

7–10 August 2024

AUGUSTIN HADELICH

PERFORMS MENDELSSOHN'S VIOLIN CONCERTO



«SYDNEY»
«SYMPHONY»
«ORCHESTRA»

Principal Partner



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world’s finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world’s great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Orchestra’s first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. 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

Andrew Haveron

Concertmaster

Harry Bennetts

Associate Concertmaster

Alexandra Osborne

Associate Concertmaster

Lerida Delbridge

Assistant Concertmaster

Fiona Ziegler

Assistant Concertmaster

Sun Yi

*Associate Concertmaster
Emeritus*

Brielle Clapson

Sophie Cole

Sercan Danis

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Léone Ziegler

Benjamin Tjoa^o

Katherine Lukey*

SECOND VIOLINS

Kirsty Hilton

Principal

Marina Marsden

Principal

Emma Jezek

Acting Associate Principal

Wendy Kong

Acting Assistant Principal

Alice Bartsch

Victoria Bihun

Monique Irik

Nicole Masters

Maja Verunica

Marcus Michelsen^o

Emily Qin^o

Riikka Sintonen^o

Dominic Azzì†

Rain Liu†

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider

Principal

Anne-Louise

Comerford

Associate Principal

Justin Williams

Assistant Principal

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Stuart Johnson

Justine Marsden

Felicity Tsai

Leonid Volovelsky

Stephen Wright^o

Harry Swainston†

James Wannan*

CELLOS

Catherine Hewgill

Principal

Simon Cobcroft

Associate Principal

Leah Lynn

Assistant Principal

Kristy Conrau

Fenella Gill

Timothy Nankervis

Elizabeth Neville

Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis

Eliza Sdraulig^o

DOUBLE BASSES

Kees Boersma

Principal

Alex Henery

Principal

David Campbell

Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Richard Lynn

Jaan Pallandi

Benjamin Ward

FLUTES

Emma Sholl

Acting Principal

Carolyn Harris

Laura Cliff†

OBOES

Shefali Pryor

Acting Principal

Callum Hogan

Alexandre Oguey

Principal Cor Anglais

CLARINETS

Francesco Celata

Acting Principal

Clare Fox*

Alexander Morris

Principal Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie

Principal Emeritus

Fiona McNamara

Noriko Shimada

Principal Contrabassoon

HORNS

Samuel Jacobs

Principal

Euan Harvey

Acting Principal

Marnie Seibre

Rachel Silver

Emily Newham^o

WAGNER TUBAS

Peter Luff*

Guest Principal

Wagner Tuba

Greg Stephens*

Stefan Grant†

Abbey Edlin*

TRUMPETS

David Elton

Principal

Brent Grapes

Associate Principal

Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Jonathon Ramsay*

Guest Principal

Scott Kinmont

Acting Principal

Nick Byrne

Christopher Harris

Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Steve Rossé

Principal

TIMPANI

Antoine Siguré

Principal

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos

Principal

Timothy Constable

HARP

Louisic Dulbecco

Principal

Julie Kim*

Natalie Wong*

Bold Principal

* Guest Musician

^o Contract Musician

† Sydney Symphony

Fellow

2024 CONCERT SEASON

Emirates Masters Series

Wednesday 7 August, 8pm

Friday 9 August, 8pm

Saturday 10 August, 8pm

Emirates Thursday Afternoon Symphony

Thursday 8 August, 1.30pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

AUGUSTIN HADELICH PERFORMS MENDELSSOHN'S VIOLIN CONCERTO CONDUCTED BY SIMONE YOUNG

SIMONE YOUNG conductor

AUGUSTIN HADELICH violin

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64 (1844)

i. Allegro molto appassionato –

ii. Andante –

iii. Allegro non troppo – Allegro molto vivace

INTERVAL

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824-1896)

Symphony No.8 in C minor (1887 version ed. Nowak)

i. Allegro moderato

ii. Scherzo: Allegro moderato – Trio: Langsam

iii. Adagio: Feierlich langsam, doch nicht schleppend

iv. Finale: Feierlich, nicht schnell

This work, published by MWV, has been supplied by Clear Music Australia Pty Ltd as the exclusive hire agents in Australia.

