

28 & 29 April
Sydney Opera House

ARABELLA STEINBACHER PERFORMS LENTZ



Presenting Partner



«SYDNEY»
«SYMPHONY»
«ORCHESTRA»

Principal Partner



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 Fremaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdenek Macal, 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. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made 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.

Simone Young

Chief Conductor

Donald Runnicles

Principal Guest

Conductor

Vladimir Ashkenazy

Conductor Laureate

Andrew Haveron

Concertmaster

Chair supported by
Vicki Olsson

FIRST VIOLINS

Andrew Haveron

Concertmaster

Harry Bennetts

Associate

Concertmaster

Lerida Delbridge

Assistant

Concertmaster

Fiona Ziegler

Assistant

Concertmaster

Sun Yi

Associate Concertmaster

Emeritus

Brielle Clapson

Sophie Cole

Claire Herrick

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Anna Skálová

Léone Ziegler

Sercan Danis*

Benjamin Tjoa*

Andrew Osborne*

Jennifer Booth

Georges Lentz

SECOND VIOLINS

Kirsty Hilton

Principal

Marina Marsden

Principal

Emma Jezek

Assistant Principal

Alice Bartsch

Victoria Bihun

Rebecca Gill

Emma Hayes

Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Wendy Kong

Nicole Masters

Maja Verunica

Dominic Azzi†

Marcus Michelsen*

Riikka Sintonen*

Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba*

Marianne Edwards

Associate Principal

Benjamin Li

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider

Principal

Justin Williams

Acting Associate Principal

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Graham Hennings

Stuart Johnson

Felicity Tsai

Amanda Verner

Leonid Volovelsky

Stephen Wright*

Andrew Jezek*

Anne-Louise

Comerford

Associate Principal

Justine Marsden

CELLOS

Catherine Hewgill

Principal

Justin Park*

Guest Associate Principal

Leah Lynn

Acting Associate Principal

Kristy Conrau

Fenella Gill

Timothy Nankervis

Christopher Pidcock

Miles Mullin-Chivers*

Eliza Sdraulig*

Ariel Volovelsky†

Elizabeth Neville

Adrian Wallis

DOUBLE BASSES

Kees Boersma

Principal

Alex Henery

Principal

Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Richard Lynn

Jaan Pallandi

Benjamin Ward

David Campbell

FLUTES

Joshua Batty

Principal

Emma Sholl

Associate Principal

Carolyn Harris

Katie Zagorski*

OBOES

Diana Doherty

Principal

Callum Hogan

Alexandre Oguey

Principal Cor Anglais

Shafali Pryor

Associate Principal

CLARINETS

Francesco Celata

Acting Principal

Alexander Morris

Acting Associate Principal

Christopher Tingay

Alexei Dupressoir*

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie

Principal Emeritus

Fiona McNamara

James Dodd*

Noriko Shimada

Principal Contrabassoon

Todd Gibson-Cornish

Principal

HORNS

Nicolas Fleury*

Guest Principal

Euan Harvey

Acting Principal

Marnie Sebire

Rachel Silver

Jenny McLeod-Sneyd*

Emily Newham*

Geoffrey O'Reilly

Principal 3rd

TRUMPETS

David Elton

Principal

Brent Grapes

Associate Principal

Cécile Glémot

Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Ronald Prussing

Principal

Nick Byrne

Christopher Harris

Principal Bass Trombone

Scott Kinmont

Associate Principal

TUBA

Edwin Diefes*

Guest Principal

Karina Filipi*

Steve Rossé

Principal

TIMPANI

Mark Robinson

Acting Principal

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos

Principal

Timothy Constable

Ian Cleworth*

HARP

Natalie Wong*

Principal

Lucy Reeves*

KEYBOARDS /

EXTRAS

David Drury*

Guest Principal Organ

Catherine Davis*

Guest Principal Piano

Joanna Tondys*

Guest Principal

Harpsichord

Zane Banks*

Guest Principal

Electric Guitar

Bold = Principal

Italics = Associate

Principal

***** = Guest Musician

= Contract Musician

† = Sydney Symphony

Fellow

Grey = Permanent

Member of the Sydney

Symphony Orchestra

not appearing in this

concert

ROYAL CARIBBEAN CLASSICS UNDER THE SAILS

Friday 28 April 7pm
Saturday 29 April 7pm
Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

