

26 March
Sydney Town Hall

HAYDN: SEVEN LAST WORDS



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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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TEA AND SYMPHONY

Friday 26 March, 11am
Sydney Town Hall

HAYDN: SEVEN LAST WORDS

ANDREW HAVERON director and violin

ESTIMATED DURATIONS
67 minutes.

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)

Seven Last Words of our Redeemer from the Cross Hob.XX/1

Introduzione: Adagio

Sonata 1: Largo

Sonata 2: Grave e cantabile

Sonata 3: Grave

Sonata 4: Largo

Sonata 5: Adagio

Sonata 6: Lento

Sonata 7: Largo –

Il Terremoto: Presto e con tutta la forza

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ANDREW HAVERON director and violin
*Sydney Symphony Concertmaster,
Vicki Olsson Chair*

Andrew Haveron has established himself as one of the most sought-after violinists of his generation. A laureate of some of the most prestigious international violin competitions, Andrew studied in London at the Purcell School and the Royal College of Music. With his unrivalled versatility, he is a highly respected soloist, chamber musician and concertmaster.

As a soloist, Andrew has collaborated with conductors such as Sir Colin Davis, Sir Roger Norrington, Jiří Bělohlávek, Stanislaw Skrowachewski, David Robertson and John Wilson, performing a broad range of the well-known and less familiar concertos with many of the UK's finest orchestras. His performance of Walton's violin concerto with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2015 was nominated for a Helpmann Award. Andrew's playing has also been featured on many film and video-game soundtracks, including Disney's 'Fantasia' game, which includes his performance of Vivaldi's Four Seasons with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

In 1999 Andrew was appointed first violinist of the internationally acclaimed Brodsky Quartet. A busy schedule saw the quartet perform and broadcast in their unique style all over the world. Amassing a repertoire of almost 300 works, they collaborated with outstanding artists and commissioned many new works from today's composers. Also famed for their iconic 'cross-genre' projects, the quartet enjoyed barrier-breaking work with Elvis Costello, Björk, Paul McCartney and Sting. Andrew has also appeared with numerous other chamber groups such as the Nash and Hebrides ensembles, the Logos Chamber Group, Kathy Selby and Ensemble Q.

Andrew is also in great demand as a concertmaster and director and has worked with all the major symphony orchestras in the UK and many further afield. In 2007 he became concertmaster of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, broadcasting frequently on BBC Radio and enjoying many appearances at the BBC Proms including the famous "Last Night". Joining the Philharmonia Orchestra in 2012 Andrew also led the 'World Orchestra for Peace' at the request of its conductor Valery Gergiev, and again in 2018 at the request of Donald Runnicles. He has also been the leader of 'The John Wilson Orchestra' since its inception. In 2013, Andrew started in his current position of concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In 2019 Andrew appeared with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Simon Rattle, and in recitals around Australia with pianists Anna Goldsworthy, Piers Lane and Simon Tedeschi.

Andrew Haveron plays a 1757 Guadagnini violin, generously loaned to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra by Vicki Olsson.



Andrew Haveron

Photo: Nick Bowers

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Haydn's *Stabat mater*, a 13-movement work for soloists, choir and orchestra describes the anguish of the Virgin Mary at seeing her son dying on the cross, and asks, on behalf of Christian souls, to share in the agony of Christ and subsequent bliss in heaven. First performed in Vienna in 1768 it became immensely popular, nowhere more so than in Spain. Haydn's celebrity there eventually led to a commission from 'a canon of Cádiz Cathedral' for an orchestral work to accompany the liturgical presentation of the seven last utterances of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. In the season of Lent in 1787, the ceremony took place in the Oratory of the Holy Cave, an underground church in the city. Presumably on the basis of an eye-witness account, Haydn's friend and biographer Georg August Griesinger described the occasion:

On the appointed day, the walls, windows, and pillars of the church were hung with black cloth, and only one large lamp hanging from the centre of the roof broke the solemn darkness. At an appointed hour the doors were all locked, and the music began. After a short prelude the bishop ascended the pulpit, pronounced the first of the seven words (or sentences) and delivered a meditation upon it. As soon as this was ended, he left the pulpit, and prostrated himself before the altar. The interval was filled by music. The bishop then in the same way pronounced the second word, then the third, and so on, the orchestra following on the conclusion of each discourse.

Haydn duly composed a set of orchestral 'sonatas', his publisher released a string quartet version soon after, most likely with Haydn's approval if not in his actual arrangement. That formed the basis of a keyboard reduction and some years later Haydn reworked the piece as an oratorio.

From the mid-1770s Haydn's duties as music director to Prince Nikolaus Eszterházy at his palace, Eszterháza, in rural Hungary involved overseeing a full-time opera company (the Empress Maria Theresa once quipped that she had to go the country to see a decent production). Haydn conducted numerous works and contributed some six operas to the repertoire. The Seven Last Words, unsurprisingly, shows his finely-honed ability to depict emotion and a dramatic scenario.



Joseph Haydn

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Haydn prefaces the set with an introduction which establishes the solemnity of the occasion through a stately pace and the distinctive dotted rhythms that feature frequently in ceremonial music of the period.

The seven sentences that follow presented Haydn with the challenge of sustaining the sombre mood, largely though slow tempos, while not boring the audience. He met the challenge in several ways – by transforming material from movement to movement, sometimes unusual orchestration, and contrasting key and metre. Each of the sentences begins with a motto, or theme that 'fits' the Latin text from the Gospel.

The first, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do', presents the theme on oboe and violin, taking up the dotted rhythms and repeated quavers of the introduction. The harmony is often chromatic, with expressive semitonal dissonances, like sighs, on strong beats. At the end, the repeated notes, as if exhausted are quietly stated and separated by rests.

'Today you will be with me in Paradise', the second sonata, likewise states the theme in the first violin, with the repeated note pattern, now half speed, forming the accompaniment. Here Christ is addressing one of the thieves crucified with him, assuring him of the comfort of salvation, which Haydn represents in lyrical music that transforms from minor- to major-key harmony.

Addressing his mother and his favourite disciple (St John) in the third piece, Jesus says 'Woman, behold your son'. Delicately scored, the music is much more fragmented – the repeated-note figure appears at various speeds in isolation, and the theme comes in short motifs in the violins, and is passed to solo flute.

Jesus' impassioned cry 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' forms the fourth sonata, a dark minor-key piece redolent of similar moments in opera, punctuated by solo sobbing motifs. Suffused by dotted rhythms and the three-note pattern, it too ends in a gesture of exhaustion.

'I thirst', the fifth sonata, begins with a unison cry followed by the dry texture of pizzicato strings over which the two note 'theme' migrates from one instrumental group to another. Jesus' increasing distress is depicted in more and more insistent music, bringing in the sobbing motif from earlier in the work.

The theme of 'It is finished', the sixth sonata, is given a fully-scored chorale treatment before breaking into canon, and then offering a contrasting – and an oddly cheerful seeming second theme. Jesus has, after all conquered the world.

The final sentence 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit' is again operatic at first, and in E flat, a key which composers of the time associated with heroism. Now-familiar motifs return – the repeated-note idea, the etiolated sobbing figure, the dramatic use of sudden dynamic changes. And as Jesus gives up his spirit the music dissolves into fragmentary pizzicato, leading straight into a fast, forceful (and operatic) evocation of the earthquake that, according to Matthew 27:51, signalled Jesus' death.

Gordon Kerry © 2021



The interior of the Oratory of the Holy Cave, photo Jim Walton

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