Pre-concert talk

By Sam Weller in the
Northern Foyer at 7.15pm
(12.45pm Thursday)

Estimated durations

Mendelssohn – 28 minutes

Interval – 20 minutes

Bruckner – 78 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately two hours

Cover image

Augustin Hadelich

Photo by Luca Valentina

Principal Partner



WELCOME

Welcome to **Augustin Hadelich performs Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto**. Led by Chief Conductor Simone Young, this program is a highlight of the Orchestra's 2024 season.

The Mendelssohn Violin Concerto is, justifiably, one of the most loved and most famous of all violin concertos in the repertoire, requiring a soloist of the highest calibre to give it its full expression. It is all the more exciting to hear Augustin Hadelich, one of the most brilliant violinists of today, play this extraordinary work by Mendelssohn.

Described as 'technically dazzling' (*New York Times*); with 'pinpoint intonation and tone... masterly' (*LA Times*), Chief Conductor Simone Young describes his playing as something beyond virtuosic.

Simone Young is herself one of the world's foremost exponents of the music of Bruckner. In the 200th anniversary year of his birth, Simone Young will be conducting Bruckner's work across the globe – this concert is Sydney's opportunity to hear her celebrated interpretation of Bruckner, with a bold original version of his astonishing Eighth Symphony. There is no substitute for hearing this thrilling work in live performance, and in the hands of Simone Young its nuance, sweeping breadth and drama are deeply memorable.

It is wonderful that the Orchestra is able to invite international artists of Hadelich's calibre as regular guests, and at Emirates we are very proud that our partnership enables this for Sydney audiences.

Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have shared one of the most enduring and impactful partnerships in Australia's performing arts landscape, a partnership we hold in the highest esteem.

It is a cornerstone of our program of support for music, arts and culture around the world, enriching the lives of the communities we serve and an embodiment of our commitment to Australia.

We are delighted by our continuing partnership, which connects audiences to the most extraordinary local and international talent.

Please enjoy this riveting concert.



Barry Brown
Divisional Vice President for Australasia
Emirates



YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64 (1844)

Mendelssohn's great concerto is in three movements, though played without a break. Unusually for its time there is no orchestra introduction to the first movement, but there is an introductory section to the finale. The work's key of E minor lets Mendelssohn exploit the bright high E string and dark, lowest G. The Concerto grew out of a life-long friendship with violinist Ferdinand David.

It was premiered in 1845, the year the Potato Famine began in Ireland, John Henry Newman went over to Rome, and former slave Frederick Douglass published his autobiography. Contemporary music included Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto, and Verdi's *Joan of Arc*.



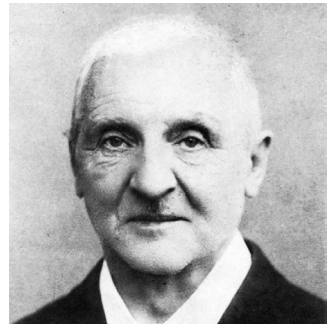
Portrait of Felix Mendelssohn (1833) by Eduard Magnus (1799-1872).
Source: Berlin State Library.

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824-1896)

Symphony No.8 in C minor (1887 version ed. Nowak)

Bruckner's Eighth Symphony is a massive four-movement piece that follows architectural lines similar to much of his work. A lengthy opening movement begins in almost nothingness, proceeding through contrasting chapters of heroic noise and delicate nature imagery. There follows a faster scherzo (the first time he put this movement second, not third) full of titanic laughter, then the longest Adagio ever written to date, full of emotional intensity, and a finale that miraculously brings together the disparate threads of the earlier movements.

This version was completed in 1887, though never performed in Bruckner's lifetime. That year saw the foundation of Yamaha Organ Manufacturing, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and the first release of Glenfiddich single malt. Other music included Verdi's *Otello*, Brahms' Double Concerto, and Borodin's *Prince Igor*.



Photograph of Anton Bruckner in 1890, by Austrian photographer Anton Huber (1852-1936).



Simone Young. Photo by Peter Bevan-Brew

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIMONE YOUNG AM conductor

Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor, Simone Young, has previously held the posts of General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Her Hamburg recordings include the *Ring Cycle*, *Mathis der Maler* (Hindemith), and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. She has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Vienna, Berlin and Hamburg State Opera companies.

