

2 & 3 May 2024



A MUSICAL TEMPEST WITH

JOHN BELL

Presenting Partner



“SYDNEY”
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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. 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.

PERFORMING IN THIS CONCERT

FIRST VIOLINS

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Alexandra Osborne
Associate Concertmaster
Lerida Delbridge
Assistant Concertmaster
Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
Jennifer Booth
Sophie Cole
Seroan Danis
Claire Herrick
Georges Lentz
Emily Long
Alexandra Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Léone Ziegler
Robert Smith^o

SECOND VIOLINS

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Principal
Marina Marsden
Principal
Emma Jezek
Acting Associate
Principal
Alice Bartsch
Emma Hayes
Shuti Huang
Monique Irik
Benjamin Li
Maja Verunica
Marcus Michelsen^o
Emily Qin^o
Riikka Sintonen^o

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider
Principal
Carrie Dennis
Principal
Anne-Louise Comerford
Associate Principal
Justin Williams
Assistant Principal
Sandro Costantino
Rosemary Curtin
Jane Hazelwood
Graham Hennings
Stuart Johnson
Felicity Tsai

CELLOS

Kaori Yamagami
Principal
Simon Cobcroft
Associate Principal
Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Kristy Conrau
Fenella Gill
Timothy Nankervis
Christopher Pidcock
Adrian Wallis

DOUBLE BASSES

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Principal
David Campbell
Dylan Holly
Steven Larson
Richard Lynn
Jaan Pallandi

FLUTES

Joshua Batty
Principal
Emma Sholl
Associate Principal
Lisa Osmialowski*
Guest Principal Piccolo

OBOES

Shefali Pryor
Acting Principal
Callum Hogan
CLARINETS
Jonathan Cohen*
Guest Principal
Christopher Tingay
Alexander Morris
Principal Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS

Ben Hoadley*
Guest Principal
Fiona McNamara

HORNS

Euan Harvey
Acting Principal
Marnie Sebire
Rachel Silver
Stefan Grant[†]
Ian Wildsmith[†]
TRUMPETS
Brent Grapes
Associate Principal
Cécile Glémot
Joel Walmsley[†]

TROMBONES

Scott Kinnmont
Acting Principal
Nick Byrne
Christopher Harris
Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Edwin Diefes*
Guest Principal

TIMPANI

Antoine Siguré
Principal

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos
Principal
Mark Robinson
Associate Principal
Timpani/Section
Percussion
Timothy Constable

HARP

Natalie Wong^o
Acting Principal Harp

Bold Principal

^o Guest Musician

^o Contract Musician

[†] Sydney Symphony Fellow

2024 CONCERT SEASON

SYMPHONY HOUR

Thursday 2 May, 7pm

TEA & SYMPHONY

Friday 3 May, 11am

A MUSICAL TEMPEST WITH JOHN BELL

A SPELLBINDING CONCERT OF WORDS AND MUSIC

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor & presenter

JOHN BELL actor

A concert celebrating Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with music inspired by the play alongside excerpts performed by John Bell.

ARTHUR HONEGGER (1892–1955)

Prelude for *The Tempest*, H48a (1923)

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

Incidental music to *The Tempest*, Op.109 (1925)

Suite 2 No.6, *Miranda's Song*

Suite 2 No.2, *Intermezzo*

Suite 1 No.5, *Canon*

Suite 1 No.3, *Caliban's Song*

Suite 2 No.1, *Chorus of the Winds*

Suite 2 No.8, *The Naiads*

HENRY PURCELL (1659–1695) attrib.

***The Tempest, or, The Enchanted Island*, Z631 (c.1695)**

i. Overture

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

Incidental music to *The Tempest*, Op.109 (1925)

Suite 2 No.4, *Prospero's Song*

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

***The Tempest*, Op.18 (1873)**

Pre-concert talk

By Natalie Shea in the Northern Foyer at 6.15 (Thursday only)

Estimated durations

Honegger – 5 minutes

Sibelius – 20 minutes

Purcell – 5 minutes

Tchaikovsky – 20 minutes

The concert will run for approximately 1 hour

Cover image

John Bell

Photo by Pierre Toussaint

Presenting Partner



Principal Partner



CONCERT DIARY

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or call our Box Office on (02) 8215 4600

MAY 2024

Emirates Masters Series
Wednesday 8 May, 8pm
Friday 10 May, 8pm
Saturday 11 May, 8pm
Emirates Thursday Afternoon
Symphony
Thursday 9 May, 1.30pm
Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIFTH SYMPHONY

INTOXICATING MELODIES

Indulge in the intoxicating richness of Romanticism with these performances of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No.5, with its passionate melodies and beautiful orchestration.

