

19–22 April
Sydney Opera House

ELGAR'S CELLO CONCERTO

«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 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 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

Sun Yi

Associate Concertmaster Emeritus

Lerida Delbridge

Assistant Concertmaster

Fiona Ziegler

Assistant Concertmaster

Jennifer Booth
Sophie Cole
Claire Herrick
Georges Lentz
Emily Long
Alexandra Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Anna Skálová
Léone Ziegler
Sercan Danis*
Benjamin Tjoa*
Brielle Clapson

SECOND VIOLINS

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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

Riikka Sintonen*

Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba*

Marianne Edwards

Associate Principal

Benjamin Li

VIOLAS

Frederik Boits*

Guest Principal

Tobias Breider

Principal

Anne-Louise

Comerford

Associate Principal

Justin Williams

Acting Associate Principal

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Stuart Johnson

Justine Marsden

Felicity Tsai

Leonid Volovelsky

Aidan Filshie*

Graham Hennings

Amanda Verner

CELLOS

Catherine Hewgill

Principal

Justin Park*

Guest Associate Principal

Leah Lynn

Acting Associate Principal

Timothy Nankervis
Christopher Pidcock

Miles Mullin-Chivers*

Eliza Sdraulig*

Ariel Volovelsky*

Minah Choe*

Paul Ghica*

Kristy Conrau

Fenella Gill

Elizabeth Neville

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Jennifer Druery*

Oliver Simpson*

David Campbell

Steven Larson

FLUTES

Joshua Batty

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Carolyn Harris

Katie Zagorski*

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Shefall Pryor

Associate Principal

Callum Hogan

Alexandre Oguey

Principal Cor Anglais

Diana Doherty

Principal

CLARINETS

Francesco Celata

Acting Principal

Alexander Morris

Acting Associate Principal

Christopher Tingay

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie

Principal Emeritus

Fiona McNamara

Noriko Shimada

Principal Contrabassoon

Todd Gibson-Cornish

Principal

HORNS

Andrew Bain*

Guest Principal

Euan Harvey

Acting Principal

Marnie Sebire

Rachel Silver

Jenny McLeod-Sneyd*

Geoffrey O'Reilly

Principal

TRUMPETS

David Elton

Principal

Cécile Glémot

Anthony Heinrichs

Brent Grapes

Associate Principal

TROMBONES

Ronald Prussing

Principal

Nick Byrne

Christopher Harris

Principal Bass Trombone

Scott Kinmont

Associate Principal

TUBA

Edwin Diefes*

Guest Principal

Steve Rossé

Principal

TIMPANI

Mark Robinson

Acting Principal

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos

Principal

Timothy Constable

Philip South*

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

EMIRATES MASTERS SERIES

Wednesday 19 April 8pm

Friday 21 April 8pm

Saturday 22 April 8pm

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Thursday 20 April 1.30pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

ELGAR'S CELLO CONCERTO

POWERFUL INSPIRATIONS

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT cello

ALEX TURLEY (born 1995)

Mirage for brass ensemble

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

Cello Concerto in E minor, Op.85

i. *Adagio* — *Moderato* —

ii. *Lento* — *Allegro molto*

iii. *Adagio*

iv. *Allegro* — *Moderato* — *Allegro, ma non troppo*

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Symphony No.10 in E minor, Op.93

i. *Moderato*

ii. *Allegro*

iii. *Allegretto*

iv. *Andante* — *Allegro*

Pre-concert talk by Zoltán Szabó in the Northern Foyer at 7.15 (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday) and 12.45pm (Thursday)

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

5 minutes, 30 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
57 minutes

The concert will conclude
at approximately 10pm
(3.30pm Thursday)

COVER IMAGE

By Rebecca Shaw




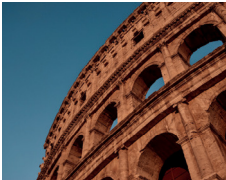

These performances have been generously supported by Paolo A.L. Hooke.