This year Simone Young will make her highly-anticipated Bayreuth Festival debut conducting Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. She also returns to the Berlin State Opera (*Chowanschina* and *La Fanciulla del West*), Vienna State Opera (*Die Fledermaus* and Kurtag's *Fin de Partie*) the Berlin, Los Angeles, Stockholm, Oslo and Goeteborg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Dallas and Washington National Symphony Orchestras, the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra.

2023 saw the commencement of her Sydney Symphony Orchestra *Ring Cycle* with the presentation of *Das Rheingold*, which played to sold out audiences, standing ovations and 5-star reviews. A second feature-length documentary film, *Knowing the Score*, about Simone Young and her career was also internationally released in 2023.

Simone Young is regularly invited by the world's great orchestras and has led the New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Stockholm, New Japan, Helsinki and Dresden Philharmonic Orchestras; the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte

Carlo; Orchestre de Paris; Staatskapelle Dresden; the BBC, San Francisco, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, and National Symphony Orchestra. In Australia she has conducted the West Australian, Adelaide, Melbourne and Queensland Symphony Orchestras and the Australian World Orchestra.

Highly sought-after by the world's leading opera houses, Simone Young has appeared at the Vienna State Opera (*Peter Grimes*), The Metropolitan Opera New York (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Opera Nationale de Paris (*Parsifal* and *Salome*), Bavarian State Opera, Munich (*Tannhäuser*), Berlin State Opera (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and Zurich Opera (*Salome*).

Simone Young's many accolades include Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera, the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna, a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, Helpmann Award and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

AUGUSTIN HADELICH violin

Augustin Hadelich is one of the great violinists of our time. Known for his phenomenal technique, insightful and persuasive interpretations and ravishing tone, he appears extensively around the world's foremost concert stages. He has performed with all the major American orchestras as well as the Berliner Philharmoniker, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Concertgebouworkest, London Philharmonic Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo and many other eminent ensembles.

In the 2023 summer festival season, Augustin Hadelich is giving concerts at the BBC Proms, in Aspen, La Jolla, Verbier, Tsinandali, Bucharest and in Salzburg. At the Salzburger Festspiele he makes his much-anticipated debut with the Wiener Philharmoniker. Another highlight includes his residency at the Konzerthaus Berlin, where he explores various concert formats. For the 2023/24 season opening, Hadelich performs the German premiere of Donnacha Dennehy's Violin Concerto, composed for him, together with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin as part of the Musikfest Berlin. He is soloist at the season opening concerts of the Orchestre National de France and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. Important debuts take him to Staatskapelle Dresden, Orchestra dell' Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and the NDR Radiophilharmonie. Besides his orchestra engagements, he gives solo recitals in Italy, Germany and the USA.

Hadelich's catalogue of recordings covers a wide range of the violin literature. In 2016 he received a Grammy Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo for his recording of Dutilleux's Violin Concerto *L'Arbre des songes*. A recording of Paganini's 24 Caprices was released by Warner Classics in 2018. This was followed in 2019 by the Brahms and Ligeti concertos, his second album as an exclusive artist for the label. He received an Opus Klassik Award in

2021 for his recording *Bohemian Tales* with Dvořák's Violin Concerto, recorded with the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks. His recording of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas was also enthusiastically received by the press and nominated for a Grammy. In his latest recording, *Recuerdos*, he devotes himself to works by Britten, Prokofiev and Sarasate, together with the WDR Sinfonieorchester.

Hadelich, a dual American-German citizen born in Italy to German parents, studied with Joel Smirnoff at New York's Juilliard School. He achieved a major career breakthrough in 2006 by winning the International Violin Competition in Indianapolis. His accomplishments continued with the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2009, a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship in 2011, an honorary doctorate from the University of Exeter (UK) in December 2017, and being named Instrumentalist of the Year by *Musical America* in 2018.

In June 2021 Augustin Hadelich was appointed Professor in the Practice of Violin to the faculty of the Yale School of Music. He plays a violin by Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù from 1744, known as 'Leduc, ex Szeryng', on loan from the Tarisio Trust.



Photo by Suxiao Yang

ABOUT THE MUSIC

WHO WAS FELIX MENDELSSOHN?

Mendelssohn was born into a milieu of enormous cultural and material privilege. He was a grandson of celebrated philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, and the friends of his family in Mendelssohn's childhood and early adult life reads like a *Who's Who* of German philosophy and literature; he would later enjoy friendships with everyone from Queen Victoria through Berlioz to the brothers Grimm.

Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg but grew up in Berlin, where Abraham became indispensable in financing the Prussian war effort against Napoleon. Soon after, Prussia issued an emancipation act aimed at giving Jewish citizens greater rights. (In fact, the family of Mendelssohn's mother, Lea, had, owing to his great-grandfather's distinction in banking, been given 'all the rights of Christian citizens' as early as 1791, and Moses Mendelssohn's family had been given the protection of the Prussian king after the philosopher's death.) Despite the family's assimilation and social status, however, the four Mendelssohn children were all secretly baptised in the Lutheran church in 1816, and in 1822 Abraham and Lea converted. It was at this time that they adopted the less Jewish-sounding Bartholdy as a surname.



Portrait of Felix Mendelssohn by German painter Johann Joseph Schmeller (1796-1841).

Felix and his sister Fanny showed early talent for music. Both had the finest available teachers, and Abraham Mendelssohn initiated a series of Sunday concerts at the family home where Felix and Fanny would perform with paid members of the Royal Court Orchestra. For these concerts Felix wrote his celebrated string sinfonias, five early concertos, and five *Singspiele* (opera with spoken dialogue) that were fully staged at the family home. Fanny, despite promise comparable to Felix's, was discouraged by Abraham from considering music as a career. Her husband, painter Wilhelm Hensel, was more supportive of her gifts and Fanny remained a sounding-board for Felix until her death, a few months before Felix's own in 1847.

In 1821 the premiere of Weber's *Der Freischütz* was a revelation to Mendelssohn. The supernatural element, a staple of the new Romantic aesthetic, was also to be found in the work of the brothers Grimm as well as in new translations of Shakespeare by German writers Schlegel and Tieck, whose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* inspired Mendelssohn in part of his Octet of 1825 and of course his celebrated Overture in 1826.

In 1823 the teenaged Mendelssohn received a present from his maternal grandmother, Bella Salomon: a score, copied out at her request by Mendelssohn's violin teacher, of JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. It changed Mendelssohn's life, and, in doing so, indirectly changed the way that 'art' music would be presented from then until the present day. The beginning of 1829 saw Mendelssohn's performance of his version of the *St Matthew Passion*, still occasionally done in Bach's last home-town, Leipzig, but elsewhere unknown. The experience of the *St Matthew Passion*, and of hearing still-popular works like *Messiah* in England, sparked his determination to revive the oratorio as a contemporary genre.

One of his many European tours took him Scotland, which would inspire the *Hebrides Overture* and *Scottish Symphony*.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE CONCERTO

David Garrett takes up the story of the Concerto:

The late Hans Keller, one of the most stimulating and opinionated of writers on music, used to say that the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto was the greatest concerto ever written for the instrument. Many violinists share this view, and Jascha Heifetz said: 'If it is conceivable that the music of Mendelssohn can die, then all music can die.'

This concerto is one of the best-loved of all Mendelssohn's works. Its main rival for top ranking among violin concertos is probably Beethoven's, and even in Mendelssohn's day the comparison was already being made. The English pianist-composer William Sterndale Bennett wrote of this E-minor Violin Concerto: 'There seems to me to be something essentially and exquisitely feminine about it, just as there is something essentially and heroically masculine in the Beethoven Violin Concerto.'

Mendelssohn has a reputation in some quarters for facility, even for unthinking note-spinning. The Violin Concerto gives the impression of spontaneous invention, but only through the art which conceals art. Ferdinand David, the leader of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Mendelssohn, helped the composer with the technicalities of the solo part of his concerto, and gave the premiere in 1845. As early as 1838 Mendelssohn wrote to David: 'I should also like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor runs in my head, the beginning of which gives me no peace.' Over the next six years Mendelssohn peppered David with questions about technical difficulties, and finished, "Thank God this fellow is through with his Concerto," you will say. Excuse my bothering you, but what can I do?"



1846 portrait of German violinist Ferdinand David (1810–1873) by Johann Georg Weinhold (1813–1880).

