

9–10 September
Sydney Opera House

YEOL EUM SON PERFORMS MOZART

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 this year, as the Orchestra also 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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CASUAL FRIDAYS
EMIRATES GREAT CLASSICS

Friday 9 September, 7pm
Saturday 10 September, 2pm
Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

YEOL EUM SON PERFORMS MOZART

MASTERS OF DRAMA

EDO DE WAART conductor
YEOL EUM SON piano

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Variations on a theme by Haydn, Op.56a

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No.20 in D minor, K.466

i. *Allegro*

ii. *Romance*

iii. *Rondo (Allegro assai)*

ANDREW HOWES

*Luminifera – Wild Light for Orchestra**

SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Symphonic Dances, Op.45

i. *Non Allegro*

ii. *Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)*

iii. *Lento assai – Allegro vivace*

Pre-concert talk by Phillip Sametz in the Northern Foyer 45 minutes before the performance.

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

17 minutes, 30 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
8 minutes, 25 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 9pm (Friday) and 4pm (Saturday).

COVER IMAGE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Painting by Barbara Krafft

*Andrew Howes' commission for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project is generously supported by Ken & Liz Nielsen

Yeol Eum Son's performances with Sydney Symphony Orchestra have been generously supported by The Berg Family Foundation.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



A WORD FROM EMIRATES

Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have one of the longest standing partnerships in the arts. This year marks our 20th year of partnership, and we can think of no better way to celebrate than a return to the Orchestra's home in the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

20 years ago, Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra met and established a great union of culture and travel. Covid has forced both of our organisations to navigate uncharted skies, but we are proud to do this side by side.

Emirates has led the way in our response to Covid, with safety initiatives to boost travel confidence. We continue to seek ways to support our community during these challenging times, and we hope today's music creates hope for a brighter future.

We look forward to the next 20 years together. It is my pleasure to welcome you to this performance, and we wish the Orchestra all the best for this exciting new chapter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Barry Brown', written in a cursive style.

Barry Brown

Divisional Vice President for Australasia
Emirates

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

EDO DE WAART conductor

Throughout his long and illustrious career, renowned Dutch conductor Edo de Waart has held a multitude of posts with orchestras around the world. A former Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (1994–2003), de Waart has held Music Directorships with San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Opera, Minnesota Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, and a Chief Conductorship with De Nederlandse Opera. He has also held posts with Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Santa Fe Opera, and also holds the position of Music Director Laureate at Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

De Waart celebrated his 80th birthday in 2021 with a series of special concerts with Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, where he holds the position of Conductor Laureate. Edo de Waart now celebrates his third year as Principal Guest Conductor of San Diego Symphony Orchestra and continues his role as Conductor Laureate of Antwerp Symphony Orchestra.

As an opera conductor, de Waart has enjoyed success in a large and varied repertoire in many of the world's greatest opera houses. He has conducted at Bayreuth, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Opéra Bastille, Santa Fe Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera.

De Waart's extensive recorded catalogue encompasses releases for Philips, Virgin, EMI, Telarc and RCA. Recent recordings include Henderickx's Symphony No.1 and Oboe Concerto, Mahler's Symphony No.1 and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, all with the Royal Flemish Philharmonic.

Beginning his career as an Assistant Conductor to Leonard Bernstein at the New York Philharmonic, de Waart then returned to Holland where he was appointed Assistant Conductor to Bernard Haitink at the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Edo de Waart has received a number of awards for his musical achievements, including becoming a Knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion and an Honorary Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.