Alex Turley's commission for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project is generously supported by Gary Holmes & Anne Reeckmann.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



CONCERT DIARY

APRIL 2023		
	<p>ELGAR'S CELLO CONCERTO POWERFUL INSPIRATIONS</p> <p>ALEX TURLEY <i>Mirage</i> <i>50 Fanfares Commission</i> ELGAR Cello Concerto SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No.10</p> <p>DONALD RUNNICLES conductor NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT cello</p>	<p>Emirates Masters Series Emirates Thursday Afternoon Symphony</p> <p>Wednesday 19 April, 8pm Thursday 20 April, 1.30pm Friday 21 April, 8pm Saturday 22 April, 8pm</p> <p>Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House</p>
	<p>ARABELLA STEINBACHER PERFORMS LENTZ LUMINOUS & TRANSCENDENT</p> <p>BIBER <i>Battalia in D</i> GEORGES LENTZ "...to beam in distant heavens..." – Violin Concerto R STRAUSS <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i></p> <p>UMBERTO CLERICI conductor ARABELLA STEINBACHER violin</p>	<p>Royal Caribbean Classics Under the Sails</p> <p>Friday 28 April, 7pm Saturday 29 April, 7pm</p> <p>Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House</p>
MAY 2023		
	<p>STEPHEN HOUGH PERFORMS RACHMANINOV 2 GLORIOUSLY EXPANSIVE</p> <p>RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No.2 RESPIGHI <i>Roman Festivals*</i> <i>Fountains of Rome*</i> <i>Pines of Rome</i> <i>*Great Classics performance only</i></p> <p>JOHN WILSON conductor STEPHEN HOUGH piano</p>	<p>Symphony Hour Great Classics</p> <p>Thursday 11 May, 7pm Sat 13 May, 2pm</p> <p>Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House</p>
	<p>RESPIGHI'S ROMAN TRILOGY GLORIOUS LANDSCAPES</p> <p>RESPIGHI <i>Roman Festivals</i> <i>Fountains of Rome</i> <i>Pines of Rome</i></p> <p>JOHN WILSON conductor</p>	<p>Tea & Symphony</p> <p>Friday 12 May, 11am</p> <p>Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House</p>
	<p>STEPHEN HOUGH IN RECITAL GREAT ROMANTICS</p> <p>MOMPOU <i>Cants màgics</i> CHOPIN <i>Ballade No.3</i> CHOPIN <i>Two Nocturnes</i> DEBUSSY <i>Estampes</i> STEPHEN HOUGH <i>Partita</i> LISZT <i>Années de Pèlerinage:</i> <i>Three Petrarch Sonnets</i> <i>Dante Sonata</i></p> <p>STEPHEN HOUGH piano</p>	<p>International Pianists in Recital</p> <p>Monday 15 May, 7pm City Recital Hall</p>

WELCOME

Welcome to this concert, in which the Orchestra presents the intense, elegiac beauty of Elgar's Cello Concerto, written just after WWI, along with Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, an energetic, driving and multi-layered work of revelation and freedom written in the aftermath of Stalin's death.

Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have enjoyed one of the longest-standing and most significant relationships in Australia's performing arts, and 2023 marks over 20 years of partnership.

As the Presenter of this Masters Series, Emirates is passionate about supporting incredible local and international talent, in particular the Sydney Symphony's Chief Conductor Simone Young AM.

Together, we share a common goal of creating journeys of the imagination for people around the globe.

In this performance, conducted by Donald Runnicles, the Sydney Symphony brings you Nicolas Altstaedt, a German cellist of international renown and prodigious range, described by *The Australian* as "a master storyteller."

Elgar's concerto immerses the listener in a story of darkness, sorrow and, ultimately, resilience. Similarly, in Shostakovich's great Tenth Symphony, we come to understand intense suffering before being lifted into spirited freedom.

These iconic and masterful compositions express originality and excellence at the highest level, both qualities the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Emirates aspire to in equal measure.

We are delighted by our continuing partnership, and we do hope you are enthralled by this powerful and inspirational concert.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Brown'.

Barry Brown

Divisional Vice President for Australasia
Emirates

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

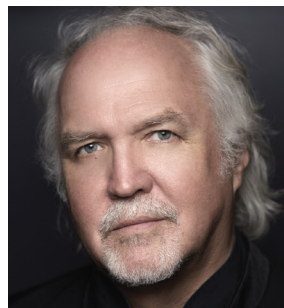
Sir Donald Runnicles is the General Music Director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Music Director of the Grand Teton Music Festival, as well as Principal Guest Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. In 2019 Runnicles also took up the post as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's first ever Principal Guest Conductor. He additionally holds the title of Conductor Emeritus of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, having served as Chief Conductor from 2009-2016.

