

9–12 November  
Sydney Opera House

# JAMES EHNES PERFORMS BEETHOVEN



Presenting Partner



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# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON **Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley** AC KC

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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Chief Conductor

## Donald Runnicles

Principal Guest

Conductor

## Vladimir Ashkenazy

Conductor Laureate

## Andrew Haveron

Concertmaster

*Chair supported by*

*Vicki Olsson*

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Concertmaster

### Harry Bennetts

Associate

Concertmaster

### Sun Yi

Associate

Concertmaster

### Lerida Delbridge

Assistant

Concertmaster

### Fiona Ziegler

Assistant

Concertmaster

Brielle Clapson

Sophie Cole

Claire Herrick

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Anna Skálová

Léone Ziegler

Amanda Chen\*

Serao Danis\*

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Georges Lentz

Nicola Lewis

Cristina Vaszilcsin\*

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Principal

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Shuti Huang

Wendy Kong

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Nicole Masters

Maja Verunica

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Tim Yu\*

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Amanda Verner

### Anne-Louise

Comerford

Associate Principal

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Graham Hennings

Stuart Johnson

Justine Marsden

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Leonid Volovelsky

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Guest Principal

**Bold** = Principal

*Italics* = Associate

Principal

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

MASTERS SERIES

# JAMES EHNES PERFORMS BEETHOVEN

GREATNESS COLLIDES

**SIMONE YOUNG** conductor  
**JAMES EHNES** violin

**ELLA MACENS**

*Release*

*Fifty Fanfares Commission\**

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)**

Violin Concerto in D, Op.61

i. *Allegro ma non troppo*

ii. *Larghetto* –

iii. *Rondo (Allegro)*

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**JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)**

Symphony No.1 in C minor, Op.68

i. *Un poco sostenuto – Allegro*

ii. *Andante sostenuto*

iii. *Un poco allegretto e grazioso*

iv. *Adagio – Più andante – Allegro non troppo,  
ma con brio*

James Ehnes' performances with Sydney Symphony Orchestra have been generously supported in memory of Dr Charles Frater.

Ella Macens' Release was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Christine Bishop.

Wednesday 9 November,  
8pm  
Friday 11 November, 8pm  
Saturday 12 November, 8pm  
Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

Pre-concert talk by  
Scott Kinmont in the  
Northern Foyer at 7.15pm.

**ESTIMATED DURATIONS**

8 minutes, 42 minutes,  
interval 20 minutes,  
45 minutes

The concert will conclude  
at approximately 10pm.

**COVER IMAGE**

James Ehnes

Photo credit Ben Ealovega

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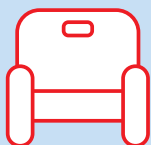


# WHY SUBSCRIBE?

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Principal Partner



# WELCOME

## Welcome to Beethoven's Violin Concerto

Abercrombie & Kent would like to welcome you to Beethoven's Violin Concerto, performed by James Ehnes and conducted by Simone Young.

In 1794, Beethoven met a prodigious young violinist, Franz Clement, and was intent on following him into his career. Writing to the 13-year-old, Beethoven said: *"Continue along the road on which you have already made such a fine and magnificent journey. Nature and art have combined to make a great artist of you."* Beethoven went on to choose the precocious violinist to premiere his concerto 12 years later.

It is no surprise to us at A&K that Beethoven likened Franz Clement's musical development to a magnificent journey. It is our belief that travel encourages joy and creativity, while truly great travel can be life changing. Our Journey Designers take that very sentiment into every itinerary they create — finding the right tempo and perfect pitch for every road travelled, with just the right crescendo and diminuendo to make every day transformative.

So, whether a winter adventure to the snowy peaks of Japan, a thrilling tiger safari through the wilds of India or a wellness retreat in the heart of the Himalayas, let us guide you into a world of discovery, Clement-style, with all the inspiration of Beethoven's concerto; we promise the road will be unforgettable.

I hope you enjoy tonight's performance and leave enthused to go on an inspirational journey of your own.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Debra Fox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'D' being particularly large and stylized.

**Debra Fox**  
Managing Director  
Abercrombie & Kent





Simone Young AM  
Photo by Sandra Steh

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **SIMONE YOUNG AM** conductor

Internationally recognised as one of the leading conductors of her generation, Simone Young has this year taken up her position as Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, having been Chief Conductor Designate since 2020. From 2005-2015 she was General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg.

