

11–12 August  
Sydney Opera House

# DIANA DOHERTY PERFORMS ROSS EDWARDS



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

### **Lerida Delbridge**

Assistant  
Concertmaster

### **Fiona Ziegler**

Assistant  
Concertmaster

Brielle Clapson

Sophie Cole

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Nicola Lewis

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Anna Skálová

Léone Ziegler

Alexandra Osborn<sup>o</sup>

Ben Tjoa<sup>\*</sup>

### **Harry Bennetts**

Associate  
Concertmaster

### **Sun Yi**

Associate  
Concertmaster  
Emeritus

Jennifer Booth

## **SECOND VIOLINS**

### **Kirsty Hilton**

Principal

### **Marina Marsden**

Principal

### **Emma Jezek**

Assistant Principal

Victoria Bihun

Rebecca Gill

Emma Hayes

Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Wendy Kong

Benjamin Li

Nicole Masters

Maja Verunica

Riika Sintonen<sup>o</sup>

Caroline Hopson<sup>o</sup>

Robert Smith<sup>\*</sup>

### **Marianne Edwards**

Associate Principal

Alice Bartsch

## **VIOLAS**

### **Tobias Breider**

Principal

### **Anne-Louise**

**Comerford**

Associate Principal

### **Justin Williams**

Assistant Principal

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Graham Hennings

Stuart Johnson

Justine Marsden

Felicity Tsai

Amanda Verner

Leonid Volovelsky

Stephen Wright<sup>o</sup>

## **CELLOS**

### **Catherine Hewgill**

Principal

Kristy Conrau

Timothy Nankervis

Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis

Miles Mullen-Chivers<sup>o</sup>

Eliza Sdraulig<sup>o</sup>

Paul Stender<sup>o</sup>

Minah Choe<sup>\*</sup>

Rachel Siu<sup>\*</sup>

### **Leah Lynn**

Assistant Principal

Fenella Gill

Elizabeth Neville

## **DOUBLE BASSES**

### **Kees Boersma**

Principal

### **Alex Henery**

Principal

David Campbell

Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Richard Lynn

Jaán Pallandi

Benjamin Ward

## **FLUTES**

### **Joshua Batty**

Principal

Carolyn Harris

**Katie Zagorski<sup>o</sup>**

Acting Principal Piccolo

### **Emma Shall**

Associate Principal

## **OBOES**

### **Diana Doherty**

Principal

### **Shefali Pryor**

Associate Principal

Callum Hogan

### **Alexandre Oguey**

Principal Cor Anglais

## **CLARINETS**

### **Francesco Celata**

Acting Principal

Christopher Tingay

### **Alexei Dupressoir<sup>o</sup>**

Acting Principal

Bass Clarinet

### **Alexander Morris**

Acting Associate

Principal

## **BASSOONS**

### **Todd Gibson-Cornish**

Principal

Fiona McNamara

### **Noriko Shimada**

Principal Contrabassoon

### **Matthew Wilkie**

Principal Emeritus

## **HORNS**

### **Euan Harvey**

Acting Principal

### **Lee Wadenpfuhr<sup>o</sup>**

Acting Principal 3rd Horn

Marnie Sebire

Rachel Silver

## **TRUMPETS**

### **David Elton**

Principal

Anthony Heinrichs

Sophie Spencer<sup>†</sup>

### **Brent Grapes**

Associate Principal

Cecile Glemont

## **TROMBONES**

### **Ronald Prussing**

Principal

Nick Byrne

### **Christopher Harris**

Principal Bass Trombone

### **Scott Kinmont**

Associate Principal

## **TUBA**

### **Steve Rossé**

Principal

## **TIMPANI**

### **Mark Robinson**

Acting Principal

## **PERCUSSION**

### **Rebecca Lagos**

Principal

Timothy Constable

Joshua Hill<sup>\*</sup>

Chiron Meller<sup>\*</sup>

Alison Pratt<sup>\*</sup>

## **HARP**

### **Natalie Wong<sup>o</sup>**

Acting Principal Harp

Genevieve Lang

## **KEYBOARD**

### **Susanne Powell<sup>\*</sup>**

Guest Principal

<sup>\*</sup> = Guest Musician

<sup>o</sup> = Contract Musician

<sup>†</sup> = Sydney Symphony

Fellow

**SPECIAL EVENT**  
Friday 11 August, 8pm  
Saturday 12 August, 8pm

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

# DIANA DOHERTY PERFORMS ROSS EDWARDS

**SIMONE YOUNG** conductor  
**DIANA DOHERTY** oboe

**PEGGY POLIAS (born 1981)**  
***Arachne* (2023)**

*Made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Peter M Howard*

**ROSS EDWARDS (born 1943)**

***Bird Spirit Dreaming – Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra in a single movement* (2002)**

*Commissioned for Diana Doherty and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra by Andrew and Renata Kaldor*

