

30 June & 1 July
Sydney Opera House

BRITTEN & PROKOFIEV



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SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Principal Partner



CONCERT DIARY

JULY 2023



**SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS
TCHAIKOVSKY'S BALLET MUSIC**

AN ENCHANTED EVENING

TCHAIKOVSKY

Selections from The Nutcracker,
Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake

SIMONE YOUNG conductor

Royal Caribbean Classics Under the Sails
Sunday Afternoon Symphony

**Friday 7 July, 7pm
Saturday 8 July, 7pm
Sunday 9 July, 2pm**

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



**RAY CHEN PERFORMS TCHAIKOVSKY
BEAUTY & ROMANCE**

ALICE CHANCE

Through Changing Landscape
50 Fanfares Commission

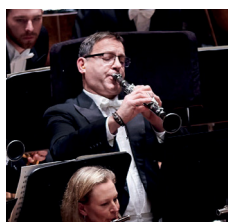
TCHAIKOVSKY Violin Concerto
NIELSEN Symphony No.5

DAVID ROBERTSON conductor
RAY CHEN violin

Emirates Masters Series Emirates
Thursday Afternoon Symphony

**Wednesday 12 July, 8pm
Thursday 13 July, 1.30pm
Friday 14 July, 8pm
Saturday 15 July, 8pm**

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



**BEETHOVEN & MOZART
HEARTWARMING CLASSICS**

BEETHOVEN

Sextet for Clarinets, Bassoons and Horns

SEIBER Serenade

MOZART Serenade No.11

**SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MUSICIANS**

Cocktail Hour

**Friday 21 July, 6pm
Saturday 22 July, 6pm**

Utzon Room,
Sydney Opera House



**PLAY WITH RAY
BACH'S DOUBLE VIOLIN CONCERTO**

BARBER Adagio for Strings
JS BACH

Concerto in D minor for Two Violins

PIAZZOLLA arr. DESYATNIKOV
The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires

MACPHERSON arr. KONCZ
Waltzing Matilda

SATIE arr. KONCZ Satisfaction

TIANYI LU conductor
RAY CHEN violin

Credit Suisse Special Event

Tuesday 25 July, 7pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



**JAVIER PERIANES IN RECITAL
SCENES FROM SPAIN**

FALLA Homenaje from le Tombeau de
Claude Debussy
Serenata Andaluza

DEBUSSY

Préludes: Book II: La Puerta del Vino

Préludes: Book I: La sérénade interrompue

ALBÉNIZ Iberia: El Albaicín

FALLA Fantasia Bética

GRANADOS Goyescas

JAVIER PERIANES piano

International Pianists in Recital

Monday 31 July, 7pm

City Recital Hall

COCKTAIL HOUR
Friday 30 June, 6pm
Saturday 1 July, 6pm

Utzon Room,
Sydney Opera House

BRITTEN & PROKOFIEV

RHYTHMIC MOVEMENTS

GENEVIEVE LANG presenter

HARRY BENNETTS violin
MARINA MARSDEN violin
AIDAN FILSHIE viola
STUART JOHNSON viola
JUSTINE MARSDEN viola
ADRIAN WALLIS cello
DAVID CAMPBELL double bass
ALEXANDER MORRIS clarinet
CALLUM HOGAN oboe
SHEFALI PRYOR oboe

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913–1976)
Phantasy for oboe and string trio, Op.2 (1932)

FRANK BRIDGE (1879–1941)
Lament for two violas (1912)

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)
Quintet in G minor for oboe, clarinet, violin, viola,
and bass, Op.39 (1924)
i. *Theme and Variations: Moderato*
ii. *Andante energico*
iii. *Allegro sostenuto, ma con brio*
iv. *Adagio pesante*
v. *Allegro precipitato, ma non troppo presto*
vi. *Andantino*

ESTIMATED DURATION

Britten – 13 minutes
Bridge – 9 minutes
Prokofiev – 22 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately 50 minutes

