

17–20 March
Sydney Town Hall

MOZART & SCHUMANN



Presenting Partner



Abercrombie & Kent

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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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Wednesday 17 March, 8pm
Thursday 18 March, 1.30pm
Friday 19 March, 8pm
Saturday 20 March, 8pm
Sydney Town Hall

MOZART AND SCHUMANN

ASHER FISCH conductor
FRANCESCO CELATA clarinet

LACHLAN SKIPWORTH (Born 1982)
Fanfara

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)
The Abduction from the Seraglio: Overture

Clarinet Concerto in A, K.622
Allegro
Adagio
Rondo (Allegro)

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)
Symphony No.2 in C, Op.61
Sostenuto assai – Allegro, ma non troppo
Scherzo (Allegro vivace)
Adagio espressivo
Allegro molto vivace

Lachlan Skipworth’s Fanfara was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

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Welcome to the Abercrombie & Kent Masters Series.

Returning to the concert hall and live music is wonderfully exciting. We're delighted to be able to support this concert, presented as part of the 2021 Abercrombie & Kent Masters Series.

Many of you will recall Asher Fisch's performances with the Sydney Symphony in 2019. They were a celebration that combined his extraordinary musical imagination with the works of great masters.

Tonight is a chance to experience Mozart's overture to *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. While a romantic and fanciful vision, it still inspires imagery of an exotic faraway landscape and an Ottoman culture which still fascinates the world.

Equally celebrated and no less lyrical and romantic is Mozart's Clarinet Concerto to be performed by Francesco Celata, the Sydney Symphony's Associate Principal Clarinet. This time, the landscape of the imagination is yours to explore and traverse as this beautiful music unfolds. Your adventure continues with Schumann's second symphony which sets out with brilliant clarity and moves through a vast expressive journey to its radiant final movement, bursting with energy.

Even if the allures of Europe, Asia and beyond seem a long way off right now, we can keep our dreams of travel and adventure alive and start planning for future explorations. While we wait and plan until we can explore further, A&K are making people's dreams of exploring Australia a reality. There is so much to be discovered in our own country and so many opportunities for idyllic escapes to places of astonishing beauty.

Enjoy tonight's beautiful escape!

Sujata Raman

Regional Managing Director
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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ASHER FISCH conductor

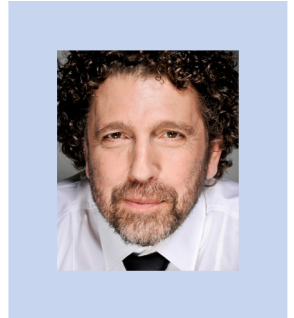
A renowned conductor in both the operatic and symphonic worlds, Asher Fisch is especially celebrated for his interpretative command of core German and Italian repertoire of the Romantic and post-Romantic era. He conducts a wide variety of repertoire from Gluck to contemporary works by living composers. Since 2014, Asher Fisch has been the Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO). His former posts include Principal Guest Conductor of the Seattle Opera (2007-2013), Music Director of the New Israeli Opera (1998-2008), and Music Director of the Wiener Volksoper (1995-2000). In 2019, Fisch won Helpmann Awards for Best Individual Classical Performance and Best Symphony Orchestra Concert for WASO's production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

After returning to conduct the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood and the Cleveland Orchestra at the Blossom Festival in August, highlights of Asher Fisch's 2019-20 season include concerts with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the orchestra of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna.

Highlights of Asher Fisch's 2018-19 season included guest engagements with the Düsseldorf Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Teatro Massimo Orchestra in Palermo.

Born in Israel, Fisch began his conducting career as Daniel Barenboim's assistant and kappellmeister at the Berlin Staatsoper. He has built his versatile repertoire at the major opera houses such as the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, and Semperoper Dresden. Fisch is also a regular guest conductor at leading American symphony orchestras including those of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and Philadelphia. In Europe he has appeared at the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the Orchestre National de France, among others.