ARABELLA STEINBACHER PERFORMS LENTZ

LUMINOUS & TRANSCENDENT

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor
ARABELLA STEINBACHER violin

HEINRICH IGNAZ FRANZ VON BIBER (1644–1704)

Battalia (Sonata di marche)

- i. Sonata
- ii. *Songful carousing in all sorts of humours*
- iii. Presto
- iv. *Mars*
- v. Presto
- vi. Aria
- vii. *The Battle*
- viii. *Lament of the Wounded Musketeer*

GEORGES LENTZ (born 1965)

"...to beam in distant heavens..." — Violin Concerto
from *Mysterium* ("Caeli enarrant..." VII)

World Premiere

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Op.30

- i. *Sunrise*
- ii. *Of the Backworldsmen*
- iii. *Of the Great Longing*
- iv. *Of Joys and Passions*
- v. *The Song of the Grave*
- vi. *Of Science and Learning*
- vii. *The Convalescent*
- viii. *The Dance Song*
- ix. *Song of the Night Wanderer*

Georges Lentz's ...to beam in distant heavens... was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Etablissement public Salle de Concerts Grande-Duchesse Josephine-Charlotte / Philharmonie Luxembourg & Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg with generous support from Liz and Ken Nielsen.

Pre-concert talk by Andrew
Howes in the Northern
Foyer at 6.15pm.

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

6 minutes, 35 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
33 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 8.45pm

COVER IMAGE

Arabella Steinbacher
Photo by Peter Rigaud

Italian Harpsichord
after Grimaldi by Carey
Beebe, Sydney 1990
supplied & prepared by
Carey Beebe Harpsichords

PRESENTING PARTNER



PRINCIPAL PARTNER



CONCERT DIARY

MAY 2023



**STEPHEN HOUGH PERFORMS
RACHMANINOV 2**
GLORIOUSLY EXPANSIVE

RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No.2
RESPIGHI
Roman Festivals*
Fountains of Rome*
Pines of Rome

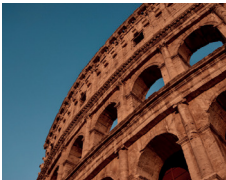
**Great Classics performance only*

JOHN WILSON conductor
STEPHEN HOUGH piano

Symphony Hour
Great Classics

**Thursday 11 May, 7pm
Sat 13 May, 2pm**

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



RESPIGHI'S ROMAN TRILOGY
GLORIOUS LANDSCAPES

RESPIGHI
Roman Festivals
Fountains of Rome
Pines of Rome

JOHN WILSON conductor

Tea & Symphony

Friday 12 May, 11am

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



STEPHEN HOUGH IN RECITAL
GREAT ROMANTICS

MOMPOU Cants màgics
CHOPIN Ballade No.3
CHOPIN Two Nocturnes
DEBUSSY Estampes
STEPHEN HOUGH Partita
LISZT
Années de Pèlerinage:
Three Petrarch Sonnets
Dante Sonata

STEPHEN HOUGH piano

International Pianists in Recital

Monday 15 May, 7pm

City Recital Hall



**STEPHEN HOUGH PERFORMS
RACHMANINOV 1**
PASSIONATE & DRAMATIC

GORDON HAMILTON
a great Big Blue Thing
50 Fanfares Commission
RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No.1
KORNGOLD Symphony in F-sharp

JOHN WILSON conductor
STEPHEN HOUGH piano

Emirates Masters Series
Emirates Thursday Afternoon Symphony

**Wednesday 17 May, 8pm
Thursday 18 May, 1.30pm
Friday 19 May, 8pm
Saturday 20 May, 8pm**

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

JUNE 2023



MOZART'S GREAT MASS IN C MINOR
VISIONARY & DRAMATIC

MOZART
Don Giovanni: Overture
Symphony No.36, Linz
Mass in C minor, The Great

MASAAKI SUZUKI conductor
SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

Emirates Masters Series
Thursday Afternoon Symphony

**Wednesday 7 June, 8pm
Thursday 8 June, 1.30pm
Friday 9 June, 8pm
Saturday 10 June, 8pm**

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

WELCOME

Welcome to Arabella Steinbacher Performs Lentz, the third concert in the *Classics Under the Sails Series*.