COVER IMAGE

David Wickham
and Adrian Wallis
Photo by Pierre Toussaint

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



ABOUT THE MUSIC

In 1924 the young Benjamin Britten heard Frank Bridge conduct his orchestral suite *The Sea* and was, famously, 'knocked sideways' by it. In 1927 he began taking lessons from Bridge, who knew within minutes of meeting the 14-year old that Britten's was a special talent; Britten was eternally grateful for Bridge's 'scrupulous attention to good technique, the business of saying clearly what was in one's mind'. Bridge was treated with some suspicion by Britten's straight-laced family. As his sister remembered, he resembled 'the popular idea of the artist in those days. He had long hair, was very excitable, and talked a lot. Our father was very conservative and could not stand anyone who talked as much, thinking it showed an empty mind'.

In 1905 Walter Wilson Cobbett had offered 50 guineas to the Worshipful Company of Musicians to establish a prize for British composers, who were encouraged to submit a work for chamber ensemble. The works had to be in a single movement, but made up of sections in contrasting speed and metre, and to last no longer than twelve minutes. Each work was to be designated 'Phantasy', an archaic spelling of 'fantasy' that evoked the sort of works for 'chests', or consorts, of viols in Tudor and Jacobean times. The inaugural prize was won by William Hurlstone, with Haydn Wood as runner up and a special prize being created for Frank Bridge.

Bridge's protégé Benjamin Britten submitted a Phantasy for string quintet in 1932, which did not win, but Britten, merely for his own diversion and not to enter in a competition, followed it up with the Phantasy for oboe and string trio in 1932. The piece was premiered the following year in a BBC broadcast with oboist Leon Goossens (brother of the Sydney Symphony's first Chief Conductor, Eugene) to whom the piece is dedicated, and members of the International String Quartet.



Benjamin Britten

ABOUT THE MUSIC

It was, according to one review, 'original... arresting...natural and unforced', and it shows the young composer wearing his considerable learning and even more considerable technique very lightly indeed. In keeping with the Cobbett ideal, Britten's Op.2 falls into clearly defined sections, but these in turn correspond to the components of a sonata-design work. The wry march music with which the piece opens, where the strings are treated almost percussively to support the oboe line, is recapitulated at the work's close. Internal episodes, in which the thematic material is developed, consist of contrastingly frenetic and spaciouly lyrical sections.

Bridge was the quietly radical kind of artist that Britain often produces. He had a fiercely independent mind and was more interested in finding a unique internationalist voice than in being part of the revival of English folk-song and older liturgical music that contemporaries like Vaughan Williams and Holst were pursuing. As a result, he was largely ignored by the establishment and, as Anthony Payne has put it, 'the isolation of English musical life from far-reaching developments abroad was an obstacle to the recognition of Bridge's later works. After his death his music fell into almost complete neglect, though interest was subsequently revived'.

Bridge's prodigious compositional technique, which he imparted to Britten, owes much to his early study of violin and his subsequent move to viola – an instrument which many of the greatest composers played. He was a member of several quartets at various times, filling in for the legendary Joachim Quartet's violist at short notice and, as a founding member of the English String Quartet, giving the first British performance of Debussy's String Quartet in 1904. In 1913 he performed in Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* with the composer directing. Not only, then, was he much more receptive to contemporary European developments than many of his contemporaries, his experience as a



Frank Bridge

ABOUT THE MUSIC

performing musician gave him an extremely refined craft. Not surprisingly he was also a fine conductor – in some ways too good, as he was often called upon to fill in at the last minute.

But as Jack Westrup put it, in chamber music Bridge was 'at home. An expert player himself, he knew the medium from the inside, and everything he wrote for it bears the impress of this intimacy[...]The basis of his invention was emotion – an emotion that found its natural expression within a framework of discipline.'

Sadly the final score of his *Lament*, one of two pieces that Bridge played with fellow-violist Lionel Tertis at London's Wigmore Hall in 1912, is lost, but was reconstructed in 1980 by Paul Hindmarsh from a number of sources including a more or less final draft. We can be sure that it represents Bridge's intentions, showing his mastery of the instrument and his technical brilliance. It begins with a long solo for second viola, which is then elaborated by the first player, subsequently contrasting with passages in full harmony, and occasionally evoking the sound of a chest of viols.



