

15–17 September  
Sydney Opera House

# DEBUSSY, COPLAND & VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

«SYDNEY»  
«SYMPHONY»  
«ORCHESTRA»

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. Australia-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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## Donald Runnicles

Principal Guest

Conductor

## Vladimir Ashkenazy

Conductor Laureate

## Andrew Haveron

Concertmaster

Chair supported by

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Sophie Cole

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Georges Lentz

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Grey = Permanent  
Member of the Sydney  
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not appearing in  
this concert

**THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY**  
**CASUAL FRIDAYS**  
**EMIRATES GREAT CLASSICS**

Thursday 15 September,  
1.30pm  
Friday 16 September, 7pm  
Saturday 17 September, 2pm  
Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

# DEBUSSY, COPLAND & VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

TOWARDS SERENITY

**DONALD RUNNICLES** conductor  
**JAMES BURKE** clarinet

## CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

*La Mer* – Three Symphonic Sketches

- i. *De l'Aube à midi sur la mer* (From dawn to noon on the sea)
- ii. *Jeux de vagues* (Play of waves)
- iii. *Dialogue du vent et de la mer* (Dialogue of the wind and the sea)

## AARON COPLAND (1900–1990)

Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra,  
with Harp and Piano

- i. *Slowly and expressively* –
- ii. *Cadenza* –
- iii. *Rather fast*

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## JOSEPH TWIST (born 1982)

*Ancient Lights, Mystic Sky*\*

## RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)

Symphony No.5 in D

- i. *Preludio (Moderato)*
- ii. *Scherzo (Presto)*
- iii. *Romanza (Lento)*
- iv. *Passacaglia (Moderato)*

Pre-concert talk by  
Alastair McKean in the  
Northern Foyer 45 minutes  
before the performance.

## ESTIMATED DURATIONS

23 minutes, 18 minutes,  
interval 20 minutes,  
8 minutes, 39 minutes

The concert will conclude  
at approximately 3.15pm  
(Thursday), 8.45pm (Friday)  
and 3.45pm (Saturday).

## COVER IMAGE

By Lachlan Ross

\*Joseph Twist's commission for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project is generously supported by Gary Holmes & Anne Reeckmann

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



# A WORD FROM EMIRATES

Welcome to this performance of *Debussy, Copland & Vaughan Williams*

Today's concert highlights two exhilarating artists. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor Donald Runnicles leads the Orchestra in Vaughan Williams' melodic and uplifting 5th Symphony, and Debussy's evocative depictions of the sea. And soloist James Burke conjures dynamic images of America in Copland's Clarinet Concerto, originally commissioned by the great jazz clarinettist Benny Goodman.

The right partnership can be a powerful thing. Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have enjoyed one of the longest standing partnerships in Australia's performing arts. Twenty years ago, Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra met and created a wonderful partnership that celebrated our common goal of creating journeys of excitement and discovery for people around the globe.

We are delighted by this continuing partnership, and it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this performance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Brown', with a stylized, flowing script.

**Barry Brown**

Divisional Vice President for Australasia  
Emirates

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **DONALD RUNNICLES** conductor

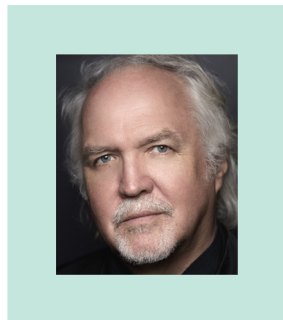
Sir Donald Runnicles is the General Music Director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Music Director of the Grand Teton Music Festival, as well as Principal Guest Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. In 2019 Runnicles also took up post as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's first ever Principal Guest Conductor. He additionally holds the title of Conductor Emeritus of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, having served as Chief Conductor from 2009-2016.

In the 2022-23 season, Maestro Runnicles will lead performances of *Arabella*, *Elektra*, *Fidelio*, *Tosca* and *Tristan und Isolde* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin; *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the San Francisco Opera; and concerts with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, including Mahler's Fifth Symphony.

Sir Donald enjoys close and enduring relationships with many of the most significant opera companies and symphony orchestras. His previous posts include Music Director of the San Francisco Opera (1992-2008), during which he led world premieres of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*, Conrad Susa's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, and the U.S. premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*; Principal Conductor of the Orchestra of St. Luke's (2001-2007); and General Music Director of the Theater Freiburg and Orchestra (1989-1993).