As the first Presenting Partner of the inaugural *Classics Under the Sails Series*, we are both proud and delighted to be bringing audiences the opportunity to hear classical music's greatest works performed by the world's leading artists.

In this performance, the extraordinary violinist Arabella Steinbacher performs the world premiere of Sydney Symphony musician and composer Georges Lentz's violin concerto "...to beam in distant heavens..."

In addition to this virtuosic work, the program abounds in vast ideas and music both stunning and powerful, including *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss, made famous by the opening scenes of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Heinrich von Biber was considered one of the greatest violin virtuosos of his time, and his *Battalia in D* is both compelling and captivating.

Both the Orchestra and Royal Caribbean create boundless opportunities to be immersed in expansive vistas, experiencing new destinations via the power of the imagination or the beauty of ocean travel.

When in port, our stunning ship are a feature of the spectacular backdrop of Sydney Harbour, a backdrop shared by the equally iconic Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

We are immensely proud of our inaugural partnership with the Sydney Symphony, and with an unwavering focus on creating extraordinary experiences, both Royal Caribbean and the Orchestra share a deep and longstanding commitment to excellence.

We hope you enjoy these performances of Arabella Steinbacher Performs Lentz, just one of five extraordinary concerts in the 2023 *Classics Under the Sails series*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gavin Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'G' and 'S'.

Gavin Smith

Vice President & Managing Director
Royal Caribbean Australia & New Zealand

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor

After a career spanning more than 20 years as a gifted cello soloist and orchestral musician, Umberto Clerici has gained a reputation as an artist of diverse and multifaceted talents.

It was in Sydney in 2018 that Umberto made his conducting debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House. A host of acclaimed conducting engagements followed culminating in his recent appointment as the Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. Simultaneously, Umberto continues to be in high demand with all the major symphony orchestras of Australia and New Zealand.

In addition to his first season as Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Umberto's 2023 conducting engagements include returns to the podiums of the Sydney, Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. Having conducted each of the New Zealand and Dunedin Symphony Orchestras in 2022, Umberto will debut this year conducting the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. In addition, Umberto looks forward to his first collaboration with Opera Queensland for Verdi's *Macbeth*.

Umberto began his career as a virtuoso cellist making his solo debut at the age of 17 performing Haydn's D Major Cello Concerto in Japan. After years of performing on the stages of the world's most prestigious concert halls, Umberto took up the position as Principal Cellist of the Royal Opera House in Turin, which he held for four years. In 2014, he was then appointed as the Principal Cello of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, a position he held until 2021.

As a cellist, Umberto is beloved by Australian audiences. Umberto has performed internationally as a soloist at New York's Carnegie Hall, Vienna's Musikverein, the great Shostakovich Hall of St Petersburg, Auditorium Parco della Musica in Rome, the Salzburg Festival and is one of only two Italians to have ever won a prize for cello in the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition.



Umberto Clerici
Photo by Jay Patel

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ARABELLA STEINBACHER violin

Celebrated worldwide as one of today's leading soloists, Arabella Steinbacher is known for her extraordinarily varied repertoire, comprising pieces from the Classical and Romantic eras, alongside modernist concerto works of Bartók, Berg, Britten, Glazunov, Gubaidulina, Hartmann, Hindemith, Khachaturian, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Schnittke, Shostakovich and Szymanowski.

Arabella Steinbacher opens the 2022/23 season with a concert at the Klosters Festival in Switzerland, where she appears with Mozarteumorchester Salzburg and Patrick Hahn, followed by a tour to Spain with Camerata Salzburg. This season, she has also been invited to return to the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and will perform concerts with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Belgique, Münchner Symphoniker, Württembergisches Kammerorchester as well as Orchestra del Teatro Petruzzelli di Bari and Ulster Orchestra Belfast.

Further afield, she returns to the stages of the Seattle Symphony, NHK Symphony Orchestra and Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra. Another highlight of this season will be the return to Sydney Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Umberto Clerici, for the world premiere of Georges Lentz's violin concerto, which he has written for Arabella.

Her extensive discography impressively demonstrates her diverse repertoire. Her most recent recording for Pentatone, whom she records for exclusively, juxtaposes works by Johann Sebastian Bach and Arvo Pärt with the Stuttgarter Kammerorchester. She has also recently concluded her highly-praised Mozart recording cycle with Festival Strings Lucerne. Just as successful was her previous recording featuring the Four Seasons of both Astor Piazzolla and Antonio Vivaldi, which was recorded with the violinist play/directing the Münchener Kammerorchester. The disc was released in summer 2020 and received rapturous reviews, *The Guardian's* 5-star review ending simply with "what a player".

