

12 & 13 April 2024

# MENDELSSOHN'S OCTET

Presenting Partner



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# WELCOME

Welcome to **Mendelssohn's Octet**, an enchanting concert in the cozy ambiance of the Utzon Room at the Sydney Opera House.

Handpicked Wines is thrilled to be a Series Presenting Partner of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's **Cocktail Hour with Handpicked Wines** series.

At Handpicked, we recognize the transformative power of passion and artistry.

Our wines, crafted with both technical precision and creative flair, enhance and elevate experiences – much like the exquisite music performed by the Orchestra, which uplifts the spirit and moves the soul.

Mendelssohn's Octet stands as a masterpiece of ingenuity. Originally composed as a birthday tribute, its instrumentation, emotional depth, and sheer joyousness established it as one of Mendelssohn's earliest triumphs.

A century earlier, Georg Philipp Telemann paved the way for musical innovation. Bridging the Baroque and early Classical eras, his prolific output and profound influence on Mendelssohn are evident in the delightful composition featured in tonight's program.

Traditionally performed in intimate settings among friends and family, this music is perfectly suited for the Utzon Room's intimacy and charm.

Our partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra reflects shared values of creativity and technical excellence, as well as a dedication to providing extraordinary experiences.

I hope you thoroughly enjoy tonight's performance of the Mendelssohn Octet, accompanied by the handpicked selection of wines curated to complement this captivating music. Cheers to an unforgettable evening!

**William Dong**  
**Managing Director**  
**Handpicked Wines**

# 2024 CONCERT SEASON

## COCKTAIL HOUR WITH HANDPICKED WINES

Friday 12 April, 6pm  
Saturday 13 April, 6pm

Utzon Room,  
Sydney Opera House

# MENDELSSOHN'S OCTET SPARKLING STRINGS

**GENEVIEVE LANG** presenter

**GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN** (1681-1767)

**Concerto for four violins in D major, TWV 40:202 (c.1720)**

- i. Adagio-Allegro
- ii. Grave
- iii. Allegro

**LERIDA DELBRIDGE** violin

**MONIQUE IRIK** violin

**WENDY KONG** violin

**BENJAMIN LI** violin

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN** (1809-1847)

**Octet for strings in E flat major, Op.20 (1825)**

- i. Allegro moderato ma con fuoco
- ii. Andante
- iii. Scherzo: Allegro leggierissimo
- iiii. Presto

**HARRY BENNETTS** violin

**ALEXANDRA OSBORNE** violin

**ALICE BARTSCH** violin

**VICTORIA BIHUN** violin

**CARRIE DENNIS** viola

**ROSEMARY CURTIN** viola

**KRISTY CONRAU** cello

**ELIZABETH NEVILLE** cello

## Estimated durations

Telemann – 6 minutes

Mendelssohn – 33 minutes

The concert will run for  
approximately 45 minutes

## Cover image

Principal Cello Catherine Hewgill  
Photo by Reza Bagheri

Principal Partner



# YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

## COMPOSERS

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### **GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681-1767)**

Concerto for four violins in D major, TWV 40:202

Composed around 1720. Notable contemporary events including the end of the Northern Wars between Sweden and Denmark, and the bursting of the South Sea Bubble. In English literature, Jonathan Swift is at work on *Gulliver's Travels*, and Alexander Pope completes his translation of Homer. JS Bach writes some of his most important solo instrumental work, while Handel composes works such as *The Harmonious Blacksmith*.

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Telemann's short Concerto is in the four conventional movements of the Baroque 'church sonata' (slow-fast-slow-fast.) However it looks ahead to the Classical period by not using a keyboard instrument to provide a continuo (a reinforcement of the bass line, with some harmonic elaboration in the right hand).

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### **FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)**

Octet for strings in E flat major, Op.20

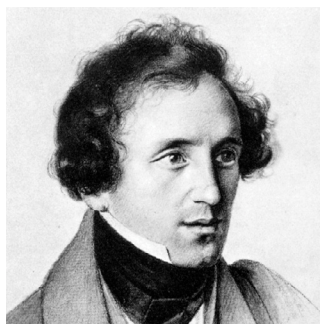
Composed and premiered in 1825. That year sees the accession of Tsar Nicholas I in Russia, the opening of the Erie Canal in the USA and the foundation of Brisbane in the colony of Queensland. William Blake is working on his illustrations to the Book of Job, and work begins on Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin.

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The 16-year-old Mendelssohn wrote this Octet after many smaller works for string ensemble, but here asked for an 'orchestral style'. A work in the classical vein, it is in four substantive movements, but in some respects anticipates the distinctive textures and colours of the composer's Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which he would soon produce.



