

24 May, Wollongong Town Hall  
25 May, Goulburn Performing Arts Centre

# THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY PERFORMS BEETHOVEN

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# 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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2023 REGIONAL TOUR

Wednesday 24 May 7.30pm,  
Wollongong Town Hall  
Thursday 25 May 7.30pm,  
Goulburn Performing  
Arts Centre

# THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY PERFORMS BEETHOVEN

**SIMON BRUCKARD** conductor  
**DIANA DOHERTY** oboe

**EDVARD GRIEG (1843–1907)**

*From Holberg's Time, Op.40*

- i. *Praeludium*
- ii. *Sarabande*
- iii. *Gavotte*
- iv. *Air*
- v. *Rigaudon*

**RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)**

Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra

- i. *Allegro moderato*
- ii. *Andante*
- iii. *Vivace*

**ESTIMATED DURATIONS**

21 minutes, 28 minutes,  
interval 20 minutes,  
26 minutes

The concert will conclude  
at approximately 9.15pm.

**COVER IMAGE**

By Craig Abercrombie

*Richard Strauss' Concerto  
for Oboe and Small  
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**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)**

Symphony No.1, Op.21

- i. *Adagio molto – Allegro con brio*
- ii. *Andante cantabile con moto*
- iii. *Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace)*
- iv. *Finale (Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace)*

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# WELCOME

Welcome to this performance of *The Sydney Symphony Performs Beethoven*.

Ever the hard taskmaster, Beethoven did not allow himself to compose a symphony until he felt he had mastered the form - and master it he did. His powerful and thrilling Symphony No. 1 pays tribute to musical heroes of the past while revolutionising the form itself.

Also an innovator with an eye for the past, Greig's *Holberg Suite* draws inspiration from Norwegian musical styles of the preceding century, while the Sydney Symphony's Principal Oboe, Diana Doherty exemplifies mastery of her instrument as soloist in Richard Strass's *Oboe Concerto*.

Innovation and respect for the past are things we value too – and as the Presenter of Sydney Symphony's Regional Touring, Rex Airlines are delighted that the Orchestra continues to provide vibrant cultural experiences across regional Australia.

The Orchestra has made regular tours to regional centres for many decades, and we are proud that our contribution ensures that audiences all over New South Wales continue to be exhilarated by the world-class musicians of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

We hope you enjoy this performance, and we look forward to your company in the audience or in the air.

**Neville Howell**

Chief Operating Officer, Rex Airlines

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **SIMON BRUCKARD** conductor

Conductor, pianist, and composer Simon Bruckard is one of the busiest young stars of the Australian music industry. He is currently Simone Young's assistant conductor for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He has worked regularly as a member of music staff for Opera Australia and frequently conducts for Victorian Opera. In 2022 Simon conducted *La Bohème* for the State Opera of South Australia with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* for Red Line Productions, *The Selfish Giant* for Victorian Opera and was assistant conductor on *Lohengrin* for Opera Australia.

Commissioned during the lockdown of 2020, Simon's opera *Cassandra* premiered in March 2021. An original work written with acclaimed writer and director Constantine Costi, it was Simon's second opera commissioned by Victorian Opera. Simon conducted the world premiere alongside *Echo and Narcissus* by Kevin March.

Simon's arrangement of *Hansel and Gretel*, commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago, will be performed in May and June of 2021 in Chicago. The arrangement features three separate chamber orchestras across three performance spaces outdoors.

Written with librettist Emma Muir-Smith, Bruckard's youth opera *The Selfish Giant* (based on the short story by Oscar Wilde) premiered to a sold-out audience as part of Victorian Opera's 2019 season. It won a Green Room Award for Musical Achievement - New Australian Opera and was nominated for another three awards. It had a highly successful return season at the Arts Centre Melbourne in May 2022.



Simon Bruckard

# 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.

It had a highly successful return season at the Arts Centre Melbourne in May 2022.



Diana Doherty  
Photo by Christie Brewster

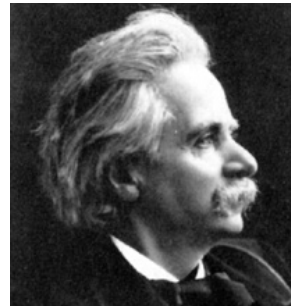
# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Each of the three works on tonight's program has a particular relationship to music of the past. Grieg recreates the world of two centuries previous to celebrate a great Norwegian thinker; Strauss tries to find comfort amid the destruction of World War II by reimagining the spirit of Mozart's brilliance; while Beethoven bids farewell to the 18th century and rings in the next.

