

4-7 May  
Sydney Town Hall

# BRAHMS & TCHAIKOVSKY

SYDNEY  
SYMPHONY  
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Principal Partner



# 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. Australian-born Simone Young commences her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra makes its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

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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2022 CONCERT SEASON

Wednesday 4 May, 8:00PM  
Thursday 5 May, 1:30PM  
Friday 6 May, 8:00PM  
Saturday 7 May, 8:00PM  
Sydney Town Hall

# BRAHMS & TCHAIKOVSKY

**MIGUEL HARTH-BEDOYA** conductor  
**SIMON TRPČESKI** piano

**JESSICA WELLS (born 1974)**

*Uplift*

*Fifty Fanfares Commission\**

**JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)**

Piano Concerto No.1 in D minor, Op.15

*Maestoso*

*Adagio*

*Rondo (Allegro non troppo)*

## ESTIMATED DURATIONS

8 minutes, 49 minutes,  
interval 20 minutes,  
44 minutes

The concert will conclude  
at approximately 10:15pm  
(Wednesday, Friday,  
Saturday), 3.45pm  
(Thursday).

## COVER IMAGE

Photo by Thomas Willmott

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**PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)**

Symphony No.4 in F minor, Op.36

*Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima*

*Andantino in modo di canzona*

*Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato – Allegro*

*Finale: Allegro con fuoco*

\*Jessica Wells' commission for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's  
50 Fanfares Project is generously supported by new works funding,  
provided by the New South Wales Government through Create NSW.

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# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **MIGUEL HARTH-BEDOYA** conductor

Peruvian conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya is a master of colour, drawing idiomatic interpretations from a wide range of repertoire in concerts across the globe. He has amassed considerable experience at the helm of orchestras, including seven seasons as Chief Conductor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and 21 seasons as Music Director of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. Previously he has held Music Director positions with the Auckland Philharmonia and Eugene Symphony in Oregon.

Harth-Bedoya regularly conducts major US orchestras including Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, New York, and Atlanta, whilst elsewhere maintaining close relationships with the Helsinki Philharmonic, MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig, National Orchestra of Spain, New Zealand Symphony, and Sydney Symphony Orchestras.

During the 21/22 season he conducts the Indianapolis Symphony, National Orchestra of Spain, Wroclaw Philharmonic, Antwerp Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony and returns to the Sydney and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras. Recent seasons have featured concerts with the BBC Scottish Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Dresden Philharmonic, NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, Zurich Tonhalle, Danish National Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, RTVE Madrid and Barcelona Symphony Orchestras.

His impressive discography includes a Grammy nomination for Higdon's opera Cold Mountain and a number of critically-acclaimed albums on Harmonia Mundi, Deutsche Grammophon and Decca. Recent releases include Mussorgsky arr Gorchakov Pictures at an Exhibition and Prokofiev Cinderella (FWSO Live), Lutoslawski Concerto for Orchestra and Brahms arr Schoenberg Piano Quartet, orchestral works by Jimmy Lopez and the complete Prokofiev Piano Concertos with Cliburn winner Vadym Kholodenko (Harmonia Mundi).

He is the founder and Artistic Director of Caminos Del Inka, a non-profit organization dedicated to researching, performing and preserving the rich musical legacy of South America.



Miguel Harth-Bedoya  
Photo: Michal Novak

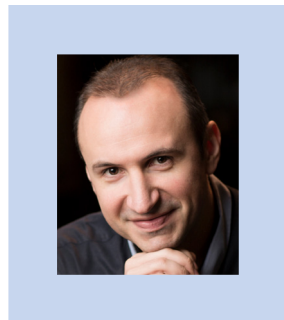
# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **SIMON TRPČESKI** piano

Simon Trpčeski has been praised not only for his powerful virtuosity and deeply expressive approach, but also for his charismatic stage presence. Launched onto the international scene twenty years ago as a BBC New-Generation Artist, in an incredibly fast-paced career that encompass no cultural or musical boundaries, Simon Trpčeski has collaborated with over a hundred orchestras on four continents and to perform on the most prestigious stages.

