

18–20 February
Sydney Town Hall

SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS BEETHOVEN



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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
THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY
GREAT CLASSICS

Thursday 18 February, 1.30pm
Saturday 20 February, 2pm
Sydney Town Hall

Simone Young conducts Beethoven

SIMONE YOUNG conductor
LAUREN FAGAN soprano

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
‘Leonore’ Overture No.3, Op.72

Ah! perfido (Oh, faithless one), Op.65

Symphony No.7 in A major, Op.92
Poco sostenuto - vivace
Allegretto
Presto
Allegro con brio

ESTIMATED DURATIONS
14 minutes, 13 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
36 minutes.

COVER IMAGE
Simone Young
Photo: Nic Walker



WELCOME

PRESENTING PARTNER



Welcome to Simone Young conducts Beethoven, proudly supported by Emirates.

Two great musical spirits meet as Chief Conductor Designate Simone Young masterfully interprets the music of Beethoven. An overture to his only opera, *Fidelio* and one of his most-loved pieces, Symphony No.7 feature in today's program.

Almost 20 years ago, Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra met to partner in a great synergy of culture and travel. COVID-19 has caused both of our organisations to navigate through uncharted skies, but we are proud to do this side by side.

Emirates has led the way in response to COVID-19 with safety initiatives to boost travel confidence. We continue to seek ways to support our community during this challenging time and we hope today's music helps to bring joy during these times.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this performance of Simone Young conducts Beethoven, and we wish you all the best for the year ahead.

Enjoy your listening and exploring!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry Brown".

Barry Brown

Emirates' Divisional Vice President
for Australasia

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 both Bob Magid OAM & Ruth Magid and Emirates.

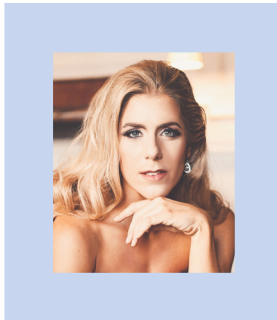


ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LAUREN FAGAN soprano

A graduate of Covent Garden's prestigious Jette Parker Young Artist Programme, Lauren Fagan has developed into one of today's most accomplished young sopranos and had the honour of representing her native Australia in the 2019 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition. Recent role debuts as Alcina for the Internationale Händel-Festspiele Karlsruhe, Violetta in Rodula Gaitanou's new production of *La Traviata* for Opera Holland Park and Mimi in the classic Phyllida Lloyd production of *La Bohème* for Opera North were met with unanimous critical acclaim for her richness of tone, thrilling top notes and compelling stage presence.

Plans for the 20/21 season include two major company debuts for Lauren: as 'Norma' in the highly-anticipated special project *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*, conceived by Marina Abramovic for Bayerische Staatsoper and conducted by Yoel Gamzou, and as Giulietta in Andreas Homoki's new production of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at Opernhaus Zürich under Antonino Fogliani. Lauren also returns to the role of Violetta at Opera Holland Park for the revival of their recent staging of *La Traviata*. On the concert stage, Lauren makes two important Australian debuts with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* conducted by Dane Lam, as well as this Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut in Beethoven's *Ah! Perfido* conducted by Simone Young.



Lauren Fagan
Photo: Victoria Cadisch

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, had a tortuous gestation. The first performance in 1805 was a flop. It was far too long, but more importantly, the occupation of Vienna by Napoleon's troops had caused the evacuation of local aristocrats so the small audience was made up mainly of French officers. Cuts and revisions followed for a revival the following year, but in 1814, three librettists and four overtures later, Beethoven made the final version. The work was now a triumph. Vienna was celebrating the final defeat of Napoleon, but more importantly, *Fidelio* was now a powerful, focused piece of theatre.

The model for *Fidelio* was a then-fashionable French genre, later known as 'rescue opera'. The story was based on an actual incident that took place in France during the post-revolutionary Reign of Terror: an aristocratic woman, portrayed in the opera as Leonore, disguises herself as a boy (Fidelio) in order to save her husband from wrongful execution at the hand of a tyrant. Jean-Nicolas Bouilly found himself in the position of Don Fernando (the government minister in the opera whose arrival signals the release of the prisoners), and later wrote the story, changing names and places, as a libretto that was set by two French composers as *Léonore*. This was Beethoven's preferred title for his German version, but theatre management insisted on *Fidelio*, or *the triumph of conjugal love* to avoid confusion with the earlier works.