## EDVARD GRIEG (1843–1907)

*From Holberg's Time, Op.40*

In 2003 the University of Bergen in Norway instituted a prize to commemorate one of the city's most famous citizens, Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754). The Holberg Prize honours achievements in humanities, science, theology and law – all areas in which this extraordinary polymath excelled. Norway was, at the time of his birth, still a part of the Danish kingdom, and Holberg unsurprisingly spent much of his adult life in the capital, where he held the Chairs of Metaphysics and Logic, Latin Rhetoric and History at the University of Copenhagen. There he wrote scholarly works that remained in use for a century or more, and a number of successful plays. He also spent considerable periods abroad, notably in Rome and Oxford, as is credited as bringing the ideas of the Enlightenment back to Scandinavia. Holberg never married, but out of the considerable fortune he amassed he helped to transform the Sorø Academy from an aristocratic riding school into a new university.



Edvard Grieg



Ludvig Holberg, sculpted by Herman Wilhelm Bissen

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

For the 1884 bicentenary of Holberg's birth, Grieg was commissioned to compose a cantata to be sung at the unveiling of a monument to the great man in Bergen. The resulting *Holberg Cantata* for baritone and male chorus, setting a text by Nordahl Rolfsen, was an onerous duty for Grieg who claimed to be writing 'poor music' but at least having some success fishing. But in a sudden *jeu d'esprit*, he composed a suite for piano of dances of the kind that Holberg (a direct contemporary of Bach and Handel) might have known, though they are far from simple, neo-Baroque pastiche. These were performed at the time of the Holberg festivities in Bergen, and shortly thereafter Grieg made this version for string orchestra, which was published in Leipzig the following year.

The *Praeludium* contrasts a lively galloping rhythm with a simple melody of sighing motif from the violins. The minor key *Sarabande* conforms to the Baroque model of a stately triple-time dance, though the passionately nostalgic harmonies, and warm sound of divided lower strings, might remind us of other works of Grieg. The elegant duple-time *Gavotte* is perhaps closer to the 'source' with its regular phrasing, clear bass line and ornamental flourishes, and features lovely brief solos from the lower voices in the central section. The *Air* – the most substantial of the five movements – is perhaps Grieg's answer to the work known popularly as Bach's 'Air on a G string'; its opening melody is constructed out of long notes that often finish with an ornamental figure while the orchestra provides a gently pulsating economy, occasionally building to an impassioned climax. A central section of fragments passed from one voice to another is punctuated by passages of ecstatic unison, before the opening melody is stated in the cellos and finally by the full band.

The finale, as in any Baroque suite, is a charming, lightweight fast dance – often a gigue. Grieg offers a *Rigaudon*, whose outer sections suggest a kind of cross between a hornpipe and Norwegian Hardanger-fiddle music; characteristically, there is a soulful, melodic central section.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

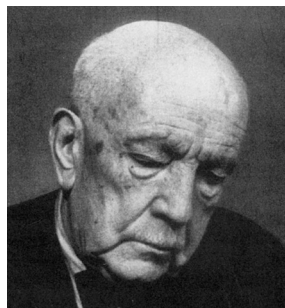
## **RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)**

Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra

As the Allied forces gained control of Germany in 1945, a group of American GIs entered the Bavarian town of Garmisch and began requisitioning villas to accommodate the troops. A US officer, Milton Weiss, knocked on one door and was greeted with the famous line ‘I am the composer of *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Salome*. Leave me alone.’ Weiss responded by placing Strauss’ house off limits to the troops, and even went so far as to provide the household with a number of staples that had been in short supply. Other visitors at this time were less respectful. A German-speaking journalist, Mr Brown (who turned out to be Klaus Mann, son of the novelist Thomas Mann), wrote an article for the American press which accused Strauss of on-going complicity with the Nazis.

In fact, Strauss had fallen from favour years before, when his covert attempts to work with the exiled Jewish playwright Stefan Zweig were discovered; it has been suggested that only Strauss’ international eminence saved him and his family (which included his Jewish daughter-in-law) from a fate worse than disgrace.

Among Milton Weiss’ GIs, however, there was one man with whom Strauss became friendly. In peacetime John de Lancie was principal oboist with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestras, and later became Director of the Curtis Institute. De Lancie asked whether Strauss might compose a concerto for him, to be met with a curt refusal. But, as Strauss’ biographer Michael Kennedy puts it, ‘a seed had been sown.’ Strauss began sketching his oboe concerto not long after. He completed the first draft shortly before he left Garmisch to spend the winter in the relative comfort in Switzerland, and in January 1946 the piece was premiered in Zurich with Marcel Saillet as soloist. John de Lancie, as Norman Del Mar reports ‘had to be content with a nice letter giving him permission to perform the work in America whenever he liked...before it was published’.