GLINKA Ruslan and Ludmilla: Overture
PROKOFIEV Piano Concerto No.2
TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No.5

HAN-NA CHANG conductor
BEHZOD ABDURAIMOV piano



Great Classics
Saturday 18 May, 2pm
Sunday Afternoon Symphony
Sunday 19 May, 2pm
Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

JOYCE YANG PERFORMS GRIEG'S PIANO CONCERTO

EXPANSIVE LANDSCAPES

Grammy-nominated pianist Joyce Yang brings her 'vivid and beautiful playing' (*New York Times*) to a program that excites on every level.

Missy MAZZOLI These Worlds in Us
GRIEG Piano Concerto
DVOŘÁK Symphony No.9, From the New World

KEVIN JOHN EDUSEI conductor
JOYCE YANG piano



International Pianists in Recital
Monday 20 May, 7pm
City Recital Hall

JOYCE YANG IN RECITAL

KALEIDOSCOPIIC COLOURS

Joyce Yang's performances have been praised as 'extraordinary' and 'kaleidoscopic' (*Los Angeles Times*), and for this solo recital the Grammy-nominated pianist has selected an evocative and thrilling program that demonstrates the full range of her virtuosity and 'wondrous sense of colour' (*San Francisco Classical Voice*).

TCHAIKOVSKY The Seasons
RACHMANINOV
Prelude Op.32 No.10
Prelude Op.32 No.2
Prelude Op.23 No.4
STRAVINSKY arr. Agosti The Firebird Suite
MUSSORGSKY Pictures at an Exhibition

JOYCE YANG piano



WELCOME

Welcome to **A Musical Tempest with John Bell**, a spellbinding combination of words and music centred on Shakespeare's great play *The Tempest*.

Written towards the end of his career, *The Tempest* creates a complex, magical and supernatural world where music plays a role more akin to a moving force or a character than an ornamentation.

The Tempest has been a rich source of inspiration for composers over hundreds of years, from Purcell to Sibelius, Honegger and Tchaikovsky, all of whom are represented in this marvellous program of words and music curated by conductor Umberto Clerici and performed by John Bell and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

UBS is delighted to be supporting this unique experience – one that combines the outstanding talents of our finest Orchestra with those of John Bell, one of Australia's finest actors; certainly our greatest Shakespearean.

As the Presenting Partner of **A Musical Tempest with John Bell**, UBS joins the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in working together to create new ways of connecting intentions, people and ideas for a better world.

Both UBS and the Orchestra understand and value the importance of change and transformation, especially when combined with excellence in implementation.

These are not only some of the challenges of our current time, they are two of the great themes of *The Tempest*.

As the character Caliban says, 'Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not' can provide respite, challenge us and inspire us.

I hope you enjoy the music of Purcell, Honegger, Sibelius and Tchaikovsky, animated by the excerpts from *The Tempest* and given life by John Bell in this distinctive and fascinating concert performance.

Michael Marr
Head of Wealth Management
UBS Australia



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor & presenter

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 Musicverein, 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

JOHN BELL actor

John Bell is one of Australia's most illustrious theatre personalities. Award winning actor, acclaimed director, risk-taking impresario and torch-bearing educationalist, Bell has been a key figure in shaping the nation's theatrical identity as we know it over the past 50 years.

After graduating from The University of Sydney in 1962, Bell worked for the Old Tote Theatre Company, all of Australia's state theatre companies and was an Associate Artist of Britain's world-famous Royal Shakespeare Company.