**EDWARDS**

***Bennelong Caprices* (2023)**

*Commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Christine Bishop*

INTERVAL

**RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)**  
**SYMPHONY NO.8 (1955)**

- i. Fantasia
- ii. Scherzo alla marcia
- iii. Cavatina
- iv. Toccata

These performances are supported by Andrew and Renata Kaldor in celebration of Ross Edwards's 80th birthday

**PRE-CONCERT TALK**

By Megan Steller in the Northern Foyer at 7:15pm.

**ESTIMATED DURATIONS**

Arachne – 12 minutes  
Concerto – 24 minutes  
Interval – 20 minutes  
Caprices – 7 minutes  
Symphony – 29 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 10pm.

**COVER IMAGE**

Diana Doherty  
Photo by Tim Skinner

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



# CONCERT DIARY

## AUGUST 2023



### **DVOŘÁK'S SYMPHONY NO.7** LUSH & ROMANTIC

Revel in the work that many consider Dvořák's greatest, and experience Stefan Dohr, Principal Horn of the mighty Berlin Philharmonic, performing Richard Strauss' stunning, virtuosic Horn Concerto No.2.

**KODÁLY** Dances of Galanta  
**R STRAUSS** Horn Concerto No.2  
**DVOŘÁK** Symphony No.7

**OLA RUDNER** conductor  
**STEFAN DOHR** horn

Royal Caribbean Classics Under the Sails  
Sunday Afternoon Symphony

**Friday 18 August, 7pm**  
**Saturday 19 August, 7pm**  
**Sunday 20 August, 2pm**

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House



### **JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER AND THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** WYNTON MARSALIS' EPIC ALL RISE

Experience this extraordinary tour de force which combines New Orleans jazz, gospel, spirituals, African chant, symphonic modernism, ragtime, blues, folk song and Latin dances with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

**BENJAMIN NORTHEY** conductor  
**JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA**  
**SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS**

Credit Suisse Special Event

**Thursday 31 August, 8pm**  
**Friday 1 September, 8pm**

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

## SEPTEMBER 2023



### **JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA** JAZZ CLASSICS FROM THE BEST

Experience the greatest jazz music ever written led by the incredible Wynton Marsalis, the music woven deep in the fabric of this incredible ensemble.

A selection of jazz classics

**JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA**

Credit Suisse Special Event

**Saturday 2 September, 8pm**  
**Sunday 3 September, 6.30pm**

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House



### **NICOLA BENEDETTI** **PERFORMS MARSALIS** WYNTON MARSALIS' VIOLIN CONCERTO

Grammy Award-winning violinist Nicola Benedetti performs a new concerto by Wynton Marsalis, celebrating the genius of performer and composer.

**ADAMS** Short Ride in a Fast Machine  
**MARSALIS** Violin Concerto  
*Australian Premiere*  
**STRAVINSKY** The Firebird (complete)

**KAREN KAMENSEK** conductor  
**NICOLA BENEDETTI** violin

Emirates Masters Series  
Emirates Thursday Afternoon Symphony

**Wednesday 6 September, 8pm**  
**Thursday 7 September, 1.30pm**  
**Friday 8 September, 8pm**  
**Saturday 9 September, 8pm**

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **DIANA DOHERTY** oboe

*Sydney Symphony Principal Oboe*

*John C Conde AO Chair*

Principal Oboe of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra since 1997, internationally recognised Diana Doherty has performed as soloist with the New York, Liverpool and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestras, Ensemble Kanazawa, Japan, all the major Australian and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras, the Australian and Melbourne Chamber Orchestras, St. Lawrence String Quartet, Musica Viva, the Seymour Group, Queensland Music Festival, Four Winds Festival, Australian Chamber Music Festival, Prague Spring Festival, MusicaRiva Festival, Italy, Bratislava Music Festival and the 'Young Artist in Concert' Festival in Davos, Switzerland.

Concertos by Ross Edwards, Graeme Koehne, Allan Zavod, Joe Chindamo and Nigel Westlake's *Spirit of the Wild* were all written specifically for Diana.