In the 2021-22 season, maestro Runnicles will lead performances of the complete *Ring Cycle*, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Der Zwerg*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and Britten's *War Requiem* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin; *Elektra* at the Metropolitan Opera; and concerts with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, including a concert version of *Hansel and Gretel*.

Sir Donald enjoys close and enduring relationships with many of the most significant opera companies and symphony orchestras. His previous posts include Music Director of the San Francisco Opera (1992-2008), during which he led world premieres of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*, Conrad Susa's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, and the US premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*; Principal Conductor of the Orchestra of St. Luke's (2001-2007); and General Music Director of the Theater Freiburg and Orchestra (1989-1993).

Mr. Runnicles' extensive discography includes complete recordings of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Britten's *Billy Budd*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, and Aribert Reimann's *L'invisible*. His recording of Wagner arias with Jonas Kaufmann and the Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin won the 2013 *Gramophone* prize for Best Vocal Recording, and his recording of Janáček's *Jenůfa* with the Orchestra and Chorus of the Deutsche Oper Berlin was nominated for a 2016 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording.

Sir Donald Runnicles was born and raised in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was appointed OBE in 2004, and was made a Knight Bachelor in 2020. He holds honorary degrees from the University of Edinburgh, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



Donald Runnicles

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT cello

German-French cellist Nicolas Altstaedt is one of the most sought-after and versatile artists today. As a soloist, conductor and artistic director, he performs repertoire spanning from early music to the contemporary, playing on period and modern instruments.

Season 2022/23 includes debuts with Budapest Festival Orchestra and Iván Fischer as well as on tour with the Seoul Philharmonic with Osmo Vänskä, Seattle and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, Staatskapelle Berlin, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Orchester National de Belgique, Kioi Chamber Orchestra Tokyo as well as returns to Il Giardino Armonico, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, DSO Berlin, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia and Münchener Kammerorchester amongst others. As a conductor, he will debut with Budapest Festival Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic and Kyoto Symphony Orchestra.

Since his highly acclaimed debut with the Wiener Philharmoniker and Gustavo Dudamel at the Lucerne Festival, he regularly performs with the most renowned orchestras around the world including the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, London and Münchner Philharmoniker, NHK and Yomiuri symphony orchestras, Washington National Symphony and Detroit Symphony Orchestra, all BBC Orchestras, OPRF and ONF Paris and Rotterdam Philharmonic with conductors such as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Christoph Eschenbach, Sir Roger Norrington, Andrew Manze, François-Xavier Roth, Lahav Shani and Robin Ticciati. He also regularly performs on period instruments with ensembles as Il Giardino Armonico, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, Arcangelo, Academy of Ancient Music and conductors as René Jacobs, Phillippe Herreweghe, Andrea Marcon, Giovanni Antonini and Jonathan Cohen.

He has received numerous prizes including the Beethovenring Bonn 2015 and Musikpreis der Stadt Duisburg 2018. His most recent recording for his Lockenhaus Festival garnered the BBC Music Magazine 2020 Chamber Award and Gramophone Award 2020. He received the BBC Music Magazine Concerto Award 2017 for his recording of CPE Bach Concertos on Hyperion with Arcangelo and Jonathan Cohen and the Edison Klassiek 2017 for his Recital Recording with Fazil Say on Warner Classics. Nicolas is a recipient of the Credit Suisse Award in 2010 and was a BBC New Generation Artist 2010-2012.



Nicolas Altstaedt
Photo by Marco Borggreve

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ALEX TURLEY (born 1995)

Mirage

Alex Turley is a composer, arranger and collaborative artist based in Melbourne.

Alex holds a Master of Music from the Sydney Conservatorium, he was the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's 2022 Young Composer in Residence, and in 2023-24 he holds a Creative and Performance Leadership Fellowship from the Forrest Research Foundation.

Recently Alex has worked with all Australian state orchestras, Genesis Owusu, Ngaiire, Rūfūs Du Sol, Electric Fields, Sangam and Ripple Effect.