Mr. Runnicles' extensive discography includes complete recordings of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Britten's *Billy Budd*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, and Aribert Reimann's *L'invisible*. His recording of Wagner arias with Jonas Kaufmann and the Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin won the 2013 *Gramophone* prize for Best Vocal Recording, and his recording of Janáček's *Jenůfa* with the Orchestra and Chorus of the Deutsche Oper Berlin was nominated for a 2016 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording.

Sir Donald Runnicles was born and raised in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was appointed OBE in 2004, and was made a Knight Bachelor in 2020. He holds honorary degrees from the University of Edinburgh, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



Donald Runnicles

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **JAMES BURKE** clarinet

James leads a busy career as both Principal Clarinet of the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields and Co-Principal Clarinet of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, having previously held Principal Clarinet positions at the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Royal Northern Sinfonia.

As well as playing as Guest Principal with many other orchestras, such as the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia and the Royal Opera House, James' work with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields means that he also has many opportunities to perform chamber music on a regular basis, often with Music Director Joshua Bell. As a chamber musician he has also worked with the London Sinfonietta, London Conchord Ensemble, Irish Chamber Orchestra, and the Philharmonia Soloists.

As a soloist, James has performed concertos and recitals all over the world, including London, the USA, South America and Sydney.

When not performing, James teaches clarinet at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He also regularly gives masterclasses, as well as orchestral and chamber music coaching sessions, at institutions such as the Royal College of Music, the Australian National Academy of Music, and for the education departments of the London Symphony Orchestra and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields.



James Burke



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

### *La Mer* – Three Symphonic Sketches

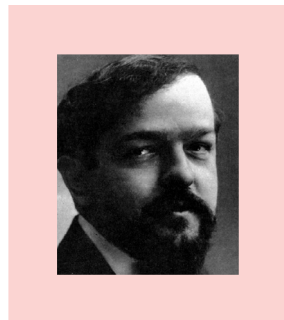
Debussy's music is never intended as visual imagery, or the soundtrack to some imaginary film. (This is what Debussy's colleague Erik Satie was burlesquing when he praised *La Mer*'s first movement, 'From dawn to noon on the sea', by saying he particularly liked the bit 'around a quarter to eleven'.) The composer may have invited such misinterpretations: in subtitled the work 'Three symphonic sketches' he of course evokes a medium of visual art; moreover, he often used terms like 'colour' and 'shading' when discussing his music. But in 1903, when he began work on *La Mer*, Debussy wrote to a friend from the Burgundian countryside:

*You may not know that I was destined for a sailor's life, and that only chance led me in another direction...You will say that the ocean does not exactly bathe the hills of Burgundy, and my seascapes may be studio landscapes, but I have an endless store of memories, and in my mind they are worth more than reality, whose beauty often weighs heavily on the imagination.*

The work, then, is about the *idea* of the sea rather than being a representation of it; significantly, much of the composition of the work took place away from the coast.

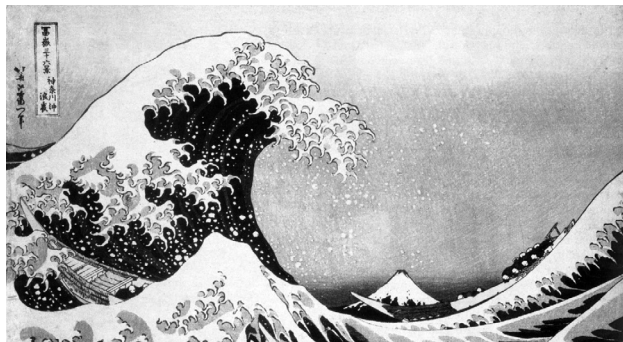
Debussy's genius for orchestration and subtle rhythmic organisation certainly make for an evocative work where it is possible to imagine the crash of waves, the call of seagulls and the protean movement of light on water. The final climactic moments of the first movement, for instance, somehow create a sense of emerging from the deep into the light.

Other masterly touches abound: the unusual timbre of cellos divided into four parts; the use of muted horns (which Debussy admitted to taking from the music of Weber) to evoke space; the soloistic use of wind instruments and harp.



Claude Debussy

# ABOUT THE MUSIC



*The Great Wave off Kanagawa* by Hokusai (1831)

But *La Mer* is as much ‘symphonic’ as it is ‘sketch’. Its three movements are by no means simply rhapsodic, but rather show Debussy’s subtle and careful approach to form. In the first movement his careful development of short motifs is perfectly symphonic; the second movement, ‘Play of Waves’, is, among other things, a symphonic scherzo; and the third movement – which has one of the rare ‘big finishes’ of any work by this composer – is a symphonic finale. (This movement, with its references back to the first, also shows Debussy’s adherence to the notion of cyclical form which he learned from César Franck and applied in such works as his String Quartet.)