Diana's performances are featured on ten recordings: Westlake's *Spirit of the Wild* (Sydney Symphony); Concertos by Haydn, Mozart, Martinu and Zimmerman (Symphony Orchestra, Lucerne, released in Europe on Pan Classics); *Romantic Oboe Concertos* (Queensland Symphony); *Blues for DD* (folk and jazz influenced works with pianist David Korevaar); *Souvenirs*; Ross Edwards' *Oboe Concerto* (Melbourne Symphony); Carl Vine's *Oboe Concerto* (Tasmanian Symphony); Bach's *Concerto for violin and oboe* (Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber Orchestra); Works for oboe and oboe d'amore by JS Bach (Ironwood and Linda Kent), all for ABC Classics; and Koehne's *Inflight Entertainment* for Naxos.

Awards and prizes include joint winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York, first prize at Prague Spring Festival Competition, a MO award for Classical/Opera performer of the year and an ARIA for her performance of the Ross Edwards' Oboe Concerto.



Diana Doherty  
Photo by Jez Smith



Simone Young AM  
Photo by Peter Brew-Bevan

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **SIMONE YOUNG** AM conductor

Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor, Simone Young, was General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg from 2005–2015. Her Hamburg recordings include The *Ring Cycle*, *Mathis der Maler* (Hindemith), and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Vienna Staatsoper, Berlin Staatsoper and in Hamburg.

This season she returns to the Berlin, Los Angeles, Oslo and Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestras, Orchestres National de France and Lyon, Zürich Tonhalle Orchestra, Madrid, Gothenburg, Dallas and Washington National Symphony Orchestras, and Orchestre Suisse Romande. Opera engagements will take her to La Scala Milan (*Peter Grimes*), the Metropolitan Opera New York (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Vienna State Opera (*Die Fledermaus* and *La Fanciulla del West*) and Berlin State Opera (*Khovanshchina*). She will also lead the ANAM orchestra in their co-production with Victorian Opera of Strauss' *Capriccio*.

Simone Young is regularly invited by the world's great orchestras and has led the New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Stockholm, New Japan, Helsinki and Dresden Philharmonic Orchestras; the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo; Orchestre de Paris; Staatskapelle Dresden; the BBC, San Francisco, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, and National Symphony Orchestra. In Australia she has conducted the West Australian, Adelaide, Melbourne and Queensland Symphony Orchestras and the Australian World Orchestra.

Highly sought-after by the world's leading opera houses, most recently Simone Young has appeared at the Vienna State Opera (*Peter Grimes*), Opera Nationale de Paris (*Parsifal* and *Salome*), Bavarian State Opera, Munich (*Tannhäuser*), Berlin State Opera (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and Zurich Opera (*Salome*).

Simone Young has been Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Her many accolades include Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera, the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna, a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, Helpmann Award and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## **PEGGY POLIAS (born 1981)**

### ***Arachne***

Peggy Polias is a Sydney-based composer, music engraver, and arts administrator. She co-curates the new playlist project *Making Waves* with Melbourne-based composer Lisa Cheney, and a growing national team of passionate volunteers.

In 2015, Polias was awarded the inaugural Peter Sculthorpe Music Fellowship by Create NSW. Her program included working closely with trio The Nano Symphony to compose and record the album-suite *Hive* (2016) for clarinet, viola and piano. In 2018 she commenced a Doctor of Musical Arts at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, participating in the Composing Women program under the supervision of Professor Liza Lim. As part of this undertaking she has composed for New York flautist Claire Chase, Sydney Chamber Opera and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellows.

In early 2020, Polias recently worked with The Riot Ensemble, London, and with pianist Bernadette Harvey, composing a substantial new work premiered as part of her Sonata Project. Her current creative research investigates connections between safety, secrecy, sound and silence.

#### *The composer writes:*

The work takes inspiration from the story of Arachne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 6), a tale of a weaving duel between skilful mortal (Arachne) and proud goddess (Minerva). It is a minimalist and texture-driven work meditating on rhythms and processes in the textile art of weaving. The work is framed around the two artistic weaves produced by each of the women. The first main section, 'Minerva's Weave: Audacity,' unfolds as a representation of the stories Minerva selects to weave, scenes of mortal pride ending with disaster or downfall, sending a message to the proud but capable Arachne. The orchestra



Peggy Polias  
Photo by Hayden Shepherd  
Photography



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

undulates line by line, thread by thread, only comprehending the full image much later in the process, when the evolving melody is played in full by the violas.

'Arachne's Weave: List of Names' follows, with a highly decorated texture gradually building up, punctuated violently by tutti chords that reflect the naming and shaming of numerous rapes from ancient Greek and Roman mythology as represented by Arachne in her woven image. This aspect of the story feels very current in terms of #metoo and the act of divulging gendered violence.