Mendelssohn's thoughtful approach to the challenge of writing this concerto produced a number of structural innovations. The first was his solution to the problem of the opening orchestral tutti (already tackled by Beethoven in his last two piano concertos). Mendelssohn abolishes it completely: the violin soars in with the impassioned and lyrical first subject after just a bar and a half of orchestral accompaniment. Another happy find is the single open G-string note which the soloist sustains as a bass to the beautifully contrasted second subject. The next formal innovation shows how the virtuosity of the writing for violin is subordinated to the overall musical purpose: the cadenza, fully written out, occurs in the middle of the movement, and concludes with the recapitulation – a magical moment, as the orchestra states the main theme while the violin continues with figuration from the cadenza.

The bassoon note sustained from the last chord of the first movement, linking it with the second, is usually explained as Mendelssohn's attempt to persuade the audience not to applaud at this point. It is such a subtle device that he can scarcely have expected it to succeed in that purpose. What it does do is make the music continuous, and emphasise the change of key to C major for the songful slow movement,

ABOUT THE MUSIC

with its more agitated middle section. Mendelssohn again shows his concern for overall unity in writing an introduction to the last movement, with a theme for violin and strings a little reminiscent of the first movement – the soloist leads the listener in a typically Romantic manner through the unfolding ‘story’ of the concerto.

The last movement has many affinities with Mendelssohn’s ‘fairy-scherzo’ vein, first proclaimed in his teenage masterpieces the *Octet* and the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* Overture. It is a movement of entrancing contrasts: between the opening call-to-attention, the substantial second subject, and the violin’s curving lyrical theme while the orchestra plays with scraps of the main theme. The whole concerto reveals how completely Mendelssohn, contrary to received opinion, could recapture the fresh inspiration of his youth in his full musical maturity.

Felix Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; two horns and two trumpets, timpani, strings and violin soloist.

It was first performed in Leipzig on 13 March 1845, with Ferdinand David as soloist. Mendelssohn was scheduled to conduct but fell ill, and instead the baton was taken up by Danish composer Niels Gade.

Reflecting its standing in the repertoire, the Sydney Symphony has performed this concerto numerous times in its history. Our first performance of the complete work was in June 1940, when Georg Schnéevoigt conducted Yehudi Menuhin as soloist.

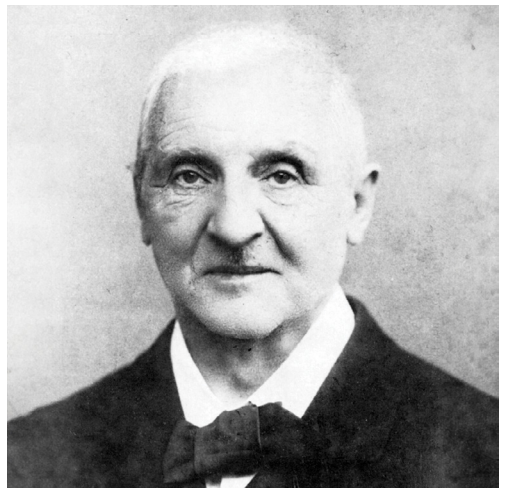
Other notable performances led by guest conductors include Thomas Beecham conducting Lyndall Hendrickson (1940); John Farnsworth Hall/Robert Pikler (1946); John Barbirolli/Ernest Llewellyn (1951); Walter Susskind/Percy Hart (1953); Bernard Heinze/Christian Ferras (1956); Kurt Woess/Ruggiero Ricci (1957); Georges Tzipine/Johanna Martzy (1961); Maxim Shostakovich/György Pauk (1975); Georg Tintner/Donald Hazlewood (1984); Jean Fournet/John Harding (1990); Yakov Kreizberg/Christian Tetzlaff (1993); Gilbert Varga/Gil Shaham (1995); Hugh Wolff/Isabelle Faust (2009) and Charles Dutoir/Arabella Steinbacher (2013).

Performances led by our Chief Conductors include Nikolai Malko/Alfredo Campoli (1960); Willem van Otterloo/Kurt Guntner (1974); Louis Frémaux/Donald Hazlewood (1981); Vladimir Ashkenazy/Sayaka Shoji (2011) and David Robertson/Christian Tetzlaff (2015).

Our most recent performances were in 2022, when Gemma New conducted Ray Chen.

WHO WAS ANTON BRUCKNER?

