Thunderstorm (Allegro) –
Shepherd's song: Thanksgiving after the storm (Allegretto)

Julian Yu's Fanfaresso 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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Welcome to the Abercrombie & Kent Masters Series.

Hello and welcome to the May performance of the 2021 Masters Series. As the breeze of optimism begins to blow around Australia and beyond, tonight's program offers a poignant balance of exhilarating exploits and countryside idyll, painted by Beethoven's talented musical brush.

Experience the musical thrills of the Egmont Overture, famously written for the stage interpretation of the Count of Egmont's 16th century contribution to the struggle for Flemish freedom. An exciting tale of imperial liberty, love and victorious martyrdom, it's sure to stir a rousing sense of adventure and conjure colourful images of the faraway lands of Belgium and beyond.

A musical program, much like a journey abroad, benefits from a complementary balance of adventure and time to reflect. Tonight this can be found in Beethoven's Symphony No.6, *Pastoral*. A sentimental stroll through the Viennese countryside, this piece, composed at the same time as the stirring Fifth Symphony, offers a gentle counterpart to our adventurous opener. It spirits you away from the bustle of cities with a regional escape. The inclusion of Nielsen's Flute Concerto, equally as captivating and with a virtuous boldness, offers a rollercoaster of emotions. Its happy conclusion leaves you with a sense of fulfilled contentment much like a return home from a whirlwind overseas adventure. Under the masterful direction of Johannes Fritzsch, the program is sure to surprise and delight.

As the promise of an escape to Europe's thriving cities and picture-perfect countryside draws ever closer, we can start planning for future explorations. Travel is one of the few purchases that leaves you richer, and here at A&K we're in the business of crafting enriching adventures that take you beyond the ordinary.

Enjoy your listening and exploring!

Sujata Raman

Regional Managing Director
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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

JOHANNES FRITZSCH conductor

Johannes Fritzsch was appointed Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in February 2021 having previously served as their Chief Conductor (2008-2014). Since 2018, Johannes has held the position of Principal Guest Conductor of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

From 2006 – 2013 he was Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Oper Graz, Grazer Philharmonisches Orchester (Austria). Prior to his appointment in Graz, Johannes held the position of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Staatsoper Nürnberg.

Johannes was born in 1960 in Meissen, near Dresden, Germany; he has conducted many leading orchestras, both within Germany and internationally. He regularly conducts the major Australasian orchestras as well as leading productions for Opera Australia, Opera Queensland, West Australian Opera and State Opera of South Australia.

In January 2015, Johannes was appointed Adjunct Professor, The Conservatorium of Music, School of Creative Arts and Media at the University of Tasmania; in June 2019, he joined the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University as Professor of Opera and Orchestral Studies.

In 2017, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra invited him to design and lead the newly founded Australian Conducting Academy.

In 2021, he conducts the Auckland Philharmonia and the Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Tasmanian and West Australian Symphony Orchestras.



Johannes Fritzsch

JOSHUA BATTY flute

Joshua Batty joined the SSO as Principal Flute in 2019 after holding the same position with the RTE Concert Orchestra, Ireland. He teaches flute at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music after being appointed a flute tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music aged 24.

Joshua was fortunate to study with Michael Cox and Jacques Zoon as a full scholar at the Royal Academy of Music in London, during which time he became Principal Flute of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester and shortly after was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

He has guested as Principal Flute with many leading orchestras across the world, performing across UK, Europe, USA, South America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Orchestras include the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, BBC Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic, Malaysia Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Halle, Opera North, Royal Ballet Sinfonia, BBC Wales, Aurora Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, Royal Northern Sinfonia, John Wilson Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, and London Mozart Players. He has also given numerous recitals and masterclasses at Universities and festivals across UK, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Recent solo highlights include recitals for Musica Viva, at International Flute Conventions in UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand and performing at Buckingham Palace.

Joshua Batty's Chair is generously supported by Karen Moses.