Asher Fisch's recent recordings include Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, recorded live with WASO and featuring Stuart Skelton and Gun-Brit Barkmin. Widely acclaimed, it won *Limelight Magazine's* Opera Recording of the Year in 2019. Fisch's recording of Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* with the Munich Radio Orchestra also won *Limelight Magazine's* Opera Recording of the Year in 2017. In 2018 Fisch and WASO recorded Bruckner's Symphony No.8 for WASOLive! and Stuart Skelton's first solo album for ABC Classics. Fisch is also an accomplished pianist and has recorded a solo disc of Wagner piano transcriptions for the Melba label.



Asher Fisch
Photo: Chris Gonz

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

FRANCESCO CELATA clarinet *Sydney Symphony Associate Principal Clarinet*

Francesco Celata joined the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1993 as Associate Principal Clarinet.

He has appeared as soloist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra on several occasions, including previous performances of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, Bernstein's Prelude, Fugue and Riffs, Krommer's Double Clarinet Concerto, a concerto written for him by Gordon Kerry. He appeared as soloist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, under David Robertson at The National Centre for Performing Arts in Beijing performing the virtuoso concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra, 'Gnarly Buttons' by American composer John Adams. He has also appeared as soloist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, The Queensland Philharmonic and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra.

He has appeared as guest Principal Clarinet on numerous occasions with the London Symphony Orchestra and more recently with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, also touring internationally and recording with both orchestras.

Francesco has performed under many of the world's leading conductors including Lorin Maazel, Sir Colin Davis, Ricardo Muti, Sir Simon Rattle, Zubin Mehta, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Charles Dutoit and Myun-whun Chung, performing in the major concert halls of the world.

He is a dedicated pedagogue, and since 1994 has taught clarinet at the Sydney Conservatorium, where he is a Lecturer in Clarinet. He has taught many students who have gone on to leading orchestral positions in Australia and around the world. He has given masterclasses at the Shanghai Conservatorium, Trinity College in London, the Australian National Academy of Music and was for several years, the Artistic Director of the Australian International Symphony Orchestra Institute (AISOI). In 2013 he joined the staff of the Conservatorium of Music in Hobart for three years as Lecturer in Orchestral and Chamber Music heading the woodwind department.

Francesco is an experienced chamber musician and founded the Sydney Soloists. The group has performed at the Sydney Festival, tours for Musica Viva, numerous ABC national broadcasts, recorded for the ABC and had their own chamber series at Government House in Sydney.



Francesco Celata
Photo: Keith Saunders

ABOUT THE MUSIC

LACHLAN SKIPWORTH (Born 1982) Fanfara

The composer writes...

There wasn't a lot to celebrate when writing Fanfara amidst a global pandemic. But now we're here, I think the mere fact we're playing and listening to music together in person is enough. And I hope the immediacy of this music, in particular its bright textures and predominantly fast tempi, serves the purpose well. Naturally, trumpets peal an opening figure over galloping strings at the outset. The main melody then enters in the violins, its long lines forming a recognisable refrain throughout the opening section. Winds and brass offer their own answering phrases over staccato interjections from pizzicato strings, snare drum and low brass.

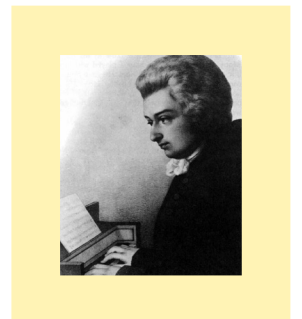
The sudden appearance of a second trumpet fanfare heralds the arrival of a new section in compound time. Strings then burst forth, playing a lively theme with dotted rhythms and winding inner parts. The section cadences with lively brass, soon receding to reveal a harp solo from which a more delicate interlude grows. Muted colours and delicate accompaniments pervade, allowing broad gestures to sweep across the orchestral surface. A lone timpani beats quietly, before clarinets and horns join to present a familiar fragment of the opening theme. Before long we're hurtling in full *tutti* towards the triumphant climax of the work.

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

In 1782, Mozart produced his first major opera for Vienna, a work in German with spoken dialogue, but set in a fashionably exotic Turkish locale – *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Konstanze and her maid have been kidnapped and confined in the harem of Pasha Selim. Their lovers, Belmonte, son of a Spanish colonial governor, and his servant Pedrillo attempt to rescue them but are caught. Selim shows great magnanimity in refusing to settle an old score with Belmonte's family, and releases the lovers. The overture bustles and marches, evoking 'Turkish' military music through the use of colourful percussion.