Born in Upper Austria in 1824, Bruckner’s worldview was naturally informed by the conservative, Catholic, village society of which he was a product. Despite his quaintly rustic manners and seeming naiveté, he was, like his father, (and indeed like Schubert) a trained schoolmaster; his musical schooling, too, was considerable. Experience as a boy chorister and organist – not merely in what was required for a village organist – led to his first mature work, a Requiem, in 1848, but he had the wisdom and humility to take lessons well into adulthood. He worked as organist at the Abbey of St Florian, and later the Cathedral in Linz, and in 1855 the 30-something Bruckner imposed seven years’ silence on himself while he submitted to pedagogue Simon Sechter’s strict regime in harmony and counterpoint. (Afterward, one of the examiners was heard to say ‘he should have examined us’.) Bruckner took his diploma from the Vienna Conservatory in 1861, after which conductor Otto Kitzler introduced him to the techniques of orchestration and formal design found in contemporary music. Bruckner’s ‘cathedrals in sound’, as the shopworn cliché has it, are the product of a well-informed, as well as original, musical intelligence, and a deeply-held religious conviction.



Photograph of Anton Bruckner in 1890, by Austrian photographer Anton Huber (1852–1936).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

There are, incidentally, numerous unfortunate misperceptions about Bruckner and his work, one of the more pervasive being that he wrote the same symphony nine times. One can, of course, point to stylistic correspondences between works and even to quotations of one by another. The same can be said of Mahler, with whom Bruckner is so often, and erroneously, bracketed. The point is that in both cases the differences between works are considerable, and these differences contribute to the richness of experience contained in each composer's output.

In 1868 Bruckner moved to Vienna from Linz in order to advance his career, and despite those famously provincial manners and dress, his extreme diffidence, and certain eccentricities he had some success in all fields: as an organist, and especially in improvising, he was internationally feted; within a decade he held posts at the Vienna Conservatorium and University, at in the Royal Chapel; and his choral and instrumental works started to receive attention.



The organ of St Florian's Abbey, Linz, where Bruckner worked and is laid to rest.

In the late 1860s Eduard Hanslick, Vienna's most powerful and feared music critic, was desperate to anoint the next major symphonist. Mendelssohn had been dead for twenty years and Schumann for ten, and those composers had cultivated Hanslick's ideal of music as an abstract structure of 'sounding forms set in motion'. The Music of the Future was being noisily proclaimed by Wagner and Liszt, in works

freighted with literary and other extra-musical ideas; Brahms, whom Hanslick would soon champion as heir to Beethoven and Schumann, was yet to produce his first symphony. Hanslick, on the basis of Bruckner's first two symphonies (the official First and the *Nullte*, or 'annulled'), wondered if he might be the one. But then Bruckner nailed his colours to the Wagnerian mask and Hanslick's loathing knew no end.

ABOUT THE SYMPHONY

'Fame', John Milton reminds us, 'is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise... to scorn delights and live laborious days'. Fame came late in life to the clear-spirited Bruckner: the period of his maturity begins around 1864 but nearly twenty laborious years were to pass before he was established as a major figure, but when he achieved fame it was on an international scale.

The catalyst for Bruckner's success was his Seventh Symphony, which (despite Hanslick's view of it as 'sick and perverted') justly remains one of Bruckner's most beloved works. Within two years of its premiere in Leipzig under Arthur Nikisch, the Seventh had been performed in various cities in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and the United States. The credit for the work's success rests largely with the conductor Hermann Levi, remembered by music history as the first conductor entrusted with the score of Wagner's *Parsifal* (despite his being Jewish). Levi conducted the second performance of the Seventh in Munich, where the critical response remained one of the great triumphs of Bruckner's life. Not only did Levi go to great lengths to organise performances of works like the Seventh and Bruckner's mighty setting of the *Te Deum*, he also took an active role in raising funds for the publication of a number of Bruckner's works. In gratitude, Bruckner referred to Levi ever afterwards as 'my artistic father', and when the Eighth Symphony was finally completed

ABOUT THE MUSIC

after some three years' work, Bruckner sent it to the conductor with the words, 'Hallelujah! At long last the Eighth is finished, and my artistic father must be the first to know about it. May it find grace!' Sadly for Bruckner, the work failed to find grace with Levi. Despite the latter's great love and respect for both the composer and his work, it appears that Levi simply could not make sense of the vast scale of the piece, at least in the original version that we hear in this performance.



