

12-15 October
Sydney Opera House

RAVEL'S PIANO CONCERTO



Presenting Partner



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Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australia-born Simone Young 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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MASTERS SERIES

Wednesday 12 October, 8pm
Friday 14 October, 8pm
Saturday 15 October, 8pm
Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

RAVEL'S PIANO CONCERTO

COLOURFUL SOUNDS

PIETARI INKINEN conductor
JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET piano

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

La Valse

RAVEL

Piano Concerto in G

i. *Allegrement*

ii. *Adagio assai*

iii. *Presto*

CHLOÉ CHARODY (born 1984)

*My Australia**

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803–1869)

Symphonie fantastique, Op.14

i. *Daydreams – Passions*

ii. *A Ball*

iii. *In the Fields*

iv. *March to the Scaffold*

v. *Sabbath Night Dream*

*Chloé Charody's *My Australia* was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by the members of the Vanguard Patrons Program.

Pre-concert talk by
Genevieve Lang at 7.15pm
in the Northern Foyer.

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

12 minutes, 23 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
8 minutes, 49 minutes

The concert will conclude
at approximately 10pm.

COVER IMAGE

Tamara Schipchinskaya

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WELCOME

Welcome to Ravel's Piano Concerto

Abercrombie & Kent would like to welcome you to Ravel's Piano Concerto in G, performed by French pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and conducted by Pietari Inkinen.

Infused with wit and playfulness, jazz twists, Spanish flavours and languorous melodies, the concerto draws on material written for an earlier, unpublished work, *Saspiak Bat*, first conceived of in the Basque region of Spain, where Ravel had been on holiday with his great friend and composer Gustave Samazeuilh.

Samazeuilh recounts:

I remember the excursion [in 1911] which took us by the excellent route of the Col de Lesaca, from Pampelune to Estella and the return by Roncevaux, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port and Mauléon. Ravel had brought the sketch of a Basque work for piano and orchestra, *Saspiak Bat*, of which I saw the very advanced sketches...

It is no surprise to us at A&K, that Ravel found inspiration while on holiday. It's our belief that travel encourages joy and creativity, while truly great travel can be lifechanging. Our Journey Designers take that very sentiment into every itinerary they create — finding the right tempo and perfect pitch for every individual, with just the right crescendo and diminuendo to bring each extraordinary day to life.

Whether journeying to the pristine beaches of the Iberian Peninsula, the vast volcanic plains of Iceland or the French epicurean region of Bordeaux, let us guide you into a world of discovery, Ravel-style, with all the inspiration of his masterful concerto; we promise the show will be unforgettable.

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



Debra Fox
Managing Director
Abercrombie & Kent

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

PIETARI INKINEN conductor

The Finnish conductor Pietari Inkinen has been Chief Conductor of the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie since September 2017, where his contract has recently been extended until June 2025. He is also Chief Conductor of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director of the KBS Symphony Orchestra.

Recent and future highlights include his debuts with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gürzenich Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, SWR Symphony Orchestra and Budapest Festival Orchestra. In previous seasons Pietari Inkinen has also conducted Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Staatskapelle Berlin, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and Helsinki Philharmonic.

The music of Richard Wagner being of great significance to Pietari Inkinen's work, he was invited to conduct *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festival in 2023. During the summer 2021 he conducted three performances of *Die Walküre* on the Green Hill. Earlier, he led the tetralogy with great success at Opera Australia in Melbourne, for which he received the Helpmann Award in 2014 and the Green Room Award for Best Opera Conductor in 2016. Other opera productions have taken him to the Finnish National Opera, the Théâtre de la Monnaie, the Staatsoper Unter den Linden and the Bavarian State Opera.

He conducted Wagner's *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in Palermo's Teatro Massimo, and performances of a highly successful new production of *Eugene Onegin* at the Dresden Semperoper.

Pietari Inkinen has also been Chief Conductor of the Prague Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Ludwigsburg Schlossfestspiele. During his time as Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, he conducted the recording of all of Sibelius' symphonies for the Naxos label as well as Rautavaara's *Manhattan Trilogy*. Also worth mentioning is a CD with arias and orchestral pieces by Richard Wagner with tenor Simon O'Neill (EMI), as well as Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No.1 and Britten's Cello Symphony together with Johannes Moser (Hänssler). In addition, he recorded excerpts from Wagner's *Siegfried* and symphonies of Prokofiev and Dvořák with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie (SWRmusic/Naxos).

