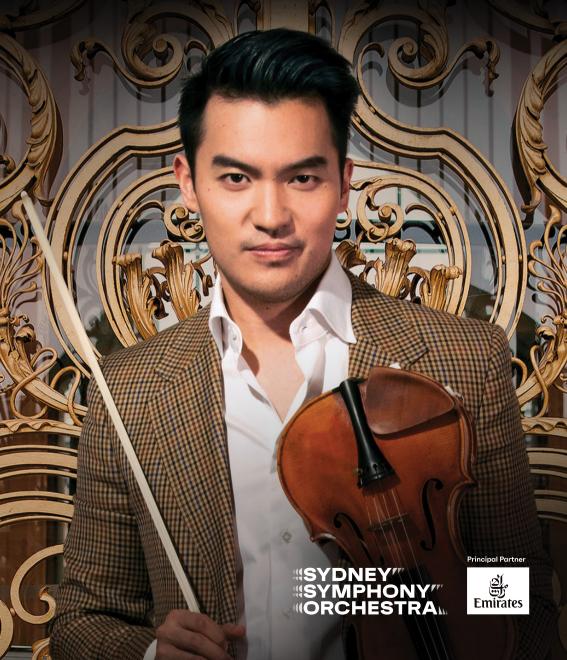
12–15 July Sydney Opera House





# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcastina 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.

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Conductor Laureate

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# **EMIRATES MASTER SERIES**

Wednesday 12 July, 8pm Friday 14 July, 8pm Saturday 15 July, 8pm

**EMIRATES THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY** 

Thursday 13 July, 1.30pm

Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

# RAY CHEN PERFORMS TCHAIKOVSKY

**BEAUTY & ROMANCE** 

**DAVID ROBERTSON** conductor **RAY CHEN** violin

ALICE CHANCE (born 1994)
Through Changing Landscape (2023)

# PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893) Violin Concerto in D, Op.35 (1878)

i. Allegro moderato – Moderato assai

ii. Canzonetta: Andante

iii. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

INTERVAL

# CARL NIELSEN (1865-1931) Symphony No.5, Op.50 (1922)

i. Tempo giusto - Adagio

ii. Allegro - Presto - Andante poco tranquillo - Allegro

# PRE-CONCERT TALK

By Andrew Bukenya in the Northern Foyer at 7.15pm (12.45pm Thursday)

### **ESTIMATED DURATION**

Chance – 5 minutes Tchaikovsky – 33 minutes Interval – 20 minutes Nielsen – 34 minutes

This concert will run for approximately 90 minutes

### COVER IMAGE

Ray Chen Photo by John Mac



<sup>\*</sup>Alice Chance's *Through Changing Landscape* was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, supported by Peter Howard.

# **WELCOME**

Welcome to Ray Chen Performs Tchaikovsky, an experience where Australia's star violinist performs Tchaikovsky's poignant, beautiful violin concerto (the only one he published).

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 Master 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 excitement and discovery for people around the globe.

In this performance, the Orchestra brings you the brilliance of online and real-world sensation Ray Chen, along with Nielsen's Symphony No 5, a work exploring heartache, uncertainty and ultimately the hope arising after World War 1, and a new work, *Through Changing Landscape* by Australian composer Alice Chance, a continuously rising star.

All three works embody the beauty and excellence that are at the heart of both the Sydney Symphony and Emirates experience.

We are delighted by our continuing partnership, and we do hope you enjoy this marvellous concert.

**Barry Brown** 

Divisional Vice President for Australasia

Emirates



# **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

# **RAY CHEN** violin

Ray Chen is a violinist who redefines what it is to be a classical musician in the 21st century. With a media presence that enhances and inspires the classical audience, reaching out to millions through his unprecedented online following, Ray Chen's remarkable musicianship transmits to a global audience that is reflected in his engagements with the foremost orchestras and concert halls around the world.

Initially coming to attention via the Yehudi Menuhin (2008) and Queen Elizabeth (2009) Competitions, of which he was First Prize winner, he has built a profile in Europe, Asia, and the USA as well as his native Australia both live and on disc. Signed in 2017 to Decca Classics, the summer of 2017 saw the recording of the first album of this partnership with the London Philharmonic as a succession to his previous three critically acclaimed albums on SONY, the first of which (Virtuoso) received an ECHO Klassik Award, Profiled as "one to watch" by The Strad and Gramophone magazines, his profile has grown to encompass his featuring in the Forbes list of 30 most influential Asians under 30, appearing in major online TV series Mozart in the Jungle, a multi-year partnership with Giorgio Armani (who designed the cover of his Mozart album with Christoph Eschenbach) and performing at major media events such as France's Bastille Day (live to 800,000 people), the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm (telecast across Europe), and the BBC Proms.

