

20 October 2023  
Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre

# THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY PERFORMS MOZART



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Principal Partner



# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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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.

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# THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY PERFORMS MOZART

HERE'S TO MOZART

**UMBERTO CLERICI** conductor  
**DANIEL DE BORAH** piano  
**MUSICIANS OF THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA**

**JACQUES IBERT (1890–1962)**  
*Hommage à Mozart (1956)*

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)**  
**Piano Concerto No.17 in G, K453 (1784)**

- i. Allegro
- ii. Andante
- iii. Allegretto

INTERVAL

**FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)**  
**Symphony No.5 in B flat, D485 (1816)**

- i. Allegro
- ii. Andante con moto
- iii. Menuetto. Allegro molto
- iv. Allegro vivace

## ESTIMATED DURATION

Ibert – 5 minutes  
Mozart – 30 minutes  
Interval – 20 minutes  
Schubert – 27 minutes

The concert will run for  
approximately one hour  
and thirty minutes.

## COVER IMAGE

Photo by  
Craig Abercrombie

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **UMBERTO CLERICI** conductor

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

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

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

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

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



Umberto Clerici  
Photo by Jay Patel

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **DANIEL DE BORAH** piano

Daniel de Borah is recognised as one of Australia's foremost musicians, consistently praised for the grace, finesse and imaginative intelligence of his performances. His busy performance schedule finds him equally at home as concerto soloist, recitalist and chamber musician.

Since his prize-winning appearances at the 2004 Sydney International Piano Competition, Daniel has given recitals on four continents and toured extensively throughout the United Kingdom and Australia. As a concerto soloist he has appeared with the English Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Tasmanian, Adelaide and Auckland Symphony Orchestras.

An avid chamber musician, Daniel has enjoyed fruitful collaborations with many leading soloists including Vadim Gluzman, Andrew Haveron, Dale Barltrop, Kristian Winther, Baiba Skride, Li-Wei Qin, Nicolas Altstaedt, Umberto Clerici, Roderick Williams, Steve Davislim and Andrew Goodwin. His festival appearances have included the Musica Viva Festival, Adelaide Festival, Huntington Estate Music Festival and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. Daniel is a founding member of Ensemble Q, ensemble-in-residence at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University since 2017.

During his studies Daniel won numerous awards including 3rd Prizes at the 2004 Sydney International Piano Competition, the 2001 Tbilisi International Piano Competition and the 2000 Arthur Rubinstein in Memoriam Competition in Poland. In 2005 he was selected for representation by the Young Classical Artists Trust, London. Daniel is also a past winner of the Australian National Piano Award and the Royal Overseas League Piano Award in London.

Born in Melbourne in 1981, Daniel studied at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, the St. Petersburg State Conservatory and the Royal Academy of Music, London. His teachers have included Zsuzsa Esztó, Mira Jevtic, Nina Seryogina, Tatyana Sarkissova and Alexander Satz. Daniel now lives in Brisbane where he serves as Head of Chamber Music at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University.



Daniel de Borah  
Photo by Darren James

# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## WHAT'S CLASSICAL?

Leopold Mozart nearly burst with pride. No less than the esteemed Joseph Haydn had told him (or so Leopold reported) that 'before God and as an honest man, your son is the greatest composer known to me by person and repute.' But what Haydn said next might ring a little oddly to modern ears, yet neatly encapsulates the values that we associate with classicism in music: 'he has taste and what is more the greatest skill in composition.'

This isn't 'innocent vessel for divine inspiration' stuff, such as we might expect from Romantic artists of the next century. Haydn is stressing that greatness in an artist is predicated on solid understanding of craft and technique, and by extension of generally understood formal process; by 'taste' he means that form and structure regulate the emotional implications of the music' material. Critic Joan Acocella recently noted of Mozart that he 'often gladdens your heart in order, then, to break it, whereupon, in the next movement, he tells us that we have to go on living anyway' – something that typically happens across the three movements of a Mozart concerto.

Mozart's influence remained strong in the first years of the 19th century in Vienna (even though Haydn as still very much alive and had achieved late-in-life rock-star status in Paris and London) and was nowhere stronger than on the young Schubert. Despite the proto-Romanticism of many of his songs, Schubert's instrumental works, even the later ones, work within the canons of Viennese classical form, and indeed 'taste'.

What then of neo-classicism? French (or French resident) composers of the 20th century in particular reacted to the kind of Romanticism practised by Wagner. Some, like Erik Satie, went for extreme simplicity; Ravel decided it was his 'nature to be artificial' and created simulacra of early



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

forms, with one eyebrow raised; Stravinsky discovered in the music of what he thought was Pergolesi a whole new style of his own. Importantly none of these people wrote music that could be passed off as 'classical', but their work drew attention to their own skill and technique and taste.