Edo de Waart,
photo by Jesse Willems

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

YEOL EUM SON piano

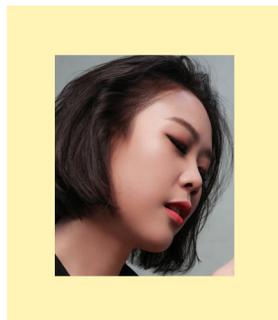
Multi-award-winning South Korean pianist Yeol Eum Son is famed for her power, her poetry and her remarkably perceptive playing. Her graceful and timeless interpretations, crystalline touch and versatile, thrilling performances have caught the attention of audiences worldwide. She is highly regarded as a brilliant virtuoso whose playing has a rare balance between enormous kinetic energy and substantial gravity. Yeol Eum performs all over the world as a recitalist and soloist with orchestras. An avid chamber musician, in 2018 Yeol Eum was appointed Artistic Director of Music in PyeongChang festival, responsible for programming both summer and winter editions at the Olympic site in PyeongChang.

Praised for her eclectic and rich repertoire, ranging from Bach, Mozart, early German and Russian Romantic to Gershwin, Szymanowski, Ligeti and Salonen, Yeol Eum has collaborated with major ensembles and festivals worldwide.

In the current season, Yeol Eum is Artist in Residence with the Residentie Orchestra in the Hague, and will debut with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hanover, Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias and Musikkollegium Winterthur. She will debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as well as the Melbourne, Tasmanian and Detroit Symphony Orchestras and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Widely recognised for her interpretation of Mozart's Piano Concertos, Yeol Eum released a highly acclaimed album on Onyx featuring Mozart's Piano Concerto No.21 with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields under the late Sir Neville Marriner, his very last recording.

Yeol Eum is Honorary Ambassador of the Seoul Arts Center and her home city of Wonju. A double Second Prize winner of the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition (2011) and the 13th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (2009), she was a student of Arie Vardi at the Hochschule für Musik Theater und Medien Hannover, Germany. She holds a degree from the Korean National University of Arts.



Yeol Eum Son,
photo by Woongchul An

Yeol Eum Son's performances with Sydney Symphony Orchestra have been generously supported by The Berg Family Foundation.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

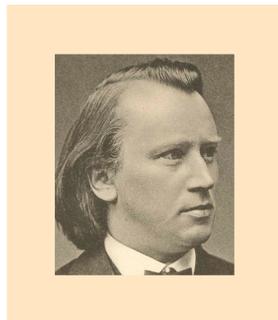
The violinist Joseph Joachim once reassured a youthful Brahms, who had pestered him anxiously for an opinion on his new *Variations on a theme by Schumann*, 'If I could, I would turn every one of the Variations into a triumphal arch and the theme into a laurel wreath for you to wear as I led you through them, you young Emperor of Music!'

For Brahms, like Haydn and Beethoven before him, the variation form was central to his musical life. While he declared a 'particular affection' for the form, which he argued should be used more creatively and with greater freedom, his own exploration of variation form nevertheless remained conservative, a challenge to his ingenuity in remaining faithful to the theme. His creativity shone in spinning off entirely new ideas from fragments of the original theme.

Brahms was at a crossroads when he came, aged 40, to consider a theme from an old manuscript apparently by Haydn. He was in 1873 still three years from completing his long-gestating first symphony. His experience of the art of orchestration was limited to a first piano concerto and a pair of serenades, all composed long before he had even arrived from his native Hamburg in 1862 to make a permanent home in Vienna.

Now, in his *Variations on a theme by Haydn*, the composer turned two notable corners. Composing the work in two separate versions more or less concurrently, one for two pianos (Op.56b) and one for orchestra (Op.56a), Brahms on one hand closed his career as a composer of major piano works – henceforth there would be only miniatures; and on the other hand he created, triumphantly, the world's first free-standing variations for orchestra. At the same time, in his confident and subtle mastery of a constantly varying instrumental palette through ten distinct environments (theme, eight variations and finale), he announced his arrival as an orchestrator.

