

19–20 August
Sydney Opera House

MAX RICHTER: THE FOUR SEASONS



Presenting Partner

CREDIT SUISSE 

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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. 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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2022 CONCERT SEASON

Friday 19 August, 8pm
Saturday 20 August, 8pm
Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

MAX RICHTER: THE FOUR SEASONS

RECOMPOSED

GEMMA NEW conductor
RAY CHEN violin

NICO MUHLY (born 1981)

Control (Five Landscapes for Orchestra)
Landform
Mountain
Beehive
Petroglyph & Tobacco
Red Dust

MAX RICHTER (born 1966)

Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi's Four Seasons

Spring 0

Spring 1

Spring 2

Spring 3

Summer 1

Summer 2

Summer 3

Autumn 1

Autumn 2

Autumn 3

Winter 1

Winter 2

Winter 3

Pre-concert talk by Karl
Knapp in the Northern
Foyer 45 minutes before
the performance.

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

22 minutes, interval 20
minutes, 45 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 9.45pm.

COVER IMAGE

By Chris Brignell

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WELCOME

As the Orchestra's Premier Partner, we welcome you to tonight's performance of Max Richter: The Four Seasons.

The cinematic style of Max Richter and Nico Muhly feature in this evening's program, one that takes us from the gondolas of Vivaldi's Venice to the red dirt of Utah. It is a program that speaks to the way classical music can evolve, and grow, and be taken up and taken forward by new generations. Richter begins with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* but transforms it into something new and different, while never losing sight of the original material.

Richter's success with this work shows how new generations can make classical music their own. That is why Credit Suisse continues to work in partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, striving to bring music to more than 2,000 young students in deserving schools by supporting emerging young professional musicians. We also work together to bring some of the most acclaimed international artists, such as Ray Chen, to Sydney.

We are proud to support this world-class Orchestra and wish you a very enjoyable evening.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RG', with a stylized, flowing design.

Richard Gibb

Chief Executive Officer
Credit Suisse Australia

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

GEMMA NEW conductor

Sought after for her insightful interpretations and dynamic presence, New Zealand-born Gemma New is the newly appointed Artistic Advisor and Principal Conductor of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. She also holds the titles of Music Director of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Hailed by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* as “a rising star in the musical firmament”, New is the recipient of the prestigious 2021 Sir George Solti Conducting Award.

The 2022/23 season will mark Gemma New’s eighth season as Music Director of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and her fourth season as Principal Guest Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. 2022 marks New’s inaugural season as Artistic Advisor and Principal Conductor of New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, where she leads the 2022 Winter Festival with Hilary Hahn and Paul Lewis, Mozart Requiem with Voices New Zealand, and contemporary works by New Zealand composers John Psathas, John Rimmer, Tabea Squire and Anthony Ritchie in the orchestra’s 75th anniversary season.

Gemma regularly appears with top orchestras in North America and Europe, having conducted the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, WDR Sinfonieorchester, BBC Philharmonic, Hallé Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester, Ulster Orchestra, Orchestre National d’Île de France and Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

A former Dudamel Conducting Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, New served previously as Associate Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony. In 2018, she was a Conducting Fellow at Tanglewood Music Center where she led the world premiere of Michael Gandolfi’s *In America*. She is a former recipient of the David Karetsky Conducting Fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival and an Ansbacher Fellowship, in which she was selected by members of the Vienna Philharmonic to observe rehearsals and concerts at the Salzburg Festival. As a Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Fellow, she studied Mendelssohn’s music with Kurt Masur in Leipzig and led the Leipziger Symphonieorchester. Prior to receiving the 2021 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award, she was awarded Solti Foundation Career Assistance Awards in 2017, 2019 and 2020.

Committed to new music, New made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2013 on works by John Adams and Andrew Norman. In 2010, she founded the Lunar Ensemble, a nine-member contemporary music ensemble that premiered 30 works over six seasons. New has conducted works by Thomas Adès, Anna Clyne, Steve Mackey, Aaron Jay Kernis and many others.



Gemma New,
photo by Roy Cox

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

RAY CHEN violin

Ray Chen is a violinist who redefines what it is to be a classical musician in the 21st century. With a media presence that enhances and inspires the classical audience, reaching out to millions through his unprecedented online following, Ray Chen's remarkable musicianship transmits to a global audience that is reflected in his engagements with the foremost orchestras and concert halls around the world.