He writes:

It was a pleasure to create this new work or the Sydney Symphony's stellar brass section. Orchestral brass instruments are perhaps best known for their directness and power, however, they also have an extraordinary palette of subtle and mysterious colours. From the outset I intended to create a work that explores these darker shades while highlighting a few of my favourite textural effects.

In this piece, I ask that the horns and trumpets be separated from the rest of the ensemble by a great distance, in reference to the long history of antiphonal brass in music. There is a curious symmetry to be found as the instruments call out to one another across the hall with interwoven melodies, creating a shimmering quality in the air. This quality underpins the central theme and title of this work, which refers to the bending and refracting of rays of light in a mirage.

As the central ensemble on stage provides an ever-shifting harmonic background, wispy melodies grow outwards from afar, propelling the piece forward through a curious and warped sense of time.

Alex Turley's commission for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project is generously supported by Gary Holmes & Anne Reeckmann.



Alex Turley,
Rachael Michelle Photography

ABOUT THE MUSIC

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934) **Cello Concerto in E minor, Op.85**

Elgar's career reached its last zenith with his Violin Concerto in 1910 and Second Symphony in 1911, works into which he claimed 'I have written out my soul...shewn myself'. Between them and this 1919 Cello Concerto — his last major work — Elgar faced down worsening prospects in almost every aspect of his life, from the personal challenges of age, ill-health and bereavement, to the professional affront of being elbowed aside by younger colleagues. There was also the war. While Britain's youth marched into France in August 1914 singing 'It's a long way to Tipperary', Elgar's *Land of Hope and Glory* — composed during the Boer War as trio of his first *Pomp and Circumstance March* (1901) — was re-mobilised at home as a patriotic anthem. Rendered semi-superfluous by his own old tune, Elgar, at 57, struggled to find a new wartime voice in works like *Carillon*, a musically slight but eloquent response to the tragedy in Belgium, recorded for gramophone in 1915, that here in Australia became his next-most-popular contribution to the war effort. His more substantial choral score *The Spirit of England*, setting war poems by Laurence Binyon, was introduced to Britons in 1916 and 1917 deep in the hostilities, but reached almost celebratory first performances in Melbourne and Sydney in July-August 1918, just as Allied victory seemed assured. Still, it was Binyon's lines commemorating the millions fallen ('They shall grow not old...Age shall not weary them...') — not Elgar's music for them — that everyone remembered.

Binyon, by day, was a curator at the British Museum under Elgar's close friend Sidney Colvin, the keeper of prints and drawings, and it was Colvin who first suggested Elgar turn Binyon's poems into the 'wonderful Requiem for the slain' that *The Spirit of England* became. Binyon himself approached Elgar again immediately the Armistice was declared with a request to set his new ode, 'Peace'. But by letter on 18 November 1918, Elgar demurred: 'I do not feel drawn to write peace music somehow...



Edward Elgar

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the whole atmosphere is too full of complexities for me to feel music to it.' And he had already, as his wife, Alice, recorded in her diary, conceived another 'lament which should be in a war symphony' — music that evolved over the spring and summer of 1919 into 'a real large work & I think good and alive', as he described the 'nearly completed' Cello Concerto in a letter to Colvin and his wife, Frances, asking permission to dedicate it to them.

The score is laid out in four movements, though listeners tend to hear the first and second movements, played without break, as a single span. Whereas his Violin Concerto opened into a conventionally spacious orchestral introduction, pending the princely arrival of its soloist, Elgar sets his cello in a more intimate frame. Denied welcoming brass or upper strings, the brief opening cello recitative (*Adagio*) sets its own unusually pared-back terms — hereinafter will be lyricism, light orchestration, simple layouts. The violas, eerily unaccompanied, announce the dreamy, modal, much-loved main theme (*Moderato*), its rocking rhythm Elgar's characteristic pastoral lilt. The winds introduce the airy, major-tending contrasting theme, which the cello then sets about varying, before the main theme simply returns. A longer, second cello recitative (*Lento*) inducts into faster, lighter, scherzo-like *Allegro molto*, the cello driving the music forward with its scrubbing semiquavers.