Inkinen is also an accomplished violinist. He studied at the Cologne Music Academy with Zakhar Bron before taking further studies in conducting at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki.



Pietari Inkinen, photo
by Nguyen Phuong

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET piano

Award-winning pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet enjoys a prolific recording and international concert career. He regularly works with orchestras such as The Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, BBC Symphony and London Philharmonic orchestras, and collaborates with conductors including Vladimir Jurowski, Gianandrea Noseda, François-Xavier Roth, Vasily Petrenko, Ludovic Morlot, Edward Gardner, Louis Langrée, and Sir Andrew Davis among others.

Highlights of the 2022/23 season include Sydney Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Prague Radio orchestras, Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille, Budapest Festival Orchestra, and Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra. He returns to Seattle Symphony Orchestra for a play-direct program of Hadyn, Beethoven and Mozart, and performs with Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg at the Bishwiller Festival. He continues his relationship with Manchester Camerata and Gabor Takács-Nagy which will include a tour of the Baltics. With Takács-Nagy, Bavouzet also performs Mozart concertos with Orchestre de Chambre de Geneva and the Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra.

In recital, Bavouzet continues his three-year residency at the Wigmore Hall, titled 'Autour de Debussy', which includes solo recitals and a chamber concert with the Orsino Ensemble. Bavouzet and the Orsino Ensemble also perform at the Helsinki Seriös chamber music series. Other recitals include two Debussy programs at the Ferrara Musica Festival, City Recital Hall, Sydney, and Sala São Paulo to name a few.

Bavouzet records exclusively for Chandos. His most recent release is the final instalment in the highly successful complete Haydn's Piano Sonatas series and his *The Beethoven Connection* received numerous accolades from *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine* and *Choc-Classica*, and *The New York Times*. Ongoing cycles include the complete Mozart Piano Concertos with the Manchester Camerata and Gábor Takács-Nagy; their fourth volume was nominated for a Gramophone Award in 2020. In September 2020, the complete Beethoven Concertos were released with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra play/directed by Bavouzet.

Bavouzet has worked closely with Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Kurtág, Maurice Ohana, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Bruno Mantovani and Jörg Widmann and is also a champion of lesser-known French music, notably that of Gabriel Pierné and Albéric Magnard. He is the International Chair in Piano at the Royal Northern College of Music and an Advisory Board member of the Pianofest in the Hamptons. In 2012 he was ICMA Artist of the Year and in 2008 he was awarded Beijing's first ever Elite Prize for his Beethoven complete sonata series.



Jean-Efflam Bavouzet,
photo by Benjamin
Ealovega

2023 SEASON

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MUSIC THAT INSPIRES

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

A great deal of Ravel's music might be described as being in inverted commas. His most famous piano piece the *Pavane for a Dead Princess* resurrects a gracious Renaissance dance mixed with some of that Spanish flavour that recurs so frequently in Ravel's works. His *Le tombeau de Couperin* is 20th-century piano music which nonetheless pays a genuine homage to the keyboard style of the French Baroque master. In *Gaspard de la nuit* Ravel famously set out to write his version of romantic piano music – once wryly suggesting that he 'might have overdone it'. His *Shéhérazade* songs evoke a typical early twentieth century view of Asia – significantly enough both the orchestration and the subject matter relate directly to Russian music, specifically that of Rimsky-Korsakov.

'A masterpiece, but it is not a ballet' was the verdict of Sergei Diaghilev when Ravel delivered the piano score of his newly-commissioned *Wien*. Ravel had considered such a piece well before World War, but the composition dates from 1920, and while it was eventually given as a ballet in 1928 the piece is much better known in the concert hall. The original scenario, reflected in the music, had glimpses of dancers in 1850s-Viennese costume emerging from and disappearing into darkness, accompanied by fragments of music suggesting the waltzes of the time. Ravel was adamant, however, that the piece should not be seen as an emblem of the end of imperial France or Austria. **La Valse** (as it came to be named) is, he said, 'tragic, but in the Greek sense: it is a fatal spinning around, the expression of vertigo and of the voluptuousness of dance to the point of paroxysm.'