The long list of prominent conductors Simon Trpčeski works with includes Lorin Maazel, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Marin Alsop, Gustavo Dudamel, Cristian Măcelaru, Gianandrea Noseda, Vasily Petrenko, Charles Dutoit, Jakob Hrusa, Vladimir Jurowski, Susanna Malkki, Andris Nelsons, Antonio Pappano, Robert Spano, Michael Tilson Thomas, Gabriel Bebeșelea and David Zinman.

Simon Trpčeski's fruitful collaborations with EMI Classics, Avie Records, Wigmore Hall Live, Onyx Classics, and currently Linn Records has resulted in a broad and award-winning discography which includes repertoire such as Rachmaninov's complete works for piano and orchestra and Prokofiev piano concertos as well as composers such as Poulenc, Debussy, Ravel. Variations, his latest solo album released in spring 2022 features works by Brahms, Beethoven and Mozart.



Simon Trpčeski

Photo: B. Ealovega-KulturOp

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Australian composer Jessica Wells is also a versatile orchestrator and arranger for concerts, films, theatre, and album recordings. With a Master of Music in Composition (Sydney Conservatorium) and Master of Arts in Screen Composition (AFTRS), her business, Jigsaw Music, provides music preparation services for clients all over the country and overseas. She also works as a recording producer and conductor.

She has orchestrated over 70 films, and wrote the theme music for ABC TV's Q&A program – which makes her kids think she's famous.

She was a 2017 Finalist in the APRA Art Music Awards, in the category of Instrumental Work of the Year for her piece *Moon Fire*, written for the National Carillon and electronics.

Jessica is the Musical Director of the APRA Screen Music Awards, and she is the current Vice President of the Music Arrangers' Guild of Australia.

## JESSICA WELLS AND THE METAPHOR OF FLIGHT

Wells prefaces her fanfare, *Uplift* with famous lines from John Gillespie Magee's *High Flight* (An Airman's Ecstasy):

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings...*

She goes on to say:

*Perhaps comparable to the reaction of a young Canadian Air Force pilot in 1941 after his first test-flight in a Spitfire, was my reaction to finally taking off on a work trip in mid-2021 after a long stint of pandemic lockdowns and border closures.*

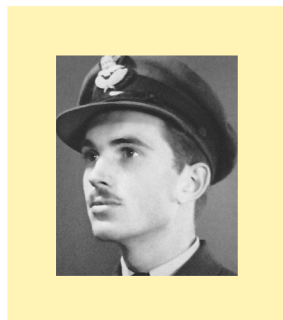
*Uplift for orchestra was conceived as a depiction of a take-off, beginning with 'stuck on the tarmac – full of angst', and making its way through 'taxiing', 'lift-off', 'rising through the clouds' and 'floating on air'. Our pilot-conductor must increase the speed of this large vehicle (the orchestra) and propel it into the atmosphere.*

*Of course, the metaphor for Uplift is easily construed, the emotional dissonance of the opening escaping to the flurrying heights of joy, followed by a moment of calm, peace, and majesty, to finish in glorious triumph, 'ecstatic' and 'soaring'.*

*Jessica Wells' commission for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project is generously supported by new works funding, provided by the New South Wales Government through Create NSW.*



Jessica Wells



John Gillespie Magee, Jr.  
(Royal Canadian Air Force  
photo)

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## BRAHMS AND ROMANTICISM

Robert Schumann had been the Romantic composer par excellence, cultivating the fragmentary, the poetic and the allusive while also contributing to those genres established by composers in the classical tradition. After his death in 1856 two roads diverged in German music: the 'New German' composers, led by Franz Liszt and in turn by Richard Wagner, composed what they called the 'music of the future', avoiding or at least subverting the conventions of symphony and sonata with narrative or philosophical 'programs'; in due course Brahms would come to occupy the position of antipope, breathing new life into the forms and genres of abstract music.

When Brahms' First Piano Concerto appeared in January 1859 it shocked traditionalists in its scale and ferocity, but also because it blurs the distinction between symphony and concerto, and because of suspicions that it contained a program. The premiere in Hannover was received with polite confusion, one critic finding it 'dry and difficult to understand'; but the performance in Leipzig a day or two later engendered frank hostility, and it is fair to say that Brahms was still less than confident in handling orchestration.