Portrait of Telemann (c.1750) by Valentin Daniel Preisler (1717-1765), based on a lost painting by Ludwig Michael Schneider (c.1710-1765).



Portrait of Felix Mendelssohn (1834) by Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow (1788-1862). Courtesy Berlin State Library.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Leipzig, in the eastern German region of Upper Saxony, has been a culturally important city for centuries. Its university dates from the turn of the 15th century, making it a centre for learning – notably in the law. In 1519 the university hosted a debate in which Martin Luther took part, two years after famously producing his incendiary theses on the papacy. The occasion was a fiasco, yet within 20 years Luther's Protestantism had been established as the official religion of the Duchy of Saxony. The impressive abbeys and formerly Catholic churches of Leipzig became bastions of Lutheran practice, and this meant the cultivation of the new German liturgy, especially its music.

In the 18th century, Leipzig would become the city of JS Bach, who spent much of his professional life there, working for the St Thomas School (which provided choirs for the two major churches in the city) and conducting the Collegium musicum – a pro-am orchestra that gave public concerts of secular music at one of the city's coffee houses. In both capacities of liturgical and secular composer he was succeeding his friend and colleague Georg Philipp Telemann, who would be godfather to Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel.

After the precocious childhood that produced such works as the Octet, Felix Mendelssohn would settle in Leipzig in 1853. Aged 26 he became director of the Gewandhaus, the city's orchestra, in 1835 – like Telemann developing the practice of public concert-giving. He was immensely supportive of his composer contemporaries, of course, but also led the charge for the revival of Leipzig's Baroque heritage, notably the music of Bach. Having converted to Lutheranism early in his life, in his later work he would cultivate religious music steeped in Bach's example. In 1843 Mendelssohn founded the Leipzig Conservatorium, with incalculable benefit to western music.



Portrait of Telemann (c.1750) by Valentin Daniel Preisler (1717–1765), based on a lost painting by Ludwig Michael Schneider (c.1710–1765).]

## **GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681-1767)**

Concerto for four violins in D major,  
TWV 40:202 (c.1720)

Telemann was born in the Saxon city of Magdeburg – where his father was a Lutheran pastor – and seemed destined for a career in the law. At Leipzig, however, his legal studies were shelved when his musical abilities became known and commissions – for liturgical music in particular – began to flood in. His career took him to courtly positions in Poland and Saxony, and in 1712 he took up the position of director of music for the city of Frankfurt as well as Kapellmeister at the city's principal church. A decade later he moved to Hamburg – a 'Free City', or, effectively, a city-state – where he became music director of the city's major churches and Kantor of Johannes Lateinschule, which involved composing liturgical music and training the choristers. From 1722 Telemann was

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

ensconced more or less happily – though there was a scandal involving his wife, a Swedish officer and crippling gambling debts – in Hamburg. He did call the city’s bluff by applying for a post in Leipzig that year (managing to get an increase in salary) but remained in Hamburg for the rest of his life, making occasional forays to places like Bayreuth – one of the four cities that saw premieres of his 40 operas. Telemann was the most prolific composer of the Baroque period (if not of all time), with concertos and orchestral suites each numbering over a hundred alongside his 1000-odd cantatas and 46 settings of the Passion. He also, as American writer Sam Morgenstern has pointed out, ‘founded or revived the *Collegia musica* in Leipzig, Frankfurt and Hamburg, thereby inaugurating concert life as we know it’.

The four ‘concertos’ for four violins, TWV40, were probably composed around 1720, just before Telemann moved to Hamburg (though some scholars regard TWV40:204 as spurious). They are unusual in having no continuo instrument, and given their small scale are really more properly considered as sonatas. The design favoured by Telemann is what the Baroque knew as the *sonata da chiesa* or church sonata. This does not indicate that they were written for liturgical use however, merely that they begin with a slow movement, and have abstract movement headings, rather than the secular dance-form titles of *sonata da camera* (chamber sonata) movements.

The opening Adagio with its long-short-long gesture is very brief, serving to introduce the glittering Allegro where Telemann makes much use of imitation between the voices. The Grave movement has great pathos for its brevity, but this in turn is swept away by a final burst of energy in the second Allegro.

## FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Octet for strings in E flat major, Op.20 (1825)

The young Mendelssohn was one lucky composer. The son of a wealthy Jewish banker (who later converted to Lutheran Christianity), Mendelssohn grew up in Berlin where his father’s financing of the war effort against Napoleon made him a valued member of the community. Berlin was also a major centre for the performing arts and Felix keenly absorbed all the music he could in concert halls and opera houses.