One of the last photos of Richard Strauss, 1949

# ABOUT THE MUSIC



Strauss with oboist and GI, John de Lancie.  
Photo © Richard-Strauss-Archive / Richard-Strauss-Institute Garmisch-Partenkirchen

The concerto was written in the same period as Strauss' *Metamorphosen* in which a fragment from Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony becomes the protagonist in a heart-rending drama of dissolution. The concerto, by contrast, in some respects revisits a mythical Mozartean world (and it was the works of classical masters which had the first profound influence on the young Strauss). The work is worlds away from the real or imagined bombast of Strauss' tone-poems. Laid out in the three conventional movements it has a classical poise and economically uses the resources of the small orchestra. But it's not easy: the oboe is required to play for 56 bars straight in the first movement, and is often included in the fuller scored tutti passages. The slow movement reminds us of Strauss the song writer – though interestingly a supremely lyrical passage then becomes the basis for the first unaccompanied cadenza, which in turn takes the music immediately into the rondo-style finale, dominated by a terse two-note figure and running semiquavers.

Behind the apparent serenity of this work its composer was old, ill and depressed. Kennedy quotes from a letter Strauss wrote to his grandsons a few months after the premiere of the Oboe Concerto. 'Art' he says 'is the finest gift of God that exalts over all earthly suffering and our beloved music is the most delightful'.

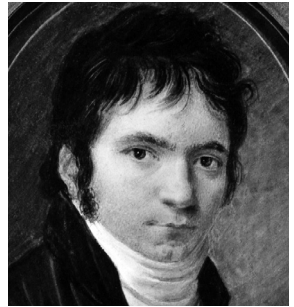
# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)**

Symphony No.1 in C, Op.21

By the end of the 18th century composers like Joseph Haydn had established the conventional form of the classical symphony: two fast-ish outer movements that create drama out of the contrast of themes in different keys, and, for the inner movements a slow, songlike one, and a lively dance in triple time. In his late middle age, Haydn's symphonies enjoyed huge popularity among the growing middle-class audiences in Paris and London. On the way to London once he visited the city of Bonn, and, impressed with the music of a certain Beethoven, invited the young composer to study with him. In 1792 Beethoven travelled to Vienna and between 1795 and 1800 became established as a performer and composer. Their relations were at times strained: Beethoven thought that Haydn gave him insufficient attention, while Haydn (admittedly enjoying his unexpected international celebrity) referred to Beethoven as the 'Grand Mogul'.

Despite the clear elements of rivalry here, Beethoven waited some years before tackling genres that Haydn had made his own, especially the string quartet and symphony. But this is not to say that he was unschooled in how an orchestra works. The writer Lewis Lockwood notes that when still a teenager in Bonn in the 1780s, Beethoven played in an extraordinarily well-resourced court orchestra, and was exposed to the musicianship of some of the most brilliant players of the time. His employer, the Elector Max Franz, was extremely knowledgeable about music and made sure that his band played the latest new work, such as Mozart's late symphonies.



Beethoven in 1802

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Lockwood notes that Beethoven had a file of sketches for a 'C major sinfonia' that dated back to this time, but the work we know as the First Symphony appeared in 1800 at his first big concert in Vienna, a so-called Academy given 'for Beethoven's benefit' (that is, he took the risk and hoped for the profits). The concert began with 'a grand symphony by Mozart', included a new concerto by Beethoven (at that stage a celebrated pianist), some extracts from Haydn's *The Creation* (his former teacher's recent hit oratorio, so good politics and business to include it) one or two other things like the Septet. The concert concluded with the new Symphony, dedicated to Baron Gottfried van Swieten, who was a major patron of music in Vienna, and whose house-concerts of Baroque music had a stunning effect on Mozart and Haydn some time before.



Gottfried van Swieten, dedicatee of the symphony, and major force in Viennese music at the time.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Posterity has tended to see the symphony as a somewhat unadventurous debut (unlike some of the piano music Beethoven composed at the time, which was genuinely radical); Berlioz said of it that 'in a word, Beethoven is not here.' But in fact it is a perfectly well-made example of the classical symphony, bidding 'farewell', as one writer has it, 'to the 18th century' but at the same time laying the groundwork for Beethoven's mature work.

Like much of Haydn's music, it is basically comic: at the very opening, Beethoven uses, three times, a two-chord gesture usually reserved for the *end* of a piece. But we hear some hints of tragedy as the movement progresses. In the slow movement, his counterpoint pokes gentle fun at the 'learned' style, and his minuet – the three-to-a-bar dance – is too fast to dance to. This, as Lockwood says is the most 'modern section of the piece. Beethoven would soon refer to just this kind of movement as a *scherzo*, or 'joke'. The finale begins with a gag, too – a slow introduction seems to having trouble getting off the ground until, suddenly, it is as though a spring had been released.

The 1800 performance was, according to the review the next day, pretty rough, and while Beethoven was praised for his 'art, novelty and wealth of ideas' he was criticised for overusing the woodwind instruments. A more gracious tribute came later in the year from a critic who said that 'this symphony has every right to a place alongside those of Mozart and Haydn.'

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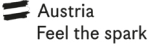
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