The 'theme by Haydn' had been discovered and shown to Brahms three years previously by his Viennese friend Carl Ferdinand Pohl, librarian of the Society of the Friends of Music and Haydn's first comprehensive biographer. Pohl had unearthed a set of half a dozen wind band divertimenti, or *Feldparthien* (literally, field partitas), in which



Brahms, around 1875

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it appeared, as the second movement of the last, under the heading *Corale St Antonii*. All six divertimenti are now considered spurious, possibly by Ignaz Pleyel, and the St Antony Chorale itself perhaps an old Austrian pilgrims' hymn.

Brahms in his opening statement of the theme consciously imitates the early Classical wind sonorities in the original divertimento. He reserves his upper strings for the actual variations, which follow, as John Horton has suggested, in a loosely symphonic sequence – energetic in the first three variations; Romantically melancholy in the fourth (*Andante con moto*); scherzo-like in 5, 6 and 8, with Variation 7 (*Grazioso*) a contrasting centrepiece; and gloriously cumulative in a passacaglia finale which builds in Bachian fashion from a ground bass constantly reiterating the first five bars of the St Antony theme.

The bell-like tolling of the note B flat from the end of the theme echoes constantly through Variation 1, interwoven with sweeping string figures. Variation 2, in the minor, propels each scampering phrase with a peremptory shove, but the more delicate Variation 3 flows placidly, evoking Romantic horn sighs. The poignant expressiveness of the minor-key Variation 4, based on two new, wistfully flowing melodies, is achieved with a deceptive simplicity which refuses to proclaim its extraordinary contrapuntal skill.

The impetuous Variation 5 pits different rhythms against each other within a basic 6/8 metre and a swaggering march follows in the equally brilliant Variation 6. The languorous *siciliano* of Variation 7 is another contrapuntal tour de force with glowing Brahmsian harmonies. A final, fleeting ghost-like variation – the third in the minor – leads to the solemn ground bass of the finale, a mere ten notes from which Brahms builds a kaleidoscopic edifice, rising inexorably to a majestic return of the full chorale theme.

Brahms' unprecedented use of a passacaglia, or ground bass, finale to a set of variations is both a homage to the towering example of Bach and an advance hint of the great passacaglia, based on a theme of Bach himself, with which, 12 years later, he would close his fourth, and final, symphony.

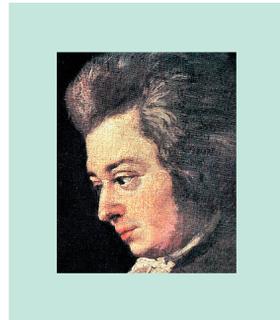
ABOUT THE MUSIC

The first of the two piano concertos for which Mozart chose the minor mode is one of his most often heard works, and one of his most admired. Even in the 19th century, when much of his music was in eclipse, this concerto was played and regarded as representing the 'daemonic' Mozart. Beethoven played it and wrote cadenzas for it. In 1839 Schumann singled out this concerto: 'Our younger master will certainly not forget how the older ones would suddenly emerge with something magnificent – Mozart's Concerto in D minor, Beethoven's in G.'

Such fame is a problem: Charles Rosen remarks of this concerto, in his book *The Classical Style*, that we have to ask ourselves whether we are hearing the work of art or its reputation. There may be people who are hearing the concerto for the first time tonight, with fresh ears. The stormy drama of the work can hardly fail to make an impression of great, but controlled emotion and power.

This concerto is not incontestably better than the nine others Mozart wrote in 1784 and 1785, but it is distinguished from them by the intensity of its subjective approach. It has often been hailed as being like Beethoven, a form of praise which tends to obscure its special qualities and their sources. As familiarity has grown with the music of Mozart, Haydn and their predecessors, we have come to see that the late 18th century had its own deep vein of Storm and Stress, of passionate expression. There is, for example, a remarkable D minor keyboard concerto by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach which has some of the same feeling as this one by Mozart. One respect in which its music could be admitted to be Beethovenian is that the strife and passion persist until the change of mood in the last bars of the *Rondo*.