Elgar anticipated that the *Adagio*, despite its anticipatory half-close, would often be played without the rest of the concerto, and scored it with just strings and wind sextet. The cello melody gives the uncanny impression of being an internal dialogue between two separate voices, higher and lower, each merging in and out of the countermelodies of the supporting strings.

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The finale opens, exceptionally, announcing its fragmentary theme (*Allegro*) without the cello. The cello then reworks it in a parenthetical recitative and short cadenza (*Moderato*), before it takes over fully (*Allegro, ma non troppo*). The soloist sweetly but firmly pulls the music up introducing its arcing subsidiary idea, then carried on by flowing semiquavers into the extensive development. There's a heady reprise of the fast theme, echoes of earlier quiet asides, and a penultimate throwback to the concerto's opening gesture, caught up into a rapid, surging close.

© Graeme Skinner 2014

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975) **Symphony No.10 in E minor, Op.93**

These days there is always debate about the meaning of a Shostakovich symphony. Ever since Western listeners realised they might have been wrong to take Shostakovich at his word when the Fifth Symphony was described as 'a Soviet artist's reply to just criticism', we have pondered the real meaning of his works, and tried to find clues in the various writings that have come out since his death: *Testimony* (purportedly his 'ghosted' memoirs), Ian McDonald's *The New Shostakovich*, and Elizabeth Wilson's *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (1994), to name three standard texts.

Symphony No.10, completed on 27 October 1953 and premiered under the conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky in Leningrad in December of that year, is supposed to be about the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin — the composer was finally free to broadcast his views, eight months after the dictator's death. *Testimony* even has Shostakovich say:

I did depict Stalin [in the Tenth]...I wrote it right after Stalin's death, and no one has yet guessed what the symphony is about... The second part, the scherzo, is a musical portrait of Stalin...[It is hard] to draw the image of leaders and teachers with music. But I gave Stalin his due, the shoe fits, as they say. I can't be reproached for avoiding that ugly phenomenon of our reality.



Dmitri Shostakovich in 1950

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It is easy to imagine such a meaning for the second movement, coming so hard and violently upon the heels of the intensely ruminating first movement. It seems so full of terror; of fears of being taken suddenly by the secret police in the middle of the night. With its brutal stamp, this heavy-booted Georgian *gopak* 'dance' is a long way from the customary playful scherzo. The first movement seems to possess that mixture of despondency and relief which may be expected when, after 40 years, you no longer have to feel [in Nadezhda Mandelstam's words] that 'every acquaintance [is] a suspected police informer', but you haven't yet had the time or licence to fully vent your anger.

Shostakovich's friend Tatyana Nikolayeva, however, claimed that the Symphony No.10 was begun in 1951. Would that alter the meaning? It's possible that Shostakovich substantially revised the symphony in 1953, or finally completed it then. He certainly didn't release it for public presentation until Stalin was well out of the way.

From a technical point of view, the first movement is extraordinarily impressive. Longer than the third and fourth movements put together, it exhibits a masterly control of tension. Ian McDonald, writing in *The New Shostakovich*, praises the way 'three themes weave in and out of each other with effortless ingenuity.'

Though heavy with thoughtful pauses, the mood of the opening, deep in the strings, is very much that of a slow stirring to life. McDonald sees ominous significance, however, in the way the first note of the sextuplet figure is so quickly dropped.

The important clarinet theme next emerges. The late Klaus George Roy, former annotator for the Cleveland Orchestra, pointed out that this clarinet melody may be a quote from the fourth movement of Mahler's Second Symphony — from the song *Urlicht*: 'Mensch liegt in grösster Not' (Humankind lies in direst need). This would not be surprising. Shostakovich admired Mahler, and quotes from song are not unusual in Shostakovich's works. They often provide clues

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to the meaning of the music. This symphony also quotes 'What's in my name?' from Shostakovich's own *Four Pushkin Monologues*. In the 'Mahlerian' section of the symphony, Shostakovich even adopts Mahler's original instruction to the performer of *Urlicht*: 'einfach' [simply], writing it, in Italian, as 'semplice'.

We have been listening for nearly eight minutes when the flute launches what could be described as a pessimistic waltz: the symphonic movement's second subject. It is the development which unleashes for the first time the movement's underlying terror. Significantly, the 'Mahler quote' material is developed. The scale of emotion is immense: the music is so demanding that in the central tutti, the first and second violins have to play continuously for well over four minutes with scarcely a semiquaver rest.