An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Vienna Staatsoper, the Staatsoper Berlin and in Hamburg. Her Hamburg recordings include the *Ring* Cycle, *Mathis der Maler* (Hindemith), and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. Her tour to Brisbane with the Hamburg Opera and Ballet, (*Das Rheingold* in concert, and Mahler Symphony No.2 "*Resurrection*"), won her the 2013 Helpmann Award for Best Individual Classical Music Performance.

Simone Young is regularly invited by the world's great orchestras and has led the New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Stockholm, New Japan, Helsinki, and Dresden Philharmonic Orchestras; the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo; Orchestre de Paris; Staatskapelle Dresden; the BBC, San Francisco, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, and National Symphony Orchestra; and the Orchestra Nazionale de Espana, Madrid; and the Barcelona Symphony and Orchestra Nacional de Catalonia. In Australia she has conducted the West Australian, Adelaide, Melbourne and Queensland Symphony Orchestras and the Australian World Orchestra.

Highly sought-after by the world's leading opera houses, most recently Simone Young has appeared at the Opera Nationale de Paris (*Salome* and *Parsifal*); Vienna State Opera (*Peter Grimes*); Bavarian State Opera, Munich (*Tannhäuser*); Berlin State Opera (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and Zurich Opera (*Salome*).

Simone Young has been Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and Principal Guest Conductor of the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra.

Her many accolades include Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera, the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna, a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## JAMES EHNES violin

James Ehnes has established himself as one of the most sought-after musicians on the international stage. Gifted with a rare combination of stunning virtuosity, serene lyricism and an unfaltering musicality, Ehnes is a favourite guest at the world's most celebrated concert halls.

Recent orchestral highlights include the MET Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, San Francisco Symphony, London Symphony, NHK Symphony and Munich Philharmonic. Throughout the 22/23 season, Ehnes continues as Artist in Residence with the National Arts Centre of Canada.

Alongside his concerto work, Ehnes maintains a busy recital schedule. He performs regularly at the Wigmore Hall (including the complete cycle of Beethoven Sonatas in 2019/20, and the complete violin/viola works of Brahms and Schumann in 2021/22), Carnegie Hall, Symphony Center Chicago, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Ravinia, Montreux, Verbier Festival, Dresden Music Festival and Festival de Pâques in Aix. A devoted chamber musician, he is the leader of the Ehnes Quartet and the Artistic Director of the Seattle Chamber Music Society.

Ehnes has an extensive discography and has won many awards for his recordings, including two Grammys, one Gramophone Award and eleven Juno Awards. In 2021, Ehnes was announced as the recipient of the coveted Artist of the Year title in the 2021 Gramophone Awards which celebrated his recent contributions to the recording industry, including the launch of a new online recital series entitled 'Recitals from Home' which was released in June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent closure of concert halls. Ehnes recorded the six Bach Sonatas and Partitas and six Sonatas of Ysaÿe from his home with state-of-the-art recording equipment and released six episodes over the period of two months. These recordings have been met with great critical acclaim by audiences worldwide and Ehnes was described by *Le Devoir* as being "at the absolute forefront of the streaming evolution".

Ehnes began violin studies at the age of five, became a protégé of the noted Canadian violinist Francis Chaplin aged nine, and made his orchestra debut with L'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal aged 13. He continued his studies with Sally Thomas at the Meadowmount School of Music and The Juilliard School, winning the Peter Mennin Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Music upon his graduation in 1997. He is a Member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Manitoba, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and an honorary fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, where he is a Visiting Professor.

Ehnes plays the "Marsick" Stradivarius of 1715.

*James Ehnes' performances with Sydney Symphony Orchestra have been generously supported in memory of Dr Charles Frater.*



James Ehnes, photo by Benjamin Ealovega



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ELLA MACENS (born 1991)

### **Release**

Sydney based Ella Macens is a fast-emerging composer with a passion for choral, orchestral and chamber music writing. Capturing qualities from both popular and classical music styles as well as that of her Latvian heritage, Ella's music is becoming well-known in Australia and beyond.

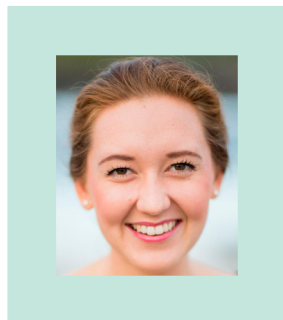
*The composer writes:*

*Release explores the courage and bravery it takes to move away from something that no longer feels right, and trust that something greater serves us elsewhere. The piece shines light on the notion of letting go as we move into a space of deeper alignment and expansion, ultimately finding inner freedom, love and joy.*

Macens' piece begins with long, softly breathing chords in the low strings and woodwinds that supports gentle duets for horns and trumpets. A more chorale-like section swells into a texture of divided strings, which in turn introduces a section marked 'majestic', which features ornate writing for solo violin. The following 'stately' section sees a simple tune for harp taken up and elaborated by woodwind solos.