As co-founder of Sydney's highly influential Nimrod Theatre Company, Bell presented many productions of landmark Australian plays, including David Williamson's *Travelling North*, *The Club* and *The Removalists*. He also initiated an Australian Shakespeare style with Nimrod productions such as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Macbeth*.

In 1990, Bell took on an even greater challenge, founding The Bell Shakespeare Company. In 25 years as Artistic Director, his productions as director included *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming Of The Shrew*, *Richard 3*, *Pericles*, *Henry 4*, *Henry 5*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Wars of The Roses*, *Measure For Measure*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *As You Like It*, as well as Goldoni's *The Servant Of Two Masters*, Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*.

Meanwhile his roles as an actor for Bell Shakespeare included Hamlet, Shylock, Henry V, Richard III, Macbeth, Malvolio, Berowne, Petruccio, Leontes, Coriolanus, Prospero, King Lear, Andronicus, and Jaques.

Bell also played the title role in two co-productions with Queensland Theatre Company: *Richard 3* and Heiner Müller's *Anatomy Titus: Fall Of Rome, A Shakespeare Commentary*. In addition, he has directed Puccini's *Tosca* (2013), Bizet's *Carmen* (2016) for Opera Australia,

as well as a production of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* that toured Australia under the banner of Oz Opera.

Bell's unique contribution to national culture has been recognised by many bodies. He is an Officer of the Order of Australia and the Order of the British Empire; has an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the Universities of Sydney, New South Wales, and Newcastle; and was recognised in 1997 by the National Trust of Australia as one of Australia's Living Treasures.

In 2003, the Australia Business Arts Foundation also awarded Bell the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Cultural Leadership Award.

In 2011, Bell established The Bouddi Foundation for the Arts on NSW's Central Coast to support young artists of every kind.

As an actor and director, his many awards include a Helpmann Award for Best Actor (*Richard 3*, 2002), a Producers and Directors Guild Award for Lifetime Achievement and the JC Williamson Award (2009) for extraordinary contribution to Australia's live entertainment industry.



John Bell
Photo by Pierre Toussaint

ABOUT THE TEMPEST

SYNOPSIS

Prospero, the Duke of Milan, is consumed by the study of magic and neglects affairs of state. His ambitious brother Antonio stages a coup, putting Prospero and his baby daughter Miranda in a leaky boat and pushing them out to sea. They land on an island with only one human inhabitant, Caliban, son of the late witch Sycorax. The other being on the island is Ariel, an airy spirit who was imprisoned by Sycorax for refusing to carry out her abhorrent commands.

Prospero releases Ariel but then indentures him as a servant with a vague promise of liberty sometime in the future. Having taken his island from him, Prospero and Miranda set out to 'civilise' Caliban by taking away his language, religion and culture. When Caliban attempts to violate Miranda the furious Prospero imprisons him and makes him his slave.

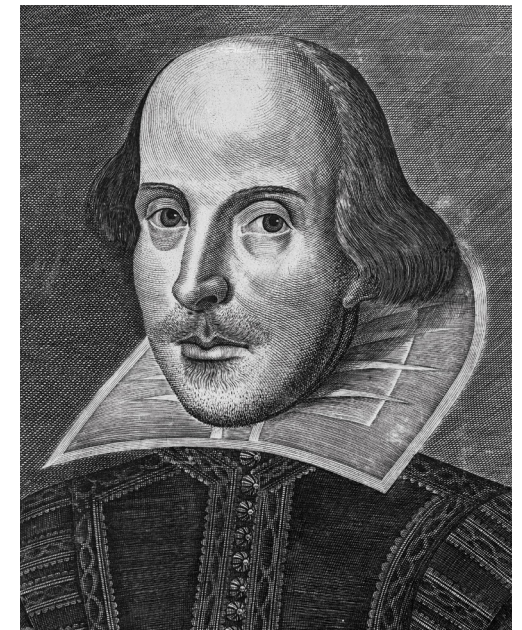
Twelve years later a ship draws near the island. On it are Antonio and his ally Alonso, King of Naples, with his son Ferdinand. Prospero commands Ariel to whip up a tempest which blows the ship ashore. Ferdinand, wandering the island in search of his father, comes across Miranda and the two immediately fall in love. In order to test Ferdinand's sincerity Prospero enslaves him and puts him to hard labour.