Such an outburst, however, fails to dispel the predominantly bleak mood. The movement ends, after a brief recapitulation of the main themes, with a cold coda of duetting piccolos.

The contrasting styles of the first two movements suggest the high probability of an internal program. But what does the third movement *Allegretto* mean? Here Shostakovich quotes his own musical motto, the intervals D-E flat (in German, pronounced 'Es')-C-B natural (H, in the German musical spelling): DSCH, for **D. Schostakowisch**. He also makes telling use of a horn call, a harbinger of warning since the times of Beethoven, Wagner and Mahler. The opening bars, though, present the DSCH motif in altered form — CDSH (C-D-E flat-B). He may have asked what was in his name, but could this symbolise the mask Shostakovich had to assume in public? McDonald speaks of the way the second subject – 'tart winds trilling a staccato combination of D-S-C-H and [a] rat-a-tat figure' — represents the people's theme appropriated by the authorities. Just as the people gain in confidence, the horn sounds, and the real people emerge, depressed, downtrodden.

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The whole of the second half of this symphony sees, in critic Michael Steinberg's words, the 'imprinting of [Shostakovich's] own presence', and in the finale the 'Shostakovich theme' seems to assume a warning role.

The final movement opens solemnly. Then, with a flourish, the *Allegro* begins, and we are led to a raucous, apparently high-spirited conclusion. It can be argued that this *Allegro* is a satisfactory counterweight to the first movement. Steinberg, again, says: 'I have sometimes imagined that [Shostakovich] would have been happy had circumstances allowed him to be a latter-day Haydn, unburdened by any obligation to devise weighty, "significant" endings.' But can we assume that no meaning is desired here? David Heaton speaks of Shostakovich's finales as 'false dawns'. You might be meant to hear them as hollow celebrations.

And, after all, though Stalin was dead, Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony was still subjected to criticism at a Union of Soviet Composers Commission on Musical Criticism. Boris Yarustovsky said that the work was '[a] tragedy of the profoundly isolated individual, helpless in the face of the forces of evil...Such a conception of the world is very far from that which is experienced by the majority of Soviet people.' Shostakovich responded by offering his own self-criticism: the first movement is too long, he said, the second movement too short, the third movement, though 'more or less successful' is too long in some places and too short in others. How could anyone take this to be serious self-criticism? It was Shostakovich at his usual passive-aggressive game. When he said of the first movement that 'I have still not succeeded in writing the real symphonic *Allegro*,' surely he had to be joking (albeit bitterly).

The sober truth is that Shostakovich was an artist placed in an impossible situation. But the music itself supports Arnold Schoenberg's assessment that this 'great talent' was one of the few among his contemporaries who had 'the breath of a symphonist'.

By Gordon Kalton Williams © Symphony
Australia 1999/2012

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT ON ELGAR'S ICONIC CELLO CONCERTO

The brilliant German cellist makes his Sydney debut in April. Here he explains how music is like time travel, helping us understand the past — and explores the intensely emotional Cello Concerto by Edward Elgar, a piece that, he says, contains a lifetime in just half an hour.

By Hugh Robertson

It has become one of the most famous and beloved pieces of music ever written.

Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto is one of those iconic works, its intense and impassioned opening immediately identifiable. It was voted the greatest work of the 20th century in the ABC's Classic 100 poll in 2011, and the fifth-greatest concerto of all time in the 2007 edition.

But it wasn't always so — in fact the premiere of the work in 1919 was a disaster. Not only did it receive insufficient rehearsal time, but it was criticised for being old-fashioned — a work by an old master whose Edwardian, grandiose style wasn't suited to the harsh new world that had emerged following World War I.

It took almost 50 years for the work to find its audience, but when it did it caught on like wildfire. English cellist Jacqueline du Pré, a star on the rise, recorded the concerto in 1965, and captured the public's imagination. That recording has gone on to be one of the highest-selling classical albums ever recorded, and du Pré's performance has assumed legendary status — her own teacher, the great Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, stopped performing the work entirely, saying simply, "My pupil, Jacqueline du Pré, played it much better than I."