Recurring sections titled 'Phocaeen Purple' are like the edging to the two main scenes. Such details are described vividly in Ovid's story, and Arachne's father is said in the story to have made his living as a merchant of this particular colour dye.

The metamorphosis in this story occurs after an enraged Minerva rips Arachne's weave to pieces, unable to find fault with it. A graphic notation section devised using multicoloured real embroidery threads was used in the musical section 'Torn to Pieces.' Arachne is so devastated she tries to hang herself, but a regretful Minerva takes pity and instead turns Arachne into a spider to weave forevermore. 'Gossamer' is a meditation on this arachnid state, fragile, beautiful, natural and organic.

*Made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Peter M Howard*

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ROSS EDWARDS

We celebrate the life and work of Australian composer Ross Edwards with two works, both composed for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Of the Oboe Concerto ***Bird Spirit Dreaming***, Fred Watson writes:

Composed especially for his friend, the wonderfully gifted oboist Diana Doherty, Ross Edwards has sought to imbue the traditional concerto with elements of theatre, ritual and dance, whilst preserving its concert hall function as an accompanied soloistic display.

As we have come to expect from this composer, the texture is dominated by an almost kaleidoscopic interplay of material gleaned from the natural environment and diverse cultural sources, whose symbolic meaning remains ultimately and tantalisingly elusive. There are, however, audible references to other Edwards works, notably *Dawn Mantras* and *Symphony No.2 Earth Spirit Songs*, whose common theme is renewal.

Although it is unlikely that the composer was conscious of a program or narrative, a hidden purport might suggest a lone voice crying in the wilderness, led through various stages of socialisation before re-emerging, transformed into a joyful affirmation of unity embracing diversity.

Thus, an opening 'wild bird' soliloquy is arrested by what sound like phrases from a Lutheran chorale before embarking on a rhapsodic melodic journey, unified by drones, ritornellos and episodes of canonic variation. This melodic unfolding, with its fleeting references to birdsong, plainsong, Hebrew cantillation, scales from Southeast Asia and rhythmic counterpoint inspired by the sound patterns of insects and frogs, culminates in a protracted love duet between the soloist and cor anglais, played by Doherty's husband and the Sydney Symphony's Principal Cor Anglais, Alexandre Oguey.



Ross Edwards  
Photo by David Roche

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Finally, the opening 'wild bird' motif returns and is ritualised, along with other previous material, into patterns characteristic of Edwards' *maninya* (Australian dance-chant) form as a seething, celebratory finale.

*Commissioned for Diana Doherty and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra by Andrew and Renata Kaldor*

On his new piece, ***Bennelong Caprices***, Ross Edwards has written:

In my 80th year, Simone Young and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have graciously chosen to honour me with a celebratory concert in the Sydney Opera House where, twenty years ago, Diana Doherty was soloist with the orchestra and visiting conductor Lorin Maazel in the world premiere of my Oboe Concerto *Bird Spirit Dreaming*. Soon after this event my wife Helen and I attended the North American premiere given by Diana with Maestro Maazel and the New York Philharmonic, after which Diana embarked on a series of acclaimed national and international performances of the work. Today, Diana and I thank Simone and the Orchestra's management for this special anniversary performance.

*Commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Christine Bishop*

Other highlights of my long relationship with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have included the commissioning and premiere performances of some of my most significant orchestral works: my Second Symphony *Earth Spirit Songs\** (1998), composed for Yvonne Kenny; my Fifth Symphony *The Promised Land\** (2005); the Saxophone Concerto *Full Moon Dances\** (2011) for Amy Dickson; and the double concerto *Frog and Star Cycle\** (2015) for Amy and the Scottish percussionist Colin Currie. Dene Olding, who premiered my Violin Concerto *Maninyas* with the Orchestra in Sydney in 1988, performed it with Vladimir Ashkenazy and the orchestra on tour at the

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

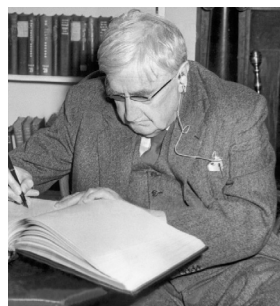
2010 Edinburgh Festival. All these works, with the exception of the Fifth Symphony, which I intend to revise, have been recorded by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra on the ABC Classic label.

As an upbeat to the final work in this concert, the magnificent Vaughan Williams Eighth Symphony, I was invited to come up with a short, festive work that I've entitled *Bennelong Caprices*, which includes excerpts from some of my earlier music in fresh contexts and arrangements, one of them dating from 50(!) years ago when I first started composing for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. A serene, chorale-like opening is followed by playful episodes inspired by sound patterns from Australia's natural world.