(L-R) Frank Bridge, Benjamin Britten and Ethel Bridge, date unknown
© National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG x15184)

ABOUT THE MUSIC

In the 1930s Britten heard and liked music by Russian contemporaries such as Shostakovich, whose music remained a life-long love, and Prokofiev, whose musical wit and brilliance Britten admired. And as Britten scholar Donald Mitchell has noted, it was the Russians who represented a 'spearhead of the resistance against fascism'.

Prokofiev had left the Soviet Union not long after the Revolution, and while friends warned him that it would be held against him, it is clear that his plans to travel and work abroad had been made well before 1917. After a number of years in the USA, Prokofiev thought that Paris would offer him a secure professional niche and he settled there in 1923. He had discovered that Rachmaninov firmly held the position of 'Russian composer in exile' in the mind of the US public; sadly, in Paris the rage, as one critic noted, was for 'Stravinsky, Stravinsky, and Stravinsky! No wonder Prokofiev's star is setting on that horizon.'

As he settled in Paris Prokofiev was hard at work on his Second Symphony, despite the lukewarm reception accorded his first Violin Concerto, and the slightly more enthusiastic reception of his second Piano Concerto. In 1924, however, he was approached by one Boris Georgevich Romanov, a provocative Russian dancer and ballet master whom Prokofiev had known in pre-revolutionary times, and who had emigrated to Berlin in 1920 where he established the Russian Theatre.

No doubt hoping to cash in on the Parisian success of Diaghilev's Ballets russes, Romanov commissioned Prokofiev to write a short ballet scored for the easily toured combination of oboe, clarinet, violin, viola, and bass. Called *Trapeze*, it was set in a circus, and thus has some resonances with recent and contemporary works such as Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, Schoenberg's *Pierre lunaire* and Erik Satie's *Parade*.



Sergei Prokofiev

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Compared to opera, scholar Thomas Schipperges writes, Prokofiev 'thought ballet music was not serious enough, but easy and devoid of substance'. But the composer set to work, producing the score quickly and enjoying it. Working was 'a sheer delight, since I had already thought everything through. I experience the same pleasure as a child putting colour to his drawing.' The small ensemble offered an irresistible palette from which to draw the kinds of textures and colours expected from the ultra-modernist that some sections of Parisian society thought Prokofiev was. In any event, the ballet was not a success. Some found the musical style merely abrasive; the more recent critic Orrin Howard, for instance, wrote: 'Let's be honest, there's nothing lovable about this music. It's determinedly abrasive, intimidating, and unapologetic in its dissonance and unrelenting grimacing.' It is rhythmically very complex and challenging for the dancers, and as Schipperges writes, 'makes no attempt at concrete illustration of the events on stage.' And we know little of what actually happened on stage. The original scenario, reads:

1. Ballerina (Theme and variations)
2. Dance of the boors (with the ballerina, 5th variation).
It ends with the group (They hug)
3. The tumblers leap out (their intensity frightens the Chinamen). They hug the ballerina
4. Challenge to a duel (choreographic roll-call)
Fight with a fire-cracker. They spin. Explosions
5. They mourn the dead ballerina

ABOUT THE MUSIC

But this was subject to numerous changes (to Prokofiev's annoyance) during and after the score's composition. We do get a glimpse from one brief review, though:

The tightrope walker floats, the wild beast tamer blazes up wildly; the sailor is clumsy and yet very agile, the King of the air is supple. [...] The clowns are grotesque and vivacious. The scenery gives you the impression that you are sitting in front of an expressionist picture.

Prokofiev, never one to waste music, had long decided to make concert pieces out of the score, and arranged much of the material as the Quintet, Op.39, and two other movements in the orchestral Divertimento, Op.43. The in-your-face nature of this music came back to haunt Prokofiev when he returned to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Denounced as 'formalist', Prokofiev apologized for the work saying that it was the fault of 'the Parisian atmosphere, where complex patterns and dissonances were the accepted thing, and which fostered my predilection for complex thinking'.

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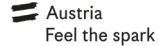
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