Born into a family of musicians, she has played the violin since the age of three and studied with Ana Chumachenko at the University of Music and Theatre, Munich since the age of eight. A source of musical inspiration and guidance of hers is Israeli violinist Ivry Gitlis.

Arabella currently plays the violins of Antonio Stradivari, Cremona 1718, known as the 'ex Benno Walter', and the Guarneri del Gesù 'Sainton', Cremona 1744, both generously provided by a private Swiss Foundation.



Arabella Steinbacher
Photo by Sammy Hart

ABOUT THE MUSIC

HEINRICH IGNAZ FRANZ VON BIBER (1644–1704)

***Battalia* (Sonata di marche)**

The Bohemian-born Biber was a brilliant violinist, and though few records of his tours survive, we know that he impressed the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, at whose court Biber was based, and the Emperor Leopold I sufficiently to be ennobled in 1690.

The *Battalia* (or battle piece) was a favourite kind of program music at the time, and Biber's, which dates from 1673, shows that he was an imaginative experimenter with instrumental sounds, simulating snare drums and firearms. The score has a superscript along the lines of 'The songful carousing of musketeers, Mars [the God of War], the battle and lament of the wounded, with songs imitated, and dedicated to Bacchus [the God of Wine].

It is in eight short movements: an opening martial Sonata (marked presto), followed by the songful carousing ('in all sorts of humours') with simultaneous sounding of eight different folk tunes in various keys. Another Presto introduces Mars, depicted in a bravura solo violin part. The third presto (this one in 3/4) leads to an Aria. Biber then unleashes the violence of the Battle and concludes with the sorrowing *Lament of the Wounded Musketeer*.



Heinrich Ignaz von Biber

ABOUT THE MUSIC

GEORGES LENTZ (born 1965) ***“...to beam in distant heavens...”*** **— Violin Concerto**

Georges Lentz needs little introduction to Sydney Symphony Orchestra patrons: one of Australia’s finest composers, he is also a long-serving member of the first violin section.

He writes of his new concerto:

When I was first approached by Arabella Steinbacher in 2018 about writing a new violin concerto for her, my immediate thought was of all the great masterpieces in the repertoire, and I felt there was no way I could add anything to all that incredible music. A few weeks went by and, still feeling honoured about having been asked by such an amazing high-profile soloist, I started internalising her phenomenally beautiful sound and the incredible grace of her playing, and I thought, ‘Arabella plays like an angel’. This image led me to other stereotypical angel associations — quicksilver nimbleness, weightlessness, and above all light. I started making a few initial sketches with those thoughts in mind.

It didn’t take long after that for the ideas to come rushing in, but alas also for the angelic light in my imagination to be tainted by a much darker light. Switching on the nightly world news took care of that — not much light, not many angels to be seen out there, in the real world. Or perhaps only Lucifer (literally the ‘bringer of light’), that rebel fallen angel, that Satan wanting to be God. My thoughts strayed to the image of the devil as fiddler. I was haunted by this dual nature of angels, capable of both goodness and evil, of reason and of madness — just like us humans, really.

Many strange thoughts go through my head when I compose, and they don’t always make sense or add up. I will therefore simply give a few disparate hints at what made me decide in the end to attempt a violin concerto after all.



Georges Lentz

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The memory of sitting alone with my own violin in the middle of the Outback at night, improvising and trying some ideas for a number of my works over the years, was top of my mind throughout the writing of the new work. The focus on that one lonely violin under the vast starry sky became important to me, as did the idea of writing a piece not just for but ‘about’ the violin, the spatialisation and dialogue with other violins, the play with the instrument’s open strings (an obvious nod to Alban Berg’s great violin concerto ‘To the memory of an Angel’), even the embrace of fake (and sometimes not so in-tune!) electronic keyboard violin sounds dialoguing with Arabella’s precious Stradivarius — these all seemed to open up new possibilities, as did the inclusion of another, not so angelic string instrument — the electric guitar. I found these sound worlds resonating with my reading of *Jerusalem*, that last, vast poem by the great English poet and artist William Blake (1757–1827), with its wild, mystical, visionary, psychedelic worlds of angels and monsters in an apocalyptic end-time setting. The words ‘... to beam in distant heavens...’ from that epic poem seemed to capture the spiritual yearning and journey I was trying to express.