*\*These commissions, as well as Bird Spirit Dreaming, were generously assisted by Andrew and Renata Kaldor.*

## **RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) SYMPHONY NO.8 (1955)**

Like that of Ross Edwards, the career of Ralph Vaughan Williams dispels any sense that classical music is 'no country for old men'. Indeed, while some of the most canonical composers – such as Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schubert or Purcell – died shockingly young, there is a cohort of composers for whom older age caused no flagging of productivity, and in many cases saw exploration of new realms of style and expression. Joseph Haydn was 58 at the time of his pop-star reception in London, and responded with ever more sophisticated – and wildly popular – symphonies. At 70, Igor Stravinsky began using the twelve-note technique of his late, great rival Schoenberg to produce radically new and beautiful works, while much of the most powerful music of Leoš Janáček was written in his sixties and seventies. The list goes on, including, closer to home, Ross Edwards and still-active members of his age cohort such as Anne Boyd and Barry Conyngham.



Ralph Vaughan Williams  
in 1954

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Vaughan Williams was no child prodigy (aunts wondered why he pursued music when he was obviously 'so bad at it'), and his musical apprenticeship – studies with Charles Villiers Stanford and Hubert Parry, and later with Max Bruch and Maurice Ravel – was long. The year 1910 – when the composer was in his late thirties – effectively marks the start of his musical maturity, with performances of his epoch-making *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* and *A Sea Symphony*, his first essay in that genre.

Vaughan Williams' final three symphonies date from the 1950s, and all three show Vaughan Williams experimenting with new sonorities. The Seventh, *Sinfonia Antartica* [sic] was derived from his music for the film *Scott of the Antarctic*, and features a wind machine; the Ninth includes flugel horn and three saxophones (he had also used saxophone in the Sixth Symphony), and the Eighth glitters and hums with percussion.

## LISTENING GUIDE

Fascinated by the idea of 'late style', the critic and philosopher Edward Said wrote of the common view that

age confers a spirit of reconciliation and serenity on late works, often expressed in terms of a miraculous transfiguration of reality. In late plays such as *The Tempest* or *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare returns to the forms of romance and parable; similarly, in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* the aged hero is portrayed as having finally attained a remarkable holiness and sense of resolution.

Said then goes on to look at work such as the late Beethoven string quartets and piano sonatas, where, in complete contrast, the music actively undermines the sense of wholeness and inexorability that Beethoven and other classical composers strove for in earlier works.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

There is something of both aspects in Vaughan Williams' *Eighth Symphony*. Scored for a 'Schubert'-sized orchestra plus harp and 'extra percussion, including all the 'phones and 'spiels known to the composer', the emotional tone of the work has something of the luminous, visionary quality of pieces like the Fifth. There is certainly none of the grinding dissonance of the Fourth. But in his own quiet English-gentlemanly way, Vaughan Williams happily turns several conventions on their heads.

The first of the work's four movements is a Fantasia, subtitled 'Variations without a theme'. In his own program note, the composer notes that 'some hearers may have their withers wrung by a work being called a symphony whose first movement does not correspond to the usual symphonic form' and then goes into comic detail about how this or that *might* be understood as first or second subject. In fact the movement falls into seven sections contrasting in speed and manner, of which the second through fifth were composed first. Fragmentary themes announced at the start are viewed through different lenses. That material consists of the tune where trumpet is answered by vibraphone, a folksy flute melody and a downwards scale progression heard in the strings.

The second movement bears comparison with that of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, though Vaughan Williams restricts his palette to woodwind instruments only. A series of up-tempo march tunes success one another, with a contrasting section in 6/8 providing a kind of trio section.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

The Cavatina that follows is, contrastingly, for strings alone, beginning with an ornately lyrical line from the cellos that informs the rich polyphonic textures that ensure. Again, there is a sudden change of character in the final 3/4 section which is simple and homophonic, though allowing a last florid cello solo.

Vaughan Williams gets the band back together in the final Toccata, where he adds 'all available hitting instruments' including tuned gongs (optional) which he heard and loved in a performance of Puccini's *Turandot*. Like the opening, this is a series of contrasting episodes, and though Vaughan Williams thought the beginning sounded 'sinister', the effect is of great joy in the possibilities of the medium.

Said's conclusion on late style seems peculiarly apt to this work:

This is the prerogative of late style: it has the power to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them. What holds them in tension, as equal forces straining in opposite directions, is the artist's mature subjectivity, stripped of hubris and pomposity, unashamed either of its fallibility or of the modest assurance it has gained as a result of age and exile.