Meanwhile Caliban is discovered by two other of the ship's company: the drunken butler Stephano and his sidekick, the clown Trinculo. They plan to take Caliban back to Naples and exhibit him as a freak. Meanwhile they ply him with alcohol to make him subservient and plot to murder Prospero and take over the island. Ariel alerts Prospero to their plot.

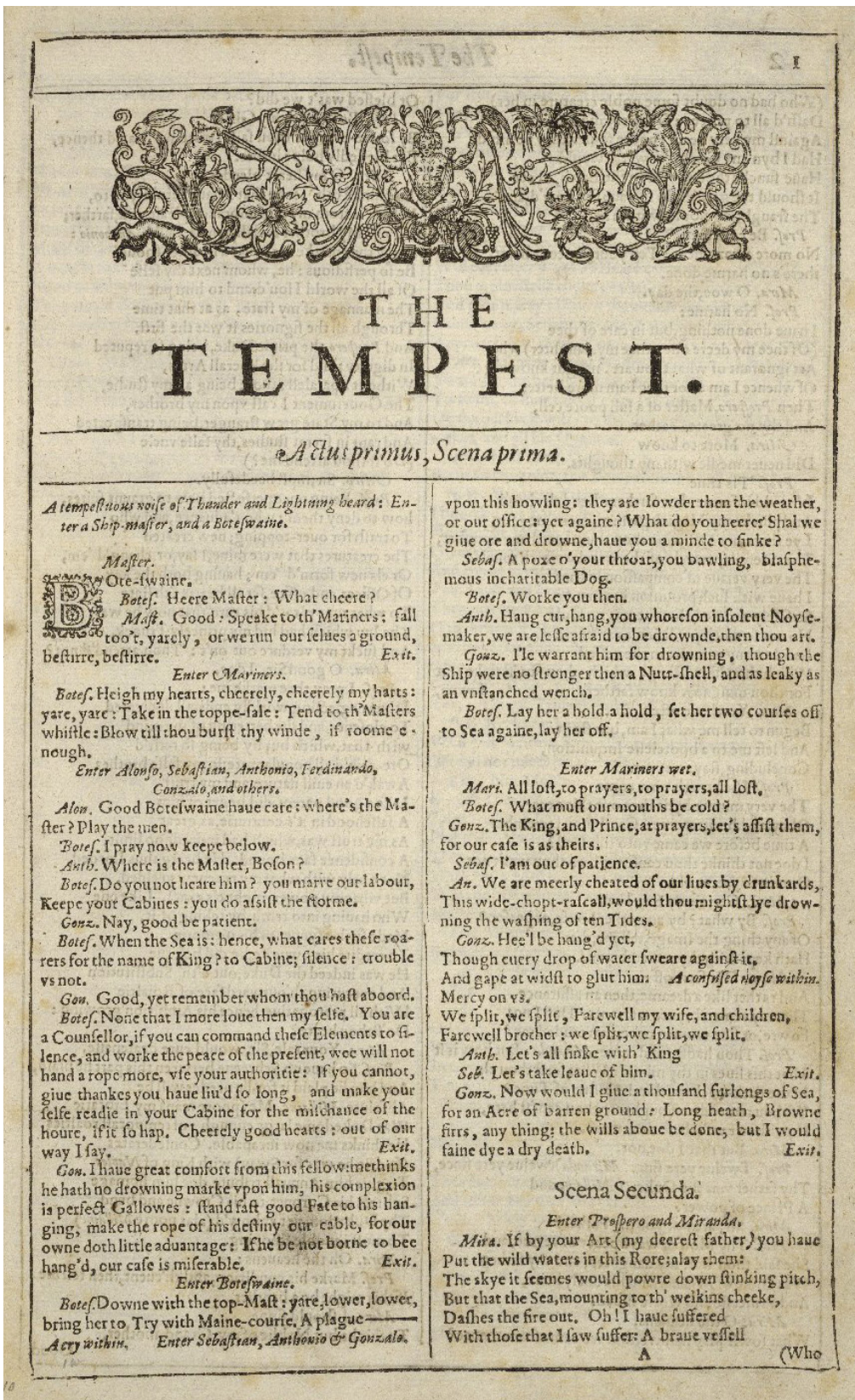
Prospero entices all his enemies into a magic circle and is about to punish them for their crimes against him. But his better angel, Ariel, persuades Prospero that only by forgiveness can he retain his humanity. Prospero releases and forgives his enemies, renounces his magic, frees Ariel and Caliban and entrusts Miranda to Ferdinand. Prospero is now free to leave his island and rejoin the mainstream of humanity.