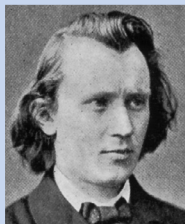
## THE ORIGIN OF BRAHMS' FIRST CONCERTO

The work grew out of a Sonata for two pianos that Brahms worked on in the mid-1850s, which his mentors the Schumanns – Robert and Clara – had encouraged him to orchestrate. Not surprisingly Brahms, still in his early twenties, was influenced by the prevailing currents of Romanticism and his music from this time contains more than its share of *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress), which was carried over into the Concerto. Thanks partly to violinist Joseph Joachim, though, a story grew up that the first movement of the Concerto enacted, and registered Brahms' reaction, Robert Schumann's attempt to commit suicide by flinging himself into the Rhine at Düsseldorf. Be that as may, the work has one of the excoriating openings of any – by Brahms or anyone else – with its powerful sustained pedal-note D that only just supports a massive superstructure of unstable harmony and arresting rhetorical motifs. This provides an introduction of some minutes' duration (as in Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, there is the danger that listeners will forget that they are to hear a piano concerto!) before the appearance of the soloist who, as Karl Geiringer has noted, is repeatedly given music 'only remotely, if at all, connected to the material of the orchestral part'. Geiringer goes on to point out how this may derive from Brahms' study of Baroque music, but the effect here is of titanic, and arch-Romantic, struggle and fight between *Angst* and brilliance.

The original two-piano sonata followed the first movement with a minor-key scherzo that Brahms omitted from the Concerto, though he did, some years later, use it as the basis for the sombre dance-like second movement of his *German Requiem*, 'Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras' (for all flesh is as grass).



Brahms' mentor Robert Schumann in 1850



The young Johannes Brahms

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

The remainder of the Concerto is all new material, and the manuscript of the Adagio originally bore the inscription *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini* (Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord); as Charles Rosen has noted, ‘the juncture of religion and music’ affects ‘even the piano concertos of Brahms’. The inscription was not included in the published score, but, writing to Clara Schumann about it in 1856, Brahms said, ‘I am also painting a lovely portrait of you; it is to be the *adagio*’. This suggests that the ‘blessed person’ is Clara, and the ‘Lord’ is Robert (whom Brahms occasionally referred to jokingly as ‘Mynheer Domine’) and his legacy. This is no less ‘Romantic’ than the opening movement, though of a quite different tenor and mood. The piano, perhaps representing Clara, has a more conventionally prominent role, though the movement is by no means a vehicle for bravura display.

If there is an accidental similarity to Beethoven’s Third Concerto at the outset, there is a more conscious one in the third movement, where Brahms seems to have used the form and proportions, and even, according to Jan Swafford, certain phrase structures of Beethoven’s finale to shape his own.

Brahms was wounded by the negative response to the piece, though aware of the role his orchestral inexperience played in its reception. It would be another 15 years before the next try.

## TCHAIKOVSKY, MARRIAGE AND MYTHS

In 1877, the tormented and self-hating Tchaikovsky received a declaration of love from a student, one Antonina Milyukova, who, being a nymphomaniacal psychopath, threatened suicide if Tchaikovsky refused to marry her. The composer, feeling that such a marriage would both save Antonina from herself and cure his homosexuality, accepted the proposal, but within minutes of being married realised that he had made a terrible mistake – so terrible that within two months he had attempted suicide himself. He then fled Moscow, travelling first to Switzerland and then Italy; Antonina quickly descended into her own madness and ended her days in the Gothic squalor of a lunatic asylum. Tchaikovsky consoled himself by pouring his anguish into his Fourth Symphony and the opera *Eugene Onegin*.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, archival material pertaining to Tchaikovsky became more readily available. Thanks to scholars like Alexander Poznansky we can now see the scenario outlined above – retailed for much of the last century in program notes – for the load of confected rubbish that it is. The composer seems at no time to have been particularly anguished by his sexuality and his decision to marry Antonina stems from other causes.

First, there was the issue of social propriety – though Tchaikovsky’s sexuality was an open secret, and in fact late 19th-century Russia was a far more tolerant society in these matters (at least regarding members of the upper classes) than contemporary Victorian England. Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky made it quite clear to Antonina that the



Pianist and composer  
Clara Schumann



Tchaikovsky in 1875



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

relationship would be platonic and she, according to the available evidence, accepted that. Antonina's threatened suicide seems to have been nothing more than a literary device, along the pop-song lines of 'I'll die without...'; her mental illness only developed after Tchaikovsky's death, and in the sixteen years between their marriage and the composer's death she had lived in a long-term relationship which produced three children.