Notes © Peggy Polias (2023), Fred Watson (2002), Ross Edwards (2023), Gordon Kerry (2023)

# ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

*Ross Edwards decided he wanted to be a composer as a 13 year-old boy attending his first Sydney Symphony concert. Tonight, we celebrate his 80th birthday with a joyous concert featuring Diana Doherty and conducted by Chief Conductor Simone Young. We spoke with Edwards about his celebrated career and his uniquely Australian soundworld.*

*By Hugh Robertson*

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A birthday is always cause for reflection – especially any major milestone that ends in a zero. A time for taking stock of one’s achievements, looking ahead at what is yet to come, and perhaps celebrating with some old friends.

Ross Edwards has spent much of this year engaged in all those anniversary pursuits. He turns 80 later this year, and the Sydney Symphony is throwing him a party at the Sydney Opera House, with friends including Principal Oboe Diana Doherty and Chief Conductor Simone Young.

For decades, Edwards has been one of this country's most celebrated composers. But not merely a composer *from* Australia, in many ways he has been the composer *of* Australia, inspired by our land’s flora and fauna, and raising his eyes above the horizon to our skies and stars. Bursting with colour and energy, his music captures so much of our landscape and the richness all around us.

And his music has been enthusiastically received by Australian music lovers. One need only look at Edwards’s placing in the ABC’s annual Classic 100 polls for evidence of that. Edwards is also a six-time APRA-AMC Art Music Award winner, and the recipient of the Australia Council’s Don Banks Music Award for outstanding and sustained contribution to music in Australia.

Edwards’s composition *Dawn Mantras* was also selected as Sydney's contribution to the celebrations for the new millennium in 2000, and was broadcast worldwide to an audience of billions.



# ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

But it took Edwards a long time to discover his musical voice, despite knowing from a very early age that he wanted to be a composer. He was 13 when his aunt took him a Sydney Symphony Orchestra concert at Sydney Town Hall; Gordon Watson (later a teacher at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music) was performing Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto, and the young Ross was hooked.

"There was no going back," says Edwards, sitting in the shed at the back of his Balmain property, where he spends most days writing. "My parents were furious. They were worried, I guess, because in those days a composer was a really silly thing to want to be. But I persevered with it."

Edwards admits he struggled through many frustrating years as a teenager. There was no music offered at his high school, and even though his headmaster felt he should go to the Conservatorium high school, Edwards's father was insistent he receive a "proper" education. His first experience at university was a bust, too: the music course at the University of Sydney didn't involve composition in those days – and in a fit of frustration, Edwards dropped out entirely.

He had, however, introduced himself to two figures who were to prove crucial in his development: Australian composer Richard Meale, and English composer Peter Maxwell Davies. Edwards's long relationship with Meale began out of youthful impertinence. "I rang Richard – I'd never met him – and I said I'd been to his concert and, asked, 'Would you be able to teach me?' He was a very kind person, and I must have been an awful nuisance, because I asked him everything. I was just so enthusiastic. And he was very helpful."

Maxwell Davies provided Edwards with a lifeboat just when it looked like his music education was over. They met in 1964, after Edwards had dropped out of uni, and just after Maxwell Davies had moved to Australia to take up a position at the Elder Conservatorium of Music.



Ross Edwards  
Photo by Bridget Elliot

## ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

“When I met Peter Maxwell Davies, I said, ‘You don’t have a degree in music, do you?’ And he said, ‘Of course I do you silly bugger!’” Edwards recalls with a laugh. “But then he said, ‘If I could get you a scholarship to Adelaide, where I’m going to do a course, would you complete the degree?’ I was dead lucky actually.

“I had Max as a teacher, and then I had the Hungarian composer Sándor Veress, who was probably the leading composer at the time. He taught Ligeti, and he himself had been a pupil of both Bartók and Kodály. So I was in good hands.

Following Edwards’s completion of his Bachelor of Music in 1969, Maxwell Davies then invited Edwards to go with him back to London to do his Masters. “It all fell into place, whereas it could have been a total disaster. A lot of people were very helpful.”

But on the other side of the world, Edwards hit a mental block.

“I felt pretty lost,” he recalls. “I suppose I was a bit homesick, but also I didn’t know quite where I was going and what I should do. I was writing in the approved style at the time, or the compulsory one really – which was the sort of the end of Modernism. And there were very strict rules about how one should write music. It was supposed to be very adventurous, but as far as I could see had just become ossified and pointless.’