He has appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Munich Philharmonic, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra Nazionale della Santa Cecilia and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He works with conductors such as Riccardo Chailly, Vladimir Jurowski, Sakari Oramo, Manfred Honeck, Daniele Gatti, Kirill Petrenko, Krystof Urbanski, Juraj Valcuha and many others. From 2012-2015 he was resident at the Dortmund Konzerthaus.

His presence on social media makes Ray Chen a pioneer in an artist's interaction with their audience, utilising the new opportunities of modern technology. His appearances and interactions with music and musicians are instantly disseminated to a new public in a contemporary and relatable way. He is the first musician to be invited to write a lifestyle blog for Italian publishing house, RCS Rizzoli (Corriere della Sera, Gazzetta dello Sport, Max). He has been featured in *Vogue* and is currently releasing his own design of violin case for the industry manufacturer GEWA. His commitment to music education is paramount, and inspires the younger generation of music students with his series of self-produced videos combining comedy and music.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Australia, Ray was accepted to the Curtis Institute of Music at age 15, where he studied with Aaron Rosand and was supported by Young Concert Artists. He plays the 1715 "Joachim" Stradivarius violin on Ioan from the Nippon Music Foundation. This instrument was once owned by the famed Hungarian violinist, Joseph Joachim (1831-1907).



Ray Chen Photo by John Mac

# **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

# **DAVID ROBERTSON** conductor

David Robertson – conductor, artist, composer, thinker, American musical visionary – occupies the most prominent podiums in opera, orchestral, and new music. He is a champion of contemporary composers, and an ingenious and adventurous programmer.

Robertson has served in numerous artistic leadership positions, such as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, a transformative 13-year tenure as Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, with the Orchestre National de Lyon, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and, as protégé of Pierre Boulez, the Ensemble InterContemporain.

He appears with the world's great orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, and many major ensembles and festivals on five continents. Since his 1996 Metropolitan Opera debut, Robertson has conducted a breathtaking range of Met projects, including the 2019-20 season opening premiere production of Porgy and Bess, for which he shared a Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording in March 2021. In 2022, he conducted the Met Opera revival of the production, in addition to making his Rome Opera debut conducting Janáček's Káťa Kabanová.

Robertson is a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of France, and is the recipient of numerous artistic awards. He serves on the Tianjin Juilliard Advisory Council, complementing his role as Director of Conducting Studies, Distinguished Visiting Faculty of The Juilliard School, New York.



David Robertson Photo by Chris Lee

# ALICE CHANCE (born 1994)

Alice Chance is a composer who takes playfulness very seriously.

She grew up on Darug country in Sydney and is currently based in Paris. She holds a Bachelor of Music from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, a Master of Music from l'Université Paris-Saclay and a Diplôme Supérieur in Composition from the École Normale de Musique de Paris. Recently, Alice has worked with Ensemble Offspring, The Australian String Quartet, Belvoir St Theatre, Gondwana Choirs, and she once wrote a song for Ella Hooper of Killing Heidi fame.



This piece was born from the following question:

'What if I sustained one note the whole time?'

Not necessarily a low drone, but something higher and sweeter. Maybe it could be rhythmic and alternate between the higher octaves so as not to fade into the background. It could be made to mean different things by everything that surrounds it.

Other composers have played with sustained static pitches in their work, from Borodin in the opening of *In the Steppes of Central Asia*, to Chopin in his *Raindrop Prélude*, to French singer Camille in her 2005 album Le Fil. Closer to home, Percy Grainger experimented with a similar idea in his piece *The Immovable Do*, reportedly inspired by an organ reed that got stuck.

There is something irresistibly playful about taking a constant and throwing it into a world of change. The changing landscape outside the window of a train is made even more glorious by the fact that it is viewed through the one piece of glass.

This work is a love letter to train journeys. But beyond that, it's the journey of an individual through the landscape of a lifetime, swept along from one chapter to the next, shaped and given meaning by everyone and everything that is around them.