The concerto's yearning, longing tone and sense of loss was further amplified by its close association with du Pré, who tragically died due to complications from multiple sclerosis at the age of just 42, having been forced to cease performing at just 28.

Certainly du Pré casts a long shadow over the work, but for Nicolas Altstaedt, one of the world's most exciting and in-demand cellists, this rich background and history contributes to our connection with the work, rather than obscures it.

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT ON ELGAR'S ICONIC CELLO CONCERTO

Altstaedt will perform the Elgar concerto with the Sydney Symphony under Sir Donald Runnicles in April, in a series of concerts which will mark his debut with the Orchestra. Altstaedt burst onto the scene as a BBC New Generation Artist from 2010-2012, and since then has stretched his wings in all directions at once — as a soloist, a chamber musician, and artistic director, performing on both period and modern instruments — receiving awards and critical acclaim in everything to which he turns his hand.

For Altstaedt, part of the magic of music is its ability to transport us to another time, offering a window into parts of our history that we can't ever access directly.

"If you play music, you want to understand that time in which it has been written," he says via Zoom from his apartment in Barcelona, where he is currently on tour with the Barcelona Symphony.

"That is so inspiring — music has the power to give us an impression about what people felt at that time. We cannot talk to the people from 1920, but we can listen to the music that has been written at the time and understand the impact of the war and what has been around.

And to read literature, to look at art that has been done, that is, I think, very important to inhale and to live through that, to absorb it."

"It's a bit like a historical adventure, like travelling to a different time. But then music is timeless and that's why we listen to the Elgar concerto nowadays, because it still has to tell us something. It's not just a historic monument or a piece in a museum that has outlived a few years, but it's something that is still relevant today."

"It is our chance to get to know things about society, about mankind, through the music. Music can show us what the world is about and how the world also can be a better place. So the notes help us. And then, of course, our own visions and our knowledge about what has been happening around that score."

The Cello Concerto was the final major work that Elgar wrote, despite the fact that he lived for another 15 years after completing it. That absence of new music has been taken to mean

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT ON ELGAR'S ICONIC CELLO CONCERTO

many things, but to Altstaedt it could simply be that Elgar felt he had said everything that he needed to say.

"It's very striking that after that piece he lived for quite a while still, but he didn't write down anything significant anymore. He must have felt, 'That's it — that is my last word. And I have no urge nor necessity to add anything anymore in my life. It feels like the final looking back, and this melancholy and this closing of the book is something that you really feel during the piece.'"

Altstaedt is unequivocal when considering where the piece ranks in the cello repertoire.

"The Elgar concerto is, I would say, next to the Dvořák concerto, *the* Romantic concerto. It is a very special piece, written by an old man who was looking back at his life. It is a very reflective, very melancholic concerto.

"And it's very, very moving to go through this whole piece. It's really a lifetime that you go through. It's one life in half an hour with all its diversity. It's a great masterpiece that I always love to come back to."

As we talk, I notice a fascinating duality in Altstaedt's way of speaking about music. He says that he is, above all else, a devotee of the composer's score, always returning to the source material to find the truth of a piece. He says several times that everything he needs to know is there, on the page, and it is his responsibility to study that, and to present the composer's wishes as best he can.

And yet, when he turns to talk about the *meaning* of a piece, and the way that it makes people *feel*, then Altstaedt's language becomes softer, more nuanced, philosophical and metaphysical and forever reaching for the intangible.

"Music is always about something that is bigger than life, and bigger than ourselves," he says with a smile. "Music should always give a feeling to the people that they hear something that we cannot put into words, that is much bigger than what we do in our daily lives."

"There is a horizon that music can give us that nothing else can give us."

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT ON ELGAR'S ICONIC CELLO CONCERTO

“That's why music is the most universal language in the world,” he continues. “Because — and it sounds like a cliché, but it is not — because anyone can understand it. And anyone who listens to the Elgar concerto, it doesn't matter from which cultural background, or from which education they come from: they can feel what it is about and they can be inspired by listening to that and being a better person after listening to such a masterpiece, I am absolutely convinced about that.”



Nicolas Altstaedt. Photo by Marco Borggreve.

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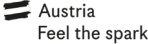
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