A magical, musical and lyrical play, *The Tempest* may be read in various ways, including a sardonic critique of colonialism and a saga of one man's voyage to self-discovery.

John Bell © 2024



The 1623 Droeshout portrait of William Shakespeare



ABOUT THE MUSIC

SHAKESPEARE AND MUSIC

When it opened in 1599, London's Globe, like any other public playhouse, was a low-tech theatre. With its roof open to the elements there wasn't much chance of sophisticated lighting cues; its tiny stage (which often contained some of the A-reserve seats) could be transformed into fair Verona or Birnam Wood only by a poet's language. The one special effect at Shakespeare's disposal was music: a song like 'Come away, Death' in *Twelfth Night* lets the drama stop and breathe; trumpet calls ('sennets' and 'alarums') might transport the audience to the fields of Agincourt. And when Shakespeare wants us to understand that a miraculous transformation has taken place – a statue restored to life as a woman, four noble lovers waking from what they think was a crazy dream, a prince cast ashore on a magical desert island – he does so by calling for music.

Shakespeare was as magical for music as music was for Shakespeare, at least when the temper of the times allowed it. The mere handful of Shakespeare-derived musical entertainments from the later 17th century includes John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and the unconscionably bowdlerised version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which became Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*.

The Enlightenment had little use for a poet of verbal ambiguity, supernatural visitations and unhappy endings, though Beethoven acknowledged the influence of *Romeo and Juliet* on the slow movement of his String Quartet in F, Op.18 No.1, and a – sadly – abortive project of an opera on *Macbeth* seems to have left its mark on the so-called 'Ghost' Trio Op.70 No.1.

With the rise of Romanticism in the 19th century, however, the Bard was back, combining as he does the 'gothic' world of *King Lear*, *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, the only momentarily requited passion of *Romeo and Juliet*, the magical realms of the 'Dream' or *The Tempest*. Incidental music such as Mendelssohn's spawned its own genre, with Claude Debussy writing (admittedly only a few minutes of music) for stagings of *King Lear* and Jean Sibelius for *The Tempest*. In the 20th century, Russian interest in Shakespeare grew hugely during the Soviet period, with the music that Dmitri Shostakovich contributed to the burgeoning film industry including an astonishing incidental score to *Hamlet*. William Walton had a gift for capturing Shakespeare as filmed – in *Henry V* (1944-1955), *Hamlet* (1948) and *Richard III* (1955) – by Laurence Olivier.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

MUSIC IN *THE TEMPEST*

Written and performed (we think) around 1611, *The Tempest* has long been considered to be, if not Shakespeare's last play, then at least something close to his last word on the theatre, with the central character of Prospero, who abjures his 'rough magic' in the play's final moments, standing in for the Bard bidding farewell to the stage.

Even by Shakespeare's standards, it is a play heavily reliant on music. Prospero's servant Ariel is attended by music when charming the grieving Ferdinand, when setting a banquet before the treacherous Neapolitans and when snatching it away again. The much more earthbound Caliban hears music all about him, saying:

*the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs,
that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand
twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears,
and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again.*



Arthur Rackham's image of Caliban and the 'thousand twangling instruments.'

The Masque of Ceres in Act IV naturally requires song and dance, and in the last act of magic before Prospero gives up his power he says:

*But this rough magic
I here abjure, and, when I have required
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.*

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

ARTHUR HONEGGER (1892–1955) Prelude for *The Tempest*, H48a (1923)

In 1920 a French journalist, Henri Collet, somewhat arbitrarily pronounced a group of youngish composers, then active in Paris, as 'Les Six'. (He was, of course, one-upping the 'Five', or 'Mighty Handful' of Russian composers that had been anointed as such by, also by a critic, in 1867.)