Alice Chance

# PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893) Violin Concerto in D, Op.35 (1878)

It was the winter of 1877, and Tchaikovsky was in love. He wrote to his brother Modest about the 'unimaginable force' of the passion that had developed; its object was a young violinist and student at the Moscow Conservatorium, Iosif Kotek. Tchaikovsky had known 'this wonderful youth' for about six vears. In 1876 Kotek had also acted as a gobetween for Tchaikovsky and his new patron, Nadezhda von Meck, who eschewed any face to face contact with the composer. Kotek was a devoted and affectionate - but platonic friend to Tchaikovsky, but predictably enough soon became besotted with a fellow (female) student. The composer's ardour cooled quickly, and within three weeks of discovering Kotek's new relationship Tchaikovsky made his fateful proposal to Antonina Milyukova, a former Conservatorium student who had fallen in love with him. They married two months later, and as the depth of their cultural and personal differences auickly became clear, Tchaikovsky left his wife two months after that. Milyukova, incidentally, was not the deranged harpy that histories (or myth) have made of her. Her mental health degenerated only many years after Tchaikovsky's death (and a subsequent happy relationship which produced children) and she never spoke ill of Tchaikovsky during his life or after his death. He, for his part, realised that he had treated her abominably, and saw to it that she was financially secure for the rest of her life.



Tchaikovsky in the 1870s



Tchaikovsky with violinist losif Kotek

Kotek and Tchaikovsky remained friends, however, and the Violin Concerto seems to have grown out of a promise that the composer made to write a piece for one of Kotek's upcoming concerts. 'We spoke' Tchaikovsky told his brother, 'of the piece he ordered me to write...He repeated over and over that he would get angry if I didn't write this piece'. While Kotek was not, ultimately, the dedicatee or first performer of the work, he was of enormous help to Tchaikovsky in playing through sections of the piece as the composer finished them.

After leaving his wife, Tchaikovsky, accompanied by one or other of his brothers (and at one point Kotek himself), travelled extensively in western Europe. Tchaikovsky worked on the Violin Concerto in Switzerland in early 1878 not long after completing his Fourth Symphony and his opera Eugene Onegin. Commentators are generally agreed that both of those works reflect Tchaikovsky's emotional reactions to the traumatic events of his marriage, though the composer himself

was careful, in a letter to von Meck, to point out that one could only depict such states in retrospect. In any event, it seems likely that, apart from honouring a promise to Kotek, Tchaikovsky found the conventions of the violin concerto offered a way of writing a large scale work without the personal investment of the opera and symphony.

Like the great concertos of Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn and Sibelius. Tchaikovsky's is in D major and in three substantial movements. The first develops two characteristic themes within a tracery of brilliant virtuoso writing for the violin, and like Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky places the solo cadenza before the recapitulation of the opening material. As in the slow movement of his Fourth Symphony, the central Canzonetta works its magic by the deceptively simple repetition of its material. The work concludes with a bravura, 'Slavic' finale which is interrupted only by a motif for solo oboe which for one writer recalls, nostalgically, a moment in the 'Letter Scene' from Onegin (which itself parallels the relationship between Tchaikovsky and Antonina).

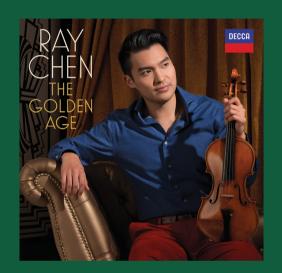
The work was initially dedicated to the virtuoso Leopold Auer, who thought it far too difficult and refused to play it. In 1881 Adolf Brodsky gave the premiere in Vienna, where that city's most feared critic, Eduard Hanslick, tore the piece to shreds:

The violin is no longer played; it is pulled, torn, drubbed...We see plainly the savage vulgar faces, we hear curses, we smell vodka...Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto gives us for the first time the notional that there can be music that stinks to the ear.

Hanslick, like many a music critic, made a bad call; Tchaikovsky had written one of the best loved works of the concerto repertoire.



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# CARL NIELSEN (1865-1931) Symphony No.5, Op.50 (1922)

When he died Carl Nielsen was a Danish national hero, and one of the most important symphonists of the 20th century. He had been born into an extremely poor family on the island of Funen, but his mother introduced him to folk-song which she sang 'as if she were longing for something far away beyond the farthest trees of the land.'

The first decade of the century saw his Second Symphony as well as evocative tone-poems like the *Helios* Overture and the *Saga Dream*, works which show Nielsen moving away from the Brahmsian tradition in which he had cast his earlier music. As the years went on, Nielsen explored more exotic orchestration and harmony in works like *Pan and Syrinx*, based on Ovid's tale from the *Metamorphoses*, and incidental music to the play *Aladdin*. At the same time he experimented with the symphony, retaining a semblance of the conventional four-movement design but infusing the works with his philosophical ideals.