“I didn’t know where I was going. And I was in London, living in a basement, and I was writing a piece for Roger Woodward. It was absolutely fierce, and exactly the kind of thing that was in demand at the time. But when I finished it, I thought, ‘that’s the end of that, I’m never doing that again.’

“I don’t know quite what happened, but something took over, and I calmed right down and became a different person.”

## ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

Edwards returned to Sydney in 1970, where he taught in the Music Department of Sydney University, later becoming a lecturer at the Conservatorium, remaining there until 1980. In 1974 Edwards married Helen Hopkins, and they moved to Pearl Beach on the NSW Central Coast, with Edwards commuting to and from Sydney.



Helen and Ross Edwards. Photo by Michael Mortlock.

But the long commute was worth it to be among nature, which came to inspire and influence Edwards in ways even he wasn't entirely conscious of at the outset.

"I crammed all my teaching into three days, and I would just walk in the national park," recalls Edwards of those years. "I was absorbing the sounds, the whole feeling of it. I wasn't taking notes, or making field recordings or anything like that. But the sounds of nature got into my music and it defined what I was going to do.

"I'd just start to write music, and nature started to determine what I was writing. I used shapes, patterns, rhythms and so on, which had just come into me. And that was the music that I was writing – it was my own language."

Edwards says he never looked back – even when, in 1988, the London premiere of his Piano Concerto led to howls of outrage from critics and industry figures, "orthodox modernists" who had previously been supporters.

## ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

“I wrote this piece which was just full of sun and sea and life, instead of a very narrow, introspective vision which I'd applied before,” he recalls with a chuckle. “A lot of people loved it and others were absolutely furious! The critics went for their life: ‘How could he do this?’ ‘We thought he was going to be really something.’ And I thought, ‘Right, well, I'll never stop now.’”

That musical language has become known as Edwards's ‘maninyas style’, a nickname appended thanks to a number of university publications researching and analysing Ross's music – richly ironic, given his early struggles with organised education.

That style emerged after Edwards once more became interested in European music, and in particular in the music of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance – including plainchant, one of the foundation stones of Western classical music.

“I took that particular chant as my way back into European music,” Edwards explains. “But I would just have fragments of it. And then I would take birdsong, or some other pattern from nature, and make it my own.

“The music became quite weird, but it became natural to me. It would have fragments of plainsong and birdsong, all sorts of different rhythms, which I somehow had taken inside myself, and internalised. And the language was gradually changing. It was becoming richer, until finally it was absolutely crackers,” he concludes with a laugh.

One of the signature works from this period is *Bird Spirit Dreaming*, the oboe concerto commissioned by his great patrons Andrew and Renata Kaldor for Diana Doherty and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2002.

The story behind this piece has been often told, but it is too serendipitous to ignore. Diana and her husband, Alexandre Oguey – now the Orchestra's Principal Cor Anglais – moved back to Sydney from Europe in 1997, and rented a house in Annandale. In a tremendous stroke of fate, that house happened to be two doors down from Ross and Helen.

## ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

“I was just walking up the street, and I heard this wonderful double reed music, and it was Diana and Alexandre,” recalls Edwards. They met as neighbours, in the course of suburban life of walking dogs and taking the bins out, “And I remember her saying, ‘I believe Ross Edwards lives in this street?’ And I said, ‘Well, yes, actually...’”

Doherty laughs when she recalls their gradual realisation of who the other person was. “But finally we got to know each other and became good friends, also with Helen. And eventually we spoke about writing a piece.”

As is so often the case with Edwards’s music, the inspiration for the piece was provided by the natural world.

“I was working in the Blue Mountains, and I naturally hear the birds,” Edwards recalls. The bird life around there is very, very strong and very, very arresting. And it always fits into my music. I sort of feel that the birds are imitating me, and then I realise I am imitating the birds.

“They provide a sort of an opening, or something which I’ll build on myself immediately. I take it over and it becomes part of the piece, but I’ve embellished it in all sorts of ways.”

Edwards also takes inspiration from Doherty’s stage presence. If you have ever been to a Sydney Symphony performance you would have seen her, bobbing and weaving in the very centre of the stage, nestled among the woodwind section.

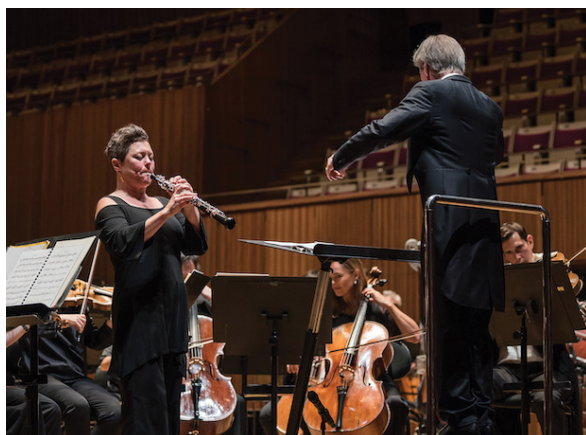
“She does move a lot on stage, that’s her style,” says Edwards. “And I interpreted that as a sort of bird-like.