There was little, really, to link the composers apart from their age and their various ways of avoiding a simple replication of the sound of Debussy and Ravel. Of the three whose work, for better or worse, has retained currency, Francis Poulenc cultivated a sometimes melancholy, but coolly ironic neoclassicism, and later wrote music of deep religious feeling; Darius Milhaud looked to jazz and other non-European musics to create works of sometimes madcap energy, but Arthur Honegger, speaking like the Swiss Calvinist he was, once said that:

I do not worship the fair, or the music-hall, but chamber and symphonic music for its essence of solemnness and austerity. I place such importance in the architecture of music that I would never want to see it sacrificed for reasons of literary or pictorial order...I am not trying to return to a harmonious simplicity, like some anti-impressionist musicians. On the contrary, I think that we should use the harmonic material created by the school of thought that preceded us, but in a different way...Bach uses elements of tonal harmony in the same way that I want to use the superposing modern harmonies.

Honegger's orchestral music, then, is always rigorously structured, even when it celebrates such aspects of modernity as a locomotive (*Pacific 231*) or team sport (*Rugby*). Those works, which established his reputation, date from the early 1920s,

as does his massive incidental music-cum-oratorio *King David* and his extensive incidental music for a French-language version of *The Tempest* staged at the Paris Odéon in 1923.

The short Prelude became so popular that, as Paul Griffiths has noted, the composer sought to play down its descriptive nature, insisting that he wanted to create "the impression of a mathematical acceleration of rhythm while the movement itself slowed", achieving this by composing "a sort of big diversified chorale, strewn with counterpoint in the manner of JS Bach."

Listeners could be forgiven for thinking it sounds like a musical storm at sea.

Honegger's Prelude for *The Tempest* is scored for flute, piccolo, oboe, cor anglais, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon and contrabassoon; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and one tuba; four percussionists and strings.

This is the first time the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has performed this piece.



Arthur Honegger in 1928

ABOUT THE MUSIC

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957) Incidental music to *The Tempest*, Op.109 (1925)

As the great Finnish conductor Osmo Vänskä has noted, Sibelius 'was very good at incidental music, and had a genuine understanding for drama. And he was extremely good at writing short pieces of music, especially in *The Tempest*. He knew exactly what to do.'

Sibelius' music for *The Tempest* appeared not long after Honegger's, when in 1925 he composed some 35 numbers for a production of the play at the Court Theatre in the Danish capital, Copenhagen. (Sibelius wrote a perhaps surprising amount of music for the stage.)

Realising, perhaps, that the days where a theatre could routinely include more than an hour of newly-commissioned music played by a full orchestra were numbered, Sibelius arranged 19 numbers from the incidental music into two suites.

Sibelius wrote little surviving music after *The Tempest*: we have his evocation of the primeval forest in the tone-poem *Tapiola*, and some of that work's austere and occasionally frightening mood can be heard in *The Tempest*. Beside this, we also hear Sibelius' ability to economically create a scene or character.

In this selection we hear first an interlude that depicts Miranda in her beauty and innocence, with gently pulsating ostinatos and an arching three-note figure, that passed between violins and viola before flowering in a more extended tune.

An intermezzo, in a mournful minor key and featuring strings and harp, evokes the sorrow of Alonso, King of Naples, who believes his son Ferdinand to have drowned.

In the Canon, the 'monster' Caliban, Alonso's drunken butler Stephano, and the clown Trinculo plot the murder of Prospero, and sing a canon (a contrapuntal form that includes classics such as 'Row, Row, Row your boat') 'top a tune played by a picture of Nobody', that is the invisible Ariel.

'Caliban' is a portrait of the 'monster' who, as we have seen has a poetic nature, and is, moreover, the true owner of the island.

The 'Chorus of the Winds' comes as Ariel describes the tempest: the music, in almost minimal fashion, evokes the calming winds of the aftermath.