Second, the then chronically impecunious Tchaikovsky was aware that Antonina would shortly inherit a respectable sum; indeed, she effectively offered this as a dowry. In later years, Tchaikovsky admitted that his treatment of Antonina had been inexcusable, and supported her financially; she scrupulously avoided making any public criticism of her husband even after his death. It is true that Tchaikovsky realised the mistake he had made within a day of the marriage, but from the correspondence between him and his two younger brothers, it is clear that the incompatibility of the composer and his wife was the result of 'cultural differences' – class and manners – rather than sexual horror. There is no evidence that he attempted suicide at this time or, for that matter, at any other, and Poznansky debunks the various suicide myths that surround Tchaikovsky's death in 1893.

## FATE AND THE FOURTH SYMPHONY

None of which is to say that the Fourth Symphony is not 'about' serious emotional and psychological states, nor that the experience of a disastrous marriage didn't affect Tchaikovsky's emotional equilibrium. The other woman in Tchaikovsky's life, Nadezhda von Meck, who became his patron and epistolary confidant late in 1876, wrote to him of the work's 'profound, terrifying despair'. The composer, famously, insisted in his correspondence with 'my dearest friend' that 'where words finish, music begins' and that a program explaining the meaning of the music would necessarily be imprecise. Nonetheless he did offer a kind of map of the work's emotional journey (never dreaming that it would be published) saying that:

*the main idea...is expressive of the idea of fate, that ominous power which prevents the success of our search for happiness. This power hangs constantly over our heads, like Damocles' sword. There is no alternative but to submit to fate.*

In a letter to his student Sergei Tanyev, Tchaikovsky alluded to this essentially Romantic idea of the individual in the face of fate, noting that:

*In my innocence I thought the idea behind my symphony was so plain that everyone would grasp it, or at any rate its chief outlines, without the need of a written program...I don't express any new thought, and haven't even tried to. The idea...is basically a reflection of Beethoven's Fifth – not the musical content, of course, but the central plan.*

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

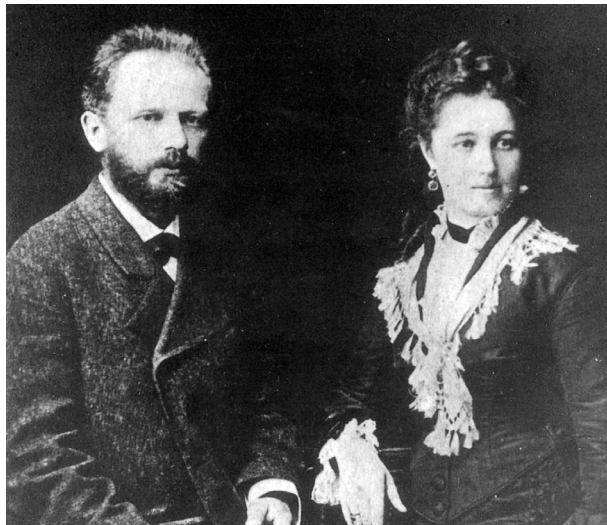
## DREAMS AND MEMORY

The theme of 'fate' is the powerful brass fanfare which opens the first movement, and which returns at climactic moments in this and the last movement. Contrasting with the 'Fate' motif is a conventional pair of 'subjects' or thematic groupings. The first, marked *moderato* is characterised by a waltz tempo kept on its toes by a pervasive use of cross-rhythm; the second, according to Tchaikovsky, represents the world of dreams into which we are tempted to escape. Scholar Leon Botstein has argued that Tchaikovsky's use of repetition in the course of this movement is emblematic of the state of mind that the music depicts: the obsessive statement and restatement of material is ameliorated by Tchaikovsky's deftness in subtly changing certain details each time. But fate, with its ambivalent minor/major tonality keeps obtruding (undermining the principles of sonata design) and eventually disperses the imagery of dreams.

In the second movement, Tchaikovsky again uses seemingly literal repetition of the thematic material to suggest the obsessive nature of memory, but as Botstein notes 'despite repetition, the background and foreground changes' as different dialogues between theme and countermelody are explored.