“I also decided that she had to fall in love – with Alexandre. There was a raised platform where Alexandre was sitting, slightly above the other woodwinds, and she went over and played to him and he played back to her. And then having been tamed, she said, ‘I’m sort of wild and I fall in love and then I have to celebrate this.’ And that’s the last movement or the last big selection, which again, it just uses the fragment of birdsong and goes mad with it.”

## ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

“I think the fact that we, as a couple, met them as a couple, it was always in Ross’s mind to have a significant part for the cor anglais as well in the concerto,” says Doherty.

*Bird Spirit Dreaming* was very much a collaboration between composer and muse, with Doherty closely involved through the whole process – and often challenging Edwards to write more and more complicated music to really stretch her technique. But try as he might, everything Edwards wrote seemed to come almost effortlessly to Doherty.



Diana Doherty, David Robertson and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra rehearsing in 2017. Photo by Daniela Testa.

“I’ve written a lot of concerti,” says Edwards, “and the soloists always want me to really give them something to show off, as you can imagine. But Diana in particular. I would send her bits of it – in those days I would fax it over – and she’d play it back over the phone.

“She always said, ‘Can you make it more difficult?’ So I made something really excruciatingly difficult – and an hour later, she played it back over the phone. With Diana, of course, you can do anything.”

*Bird Spirit Dreaming* is just one of the major works that Edwards has written for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in an ongoing collaborative relationship that stretches back decades. And it isn’t just a relationship

# ROSS EDWARDS: FREE SPIRIT DREAMING

between Edwards and the Orchestra: Andrew and Renata Kaldor have been a huge part of it too. They have been enormous supporters of Edwards's work, in an enduring and generous act of philanthropy that has made a significant impact on Australian music. Edwards's Second and Fifth Symphonies were commissioned by the Kaldors for the Sydney Symphony, as were two works commissioned for Australian saxophonist Amy Dickson: *Full Moon Dances* (2011) and *Frog and Star Cycle* (2015), the latter a double concerto alongside percussionist Colin Currie.

"I was very fortunate that Renata and Andrew Kaldor commissioned several of my pieces," says Edwards.

Two other major works of Edwards's were written with the Sydney Symphony in mind: his First Symphony was dedicated to former Chief Conductor Stuart Challender following his death in 1991; his violin concerto, entitled *Maninyas*, was written for former Concertmaster Dene Olding and premiered by the Orchestra in 1988.

But of course Edwards's relationship with the Orchestra stretches back even longer than that, to the 13 year-old boy hearing Beethoven in the Town Hall all those years ago.

What does Edwards think that little boy would make of how his life has unfolded?

"He'd be just relieved that it happened," says Edwards. "Because I really had no idea how it was going to happen. And I've been incredibly fortunate.

"I do look back – I don't know where that gets me," he continues with a laugh. "But I don't feel old. I feel about 27, really – and I'm thinking that I really want to go back to where I began, which is walking the bush."

Join us as the Concert Hall bursts to life in movement and colour every bit as spectacular as the landscapes that have inspired Ross Edwards for decades – just as he has inspired us.

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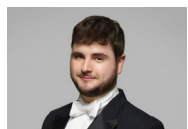


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**Diana Doherty**

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## **How long have you been playing with the Sydney Symphony?**

Since 1997 – 25 years

## **What has been the highlight of your Sydney Symphony career so far?**

There have been many, but most recently the performance of Mahler 2 at the reopening of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

## **Do you have any pre-concert rituals or superstitions?**

I have a sleep in the afternoon, especially on the days when we have a dress rehearsal too. I feel like my ears need to have some silence, and I want my brain to be fresh for the concert.

## **When did you realise that you could make a career out of music?**

When I was 16, I played a concerto with the Queensland Symphony and it was an amazing feeling. That's when I knew I had to try to make music a career.

## **What do you like to do with your spare time when you aren't playing or practicing?**

I like to do craft, garden, exercise, and cook.

## **What is the best piece of advice you ever received?**

My Dad always used to say, "Just tell the truth, it's the easiest thing to remember."

## **If you weren't a musician, what would you most like to be?**

An artist.



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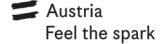
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