The first 15 bars of this concerto express the character of the whole of the first movement: throbbing, syncopated strings underlined by gruff bass triplets, rhythmic instability pushed as far as the Classical style would allow. Instead of turning to develop lighter material in the major key, this exposition retraces its steps to the mood of the opening, through orchestral tuttis of a violence unprecedented in Mozart's work.



Mozart, portrait by Joseph Lange

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The piano's first entry, in free recitative, is very moving – like the voice of one against the many, and this principle of opposition is much exploited throughout. With piano added to orchestra, the sustained and graded acceleration begins which gives this concerto much of its excitement. The piano's recitative opens the development or fantasia section, but does not return in the recapitulation – the development adds further to the concentration of the movement by using material from the exposition, rather than introducing new themes, as Mozart often does.

Beethoven's cadenza, though grandiose and headstrong, is a revealing commentary – one great creator and interpreter responding to another. Alfred Einstein has written suggestively of the pianissimo conclusion to the movement that it is 'as if the furies had simply become tired out and had lain down to rest, still grumbling, and ready at any time to take up the fight again...'

The slow movement begins in complete contrast, in an unexpected key (B flat major), fresh and poised. It proceeds as a spacious rondo, but as the second episode begins, is startlingly transformed. A raging presto in G minor begins in breathless triplets, which should be played, according to a letter of Mozart's father Leopold, 'as swiftly as the possibility of bringing out the tune clearly allows.' The return to the rondo theme is made in a transition of great breadth, like a horseman reining in his steed. This violent contrast within the movement would make no sense, as Rosen points out, if the slow movement was isolated from the others. The furies of the first movement have taken up the fight again.

The last movement is one of Mozart's few minor key rondos, but its turn to the major key towards the end, playing with more cheerful material, has provoked some disappointment from those who would judge this concerto by non-Mozartian aesthetic standards. The rocket-like theme with which the piano begins and the sustained violence of the first orchestral tutti are of a piece with the first movement, and the conciliatory character of the ending, besides being memorably jaunty and good-humoured, is perhaps best considered as a restoring of 18th-century balance, a desire to leave the audience with a friendly impression.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

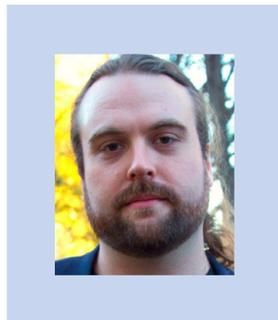
A 50 Fanfares commission, *Luminifera* was composed by Andrew Howes, whose mother Rosamund Plummer was the Orchestra's Principal Piccolo for many years. The composer writes that the piece:

is named in homage to a 17th century light hypothesis, which postulated a medium in which light could traverse a vacuum, called Luminiferous Aether. My rewrite of the name now translates as Wild Light, and I was inspired conceptually by imagining beams of light traversing the universe at unimaginable speed, striking and bouncing upon millions of surfaces almost endlessly. As I explored musical ideas that could match the concept I had established, I looked to the intervals of the harmonic series, which are the core building blocks of all sound. The harmonic series is especially important to brass instruments, and so they became the central sound of the piece, and the piece became a fanfare. It was an immense joy to compose this work for the Sydney Symphony, the orchestra I grew up hearing and whose sound I have always pictured when writing orchestral music, and I am grateful to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares project for making it possible.

Luminifera was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Ken & Liz Nielsen.

After the Rachmaninov family left Russia in 1917, the seizure of Rachmaninov's Russian income by the Soviets meant he had to earn a living from performing or conducting, rather than composition. At 44 he began building up a piano soloist's repertoire and wrote no original work for nine years. Then the urge to compose began to re-assert itself. A fitful procession of 'Indian summer' pieces emerged between 1926 and 1940, many of which are now regarded among his finest compositions.