Ravel's pre-existent models were by no means only from the tradition of 'art music' or high-class entertainment. Toward the end of the 19th century composers who wanted to be free of the influence of Wagner's emotive, chromatic music looked to local ethnic musics (as did Dvořák) or did the balancing act between classical form and structural innovation (like Brahms). Many composers felt as if the tradition was temporarily exhausted or hamstrung.



Ravel with Vaslav Nijinsky

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Camille Saint-Saëns, in the last decade of the nineteenth century made the prediction that:

The exclusive use of the major and minor modes is over and done with. Ancient modes are re-entering the scene and, following in their footsteps, Oriental modes...all this will inject new life into worn out melody; harmonies will change as well, and rhythm, scarcely explored, will develop. From all this a new art will be born.

Ravel's **G Major Concerto** grew out of a 'Basque fantasy' – he was Basque on his mother's side – which was to have been in seven movements, each of which would depict a province in the Basque country on the border of Spain and France. The Basque work, first planned in 1913, never materialised. Some of the material made it into this concerto, composed between 1929 and 1931, though Ravel once told someone that the theme of the first movement came to him 'on a train between Oxford and London'. The immediate stimulus for the piece was a suggestion that Ravel should take a new concerto to the US. He had toured there in 1927-28, enjoying everything except for the food, and it had confirmed his love of American jazz. The piece was premiered by pianist Marguerite Long in Paris, followed by a European tour with Ravel conducting.

Ravel once said that a concerto 'should be light-hearted and brilliant, and not aim at profundity or dramatic effects'. In the first movement, with its whip-cracking opening, there is some hint of Spanish music. The sublime slow movement (which suggests profundity despite Ravel's protests) is based on the template of the slow movement from Mozart's Clarinet Quintet; and throughout there is a whole lot of jazz. In fact for a long time this work was rivalled only by Gershwin's in the way in which it introduced jazz to the classical concerto. Certainly composers like Debussy and Milhaud had freely incorporated jazz – the latter in his ballet *La Création du monde* of 1923 which is based on African creation myths. We can, with no disrespect at all, include American jazz among those 'non-European modes' that Saint-Saëns talks about. It functions in the same way to renovate the language of classical music in a work like this through new sounds, a new kind of energy and humour.



Pianist Marguerite Long

ABOUT THE MUSIC

CHLOÉ CHARODY (born 1984)

My Australia

Through the dynamic fusion of opera, classical music and circus, Chloé Charody has created a unique style of music and a theatrical genre that has enjoyed a wonderful reception by critics, the media, and audiences worldwide.

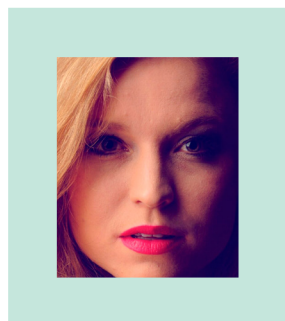
Charody's first circus-opera *The Carnival* debuted on London's West End in 2011 and for nine years ran sold-out seasons across Europe, the UK and Australia. Circus-opera is a style that Charody has pioneered, and in 2012 she founded the Berlin Circus Opera Lab to train a new generation of opera singers.

The composer writes:

Australian history is scarred by violence and discrimination, not only against Australia's first people, but in recent years against those simply seeking a safer life away from war, poverty and famine.

As a nation we have said sorry to Indigenous Australians, yet the lyrics to the Australian national anthem still stand almost unchanged since they were first written by a Scotsman in 1878 – a time when genocide against Indigenous Australians was rife. As we look to the future of the world, war, poverty and famine continue to destroy countless lives. It is our responsibility as a progressive nation to look after these people and help them heal and to create a rich life by embracing them into our multicultural society.

This year I ran a project in schools across Australia and asked children (Indigenous children, children from immigrant families and refugee children) to each write a paragraph about what Australia meant to them. Their heartwarming responses inspired me to write lyrics to this fanfare as an offering for a fresh Australian national anthem, which is available from the Australian Music Centre. I believe if we have a national anthem that is relevant to all Australians, we as a nation can look toward a progressive future filled with optimism, hope and unity.