The pianist and Debussy expert Roy Howat has also shown how Debussy’s structure corresponds to the ancient Greek idea of the Golden Section where a line is divided so that the ratio of the shorter portion to the longer portion forms the same ratio as the longer portion does to the whole length. (The façade of many a classical temple is built such that the ratio between its height and width corresponds to these divisions.) By applying this formula to time, a composer can plot where significant events (changes of speed, colour moods or metre) will have the greatest dramatic effect. Howat has argued persuasively that the moment in the last movement of *La Mer* where the violins play a soft, impossibly high harmonic represents the Golden Section of the piece.

By a nice paradox, Debussy’s marvellous musical reflection on the constant flux of the sea is achieved by the most painstaking and careful calculation. Not for nothing did the published



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

score carry the intricately designed woodcut *The Hollow Wave* by the Japanese artist Hokusai.

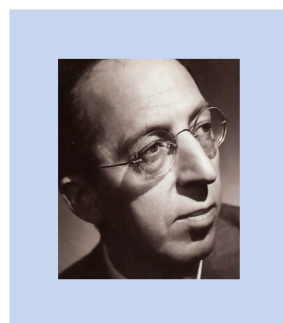
Gordon Kerry © 2022

## AARON COPLAND (1900–1990)

### **Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, with Harp and Piano**

Jazz great Benny Goodman was responsible for numerous additions to 20th-century clarinet repertoire, and it was he who approached Aaron Copland suggesting a concerto. ‘I never would have thought of composing a clarinet concerto if Benny had not asked me for one,’ wrote Copland later, adding, perhaps a mite defensively: ‘the only experience I had with clarinet writing was orchestral parts...I thought that writing a concerto with [Goodman] in mind would give me a fresh point of view.’

Copland began his work in late 1947, finishing the following year. The first movement was completed in Rio de Janeiro, and just as he previously opened himself to the musical influences of Mexico, here there are South American flavours, including, says Copland, Brazilian folk tunes.



Aaron Copland  
in the 1940s



Benny Goodman

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Since the work was written for Goodman, its jazz-like elements seem natural. But jazz had influenced earlier works of Copland, and his jazziness is far removed from what jazz musicians would call authentic. Copland admits that even his cadenza is written out in full, and syncopation in Copland's hands remains pretty 'straight'.

The concerto was premiered in a broadcast from New York with Goodman as soloist. Several early critics described the piece as 'lightweight'. However, it has become a staple of the virtuoso clarinetist's repertoire.

Copland himself provided the following description of the work:

*The first movement...is a languid song form composed in 3/4 time, rather unusual for me, but the theme seemed to call for it. The second movement...is a contrast in style – stark, severe, and jazzy. The movements are connected by a cadenza, which gives the soloist considerable opportunity to demonstrate his prowess...The... Concerto ends with a fairly elaborate coda in C major that finishes off with a...glissando – or 'smear' in jazz lingo.*

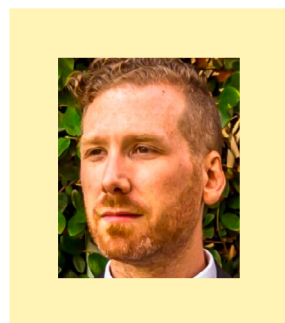
G.K. Williams © 2022

## **JOSEPH TWIST (born 1982)**

### ***Ancient Lights, Mystic Sky***

*The composer writes:*

Australia's night sky is unique. We can stare directly into the endless sparking wonders of the Milky Way, including Magellan and globular clusters only visible from the Southern Hemisphere. It's a truly spiritual experience for me. Stars represent a kind of paradoxical mystery; we look to them with hope and wonder of the future as the Hubble and new Webb telescopes provide spectacular glimpses of an endless universe; and yet, in truth, they are lights from billions of years into the ancient past. These lights are far older than even this ancient land, providing inspiration to millennia of First Nations culture, just as they do today.



Joseph Twist

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

I'm certainly not an expert - I don't even own a telescope - but I cherish such experiences. Recently my boyfriend and I walked through the Rainbow Beach rainforest on a dark moonless night towards Carlo Sand Blow - one of many wonderful stargazing spots here in Queensland. Small clusters of stars shone brightly through the trees as we made our way to the clearing where the night sky opened up in a multitude of sparkling lights.