The *scherzo* has been interpreted as the reassertion of reality. Its celebrated pizzicato-dominated string writing has an implacable character, but it also serves to provide a bridge between the introspection of the second movement and the extrovert nature of the finale. The composer's explanation for the festive nature of the finale was: 'If you find no cause for joy within yourself, look for it in others. Look, they know how to enjoy themselves, giving themselves up to undivided feelings of pleasure'. This has obscured an important aspect of the finale.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC



Tchaikovsky and  
Antonina Milyukova

## ANTONINA AND THE BIRCH TREE

Where much of the symphony uses thematic material redolent of folk music, in the finale Tchaikovsky quotes a 'real' tune, *Beryozka* ('In the field a little birch tree stood'). As Roland John Wiley notes in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*,

*both words and setting are significant. The birch tree is solitary, and it is the image of a woman...The crowd that gathers is of unmarried women who perform a round dance and then throw their wreaths into the stream. Those whose wreaths float on the surface of the water will marry; those whose wreaths sink will not.*

Critics like John Warrack have conflated 'fate' with Tchaikovsky's 'desperation to be married' making Antonina an image of fate. The composer's own view of her, however, was clearly not unsympathetic, despite the baleful intrusion of the fate music.

Importantly, however, we should remember that the 'profound, terrifying despair' of this work is created by an artist in full control of his technical forces. Tchaikovsky, a consummate professional, was careful to point out to Meck that:

*anyone who believes that the creative person is capable of expressing what he feels out of a momentary effect aided by the means of art, is mistaken.*

Interpretation of this symphony has inevitably been compromised by the fatuous rehashing of 'biographical' details, making it a document of hysteria and despair. A contemporary critic, George Bernard Shaw, got it right, though, when he said 'the most notable merit of the symphony is its freedom from the frightful effeminacy of most modern works of the romantic school.'

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*John C Conde *AO* Chair*

## Todd Gibson-Cornish

Principal Bassoon  
*Nelson Meers Foundation Chair*

## Rebecca Gill

Violin  
*Dr John Lam-Po-Tang Chair,*  
*in memory of Reg & Jeannette Lam-Po-Tang*

## Carolyn Harris

Flute  
*Landa Family Chair,*  
*in memory of Dr Barry Landa*

## Jane Hazelwood

Viola  
*Bob & Julie Clampett Chair,*  
*in memory of Carolyn Clampett*

## Claire Herrick

Violin  
*Russell & Mary McMurray Chair*

## Catherine Hewgill

Principal Cello  
*The Hon. Justice AJ & Mrs Fran Meagher Chair*

## Kirsty Hilton

Principal Second Violin  
*Drs Keith & Eileen Ong Chair*

## Scott Kinmont

Associate Principal Trombone  
*Audrey Blunden Chair*

## Rebecca Lagos

Principal Percussion  
*Karen Moses Chair*

## Emily Long

Violin  
*Dr Margot Harris Chair*

## Nicole Masters

Violin  
*Nora Goodridge *QAM* Chair*

## Fiona McNamara

Bassoon  
*Nelson Meers Foundation Chair*

## Timothy Nankervis

Cello  
*Dr Rebecca Chin & Family Chair*

## Elizabeth Neville

Cello  
*Bob Magid *QAM* & Ruth Magid Chair*

## Alexandre Oguey

Principal Cor Anglais  
*Mackenzie's Friend Chair*

## Mark Robinson

Associate Principal/Section Percussion  
*Robert Albert *AO* & Elizabeth Albert Chair*

## Marnie Sebire

Horn  
*Judge Robyn Tupman Chair*

## Emma Sholl

Associate Principal Flute  
*Robert & Janet Constable Chair*

## Rachel Silver

Horn  
*Sue Milliken *AO* Chair*

## Matthew Wilkie

Principal Emeritus Bassoon  
*Nelson Meers Foundation Chair*

## Justin Williams

Assistant Principal Viola  
*Robert & L Alison Carr Chair*

## Fiona Ziegler

Assistant Concertmaster  
*Webb Family Chair,*  
*in memory of Dr Bill Webb & Helen Webb*

# THANK YOU

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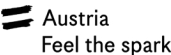
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