A drawing of Mendelssohn in 1821, aged 12, by Carl Joseph Begas (1794-1854)

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Keen to support the musical talents of his children, in 1822 Abraham Mendelssohn initiated a series of Sunday concerts at the family home where Felix and his sister Fanny would perform with paid members of the Court Orchestra (the forerunner of the Berlin Philharmonic). Among the works that Felix wrote for these concerts between 1822 and 1824 were his 13 string sinfonias, studies in different aspects of formal design and in the techniques of string writing.

By the age of 16 Mendelssohn was well placed to write a major work for string instruments – and did just that in the Octet, asking his performers to play in a ‘symphonic orchestral style’. The slightly exaggerated contrasts of volume and gesture certainly give the piece an orchestral flavour (though Mendelssohn himself made a version for full string orchestra some time later) especially in the expansive first movement. Following classical models,

Mendelssohn’s slow movement is based a lilting *siciliana* (a dance characterised by a gently-rocking ‘dotted’ rhythm) but contains a contrasting middle section. The most celebrated part of the work is the Scherzo, inspired by lines from the great German poet Goethe’s evocation of the wedding of the fairy king and queen, Oberon and Titania:

*Streaks of cloud and veils of mist  
Bright’ning o’er us hover.  
Air stirs the brake, the rushes shake,  
And all our pomp is over.*

These characters reappear in Mendelssohn’s next masterpiece, the Overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, written the following year. This movement has a scurrying elfish character balanced by the formally intricate finale (where Mendelssohn briefly recalls the fairy world of the scherzo.

**Gordon Kerry © 2014/2024**



*The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania* (1847) by Sir Joseph Noel Paton (1821–1901)



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Tonight, you will have the pleasure of savouring wines from our esteemed Platinum Partner, Handpicked. Their wines proudly showcase a diverse array of Australia's most renowned grape-growing regions. Handpicked's commitment to craftsmanship and passion for the art of winemaking resonates deeply with the values of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.



## Regional Selections Barossa Shiraz

Bursting with aromas of ripe blackberry, sweet cherry, and vanilla, intertwined with hints of mixed spice and roasted nuts. The palate indulges in the supple texture and juicy flavours, showcasing fleshy richness and a silky-smooth flow. This classic vintage is a testament to the ideal ripening conditions, resulting in outstanding quality fruit with vibrant colour and intense flavour.



## Regional Selections Yarra Valley Rosé

Boasting a delicate salmon hue and lively aromas of red fruit and spice, the Yarra Valley Rosé culminates in a delightful experience. On the palate dances juicy redcurrant and strawberry flavours intertwined with savoury spiced notes. Crafted from Sangiovese grapes, gently pressed to retain subtle colour, this wine undergoes a brief maturation in tank and older oak, ensuring its freshness.



## Regional Selections Yarra Valley Pinot Noir

With tangy cherry fruits, fresh basil, and a hint of menthol, this wine tantalizes the palate with its vibrant flavours and impeccable balance. Awarded an impressive 95 points by James Halliday, this wine is a true standout of the vintage. From the cool weather to the slow flavour accumulation, every element contributes to the allure of this remarkable wine.



## Trial Batch Tasmanian Riesling

This wine entices with delicate white flower aromatics leaving the palate bursting with elderflower, lime curd, honey, and subtle ginger spice. Its lip-smacking powdery acidity frames the palate and guides to a long, fine finish. Fermented naturally in a large concrete egg, this wine showcases Tasmanian style by preserving its bright acidity while offering a touch of sweetness.



## Collection Tasmania Cuvée

Crafted from the finest Tasmanian fruit, this sparkling blend features 50% Chardonnay and 50% Pinot Noir. With richness from time on lees and the oaked reserve wine and brioche notes from lees, it offers delicate red fruits, sweet lemon, and oyster shell nuances. Balanced acidity and a fine mousse leading to a clean finish.



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## APRIL 2024

Emirates Masters Series  
**Wednesday 24 April, 8pm**  
**Friday 26 April, 8pm**  
**Saturday 27 April, 8pm**

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### OSMO VÄNSKÄ CONDUCTS THE MUSIC OF SIBELIUS

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#### SIBELIUS

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Three Songs:

Hostkval

Hertig Magnus

Varen flyktar hastigt

The Bard

Luonnotar

Lemminkäinen Suite

**OSMO VÄNSKÄ** conductor  
**HELENA JUNTUNEN** soprano



## MAY 2024

Symphony Hour  
**Thursday 2 May, 7pm**

Tea & Symphony  
**Friday 3 May, 11am**

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

### A MUSICAL TEMPEST WITH JOHN BELL

A SPELLBINDING CONCERT OF  
WORDS AND MUSIC

Shakespeare's plays have inspired composers for centuries, and none more so than *The Tempest*. A raging storm, a shipwreck, a usurping duke and an enchanted fairy: it has been fertile soil for composers including Purcell, Sibelius and Tchaikovsky.