One day in October 1791 Mozart played two games of billiards, sold his horse, drank some strong black coffee, smoked a pipe and orchestrated the last movement of his Clarinet Concerto. After a tough year he was busy again; the clarinet concerto needed to be finished so that his friend Anton Stadler could premiere it in Prague, where people whistled Mozart's tunes in the street.

The clarinet was a novelty in Mozart's time. (The instrument on which Stadler first performed Mozart's concerto – a 'basset' clarinet with an extended bass range – soon became obsolete.) An admirer of Stadler's wrote: 'Never should I have thought that a clarinet could be capable of imitating a human voice so deceptively as it was imitated by you. Indeed, your instrument has so soft and so lovely a tone that nobody can resist it who has a heart'. In the piano concertos, Mozart exploited the inevitable contrast between the essentially



Mozart in 1782



Caroline Fischer-Achten
as Konstanze in Die
Entführung, by A Barthel

ABOUT THE MUSIC

percussive piano and an orchestra of winds and strings. With the clarinet concerto, however, he was writing for an instrument which blends into the orchestral texture, and indeed, by omitting the penetrating tone of the oboes, Mozart ensures a smooth, even surface to the music.

Part of the work's appeal is in its formal elegance and the apparent effortlessness of its composition. The instrument's resemblance to the human voice is more than a passing likeness. In the concerto's slow movement (an *Adagio*, rare in Mozart) the central section undermines the serenity of its opening, so that we understand the provisional nature of that serenity when it returns. It evokes nothing so much as the vocal writing in Mozart's sacred or ceremonial music. But the way in which Mozart uses the voice (particularly the solo soprano) in his sacred works is indivisible from the erotically charged music of his operas.

According to Schumann himself, the Second Symphony records his experience of movement from despair through healing to redemption and full recovery from a bout of mental illness.

It was drafted in piano score in December 1845, but Schumann had to put the orchestration aside when he had an attack of ringing and clicking in the ears. Mendelssohn conducted the premiere on 5 November 1846, but Schumann made many changes, including adding the trombones, before the second performance 11 days later.

Schumann's use of a catchy 'motto' to begin the work may be a reference to Haydn (whose Symphony No.104 opens with a similar gambit) and its return in three of four movements recalls Beethoven's Fifth. Mendelssohn had done much to create this awareness of past music in his contemporaries, and this symphony also pays tribute to him.

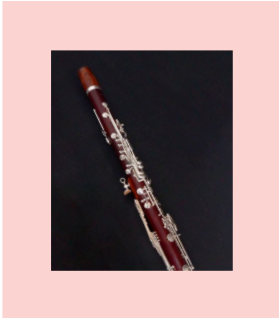
As the motto is being stated with 'mysteriously muted solemnity' at the start, another ominous theme is outlined by the strings, beginning a movement Schumann described as of a 'very moody and unruly character'. The struggle of the first movement is a real one. The victory is not yet won, in spite of the return of the motto.

The restless *Scherzo* is the most explicit tribute to Mendelssohn. But this is no 'fairy scherzo' and as Michael Steinberg notices 'a layer of melancholy underlies the jocularity.'

Schumann's dialogue with Mendelssohn continues in the slow movement; but here Schumann seems to be saying, 'I am not Mendelssohn.' The movement is full of felicitous scoring.

Especially after Beethoven's Ninth, the finale had become a challenge to composers. This movement, an expression of victory over dark, disturbing forces, falls into two parts, the second so substantial it has struck some as a 'finale in the finale'. After a series of pauses Schumann quotes Beethoven's To the Distant Beloved, here a reference to his much-loved wife Clara; it leads to an exultant conclusion, in which the opening motto is gradually reintroduced, shedding mystery and affirming the light.

Notes by Lachlan Skipworth, Gordon Kerry, David Garrett (Schumann) © 2021



Bassett clarinet,
Martin Suter, Zürich



Robert and Clara
Schumann in 1850

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