Chloe Charody's *My Australia* was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by the members of the Vanguard Patrons Program.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803–1869)

Symphonie fantastique

Berlioz's music has always divided opinion strongly. One of the most withering (and funny) assessments was from Mendelssohn, who felt that despite 'all his efforts to go stark mad he never once succeeds.' Debussy (who was far from being an uncritical admirer), by contrast described the *Symphonie fantastique* as 'the perfect masterpiece of Romantic ardour. It astonishes us by being able to translate such excesses into music without losing breath. Moreover it always impresses us as being as mobbing as a battle between the elements.' They were arguably both right. Mendelssohn and many of his contemporaries decried Berlioz's apparent lack of training in counterpoint (they tended to be pianists, where he was the inaugural guitarist with ambitions to compose) though in fact he could write perfectly good counterpoint when he chose. But his dramatic sense of colour made him one of the most unorthodox, yet greatest, orchestrators of the period.

The young Berlioz's one-sided passion for his idol, the Irish actress Harriet Smithson, had consumed him for three years after seeing her in *Hamlet* on a Paris stage in 1827. When Berlioz heard rumours about an affair between Smithson and her manager, he was overwhelmed, and composed his *Symphonie fantastique* or 'Episodes in the Life of an Artist' to exorcise his feelings of betrayal. Feeling his love for Smithson was hopeless, Berlioz promptly conceived an equally doomed passion for Marie (also known as Camille) Moke, who jilted him for pianist and publisher Camille Pleyel. In despair, Berlioz repaired to Italy, as one does, and recycled various bits of music to create the melodrama – that is, a work using music and spoken text – *Lélio*. This *Symphonie* and *Lélio* were performed together in 1832 and Berlioz, according to his memoirs, arranged for Smithson to be invited to the concert where, as she realised his love for her, she 'felt the room reel about her and sat as in a dream'. Reader, she married him.



Berlioz in the 1830s, drawing possibly by Ingres

ABOUT THE MUSIC



Harriet Smithson as Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

As a truly Romantic work, the *Symphonie fantastique* appears to avoid any of the formal conventions of the Classical period, and frankly sets about illustrating a program. This narrative evolved somewhat between the premiere of the work in 1830 and the performance Smithson attended in 1832. In the final instance, the events presented in the work's five movements are all drug-induced hallucinations, as Berlioz writes:

A young musician of unhealthily sensitive nature and endowed with vivid imagination has poisoned himself with opium in a paroxysm of love-sick despair. The narcotic dose he had taken was too weak to cause death but it has thrown him into a long sleep accompanied by the most extraordinary visions.

The opening movement (like a Haydn symphony) begins with a slow introduction – the Musician's daydreams, which ebb and flow somewhat aimlessly – that is until the work introduces a theme where a leaping figure derived from the major chord, and a falling stepwise answer is extended over some 40 bars. This theme, or *idée fixe*, represents the unattainable beloved and will recur through the work in various guises; here it transforms the daydreams into much more active passions.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The second movement – with not one but two harps – evokes a ball room, in which the Musician catches glimpses of the beloved as they whirl about in an ever-accelerating waltz.

A fragile calm descends in the third movement, a bucolic scene in which we hear the sound of two shepherd-boys ‘play the *ranz des vaches* (the tune used by the Swiss to call their flocks together) in alternation.’ The music is full of a quiet melancholy until the beloved appears, via the *idée fixe*, again, causing ‘painful forebodings’. One shepherd sounds the tune again, but answer comes there none, only the distant rolling of thunder.

The Musician then descends into a nightmarish fantasy: he has killed the woman who has been driving him mad and is marched to the scaffold to be executed. Berlioz liked to say that he wrote this famous movement in one night, which Charles Rosen points out is quite true, in that he merely copied it from the now-lost score of his failed first opera, *Les Francs-juges*! The orchestration is viscerally rough, calling for a now-obsolete instrument called the *ophicleide* (now often played on tuba) that barks out the bass notes. The beloved’s melody appears ‘like a last thought of love interrupted by the fatal stroke’ after which there is a frightening fanfare.

In the finale, the ghost of the beloved presides at a satanic orgy. The tune is grotesquely decorated by the clarinet, and Berlioz uses the then unusual technique of *col legno* bowing (striking the strings with the wood of the bow) to enhance the weirdness of the sound world. The movement also features giant bells, and the plainchant from the Requiem mass, *Dies irae* (day of wrath). But as Mendelssohn reminds us, Berlioz never quite goes mad, and despite the common criticism of his compositional technique being rough and naïve, Berlioz actually enlivens much of the symphony, especially in the two final movements, with impressive displays of counterpoint.

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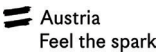
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