## IBERT AND MOZART

Jacques Ibert was something of an outsider in French music, despite an illustrious career that included the Directorship of the Paris Opera and Opéra Comique from 1955. He was a direct contemporary of members of the group of supposedly like-minded composers 'Les Six', such as Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud and Arthur Honegger, but while he shared a number of their aesthetic interest was not closely associated with the group so perhaps didn't benefit from its apparent (if illusory) solidarity, the patronage of a critic or the mentorship of Erik Satie.

Astoundingly, however, Ibert had won the Prix de Rome in 1919 immediately after four years of active service as a nurse and stretcher-bearer in World War I. Controversially, given his outsider status, was named Director of the Académie de France in Rome from 1937 (a post he nominally held until 1960), but, when his music was banned by the pro-Nazi Vichy Government, spent much of World War II in Switzerland and rural France, only returning to Paris in 1944.

He composed in most 'classical' genres. His Prix de Rome piece was, naturally, a cantata, but he made early forays into opera, wrote a lot of chamber and solo instrumental music and songs, and, as his 1920 masterpiece *Escapes* shows, he was a master of orchestral texture and line.

Ibert was a natural neoclassicist, so ideal for this tribute piece, the *Hommage à Mozart* which was commissioned by Radio France for the 1956 bicentenary of Mozart's birth.



Jacques Ibert



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Like Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, Ibert's piece does not quote any recognisable music by Mozart – or anyone else – nor indeed does Ibert restrict himself to the 'classical' harmony or the scoring available to an 18th-century orchestra. But the work is very much in the spirit of Mozart and his contemporaries: the bustling main rondo theme falls at first into regular phrases articulated by terse gestures in the lower parts. But Ibert's famous sensitivity to and love for wind instruments soon surfaces, with solo lines for flute, in particular, that set off more strenuous passages of contrapuntal writing, and herald brass writing near the work's centre. The piece never takes itself too seriously for long as the rondo theme frequently returns to remind us of the levity of the situation.

## **WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)**

### **Piano Concerto No.17 in G, K453 (1784)**

David Garrett writes:

Mozart had periods of low creative productivity, but 1784 was not one of them – it is generally agreed that this was the year in which he wrote the greatest number of first-rate works. These include six of his piano concertos (K449, 450, 451, 453, 456 and 459). Beginning in late March, he also composed a different kind of concertante work with piano: the Quintet K452 with wind instruments, intended for his benefit concert in Vienna's Burgtheater in March. He wrote to his father on 10 April: 'For my part, I consider it the best thing I have written as yet in all my life. It has met with extraordinary success.'

On the same day as this letter, Mozart completed a piano concerto, not for himself to play, but for his pupil Barbara (Babette) von Ployer, daughter of an agent of the Salzburg court in Vienna. Her father not only paid him handsomely for it, but hired an orchestra for



Mozart in 1785,  
by Johann Blasio

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

the premiere at the family's summer house in the suburb of Döbling on 13 June 1784. Mozart brought along the composer Paisiello to show off his pupil and his music.

The first movement begins with the same rhythm as four of Mozart's concertos of this time, including K459. But its somewhat march-like character is disguised by the trill on the second note and the semitone it emphasises. The expression here is to be subtle, the mood ever shifting, the harmony often chromatic and hesitating between major and minor, as in the second subject, which is led in by arpeggio figures for the winds, and followed by a dramatic plunge into a distant key. The solo piano subject includes an important winding figure, and is followed by a beautiful transition featuring the winds and especially the bassoon, which plays a large role in this concerto. The development, after a pause, sets off for far shores with great fantasy, seeming to have nothing to do with the themes. A cadenza by Mozart for this movement survives.

The opening of the very expressive slow movement ends with a pause, then the oboe begins a series of almost vocal woodwind phrases – the analogy has often been made with a richly-scored operatic *scena*. Strings and horns, joined by woodwind, conclude this meditation. After the piano has its turn with the music, and reaches the same pause, it continues passionately and surprisingly with a powerful chord introducing G minor. Yet another pause brings a development leading to distant keys. The recapitulation is even more dramatic, but some relief comes with the reappearance of the woodwind phrases in E flat. 'No concerto *andante* of Mozart's,' wrote British musicologist Cuthbert Morton Girdlestone, 'had reached hitherto such fullness...none had penetrated the soul with such breadth and depth.' Two rejected drafts of part of a slow movement have come down to us.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

The finale is based on a bourrée or contredanse theme which Mozart liked so much that he taught his pet starling to sing it, which it did with endearing mistakes. It is followed by five variations, shared between piano and orchestra, of which the fourth is in the minor, and recalls, in its syncopations and chromaticism, the world of the first two movements. After the final variation, and a cadenza, a coda begins which is virtually a new movement, full of the spirit of an *opera buffa* finale, with boisterous and amusing exchanges between piano and winds, and an exhilarating game with the theme, now heard in a fast tempo.