A motif for solo vibraphone signals a new section of fuller textures in which tuned percussion and harp engage in coruscating counterpoint that leads to the work's main climax, before the hushed spacious chords with which it concludes.

*Ella Macens' Release was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Christine Bishop.*



Ella Macens

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

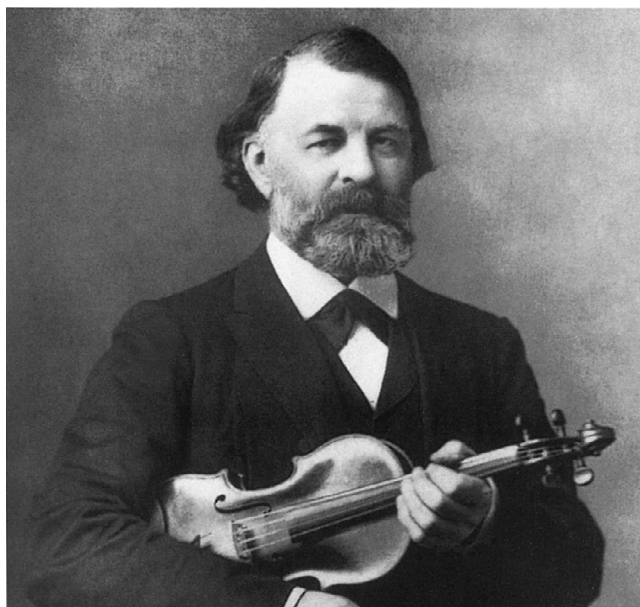
## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

### Violin Concerto in D Major, Op.61

In December 1806, Johann Nepomuk Möser attended a benefit concert which he reviewed for the *Wiener Theaterzeitung*. He wrote that ‘the excellent Klement’, leader of the orchestra at the Theater an der Wien, ‘also played, besides other beautiful pieces, a Violin Concerto by Beethhofen, which on account of its originality and many beautiful parts was received with exceptional applause’. Well, we might say, quite. But Möser went on to note that the ‘experts’ were unanimous, ‘allowing it many beauties, but recognising that its scheme often seems confused and that the unending repetitions of certain commonplace events could easily prove wearisome’. While it was rumoured that the wife of a certain 20th-century virtuoso used quietly to sing, ‘At last it’s over, at last it’s over’ to the tune of the finale, it is still hard to imagine how the critics back then got it so wrong and why there was only one other documented performance during Beethoven’s life. (It was not until Joseph Joachim took the piece up in 1844 that it gained any currency at all.)



Beethoven in 1806



Brahms’ friend and colleague Joseph Joachim rescued Beethoven’s Violin Concerto from its perplexing obscurity in the 1840s.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Beethoven himself may have felt that the work had no future, as he made a version for piano and orchestra for the pianist, composer and publisher Muzio Clementi soon after the premiere. Then again, the soloist at the premiere had played one or two lollipops of his own composition (one, according to legend, with the instrument upside down) between the first and second movements, which, though not unusual practice, must have broken the spell. And to be fair, Beethoven, who had been working at tremendous speed in the latter half of 1806, only delivered the score at the last minute leaving little, if any, time for rehearsal. He had finally completed the first version of his opera *Fidelio* and then in quick succession composed the Fourth Symphony, Fourth Piano Concerto, the three 'Razumovsky' string quartets, the Violin Concerto and one or two other things before the end of the year.

We often describe the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as Beethoven's 'heroic decade' as the music includes works such as the *Eroica* and Fifth Symphonies that dramatise seemingly titanic struggles and epic victories on a scale unimagined by previous composers. It is almost too easy to see this as reflecting Beethoven's own heroic response to the deafness which began to hamper his professional and personal life at the time; it may also reflect radical upheavals in European society: Napoleon's armies occupied Vienna three times in the course of the decade. But the period also produced works of great serenity – especially the Fourth Symphony, Fourth Piano Concerto and the Violin Concerto. They remain large-scale works, but their emotional worlds are far from the violent tensions of the odd-numbered symphonies.