Hermann Levi, whose rejection of the 1887 version precipitated a crisis in Bruckner's life.

The rejection, delivered as tactfully as possible by a third party, was a crippling blow to Bruckner's confidence (though rumours of his being suicidal seem overblown), yet it provided the spur for him to completely, and in some cases radically, revise the score. Accordingly, where in many other instances the well-meant advice or editorial action of disciples has obscured Bruckner's intentions, the 1890 version we now possess of the present work is, except at one or two questionable points, definitive.

THE ORIGINAL VERSION

The original version is notably longer than the more familiar one, and called for a slightly smaller band – double rather than triple woodwinds for instance, though the original uses instruments such as piccolo and contrabassoon. This, incidentally, reminds us that Bruckner's orchestral palette is usually much closer to Brahms' than to Wagner's. What is immediately striking about the sound-world of this version is its comparative leanness, offering a sometimes spare, angular account of the processes that drive the music on, in contrast to the rich upholstery of the 1890 version.

Levi's inability to comprehend the Eighth stems in part from its complete difference from its predecessor. The Seventh is a profoundly Apollonian work, with its nobly expansive themes and richly glowing orchestration: even the grief of the Adagio, occasioned by Wagner's death, is typically balanced by the rising, flowing acceptance of the second theme. The Eighth Symphony, by contrast, dramatises a journey from doubt to affirmation. Its subject is therefore its own process, and in the course of its unfolding the work inevitably explores musical metaphors of uncertainty, pain and ultimately reconciliation hitherto not found in Bruckner's oeuvre. 'The essence of Bruckner', according to the British composer Robert Simpson in a thoughtful monograph of that title, 'lies in a patient searching for pacification... I mean [the music's] tendency to remove, one by one, disrupting or distracting elements, to seem to uncover at length a last stratum of calm contemplation.' Not surprisingly, Simpson regards the Eighth as the finest example of this type.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

HOW IT UNFOLDS

Unease is established at the very outset of the first movement. As in the majority of Bruckner's symphonies, a soft string tremolo provides the neutral backdrop for the thematic material, but something is not quite right: the strings' note is an F, an unusual one with which to start a piece in C minor where C (the tonic) or G (the dominant) would be more likely. 'F' implies a descent into flat keys, an impression borne out by the fragmentary, unstable theme which gradually emerges underneath, and which stresses such 'foreign', or chromatic notes as G flat and D flat. The tonic key is in fact never strongly established until the appearance of its dominant, G major, for the second theme, a calmly rising scalar figure which uses Bruckner's favourite rhythm: two beats followed by a slow triplet. Following his usual practice, Bruckner introduces a third theme, here a question and answer motif in horns and woodwinds. The main body of the movement elaborates elements of this material in a music which is often turbulent and which fulfils the foreboding of the opening. In this movement, the most notable element of the 1887 version that was much altered in the revision is the climax of the coda or final section which continues in C major and at full force until the movement's close. Only later did Bruckner introduce the soft, exhausted and fragmentary music which Bruckner himself described as a 'death-watch'.



A statue of Deutscher Michel, whom Bruckner said he represented in the Scherzo.

The Scherzo, which, for the first time Bruckner places before the Adagio, fulfils something of its classical function as a lightener of the mood, while, as Simpson remarks, revealing the energy behind the turbulence of the first movement. A sonata design, its principal key is C minor, but its contrasting episodes in major keys, and its relentless rhythm like a titanic laugh, or to borrow Simpson's phrase, 'celestial engine' give it a pervasive good humour. In fact in 1891 – so, after the major revision – Bruckner described the theme in a letter to conductor Felix Weingartner as representing 'Deutscher Michel', an early 19th century personification of strong, simple German manhood. The trio section, in A flat, was completely recomposed in the revision but like the more better known 1890 version is in 2/4 time (though without the pervasive pizzicatos) and with a simple folk-like tune given first by the violins.

The Adagio – even after Bruckner edited it for the 1890 version – is considerably longer than either of its predecessors, and is without doubt one of his greatest single movements. 'Solemnly slow, yet not dragging', its key is D flat, a half step above the key of the whole work (and a relationship much loved by both Bruckner and Schubert, a composer with whom comparison is instructive).