**HONNEGGER** Prelude for the Tempest

**SIBELIUS** The Tempest, excerpts

**PURCELL** The Tempest: Overture

**TCHAIKOVSKY** The Tempest

**UMBERTO CLERICI** conductor & presenter  
**JOHN BELL** actor



Presenting Partner



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 Russian 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  
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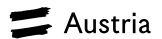
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*Deputy Chair*  
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Julie Sibraa  
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*Patron Emeritus, Sydney Symphony  
Orchestra Council*  
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Terrey Arcus AM  
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Christine Bishop  
Dr Rebecca Chin  
Paul Colgan  
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Catherine Crouch OAM  
Ewen Crouch AM  
The Hon. John Della Bosca  
Alan Fang  
Johanna Featherstone  
Hannah Fink  
Erin Flaherty  
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Dorothy Hoddinott AO  
Dr Gary Holmes  
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Michelle Anne Johnson  
Simon Johnson  
Dr John Lam-Po-Tang  
Gary Linnane  
Helen Lynch AM  
David Maloney AM  
Danny May  
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Taine Moufarrige  
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Dr Anne Reeckmann  
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Kathy White  
Rosemary White  
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## **HONORARY COUNCIL**

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Donald Hazelwood AO OBE  
Yvonne Kenny AM  
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Leo Schofield AM

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Sheridan Morley  
*Executive Officer*

## **ARTISTIC PLANNING**

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Sam Torrens  
*Artistic Planning Manager*  
Karl Knapp  
*Executive Producer – Special Projects*  
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*Artist Liaison Manager*  
Hannah Cui  
*Artistic Administrator*  
  
Library  
Alastair McKean  
*Head of Library Services*  
Victoria Grant  
*Library*  
Mary-Ann Mead  
*Library*

## Learning & Engagement

Sonia de Freitas  
*Head of Education & Communities*  
Meklit Kibret  
*Education & Community Engagement  
Producer*  
Daniella Pasquill  
*Education and Communities Program  
Administrator*  
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*Education & Communities Booking  
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*Director of Finance*  
Daniela Ramirez  
*Finance Manager*  
Emma Ferrer  
*Accounts Assistant*  
Laura Soutter  
*Payroll Manager*  
Jonathan Zaw  
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*Head of Corporate Relations*  
Chloe Bassingthwaight  
*Corporate Relations Officer*

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*Head of Philanthropy*  
Patricia Laksmo  
*Events Officer*  
Rachel Mink  
*Development Manager*

Laura Brotodihardjo  
*Philanthropy Officer*  
Gabriela Postma  
*Philanthropy Coordinator*

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*Interim Director of Marketing*  
Alison Primmer  
*Associate Director,  
Marketing Campaigns*  
Andrea Reitano  
*Head of Digital*  
Hugh Robertson  
*Editorial Manager*  
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*Producer, Digital Content*  
Belinda Dyer  
*Kabuku PR*  
Douglas Emery  
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*Marketing Manager*  
Alex Fontaine  
*Marketing Associate*  
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*Digital Marketing Coordinator*  
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*Head of CRM*  
Amy Zhou  
*Graphic Designer*  
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*Marketing Coordinator*

## Customer Service & Ticketing

Pim den Dekker  
*Head of Customer Service & Ticketing*  
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*Customer Service & Ticketing Supervisor*  
Michael Dowling  
*Customer Service Representative*  
Aiden Atan-Sanchez  
*Customer Service Representative*

## **OPERATIONS & PRODUCTION**

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*Director of Operations*  
Ross Chapman  
*Head of Production*  
Elissa Seed  
*Production Manager*  
Tom Farmer  
*Senior Production Support*  
Aeva O'Dea  
*Operations Manager*  
Jacinta Dockrill  
*Production Administrator*

## **ORCHESTRA MANAGEMENT**

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*Director of Orchestra Management*  
Brighdie Chambers  
*Orchestra Manager*  
Emma Winestone  
*Orchestra Coordinator*

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*Director of People & Culture*  
Rosie Marks-Smith  
*Senior Advisor, Culture & Wellbeing*  
Amy Walsh  
*People & Culture Advisor*  
Kevan Mooney  
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*A perfect*  
**ARRANGEMENT**



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