The idea of existential fragility and solitude is never far from my mind when I compose. Sitting with my violin in the Outback (itself an ecologically fragile environment), I remember feeling an overwhelming sadness for the seemingly unstoppable destruction of the precious planet that sustains us — through war (yet again!), greed and our mindless laziness. One night out there, I found myself imagining our grandchildren in a hundred years’ time looking back wistfully at our world today, and I imagined them saying, ‘they actually still had a beautiful, liveable planet back then’. The musical result was one particularly melancholy section which I called

ABOUT THE MUSIC

‘An Elegy for our Grandchildren’s Planet’. And I started glimpsing another, much darker meaning in the work’s title — the ‘distant heavens’ Blake talks about might not in fact be all that far away. From the viewpoint of those grandchildren in the year 2100, they might be our world right now, yet a world utterly distant and unattainable to them if we keep going the way we are.

On a purely musical level, for the first time ever I wanted to write a ‘real concerto’, a piece for a soloist of Arabella Steinbacher’s calibre to shine, a work with both great lyricism and breakneck virtuosity. For the first time, I also wanted to write a real concerto ending. And the last pages of the score may well be heard as just that — a good old throw-away finale. To me personally, however, the ending is much more equivocal. Strings of short repeated notes suggest machine-like digital code, a breakdown of any humanity the work may have contained. Is this the devil fiddler throwing away all pretence at angelic grace and egging us humans on into one final frantic race to the abyss? Or is it on the contrary our own desperate scrambling in the opposite direction, in an attempt to escape certain existential doom? In this context, is the final blow ‘the end of it all’, or a brand-new beginning? These and other salient features of the work I do not wish to explain all too specifically — I prefer to let listeners make up their own minds as to what they might mean.

Georges Lentz’s ...to beam in distant heavens... was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Etablissement public Salle de Concerts Grande-Duchesse Josephine-Charlotte / Philharmonie Luxembourg & Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg with generous support from Liz and Ken Nielsen.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

***Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Op.30**

In 1891-2 the usually robust Strauss suffered a period of serious illness, including bouts of pneumonia, bronchitis and pleurisy. In the summer of 1892 he took leave of his duties at the Weimar Opera and travelled extensively through Italy, Greece and Egypt, soaking up the sun, but more importantly enjoying the awesome physical remains of the ancient pagan civilisations in those countries. It was at this time that he began to think about a musical response to some of the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, particularly those expressed in his poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus spake Zoroaster), though the work's composition had to wait until 1896.

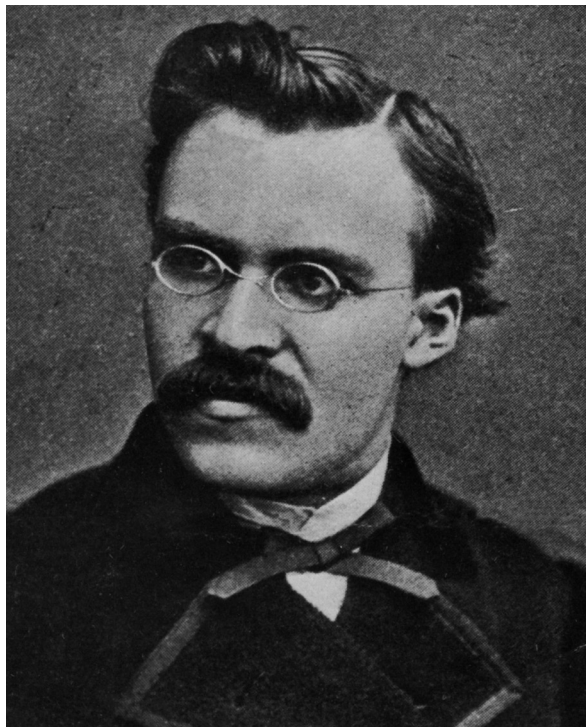
Zoroaster (as he was known to the ancient Greeks) was a Persian prophet living in the sixth century BC who taught that the universe, and humankind in particular, are subject to the eternal struggle of two gods, represented by light and darkness; his religion survives among the Parsees of modern India. Nietzsche's relationship to Zoroastrian ideas is fairly loose, and as British conductor and biographer Norman Del Mar puts it, he used these 'as a prop on which to clothe his own ideas on the purpose and destiny of mankind'.