I was struck by how joyful the experience was. I've endeavoured to capture these feelings in *Ancient Lights, Mystic Sky*, a celebration of Australia's unique vantage point of our galaxy's stars. Solo woodwind lines are woven into syncopated dance rhythms which develop into grand orchestral climaxes - a musical reflection of a few stars glimmering through the rainforest trees, leading to a cluster of bright lights, finally revealing the great expanse of the entire night sky. As the music calms, the sparkles continue with harp, percussion and string harmonics, before a soaring legato melody in cellos and violas begins. This melody is from my choral setting of *On The Night Train*, a Henry Lawson poem which captures those feelings of mystery and wonder.

*Have you seen the bush by moonlight, from the train, go running by?*

*Here a patch of glassy water; there a glimpse of mystic sky?*

*Have you heard the still voice calling — yet so warm, and yet so cold:*

*"I'm the Mother-Bush that bore you! Come to me when you are old"*

*Ancient Lights, Mystic Sky* was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Gary Holmes & Anne Reeckmann.

Joseph Twist © 2022

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## **RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)** **Symphony No.5 in D**

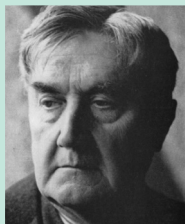
After Vaughan Williams directed the premiere of his Fifth Symphony in 1943, his champion and friend, conductor Adrian Boult, wrote to congratulate him: 'its serene loveliness is completely satisfying in these times and shows, as only music can, what we must work for when this madness is over.'

Boult was hardly alone in regarding the Fifth as an image of what serenity and peace might look like in the aftermath of war. And not without cause. The piece's demeanour stresses gradual change and accumulation of material, its harmonic idiom is predominantly modal, its scoring is transparent. But the serenity is earned, built on a substratum of more complex emotion, and it is really only in the final calm pages that the work's key of D is unambiguously sounded.

In part this exploration of long-range, subliminal tension and release reflects Vaughan Williams' admiration for the work of Jean Sibelius, and he famously dedicated the symphony to the Finnish composer 'without permission'.

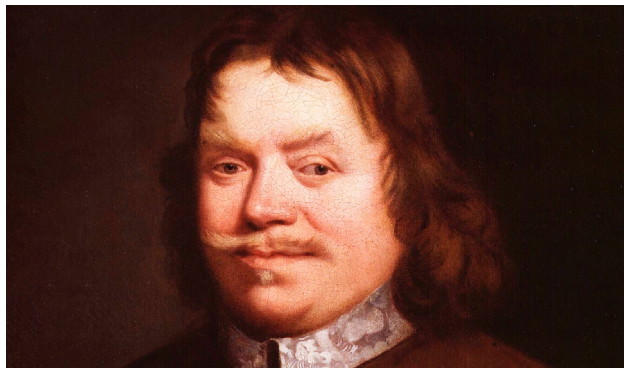
The *Preludio* is the most overtly Sibelian movement. Over a low, immobile C in the basses, the horns sound a distant call in D major – there is thus, even in this simple atmospheric gesture, a dissonance (however mild) that is not resolved by the fragmentary string motifs that soon appear, and which contain the rhythmic seeds of the final passacaglia movement. Vaughan Williams maintains the tension through a gently inexorable series of key-changes, and, over a shimmer of strings (Sibelius again), introduces a falling three-note motif that becomes imperceptibly more urgent before the first climax of the movement and a return of the horn-calls. Momentum builds again until a second climax, in which Vaughan Williams refers to his much-loved hymn tune *Sine nomine* ('For all the Saints') – specifically the setting of the word 'Alleluia'. The music returns to the horn motif.

After such a spacious opening, Vaughan Williams places the fast *Scherzo* movement second. Full of open intervals, diaphanous scoring, and metre that tugs between three and two beats in a bar, the piece recalls 'Mercury' from *The Planets* by Vaughan



Ralph Vaughan Williams  
in 1938

# ABOUT THE MUSIC



John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Williams' close friend Gustav Holst. Its dance rhythms and Phrygian-mode melodies lead to a sudden snarl that introduces the trio section, a section in 2/4 that features staccato woodwind. The opening section returns, now stripped down to a static final chord.

The heart of the piece is the *Romanza*. Vaughan Williams had an ongoing engagement with *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a Christian allegory of the soul's journey towards salvation, written by John Bunyan who was jailed in 1675 for dissenting from Anglican orthodoxy. The composer produced music for several iterations of the story – including a radio play and an opera (or 'Morality') that reached its final form in the last years of his life. *The Romanza* is dominated by a theme, heard first on cor anglais, where in the opera the Pilgrim sings 'He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death' at the foot of the Cross. The tune reappears in full string unison. An anguished central section (derived from the Pilgrim's 'Save me, Lord. The burden is more than I can bear!') is resolved by solo horn playing the cor anglais theme.