The 'Dance of the Naiads' comes from the 'Masque of Ceres', a glittering and elegant entertainment, conjured by Prospero, which dissolves when he remembers the plotting of Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban.

Finally, the brief 'Intrada' shows Prospero, wearing his magician's robe for the last time, while ordering his captives freed and promising to abjure his magic.

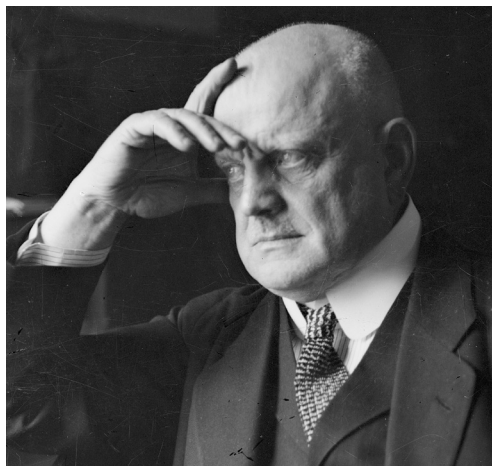
Sibelius derived two suites of music from a larger work, *The Tempest (Stormen)*, Op.109.

The first suite is scored for three flutes (the second and third doubling piccolo), two oboes, three clarinets in A (the first doubling E flat clarinet, the third doubling B flat bass clarinet) and two bassoons; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion; harp and strings.

The second suite is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets (the second doubling bass clarinet) and two bassoons; four horns; timpani and percussion; harp and strings.

The first public performance of the full work took place in Copenhagen on 15 March 1926.

The Sydney Symphony gave the Australian premiere of the Prelude to *The Tempest* under Walter Susskind in June 1995, the only previous occasion on which the Orchestra has performed any of this work.



Jean Sibelius in 1925

ABOUT THE MUSIC

PURCELL, THE RESTORATION AND THE ENCHANTED ISLE

By a wonderful irony, opera in Britain received a huge boost from the action of Cromwell's Puritan government during the Interregnum of 1649-1660. The godly Calvinists regarded theatres with extreme suspicion and repressed them; creative thinkers like Sir William Davenant (1606-1668) realised that shows – naturally, of high moral purpose – 'writ in verse and performed in recitative music' (and in the safety of private dwellings) were not covered by a blanket ban on spoken-word theatre. In 1656 he presented *The Siege of Rhodes* at his London address, Rutland House, in which his own libretto was set to music by a team of some five composers including Henry Lawes and Matthew Locke, a 'papist' who had somehow survived in Cromwell's regime and who was later mentor to the young Henry Purcell. This work launched the particularly British form often known as 'semi-opera'.

With the Restoration of the monarchy (and the theatres) Davenant resumed writing plays, and in 1667 collaborated with John Dryden on *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island*, an adaptation for contemporary tastes of Shakespeare's play. This in turn formed the basis for an 'operatic' treatment by Thomas Shadwell. Shadwell's version was created by him and another team of five composers led by Matthew Locke, now Composer to the 24 Violins of the King.

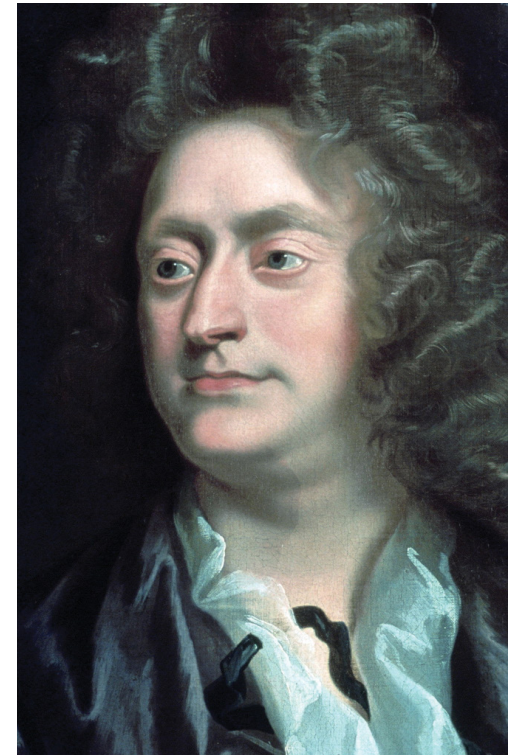
In 1712 there was a revival of the Davenant-Dryden show with a score, probably composed around 1695, that was long thought to have been the work of Locke's protégé, Purcell. There is some dubiety about this, but the score is an often-charming example of the musical manners of the time. The short Overture is a kind of 'French overture', beginning