The most famous — indeed, notorious — of these is the idea of the *Übermensch* or Superman. 'Man', in Nietzsche's words, 'is a thing to surmounted...what is the ape to man? A jest or a thing of shame. So shall man be to the Superman'. While Nietzsche (and, it must be admitted, the younger Strauss) were disdainful of Christianity's compassion for weakness, it is drawing a long bow to make Nietzsche responsible for the atrocities of Nazism. Indeed, Nietzsche scholar Joachim Köhler argues that *Also sprach Zarathustra*, with its celebration of the individual will, partly grew out of the philosopher-poet's freeing himself from the dominating personality of the composer Richard Wagner. And on cue, Wagner's widow Cosima, writing to her son-in-law Houston Stewart Chamberlain (whose racist ideas definitely did influence Hitler), condemned Nietzsche's book for its 'Jewishness'.



Richard Strauss

ABOUT THE MUSIC



Nietzsche, author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Strauss' work is, as he said, 'freely after Fr. Nietzsche' which afforded him 'much aesthetic enjoyment' rather than any profound philosophical conversion. Strauss takes some of the chapter headings of the poem as the defining images for each section of his tone-poem. It begins with the famous invocation to the sun with low rumbling accompanying the trumpets simple C-G-C theme (which in much of Strauss represents primeval nature) the increasing blaze of full chords establishes C major as one pole of the work (and as Del Mar notes, the sounds of the organ at the end of the section adds a liturgical note). *Of the Backworldsmen* depicts humanity in its primitive, or rather naïve state (in B minor, significantly — B being the other tonal pole of the piece). Strauss includes those who profess Christianity in this category, quoting a fragment of the plainchant for the Credo to underline his point, but the movement still reaches a gorgeous climax for multi divided strings.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Of the Great Longing which follows is a depiction of humanity's search for something beyond mere superstition, but Strauss' music dramatises the conflict between nature (the trumpet theme) and humanity's tendency to create dogma with more hints of plainchant and the unresolved conflict between the keys of C and B. A new chromatic motif leads into the *Of Joys and Passions* section with a theme that Strauss described as 'A flat (brass: dark blue)'. Actually the section tends to be in C minor, linking it to the idea of nature, whereas the following *The Song of the Grave* is in B minor, and therefore linked to the idea of man.

Of science is based on a deeply-voiced fugue that Strauss described a 'spine-chilling' and Del Mar regards it as having a 'strangely mysterious quality' despite its dour timbre. In *The Convalescent*, part of which Mahler sets in his Third Symphony, Nietzsche describes a Zoroaster's spiritual and physical collapse, after which he emerges as the Superman. The *Dance Song* of the Superman is, like the 'Dance of Seven Veils' in *Salome*, a Viennese waltz — a Straussian joke, perhaps. Here poet and composer part company: Strauss' Zoroaster displays none of the triumphalism that Nietzsche's does, and the work closes with a mysterious and tranquil *Song of the Night Wanderer* in which the keys of nature and man still quietly contend.

After the final rehearsal for the premiere, Strauss, with characteristic modesty wrote to his wife: '*Zarathustra* is glorious...of all my pieces, the most perfect in form, the richest in content and the most individual in character... I'm a fine fellow after all, and feel just a little pleased with myself'.

Notes by Gordon Kerry and Georges Lentz
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A STORY OF CREATION: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A WORLD PREMIERE

Violinist Arabella Steinbacher and composer Georges Lentz discuss inspiration, pushing the boundaries of the violin, and how music can speak to a universal human condition.

By Hugh Robertson

There is an idealised notion of the act of creation that it all happens in a flash, like the Big Bang: inspiration strikes, an idea is formed, and after a mad frenzy of composition a work of art is revealed to the world, fully formed and immutable. Of course that romantic image is often far from the reality, which involves hard work, revisions, and much wailing and gnashing of teeth.

For composer Georges Lentz, the act of writing music is a slow and deliberate process. Lentz is well-known to Sydneysiders as a long-serving member of the Sydney Symphony's violin section, but he is also one of Australia's leading composers — awarded the prestigious Paul Lowin Prize for orchestral composition in 1997 and the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) award for best composition by an Australian composer in 2009, among many other accolades.