Beethoven had toyed with the idea of a Violin Concerto in the early 1790s: there exists a fragmentary first movement in C, and it is possible that one of the Romances in F or G was intended as a slow movement for the uncompleted work. While he may have abandoned the early concerto, by the time of the D major work he had nonetheless composed nine of his ten sonatas for piano and violin. From the 1802 Op.30 set on, he invested these with the same complexity of emotion

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

and expanded scale that we have noted in the symphonies and string quartets. But Beethoven's interest in the concerto medium was, until 1806, primarily in composing works for himself as soloist – the first four piano concertos; after that time his hearing loss made concerto playing too risky.

At one remove, as it were, in this work he could concentrate on the problem of reconciling the principles of symphonic composition – which stress dramatic contention and ultimate integration of contrasting thematic material – and concerto composition, which adds the complication of pitting the individual against the mass.

In the Violin Concerto Beethoven uses several gambits to bring about this synthesis. As in a number of his works of this period, the Violin Concerto often makes music out of next to no material: the opening five drum taps, for instance, are a simple reiteration in crotchets of the key note (D). This gesture, seemingly blank at the start, returns several times during the movement, most strikingly when the main material is recapitulated: there the whole orchestra takes up the motif. Similarly, the *larghetto* slow movement has been famously described by Donald Tovey as an example of 'sublime inaction' – nothing *seems* to be happening, though in fact subtle changes and variations of material stop the piece from becoming monotonous. The seemingly improvised transition into the last movement was not so much to preclude Clement from playing something with his teeth or behind his back, but to dramatise the gradual change from that immobility to the release of energy in the finale. Throughout the work Beethoven expertly creates and frustrates our expectations: the soloist only enters after a fully symphonic introduction, and only then with an ornamental flourish, rather than any thematic material. The beautiful second theme is, as Maynard Solomon notes, perfectly composed to exploit the richness of the lowest string of the instrument, but the soloist only gets that theme at the movement's end. This large scale plotting of the work allowed Beethoven to expand the dimensions of the violin concerto beyond all expectations, and lay the foundation for the great concertos of Brahms and Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

### Symphony No.1 in C minor, Op.68

Brahms' first symphony was a long time coming, largely as a result of the composer's paralysing stage-fright when contemplating genres in which the 'giants' – especially Beethoven – had produced their masterpieces. That is not to say that Brahms had not wanted to compose symphonies, and in the early 1850s was persuaded by Robert and Clara Schumann to turn a D minor sonata for two pianos into such a work; the results have not survived. It was at this time, though that he began making sketches for what would, eventually, become the first movement of the First Symphony. In 1862, Clara Schumann was surprised to receive a package from Brahms containing 'the first movement of a symphony'. She wrote to Joseph Joachim that it was 'rather strong...but full of wonderful beauties' and noted that 'the themes are treated with a mastery that is becoming more and more characteristic of him. Despite the enthusiasm of such colleagues, however, the movement (at this stage it was only the *allegro* section) remained an unfinished torso for well over a decade. The Symphony was only completed and first performed in Karlsruhe in 1876 – the same year as the first production of Wagner's completed *Ring Cycle*.

Its impact was such that conductor Hans von Bülow only half-jokingly referred to it as Beethoven's Tenth. It is certainly Beethovenian in scale, and follows the blueprint of such works as Beethoven's Third, Fifth and Ninth Symphonies in tracing an epic journey from a state of turbulent conflict to one of triumphant resolution.

Clara Schumann may have found the ideas in the 1862 sketch 'strong', but they were immeasurably strengthened when Brahms added the overwhelming slow introduction where, over the implacable pounding of the timpani, the full orchestra sounds a harmony that threatens to come apart under the force of its internal tension. That tension is not resolved by a contrasting chirpy *allegro*: the remainder of the movement continues to depict a compelling, but abstract drama of musical processes in Brahms' now fully-formed orchestral sound.



Brahms around the time of the First Symphony's premiere.