with a solemn, slow section, given twice, in common time and full of the distinctive dotted rhythms of ceremonial music; this is contrasted with a fleet, 3/4 section built out of contrapuntal ingenuity.

The music for *The Tempest, or, The Enchanted Island*, attributed to Henry Purcell, is scored for flute, two oboes, two bassoons and strings.

It is thought to have been premiered in 1712, for the London revival of the 1667 adaptation by John Dryden and William D'Avenant of Shakespeare's original play.

This is the first time that the Sydney Symphony has performed this music.



Henry Purcell in 1695, painted by John Closterman or in his studio.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

TCHAIKOVSKY AND *THE TEMPEST*



Tchaikovsky in 1875

Where Honegger, Sibelius and ‘Purcell’ wrote music that could, and did, do service in the theatre, Tchaikovsky was moved to imitate the model of Liszt and create a symphonic- or tone-poem that responds to the story in purely musical terms. Unlike classical symphonic design, which to Romantic composers often sounded like old bottles full of new wine, symphonic poems could take the events and shape of a play or novel to give composers a formal map, or program, to guide them and an opportunity for dramatic and colourful effects.

For Tchaikovsky’s *The Tempest*, composed in 1873, the program was provided by the critic Vladimir Vasilievich Stasov. It was Stasov who coined the term *Kuchka* – rendered as ‘The Five’ or ‘Mighty Handful’ – to describe the group of Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Cui and Mussorgsky. As we have noted, Henri Collet was imitating Stasov in creating ‘Les Six’ in Paris.

Tchaikovsky was not one of the Five but was friendly enough – at first – to write works to programs provided by Balakirev and, as here, their mentor Stasov. Tchaikovsky would later lose patience with the Five’s intransigent rejection of Western musical techniques that might dilute their ‘Russianness’ but left them, in his view, technically impoverished.

Stasov also suggested Gogol’s *Taras Bulba* and Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* as subject for symphonic poems but wiser counsels prevailed. As suggested by him, though, Tchaikovsky’s work begins and ends with an evocation of the sea. A magisterial chorale represents Prospero. Ariel, spirit of the air, obeying Prospero, raises a storm of whirling strings, winds and emphatic brass.

Stasov and Tchaikovsky had argued about whether a musical tempest was ‘essential to depict the fury of the elements in an overture written on a piece where this incidental circumstance serves simply as the point of departure for all the dramatic action?’ Stasov won. The ship is wrecked, bringing Ferdinand to the enchanted isle. The first timid feelings of love of Miranda and Ferdinand is heard in a characteristic theme. Ariel reappears, and Caliban has contrasting music. The lovers succumb to their passion with the love theme reaching ecstatic heights. Prospero deprives himself of his magic power and leaves the island, and we hear the calm sea as at the start.

Stasov was delighted with the result, writing to Tchaikovsky that:

Your *Tempest* is such a delight! How magnificent!... Caliban, Ariel, the love scene—all these belong among the *loftiest* of musical creations. In both love scenes—what beauty, what languor, what passion! All this is incomparable. Then the magnificently wild and savage Caliban, the ethereal and playful Ariel—these are all most excellent.

Notes by Gordon Kerry © 2024 Instrumentation and history by Hugh Robertson

Tchaikovsky’s *The Tempest* is scored for three flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets and two bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani, two percussionists and strings.

It was premiered in Moscow in December 1873, with the orchestra of the Russian Musical Society conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in August 1979 under conductor William Steinberg, and most recently in March 1993 under Jansug Kakhidze.

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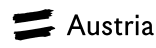
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