## **FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)** **Symphony No.5 in B flat, D485 (1816)**

At nineteen years of age, Schubert had composed six of his nine symphonies (not to mention several string quartets and masses, numerous short solo pieces and about 300 songs). At this stage, very little of his music had been performed publicly, and, indeed, Schubert would not live to witness a public concert of any of his symphonies. We can take some comfort, though, in knowing that the works were all performed by an enthusiastic ‘pro-am’ orchestra that had grown up around the regular performances of chamber music in the Schubert household. The Fifth Symphony, which appears to have been written at characteristic speed during September 1816, was performed later that year in the home of Schubert’s friend Otto Hatwig, concertmaster of the Burgtheater orchestra. The symphony omits clarinets, trumpets and drums, and requires only one flute, so must reflect the available musical personnel, but Schubert’s deployment of his resources shows that it must have been a fine ensemble. The string section was relatively sizeable, and Schubert himself often played violin or viola.



Franz Schubert

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

The scoring also, of course, recalls that of numerous works from the late 18th century, and, similarly, the symphony's musical manners show a grateful assimilation on Schubert's part of the lessons of Mozart and Haydn. Perhaps under the influence of Antonio Salieri, his teacher at this time, Schubert had less time for Beethoven whose music he felt contained an 'eccentricity which confuses and confounds [the] tragic and comic, sacred and profane, pleasant and unpleasant, heroic strains and mere noise'.

Mozart, however was another thing altogether, with Schubert famously writing:

This day will haunt me for the rest of my life as a bright, clear, and lovely one. Gently, and as from a distance, the magic tones of Mozart's music sound in my ears. With what alternate force and tenderness, with what masterly power did Schlesinger's playing of that music impress it deep, deep in my heart! Thus do these sweet impressions, passing into our souls, work beneficently on our inmost being, and no time, do change of circumstances, can obliterate them. In the darkness of this life, they show a light, a clear, beautiful distance, from which we gather confidence and hope. Mozart! immortal Mozart! how many and what countless images of a brighter, better world hast thou stamped on our souls!

As if making a virtue of necessity, Schubert begins the symphony with four introductory bars (Donald Tovey calls them 'delicious') from his depleted woodwind section with a throwaway scale for the first violins, before launching his disarmingly simple first subject: a skipping sequence of rising arpeggios echoing between first violins and cellos, and then, as the whole sequence is repeated, with elaboration from the winds. By contrast, the second subject theme is a lyrical, slower-moving tune that moves more often by step and with simple

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

harmonic support despite some surprising chord movements. It is at first given out by the strings in four parts, bringing in the woodwinds and horns as the material moves towards the central development section.

Like Mozart, another supreme lyricist, Schubert avoids too lengthy a development of his material, though his themes do provide charming opportunities like the to-and-fro between flute and oboe at its start. Mainly one is struck by the audacious use of dissonance and dramatic harmonic sidesteps which so characterise Schubert's work. And when it comes to the recapitulation – the conventional literal restatement of the first and second subjects in that order – Schubert, unlike most 'classical' composers, doesn't return at once to the main key of B flat, but delays that until the second subject is stated. The sense of homecoming is therefore delayed.

Donald Tovey regarded the main theme of the slow movement, in 6/8, as 'Schubertised Mozart', and indeed it comes close to quoting that of the rondo movement of Mozart's Violin Sonata K377. But leaves Mozart behind in its distinctively Schubertian approach to supple harmonic movement, (as we've seen in the first movement) and its alternation of fully scored passages with those of great delicacy as it develops two alternating themes in increasingly expressive guises.

The Menuetto is in G minor, inviting further comparison with two of Mozart's symphonies, with a central, bucolic trio episode in G major. The finale is a sonata-allegro with a symmetrical pair of seemingly simple themes.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

If the work is a perfect assimilation of classical form and manner, it is also a turning point in Schubert's development, paralleling a change in his life. It was at the time of its premiere that he left his father's house to live a more metropolitan existence in inner-city Vienna, beginning his short adulthood.

The Symphony was one of many works of Schubert's that fell into obscurity until 1867, when, thankfully, two British musicians, Sir George Grove (founding editor of the indispensable music bible *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) and a very young Arthur Sullivan travelled to Vienna with the express purpose of unearthing Schubert's music.

Notes by Gordon Kerry © 2023 and David Garrett © 1991 (Mozart)

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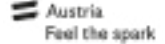
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