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Also Schubertian is the fact that the first full tutti here is in A major – effectively a third away from D flat. This moment, with its rising theme crowned by a distinctive quintuplet figure is the central pillar of the movement's structure. It is notable for seeming harmonically immobile at each appearance.

In the 1887 version the movement reaches its climax in C major – the same key as the noisy end of the first movement and again of the symphony as a whole, and it has been suggested by scholars such as John Williamson that 'when Bruckner revised the loud C major ending of the first movement, he changed the climax of the Adagio for the same reason, to maximize the impact of the C major climax to the Finale.' This climactic moment, moreover, is notable for being only time Bruckner uses triangle and cymbals.

Before the Adagio's climax, Bruckner explores some of the tragic landscapes hinted at in the first movement, but with deliberate and inexorable exorcism of the pain as the movement progresses. One of the most beautiful touches, however, makes its first appearance immediately after the first orchestral tutti. A brooding, low string figure is answered by a rising scalar figure that reaches a glowing apogee, only to be suddenly transformed into high string chords outlined by harp arpeggios.



Caricature of Bruckner in 1886.

In the finale, according to Simpson, 'Bruckner finds the essence of his nature'. (In the 1891 letter to Weingartner Bruckner dispenses some unhelpful imagery of a ritualised meeting between the Austrian Emperor and the Tsar, complete with Cossacks and fanfares and a return visit by Deutscher Michel...) With a tempo marked 'Solemnly, not fast', the Finale reaches out through a variety of themes, keys and moods, through brass chorales and resonating silences as it were to embrace the world. Perhaps part of the resistance to Bruckner results from expecting his music to behave like 'sonata form' or other traditional aspects of the symphony. Here his practice is most perfectly actualised and vindicated: immensely slow moving (but inexorable) tonal movement underpins the structure, as it does in Wagner. The finale is not the eruption of energy, but the discovery of something elemental. With Olympian serenity, the music moves towards its close where Bruckner produced a wonderful image for cosmic unity: the last pages of the score contain superimposed thematic material from the fourth and from each of the previous movements harmonised in a radiant C major chord and then gathered into a mighty unison figure.

Bruckner's Symphony calls for a large orchestra, with three flutes (the third doubling piccolo), three oboes, three clarinets and three bassoons, the third doubling contrabassoon; eight horns (four doubling on Wagner tubas), three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion, three harps and strings.

It was premiered by the Vienna Philharmonic under conductor Hans Richter on 18 December 1892 at the Musikverein in Vienna.

The Sydney Symphony's first performance of this work did not come until 1979, under Pinchas Steinberg. Indeed it has only been performed three times since: under Niklaus Wyss in 1982, then-Chief Conductor Stuart Challender in 1990, and most recently under Gunther Herbig in 2001.

David Garrett © 1998
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How long have you been playing with the Sydney Symphony?

21 (and a half) years!

What has been the highlight of your Sydney Symphony career so far?

It's impossible to choose! Some of the operas have been huge highlights: *Elektra* with Simone Young, *Peter Grimes* with David Robertson, *Pelléas and Mélisande* with Dutoit. Also touring the incredible halls in Japan with Ashkenazy. But mostly I think it's the people. I love these musicians.

Who is your favourite composer to perform, and why? Who is your favourite composer to listen to, and why?

Ravel, because of his incredible use of colour. Bach, for so many reasons, but in part because of the wealth of extraordinary music that he left us lucky oboists to explore. (But) Also Debussy, Haydn, Britten, Mahler, Mozart, Rameau, Sibelius, Puccini... All both to play and to listen to. It's all about the goosebumps really!

What is the best piece of advice you ever received – either musical or general?

'Luck is being prepared for opportunities when they come your way'. It's something David Hasselhoff said on *Australian Idol* many many years ago and has stuck with me to this day!

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Can I have two? One would start with coffee and a sunrise, a walk along the coast with good friends, yummy lunch, maybe a bit of time to read or have a nap, and then play a concert that has that electric feeling when everything comes together, followed by a glass of champagne with my fabulous colleagues and the view of the harbour. The other would also start with coffee and a sunrise, but then I'd pack up my tent, walk all day, climb a mountain, take in a view that can only be found with my own two feet, set up my camp again and fall asleep exhausted and content.

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