Despite these successes, Lentz remains far from a prolific composer. He rarely publishes new compositions or accepts commissions, and prefers to work on each of his pieces over a number of years, often working on several at the same time. So when he was approached by star German violinist Arabella Steinbacher to write a violin concerto for her, he immediately felt the weight of that task.

"The genesis of this piece was somewhat surprising and almost traumatic for me," recalls Lentz. "I felt very honoured to be asked by Arabella to write a violin concerto for her, but I really believe that unless you have something ever so slight to add to the amazing music that's out there in the repertoire, then why bother?"

Thankfully for music lovers, Steinbacher wasn't going to take no for an answer. She had heard *Monh*, Lentz's concerto for solo viola, orchestra and electronics which he wrote for German violist

A STORY OF CREATION: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A WORLD PREMIERE

Tabea Zimmermann, and so when Steinbacher came to perform in Sydney in 2018, she seized her opportunity to approach Lentz in person.

“I was very fascinated by this spiritual side of his work,” says Steinbacher. “And I had never had a violin concerto written for me, but I thought maybe it was a possibility [with Georges].”

Five years after that first approach, the Sydney Symphony is poised to give the world premiere of “...to beam in distant heavens...” — and Steinbacher has ended up with exactly what she was hoping for: a concerto that is her very own.

“I have the feeling this concerto is really written for me,” she says with a smile. “When I play it, it brings out everything that I have in myself.”

That is no coincidence, says Lentz, as not only did he write this work *for* Arabella, but to a certain extent it is directly inspired *by* her, too.

“The first idea [for the music] came after a few weeks of visualizing Arabella’s playing,” Lentz reveals. “I thought that Arabella has got something angelic in her playing, and I started thinking of angels. Spiritual ideas have always been very important to me, and so that came in there. Darker ideas came in later, but that’s where it started from.”

“I hope that in the final product there is some real angelic music, that there is real beauty, and reaching for something higher than the everyday,” continues Lentz. “That is what music can do that nothing else can do. Music can take us somewhere where words fail.”

Throughout his compositional body of work, Lentz returns again and again to the vastness of space, and the isolation of individuals; since 1989 he has been working on an ongoing cycle of works titled “Caeli enarrant...”, a line from Psalm XIX that translates to ‘the Heavens are telling...’ But Lentz is very clear that his music is not intended to be religious — he has been greatly inspired over the years by the Australian Outback landscape, astronomy, First Nations Australian art, and by the work of English poet and artist

A STORY OF CREATION: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A WORLD PREMIERE

William Blake (1757–1827) — rather, he is grappling with the same fundamental, universal human questions and struggles that we all have.

“It’s sort of an existential loneliness,” says Lentz.

“We are really fragile — we come from nothing, and we go to nothing. But for music to have integrity, it has to be understandable, you know? Of course it has to be something that speaks to people.”

“I love the Outback, and I have been out there so many times under the stars, with my own violin,” he continues. “I feel the fragility. I feel the beauty, I feel the cosmic grandness of it all. And only by feeling those individual emotions, and knowing that all of us have, deep down, the same fears, the same hopes, the same joys — only by being really personal can you then be universal and speak to other people through your music.”

Steinbacher is confident that the beauty of the concerto will shine through, especially because she herself feels it when she plays the piece. But she also points out that by knowing what Lentz is trying to say, she can draw that out in her performance — a much easier task than when performing pieces written 200 years ago.

“Working with Georges has helped me bring out these themes,” she says. “Knowing the inspiration behind the music helps me bring it out in the sound, as well — it is much easier to find the right sound to express Georges’ imagination, and the meaning behind his ideas.”

“He mentioned loneliness before — there are many moments where there’s complete quietness and loneliness,” Steinbacher continues. “Especially these lyrical moments, they are what music is all about. It’s not about technical effects and virtuosity — of course it’s a part of it — but in the end, it’s always about trying to reach the people. If you reach their heart, then this is what music is about.”

“When all is said and done,” Lentz concludes, “music has to be beautiful and communicate and speak to people. And that’s what I hope that this will do. And I have no doubt that’s in Arabella’s wonderful hands, it will.”

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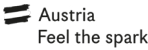
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