Leaving Russia had meant spiritual exile from the culture that had nurtured Rachmaninov's musical style. To his friend Medtner's question, 'Why do you no longer compose?' Rachmaninov replied: 'The melody has gone.' But to use this typically self-deprecating remark as a stick with which to beat the composer's later compositions is to ignore their vigour.



Andrew Howes



Sergei Rachmaninov

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His orchestral style was now marked by great clarity of texture, a freer and more independent approach to brass and woodwind writing, and a tendency to express ideas more concisely than in his earlier large-scale pieces. Harmonically and rhythmically his music of the 1930s bears the influence of Prokofiev and Stravinsky, but very much on Rachmaninov's own terms. His melodies still move, on the whole, in stepwise fashion, in the manner of Russian Orthodox chant, and although he clothes his melodies in lighter textures, he is not ashamed to write tunes that could be called 'vintage Rachmaninov'.

The result was too 'modern' and lean-sounding for audiences who wanted him to keep re-writing the Second Piano Concerto, and too conservative for critics whose twin gods were Stravinsky and Schoenberg. But collectively, the *Symphonic Dances* represent perhaps the richest results of Rachmaninov's new approach to the orchestra. They were also his last original composition.

'I don't know how it happened. It must have been my last spark,' is how Rachmaninov described the work's origins. Yet the idea of a score for a programmatic ballet had been at the back of his mind since 1915, and when Michel Fokine successfully choreographed the *Paganini Rhapsody* in 1939 the opportunity presented itself again. He wrote the *Dances* the following year, giving the three movements the titles *Midday*, *Twilight* and *Midnight* respectively. At this point the work was called *Fantastic Dances*. Fokine was enthusiastic about the music but non-committal about its balletic possibilities. His death a short time later cooled Rachmaninov's interest in the ballet idea. He deleted his descriptive titles, substituted the word 'Symphonic' for 'Fantastic', and dedicated the triptych to his favourite orchestra, the Philadelphia, and its chief conductor Eugene Ormandy. It is a work full of enigmas which the ever-secretive Rachmaninov does nothing to clarify.

In the first movement for example, there is a transformation from minor to major of a prominent theme from his first symphony. The premiere of that work in 1897 had been such a fiasco that

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Rachmaninov could not compose at all for another three years. The reference in this new piece had a meaning that was entirely private.

There is also the curious paradox that the word 'dance', with its suggestion of life-enhancing, joyous activity, is here put at the service of a work that is essentially concerned with endings, with a chromaticism that darkens every musical step.

The first movement begins hesitantly, before a bold, staccato statement of a theme that sounds very much like the plainchant for the dead, *Dies Irae*, in disguise. This leads us to the main part of the movement. From this point on, most of the major musical ideas are introduced by the woodwinds. The major lyrical theme is then given to the alto saxophone. Rachmaninov also employs orchestral piano, and when the lyrical theme is given its second statement by the strings, the piano traces a filigree accompaniment, creating an overall effect of shining brightness. In the coda, harp and piano together create a glistening, shimmering counterpoint to the plush, chorale-like statement of the motif plucked from the first symphony.

The waltz movement begins with muted trumpet fanfares that have a sinister fairy-tale quality to them. Although the atmosphere becomes warmer and more passionate at times, it does not lighten, and sometimes becomes quite macabre. It is as if we are experiencing a memory of a ballroom rather than a ball itself.

The finale is the work's most complex movement. The extensive use of the *Dies irae* (a regular source for Rachmaninov) and the curious inscription 'Alliluya', written in the score above the last motif in the work to be derived from Orthodox chant, suggest the most final of endings mingled with a sense of thanksgiving. The tolling of the midnight bell that prefaces the movement's vigorous main section reinforces the view that the work might, after all, be a parable on the three ages of man.

Notes by Anthony Cane (Brahms, © 2004), David Garrett (Mozart, © 2001), Andrew Howes (© 2022), Phillip Sametz (Rachmaninov, © 1999).

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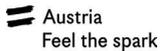
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