Initially coming to attention via the Yehudi Menuhin (2008) and Queen Elizabeth (2009) Competitions, of which he was First Prize winner, he has built a profile in Europe, Asia, and the USA as well as his native Australia both live and on disc. Signed in 2017 to Decca Classics, the summer of 2017 saw the recording of the first album of this partnership with the London Philharmonic as a successor to his previous three critically acclaimed albums on SONY, the first of which (*Virtuoso*) received an ECHO Klassik Award. Profiled as "one to watch" by *The Strad* and *Gramophone* magazines, his profile has grown to encompass his featuring in the *Forbes* list of 30 most influential Asians under 30, appearing in major online TV series *Mozart in the Jungle*, a multi-year partnership with Giorgio Armani (who designed the cover of his Mozart album with Christoph Eschenbach) and performing at major media events such as France's Bastille Day (live to 800,000 people), the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm (telecast across Europe), and the BBC Proms.

He has appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Munich Philharmonic, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra Nazionale della Santa Cecilia and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He works with conductors such as Riccardo Chailly, Vladimir Jurowski, Sakari Oramo, Manfred Honeck, Daniele Gatti, Kirill Petrenko, Krystof Urbanski, Juraj Valcuha and many others. From 2012-2015 he was resident at the Dortmund Konzerthaus.

His presence on social media makes Ray Chen a pioneer in an artist's interaction with their audience, utilising the new opportunities of modern technology. His appearances and interactions with music and musicians are instantly disseminated to a new public in a contemporary and relatable way. He is the first musician to be invited to write a lifestyle blog for Italian publishing house, RCS Rizzoli (*Corriere della Sera*, *Gazzetta dello Sport*, *Max*). He has been featured in *Vogue* and is currently releasing his own design of violin case for the industry manufacturer GEWA. His commitment to music education is paramount, and inspires the younger generation of music students with his series of self-produced videos combining comedy and music. Through his online promotions his appearances regularly sell out and draw an entirely new demographic to the concert hall.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Australia, Ray was accepted to the Curtis Institute of Music at age 15, where he studied with Aaron Rosand and was supported by Young Concert Artists. He plays the 1715 "Joachim" Stradivarius violin on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation. This instrument was once owned by the famed Hungarian violinist, Joseph Joachim (1831-1907).



Ray Chen,
photo by Tom Downs

ABOUT THE MUSIC

NICO MUHLY (born 1981)

Control (Five Landscapes for Orchestra)

Nico Muhly, born in 1981, is an American composer who writes orchestral music, works for the stage, chamber music and sacred music. He has received commissions from The Metropolitan Opera: *Two Boys* (2011) and *Marnie* (2018); Carnegie Hall, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tallis Scholars, King's College and St John's College, Cambridge, Wigmore Hall, and The Philadelphia Orchestra, among others. He is an avid collaborator, and has worked with choreographers Benjamin Millepied at the Paris Opéra Ballet, Bobbi Jene Smith at the Juilliard School, Justin Peck and Kyle Abraham at New York City Ballet; artists Sufjan Stevens, The National, Teitur, Anohni, James Blake and Paul Simon; and has written film scores for *The Reader* (2008) and *Kill Your Darlings* (2013), and the BBC adaptation of *Howards End* (2017).

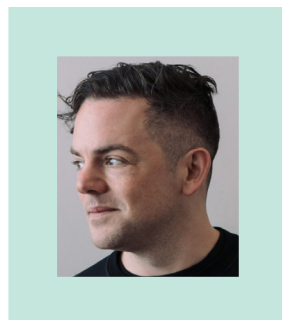
Among his concertos are works for violin, (*Shrink*, for Pekka Kuusisto), organ (*Register*, for James McVinnie), and viola (Nadia Sirota). He collaborates with the same artists as a composer and performer of chamber music. He has written vocal works for Iestyn Davies, Renée Fleming, and Nicholas Phan, has collaborated with artists Maira Kalman and Oliver Beer, and has created site-specific pieces for the National Gallery, London, and the Art Institute of Chicago, and written articles for the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, and the *London Review of Books*. Recordings of his works have been released by Decca and Nonesuch, and he is part of the artist-run record label Bedroom Community, which released his first two albums, *Speaks Volumes* (2006) and *Mothertongue* (2008).

Muhly's *Control* was commissioned by Utah Symphony in grateful tribute to Patricia A. Richards. Support provided by Wells Fargo and friends of Patricia A. Richards and the Sounds of Science Commissioning Club.