Joshua Batty

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Julian Yu's *Fanfaresso* was composed in Melbourne during the Covid lockdown, which he describes as 'a sore trial for many':

I wanted to write music that was fun and would lift people's spirits, my own included.

The piece, for winds and percussion, consists of three sections: fast – 'slow' – fast. The first and last sections are lively in nature and make much use of tonguing.

The middle section, a 'passacaglia,' uses the eight-note baseline from J S Bach's 'Goldberg' Variations, combined contrapuntally with various Chinese-style melodies and one rather sad Chinese folk song (for contrast).

The third section, a development and extension of the first, introduces a new element: a repetitive rhythmic motif in the bass, building up to a lively climax. What is that iconic Australian theme in the final few bars of the triumphant coda? You won't get it wrong!

Julian Yu's Fanfaresso 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.

In 1809, Vienna was bombarded and then occupied by Napoleon's army. It was a miserable time; Beethoven was obliged to crouch in his brother's cellar clutching pillows to his ears to protect his failing hearing from the thunder of cannon. Beethoven's initial enthusiasm for Napoleon had dissipated – well before the famous shredding of the *Eroica* Symphony's dedication – when Napoleon signed a concordat with the Pope and re-established Catholicism in France. 'With that bastard' he later remarked, 'I made a mistake'.

Beethoven was delighted to accept a commission to write incidental music for Goethe's *Egmont* in 1810. Its theme of principled resistance to an oppressive foreign regime clearly resonated with him.

Goethe's play is set in the Spanish Netherlands. In the sixteenth century they were under the suzerainty of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Lamoral, count of Egmont, was a loyal Flemish servant of the Emperor, a Catholic and a brilliant general in various campaigns against the French, who is unjustly accused of treason, imprisoned and sentenced to death. As he goes to his death he gives a stirring speech, exhorting his people to save their loved ones by being ready to follow him, and 'to fall with joy'.

The Overture establishes a baleful mood at first, passing into a more a more turbulent middle section which closes with a falling unaccompanied motif and a sudden silence to express the moment of death. Then, assuring us of Egmont's ultimate victory in death, the music burst into a radiant F major the 'Victory Symphony'.



Julian Yu



Tischbein's portrait of Goethe, author of *Egmont*

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Carl Nielsen famously wrote:

The flute cannot deny its own nature, its home is Arcadia and it prefers pastoral moods. Hence, the composer has to obey its gentle nature unless he wants to be branded a barbarian.

Arcadia was the mythical Greek land of nymphs and shepherds, but as scholar Ryan Ross argues, here it symbolises the state of childhood innocence, ‘an idyllic past [that is contrasted] with a troubled present.’

In 1925, Nielsen had been honoured as a Danish national treasure on his 60th birthday and the following year, ill with chronic heart disease, embarked on both the Flute Concerto and his memoir *My Childhood on Funen*.

There is little that is pastoral about the work’s opening, a brusque fanfare of falling semiquavers for the orchestra that is taken over and modified by the soloist. This passage is based on a piece from Nielsen’s young adulthood, a Humoresque for oboe and piano dating from the 1880s. After a passage of elaboration and dialogue, a second, contrasting theme appears. In place of the strenuousness of the first, this begins with four even statements of a single note followed by sweetly harmonised triplets – a symbol, perhaps, for Arcadia. Nielsen elaborates his material through a series of contrasting paragraphs that include, for instance a delicate texture of flute, clarinet and solo violin. The flute’s cadenza is extensive, and occasionally ‘interrupted’, but the movement concludes with a provisional tranquillity.