The three 'Leonore' Overtures are now often heard as curtain-raisers in the concert hall. No.2, the first composed, dates from 1805 while No.3 was composed for the ill-fated revival of the following year and No.1 for a proposed performance in 1807. Nos.2 and 3, arguably too long to serve as overture to the opera, may be heard as symphonic précis of the drama: 'Leonore' 3 sets the baleful mood of the prison with sombre chords, before essaying some of the turmoil and ultimate triumph of the story. The third overture is perhaps the most symphonic, recapitulating the triumphant allegro music at its end.

Beethoven had come to Vienna to study with Haydn, but also apprenticed himself to Antonio Salieri who, far from rotting away in an asylum convinced that he had murdered Mozart, remained an important and influential composer there. Salieri seems to have suggested that Beethoven write concert arias to 'classic' operatic texts in Italian, among them *Ah! Perfido*, as an exercise. Salieri had been a proponent of *opera seria* (serious opera), a genre characterised by high moral values expressed in stories drawn from Classical myth or history. The greatest librettist of this form was Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782), and individual librettos of his were often set by several composers. He wrote the recitative sections of this work for *Achille in Sciro*; the aria is anonymously penned. Beethoven responds with great agility to the shifting emotions of the text, as the spurned lover variously expresses rage, sadness, a desire for apocalyptic revenge and final exhausted despair.



The climactic scene
from *Fidelio*

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The piece was premiered in 1798 by Josepha Duschek, who had worked with Mozart; the first fully documented performance was in 1808, alongside the premiere of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies.

Three years later, Beethoven sketched and then completed the Seventh and Eighth symphonies back to back. The Seventh was completed in April 1812 in that time of celebration at Napoleon's defeat.

The symphony has always provoked attempts to interpret it in visual terms. Maynard Solomon's biography lists some of the more inspired: 'a peasant dance'; 'a village wedding'; 'a Knight's Festival'; 'the upsurge of a powerful dionysiac impulse, a divine intoxication of the spirit'. Wagner famously described the symphony as the 'apotheosis of the dance', a reference to the way in which it deifies rhythm, but the references to dance also link the piece back to the baroque suite. Solomon, moreover, has also pointed out in a more recent essay that the rhythms of the work may be derived from the metres of ancient Greek poetry, in which Beethoven was well-read.

The Seventh Symphony puzzled listeners who expected to hear the characteristic struggle and triumph of Beethoven's 'heroic' or middle period works. But Beethoven, in his music if not his life, fought Fate to a standstill in the symphonic works beginning with the *Eroica*; in his *Pastoral* Symphony the Storm movement is the last gasp of that oppressive figure. In a work like the Seventh Symphony there is no adversarial program.

The symphony's slow introduction acts as a reservoir for much of the material in all four movements setting up and playing with the relationship between rhythmic phases, the descending chords on the winds as against the rising semiquaver scales of the strings. The transition into the buoyant first movement – via a chirruping woodwind motif – is ingenious. It is also an example of how, as so often, Beethoven is able to seemingly withdraw into silence, so much so that he has established the new fast tempo before we even realise it.

The Allegretto – hardly a slow tempo – is not Beethoven's first 'funeral march' but it differs from that of the *Eroica* in both its emotional restraint and the relative optimism of its middle section. Death, it seems, is no longer tragic. The scherzo and trio are inevitably upbeat in tone. The trio section's theme has been said to refer to an Austrian pilgrims' song, more evidence of the sense of collective experience that the work presents. In the last movement, Beethoven's rhythmic manipulation is comparable to that of the Stravinsky of *Agon* or the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*: a rhythmic motive – compared by William Kinderman to a coiled spring – is passed from one voice to another and at one point is accompanied by an augmented (that is mathematically expanded) version of itself. In numerous such ways the Seventh shows how the intense concentration Beethoven learned in the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphonies can be merged with the lyrical joy of the fourth and sixth symphonies.

Gordon Kerry © 2021



Josepha Duschek in 1796



Beethoven in 1814

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