The composer writes:

Control (Five Landscapes for Orchestra) is a sequence of five episodes describing, in some way, an element of Utah's natural environment, as well as the ways in which humans interact with it.

The first part, 'Landform', begins with a texture of strings, interrupted by forceful chords. A solo oboe works slowly on top of this process, and is itself interrupted by a progression of aggressive chords that slowly ascend, presented at two different (but close enough to rub against one another) speeds. These ascending forms become more seismically unstable, and a trio of pitched percussion (xylophone, marimba, and vibraphone) creates a more mathematical grid; here, as in many other places in *Control*, I tried to reference, however obliquely, the music of Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992), whose visionary work *Des Canyons aux Étoiles* (1972) deals with Utah's landscape and the spiritual possibilities found therein. The section ends as it began, but somehow changed, observed by the pitched percussion and subtly transformed.



Nico Muhly,
photo by Heidi Solander

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The second part, 'Mountain', imagines a mountain in the summer, with various insect-like punctuations from the winds, and a heavily fragmented string section, with small groups of players and soloists splitting from the crowd. A solo viola and solo violin spin simple melodies under and over this texture, sometimes as plain as a single note displaced over all possible octaves. We end with a slightly ominous tuba and piano bassline suggesting, perhaps, that there are other uses for mountains than purely organic ones.

Part three, 'Beehive', deals with Utah's history of technological innovation being used to control the landscape. I tried, in various places in this piece, to use the orchestra to convey what must have been the pioneers' shock at the wild shapes and colours of the landscape; here, that landscape is fully gridded, plotted, and divided and put to agricultural use. The key here is a productive busyness: Utah claims one of the first telegrams ever sent, and, more recently, some of the first fibre internet connections; industriousness is built into the pioneer wagons, the early ploughs, collective grain storage, charity, education, missionary work, and an ever-changing relationship to technology. Morse-code-like rhythms dominate the first half of this movement, and suddenly, a trio of trumpets takes over, echoed by a trio of oboes, then flutes, then various chimes and bells. We end with a solo cello above a busy grid of triangles and woodblock.

Part four, 'Petroglyph & Tobacco', begins with the simple, aggressive rhythms of stone-carving, hocketed between different families of the orchestra. Eventually, a melody emerges, a Ute song. It is too easy to project a romantic ancientness to the music of Native Americans; in this case, the song was used when begging for tobacco: post-European-contact evidence for the modern malleability of Native American cultural traditions. Similarly, next to a petroglyph, we see modern graffiti, or, graffiti from 90 years ago (Rulon Rushton, 1929, making his mark on history). The landscape and its inhabitants are in a constant dialogue.

Part five is entitled 'Red Dust'. I've spent a good deal of time in the St George area in southern Utah, and one of the most striking elements of the landscape is the outrageous red colour everywhere: it's visually inescapable. More notable, though, was the way the red dust permeated my hair, my clothes, my shoes, and the carpet in my motel. I flew to London the day after a long hike, and when I took off my socks, a confetti of red dust landed on the ground: the Utah landscape had followed me halfway around the world. We can control the landscape, but it has a way of reminding us of its permanence. This section turns a simple chord progression into clouds and shifting forms, made of many moving parts.

Nico Muhly © 2022

ABOUT THE MUSIC

MAX RICHTER (born 1966) Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi's Four Seasons

Max Richter is one of the most prodigious figures on the contemporary music scene, with ground-breaking work as a composer, pianist, producer, and collaborator. From synthesizers and computers to a full symphony orchestra, Richter's innovative work encompasses solo albums, ballets, concert hall performances, film and television series, video art installations and theatre works. He is classically trained, studying at Edinburgh University, the Royal Academy of Music, London, and completing his studies with composer Luciano Berio in Florence.

Memoryhouse, Richter's 2002 debut, has been described by *The Independent* and *Pitchfork* as a 'landmark', while his 2004 album *The Blue Notebooks* was chosen by the *Guardian* as one of the best Classical works of the century. *SLEEP*, his eight-and-a-half-hour concert work, has been broadcast and performed worldwide, including at the Sydney Opera House, Berlin's Kraftwerk, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Philharmonie de Paris, and at the Barbican, London. In 2012 Richter 'recomposed' Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, winning him the prestigious ECHO Classic Award, and an established place in the classical charts. He has recently produced a *New Four Seasons* for the ground-breaking Chineke! Orchestra and soloist Elena Urioste, to be played on period instruments.