The second of the two movements is considerably shorter, but ‘telescopes’ aspects of traditional forms. It is a ‘sort of rondo’ in Nielsen’s words, beginning with ‘slightly malicious’ semiquaver motifs. The flute’s melody in the lovely *Adagio* section is lightly accompanied at first by a version of the second, repeated-note theme from the first movement, but builds to more emphatic rhetoric. There follows a new version of the *Allegretto* ‘rondo’ music that reaches its climax in a shimmer of strings, flute and timpani. The final, comic march section is, again, derived from the original second theme, though completely altered in character. The work concludes quietly and enigmatically, featuring dazzling flute writing and broadly humorous gestures from one of Nielsen’s own instruments, the trombone.

In the summer of 1802 Beethoven, as usual, retired to the village of Heiligenstadt just outside Vienna, but this particular vacation saw a major crisis in the composer’s life. After his death, a document was found among his papers: now known as the *Heiligenstadt Testament*, it is a kind of will written in 1802 and addressed, but never sent to, Beethoven’s brothers. The document describes Beethoven’s anguish on realising that the deterioration of his hearing was incurable and describes his humiliation at not hearing what others around him took for granted, such as the distant sound of a shepherd’s flute. It discusses how he considered suicide, and only his art held him back.



Carl Nielsen



Beethoven by Ludwig Ferdinand Schnorr von Carolsfeld 1808-9

ABOUT THE MUSIC

As he famously expressed it, Beethoven's response to this crisis was a resolve to 'take Fate by the throat'.

The *Heiligenstadt Testament* was obviously written (or re-written) after the crisis had past, and in his new frame of mind Beethoven launched into what scholars call his heroic period. The first of the 'Rasumovsky' Quartets and the *Eroica* Symphony each expanded the sheer scale of its genre beyond anything previously imaginable, and in works like the Fifth Symphony Beethoven dramatises a titanic struggle and victory.

Beethoven spent subsequent summers in Heiligenstadt – the *Eroica* was largely composed there in the summer of 1803 – but in the *Pastoral* Symphony of 1808 he returns in his music to the scene of his existential crisis. Beethoven once wrote in a notebook of his desire to remain in the country. 'My unfortunate hearing does not plague me there. It is as if every tree spoke to me in the country: holy! holy! Ecstasy in the woods!' This might give the impression of the work being a kind of Romantic or pantheist hymn, but that is far from being the case. In fact, Beethoven's sixth is the fulfilment of certain baroque and classical conventions; the landscape which the symphony celebrates is peopled and worked.

Beethoven was very precise in describing the symphony as about feeling rather than painting. The first movement expresses feelings of joy at arriving in the country through its seemingly simple, diatonic melody and moments where the harmony seems static but is enlivened by joyously repeated motifs. We may well picture Beethoven sitting alone by a brook in the second movement, enabled by the miracle of art to hear the bird calls. Like Haydn, though – who admitted that his tone-painting of frogs in *The Seasons* was 'frenchified trash' – Beethoven was mistrustful of art imitating nature. The bird calls were an afterthought, and perhaps an ironic one at that.

But the third movement is social as well as pastoral. It is collective humanity which celebrates to the strains of the town band – and that prefigures the use of 'pop music' elements in the all-embracing context of the finale of the Ninth Symphony. It is collective humanity which experiences the storm – the last gasp of the figure of Fate who is wrestled to the ground in the works between 1802 and the time of the *Pastoral* Symphony – and it is the universe at large which gives thanks in the finale. The simple arpeggios of the 'thanksgiving' theme may well evoke a shepherd's artless tune – which Beethoven could no longer hear in reality – but they also reflect, in repose, the striving arpeggios of the *Eroica's* main theme.

The *Pastoral* Symphony, then, lays the ghosts that besieged Beethoven in Heiligenstadt in 1802. In this regained Arcadia, he 'hears' bird-calls and shepherd's flutes, and reduces the fearsome figure of fate to nothing scarier than a thunderstorm. Not surprisingly, Beethoven felt he could leave the symphonic genre for some years after this. When he returned to it, it was with the cosmic dance of the Seventh.

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Telephone: +61 2 9921 5353 Fax: +61 2 9449 6053
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