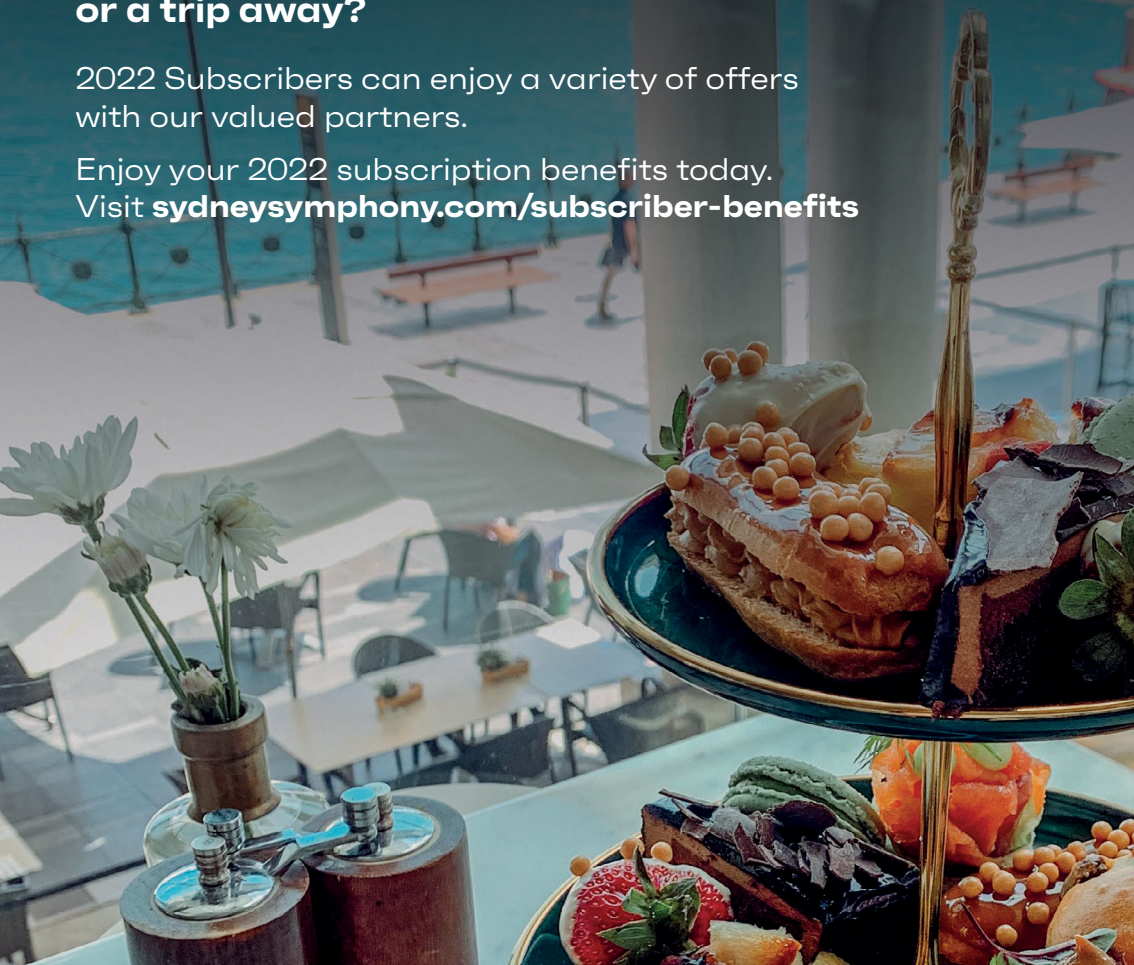
Like Brahms' Fourth, the symphony ends with a *Passacaglia*, where a repeated pattern or 'ground' supports a series of contrasting variations. (The long-short-short- long rhythm that dominates is drawn from the first movement.) The variations range from genial to dancelike, heraldic to pointillistic. There is a dramatic turn to the minor key issuing in a baleful passage where major and minor chords contend before the opening horn-calls ring through the whole orchestra. An ever-more rarefied epilogue concludes the work in peace.

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**NEW  
BEGINNINGS.**  
2022  
SEASON



Principal Partner





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# THANK YOU

Every gift makes a difference. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of our community, including those who wish to remain anonymous.

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