## ABOUT THE MUSIC



Brahms' mentor Clara Schumann

The *Andante* shows an equally Brahmsian, if completely different, sound world. After the confused alarms of the previous movement, the rhetoric is much more subdued, and the scoring lighter, allowing for brief, sylvan wind solos and passages of lush string writing. But the retreat from the Romantic *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) of the previous movement is by no means complete, and the music is occasionally taken over in an impassioned outburst. The closing section of the movement, though, is quietly gleaming, with a violin solo and the soft wind chords with which Brahms often concludes a piece. Brahms scholar Karl Geiringer writes that that the *Allegretto* (not a conventional dance-based scherzo) 'seems to smile through its tears', though it too has moments of frank emotionalism. Conductor Hermann Levi felt that the inner movements were serenade-like, but as such they provide respite between the two, titanic outer movements.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Following the Beethovenian model meant that Brahms had to create a finale that balanced if not outweighed the opening movement. Brahms' solution was essentially that of Beethoven in the finale of the Ninth Symphony - though not, of course, using voices: both begin with seemingly unrelated passages that return to a state of uncertainty and move through various musical fields before discovering the thematic centre of the piece. Brahms begins with a sombre *adagio* introduction that, like the first movement's, features harmony that moves almost painfully from chord to nearby chord. This gives rise to fragmentary, more troubled music, which in turn is interrupted by a long horn melody; this tune had personal significance for Brahms, in that he wrote it out, with some home-made verse, on a card sent to Clara Schumann when they were estranged. It is joined by the trombones (making their first appearance in the work), that suggests a sudden view of a spacious landscape. Only now does Brahms bring in his theme, a piece of pure and simple diatonicism.

Brahms, who never suffered fools, would snap at people who noted the similarity of the theme to Beethoven's 'Freude' tune: 'Any jackass can see that!' And of course it may be a Beethovenian tune but its scoring, and the development to which it is subjected, are purely and masterfully Brahmsian.

© Gordon Kerry 2022

# JAMES EHNES IN CONVERSATION

*The celebrated Canadian violinist offers his thoughts on Beethoven's magnificent Violin Concerto.*

*Written by Hugh Robertson*

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**The Beethoven Violin Concerto has been a staple of your repertoire for many years — you performed it with us in Sydney in 2016, and recorded it in 2017. Has your relationship with it changed over the years?**

It is a difficult question to answer.

Thinking rationally, of course it must have. But I think the way in which it has evolved, or changed, is probably tied to the way that I have changed, and the way that pieces grow with experience.

I don't feel differently about the piece, there hasn't been a shift where I have thought, 'Oh, I have always thought of that part completely wrong, and now I know what the music says.' Nothing like that. But every time one has the chance to play it, you should take something from that, and it adds to an accumulation of experience.

The thing that I would like to think I have really gained from the piece over the years is the flexibility of rapport with the conductor. In a macro sense, I know what I want to say with the piece. But it is sort of like knowing the beginning of the story, and knowing the end, and then depending on who you are with, and who your audience is, and the circumstances, and the times, the way you tell that story is always a little bit different.

It is an analogy I use a fair amount, because I think we really are storytellers. And in order to be an effective storyteller you have to know what the story is, and there has to be some sort of agreement of how the story works, and what the overall shape of it is. But how it is told, well that is always going to be a little bit different. And you are going to feed off your collaborators, off the audience, off the venue, off the circumstance. And I think that, hopefully, every performance, or every set of performances one has, you just gain a little bit more insight into how to be an effective storyteller.

# JAMES EHNES IN CONVERSATION

## **What is it about this piece that people connect with so deeply and intensely?**

It has a particularly magical balance of the big picture and smelling the roses along the way. It has so many absolutely beautiful moments within a piece where the overall superstructure, when played well, is so compelling that it can affect one's sense of time.

I think a great performance of a Beethoven concerto, it doesn't seem short, nor long – it just is what it is. And I feel like the proportions are so beautiful, and are so natural, and it is one of those pieces that – Beethoven always seemed to write these pieces that were enormous struggles to write, and that had these complicated debuts that often went very poorly, and yet the piece somehow seems perfect. You wouldn't want to do without any of it.

And at the same time it doesn't leave you wanting for more. It seems so wonderfully complete. It is such a complete journey. And I think it is a very optimistic piece of music – it makes people feel good to hear it. Different pieces of course fill different roles, and this is a very uplifting, optimistic piece of music. I think people tend to leave the concert hall feeling pretty good about life, and that's not a bad thing.

It manages to be very noble without ever being bombastic. And it has these incredible moments of intimacy.

It's funny – as I say that, it describes the things that the violin is best at. It is a remarkably well-conceived piece for its instrument. And when you think of the way it contrasts with some of Beethoven's other works, I think it is very, very special, and there is nothing else in the repertoire that quite hits the same spots.

It is unique, and it is irreplaceable.

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**James Ehnes performs Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Chief Conductor Simone Young on 9, 11 & 12 November, and Beethoven's Violin Sonatas with pianist Andrew Armstrong on 20 November.**

# THE FUTURE

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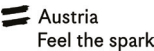
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