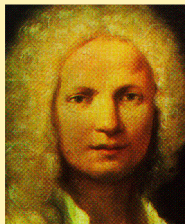
Richter has written prolifically for film and television, with recent projects including *Hostiles*, *Black Mirror*, *Taboo* – which gained him an Emmy nomination, HBO series *The Leftovers* and *My Brilliant Friend* and most recently *White Boy Rick*, *Mary Queen of Scots* and the sci-fi drama *Ad Astra* starring Brad Pitt. His music is also featured in Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island*, Ari Folman's *Waltz With Bashir* and in the Oscar-winning *Arrival* by Denis Villeneuve.

Born in Venice in 1678 and ordained a priest in 1703, Vivaldi had enjoyed great success during his lifetime as violin virtuoso, entrepreneur and composer. His works included some 500 concertos as well as many operas, instrumental sonatas and a large body of sacred music. His playing was clearly prodigious. It would seem that Vivaldi pioneered technical advances, such as using the highest register of the strings, which were unknown at the time. One contemporary describes how Vivaldi 'put his fingers but a hair's breadth from the bow, so that there was scarcely room for the bow'.

Vivaldi knew the value of publishing his music. In his *Four Seasons* Vivaldi's musical rhetoric exquisitely depicts the seasons' progress and annual rhythms of life, described also in sonnets (possibly written by him) that he affixed to the score. The set forms part of *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* ('The Contest of Harmony and Invention'), Opus 8, which was published in 1725 in Amsterdam. The publisher, Etienne Roger had developed the new technology of engraved plates – these could be reused as often as needed, and because there wasn't



Max Richter



Antonio Vivaldi

ABOUT THE MUSIC

a single glyph for every note, the use of beams to link groups of small notes together made the print more legible than before. Vivaldi's Opus 3, or *L'estro armonico* (The harmonious fancy), a collection of twelve concertos for a variety of instrumental combinations appeared in Roger's edition in 1711. Roger was so impressed at the collection's popularity that he ordered what became Opp. 5, 6 and 7 and engraved them at his own expense.

Vivaldi also knew the value of *not* publishing certain works, understanding that anything in print was fair game for other composers to copy – Bach did just that with several of Vivaldi's pieces. Baroque composers were accustomed to the notion of 'parody' in its original sense: composers might borrow music from their own or others' instrumental music and set the words of, say, the mass to them.

Despite the digital electronic element, Vivaldi would, then, have been unsurprised and probably quite comfortable with Max Richter's 'recomposition' of his most popular work in 2012. The German-born British composer has a distinguished career in electro-acoustic work, including scores for the stage and screen, and the post-minimalist aspect of his style makes for a fruitful point of contact between his music and that of the Baroque. But this is no mere arrangement or remix. As the composer has noted:

I wanted to open up the score on a note-by-note level, and working with an existing recording was like digging a mineshaft through an incredibly rich seam, discovering diamonds and not being able to pull them out. That became frustrating. I wanted to get inside the score at the level of the notes and in essence rewrite it, recomposing it in a literal way.

In the event, with quasi-minimalist repetition and dramatic elisions of Vivaldi's music, Richter estimates he retained about one quarter of the original. He begins with a brief sound sculpture that sets the scene for spring; in the first movement proper he plays with Vivaldi's birdcalls over a new, slow-moving ostinato of magisterial chords. Similarly in the other two movements a phrase from original is repeated and examined from different angles; Vivaldi's nymphs and shepherds are omitted. After a relatively straight version of the introduction, the first movement of summer drives the 'cuckoo' motif relentlessly before Richter adds his own long cantilena. Richter captures the heat-struck lassitude of the second movement, and in the third adds new rhythmic emphases to Vivaldi's stormy music. Autumn 1 is full of subtle rhythmic displacements before the somnolent episode toward the end. The slow movement uses electronics to create a static, echoing sound-world. Vivaldi's 'hunting horns' are absent from Autumn 3, the music using the soloist's first material to decorate more, slow-moving ostinatos. Winter 1 is characterised by familiar material made strange by slight metrical irregularities. There is no crackling fire in the slow movement, where the violin sings the lonely melody against a frozen backdrop. Similarly, Richter dispenses with Vivaldi's skaters while still creating a sense of movement through a winter landscape.

Gordon Kerry © 2022

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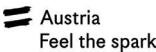
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