The Fifth Symphony, composed between 1920 and 1922 is in many respect his least conventional essay in the genre, but at the same time one of his finest and most individual works. The context in which it appeared included a turbulent period in the composer's life - he was estranged from his wife, the celebrated sculptor Anne Marie Brodersen; he had finally given up his regular job for the precarious life of the freelance composer (though at this stage an eminent and storied one); from the relative safety of neutral Denmark he had watched Europe descend into the madness of World War I. of which he said 'It's as though the whole world is in dissolution.... It's so unlimited and meaningless that life doesn't seem worth it. But it has to be resisted, like so much evil in the world.'



Carl Nielsen

The resulting piece, as Nielsen himself noted, 'isn't all that easy to grasp, nor all that easy to play', joking that 'some people have even thought that now Arnold Schoenberg can pack his bags and take a walk with his disharmonies. Mine were worse. I don't think so.' But while the symphony begins with the lulling sounds of violas playing a repeated minor third, and pairs of bassoons and horns playing sweet, simple harmonies, and while it ends with a blazing, unambiguous E flat major, there is a thrilling and sometimes challenging 'narrative' outlined by the music's trajectory.

Formally the piece strays the farthest from the four-movement symphonic layout that Nielsen inherited and usually embraced, saying

I am content with two parts instead of the usual four movements. I've thought so much about this - that in the old symphonic form you usually said most of what you had on your mind in the first allegro. Then came the calm andante, which functioned as a contrast, but then it's the scherzo, where you get up too high again and spoil the mood for the finale, where the ideas have all too often run out.

The vestiges of the traditional movements. however, are still discernible. Nielsen hated anything as restrictive as a 'program' though did let slip to a student that a 'title like Dream and Deeds could maybe sum up the inner picture I had in front of my eyes when composing.' Most accounts of the piece agree that the first movement is a study of what Nielsen called 'idle, thoughtless nature' but this shouldn't lull us into a false expectation of pastoral calm. The shimmering stasis of the opening - not unlike similar moments in Sibelius (who greatly admired Nielsen's symphonies) - and its non-committal tempo marking ('tempo giusto' - the right speed) prove to be parts of an inexorable unfolding. As longer themes develop and the music becomes more elaborate the texture is invaded, perhaps, by the sound of side-drum

and other percussion, creating an intense and disturbing drama. Nielsen biographer Jørgen I Jensen sees this music as intensely personal, the side-drum a symbol of the body in both conflict and harmony with soul and spirit: another point of reference might be the opening of Mahler's Third Symphony, where Nature is evoked through, among other things, frankly military music. Here, as in Nature, there is no particular outcome: Nielsen's martial noise merely fades away to reveal an Adagio section (effectively the slow movement) where, again, viola and bassoons create a sense of warmth and calm. The music builds in intensity until it too is assailed by percussion (which throughout the piece serves to disrupt the music), the movement ending with a kind of clarinet cadenza.

If the first movement is, dark, blind, purposeless nature, the second, as Nielsen said, 'is its counterpole: if the first movement was passivity, here it is action (or activity) which is conveyed.'

The movement begins with energetic music in a fast triple metre - making this section, effectively, a scherzo of the powerful, late-Beethovenian type in which emphatic repetition of note and chords is offset by strong cross-rhythms. The 'scherzo' metre passes effortlessly into the first of two fugal sections, here a terse thematic idea presented by the first violins. A second fugal section follows once the first has worked itself out and run itself down, now in an initially serene Andante in common time. Serenity can't last, of course, and soon enough the scherzo material reasserts itself, pounding its way, not without resistance, to that bright E-flat major close – as far from the opening A-minor shimmer as one can get in tonal music.

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**Timothy Constable** Christine Bishop Chair

# **MUSICIAN PROFILE**

# **Rosemary Curtin**

Viola

John & Jane Morschel Chair

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

Ten years as a permanent member, but my earliest work as a casual musician dates back to the early 90s. I am also a former Fellow (2003).

# Who is your favourite composer to perform?

Beethoven for the enjoyment his music brings to audiences.

# Who is your favourite composer to listen to?

Bach to listen to because there is always more to discover.

# What do you like to do with your spare time?

I am a member of a Ladies Over-35s community football team.
Having grown up spending my weekends playing in youth orchestras it is lovely to finally have time for some team sport and to enjoy the camaraderie it offers. I also love multi-day hikes in the wilderness.

# What was the last book, podcast or TV series you really loved?

Book: Lessons in Chemistry Podcast: Chat 10 Looks 3 TV: Fleischman is in Trouble



# **THANK YOU**

Every gift makes a difference. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of our community, including those who wish to remain anonymous.

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