

9 March 2024



SCHUMANN'S SECOND SYMPHONY

WITH SIMONE YOUNG

«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

Jennifer Booth

Sercan Danis

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Léone Ziegler

SECOND VIOLINS

Kirsty Hilton

Principal

Marina Marsden

Principal

Emma Jezek

Acting Associate

Principal

Alice Bartsch

Victoria Bihun

Emma Hayes

Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Wendy Kong

Benjamin Li

Nicole Masters

Emily Qin^o

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider

Principal

Carrie Dennis

Principal

Anne-Louise

Comerford

Associate Principal

Justin Williams

Assistant Principal

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Stuart Johnson

Justine Marsden

Felicity Tsai

Leonid Volovelsky

CELLOS

Catherine Hewgill

Principal

Kaori Yamagami

Principal

Simon Cobcroft

Associate Principal

Fenella Gill

Timothy Nankervis

Elizabeth Neville

Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis

DOUBLE BASSES

Kees Boersma

Principal

Alex Henery

Principal

David Campbell

Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Richard Lynn

Jaan Pallandi

FLUTES

Emma Sholl

Acting Principal

Carolyn Harris

OBOES

Shefali Pryor

Acting Principal

Callum Hogan

CLARINETS

Oliver Shermacher*

Guest Principal

Alexander Morris

Principal

Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie

Principal Emeritus

Fiona McNamara

HORNS

Premysl Vojta*

Guest Principal

Marnie Sebire

TRUMPETS

David Elton

Principal

Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Scott Kinmont

Acting Principal

Nick Byrne

Christopher Harris

Principal

Bass Trombone

TIMPANI

Antoine Siguré

Principal

HARP

Louisic Dulbecco*

Guest Principal

PIANO

Susanne Powell*

Guest Principal

* = Guest Musician

^o = Contract Musician

2024 CONCERT SEASON

GREAT CLASSICS

Saturday 9 March, 2pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

SCHUMANN'S SECOND SYMPHONY WITH SIMONE YOUNG CLASSICAL CHARM

SIMONE YOUNG conductor

PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS (1912–1990)

***Three Gymnopédies* (1954)**

- i. Lento tranquillo
- ii. Molto tranquillo alla siesta
- iii. Allegretto semplice

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

***Symphony No.2 in D, Op.36* (1802)**

- i. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio
- ii. Larghetto
- iii. Scherzo (Allegro)
- iv. Allegro molto

INTERVAL

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

***Symphony No.2 in C, Op.61* (1847)**

- i. Sostenuto assai – Allegro, ma non troppo
- ii. Scherzo (Allegro vivace)
- iii. Adagio espressivo
- iv. Allegro molto vivace

Pre-concert talk

By Simon Bruckard in the
Northern Foyer at 1.15pm

Estimated durations

Glanville-Hicks – 15 minutes
Beethoven – 35 minutes
Interval – 20 minutes
Schumann – 40 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately two hours.

Cover image

Simone Young
Photo by Craig Abercrombie

Principal Partner



CONCERT DIARY

Visit sydneyphilharmonicsymphony.com for more information,
or call our Box Office on (02) 8215 4600

MARCH 2024

Special Event

Friday 15 March, 7pm

Saturday 16 March, 7pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

SIMONE YOUNG **CONDUCTS GURRELIEDER**

A SPECTACULAR ROMANCE

Arnold Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* is a musical tapestry of monumental scale, requiring an orchestra of 140 musicians and a chorus of 285. With musical forces of this size a live performance is likely to be a once in a lifetime experience.

SIMONE YOUNG conductor
SIMON O'NEILL Waldemar
RICARDA MERBETH Tove
DEBORAH HUMBLE Waldtaube
SAVA VEMIĆ Peasant
ANDREW GOODWIN Klaus-Narr
WARWICK FYFE Speaker
**MUSICIANS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL
ACADEMY OF MUSIC (ANAM)**
SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS
MSO CHORUS
TSO CHORUS



International Pianists in Recital

Monday 18 March, 7pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON **PERFORMS BACH'S GOLDBERG VARIATIONS**

A STUNNING MUSICAL JOURNEY

VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON piano



Emirates Masters Series

Wednesday 20 March, 8pm

Friday 22 March, 8pm

Saturday 23 March, 8pm

Emirates Thursday Afternoon

Thursday 21 March, 1.30pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

BEETHOVEN'S THIRD SYMPHONY

VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON PERFORMS RAVEL

DEBUSSY arr. Colin Matthews

Four Preludes:

Book I, No.12: Minstrels

Book II, No.3: La puerta del Vino

Book I, No.4: Les sons et les parfums
tournent dans l'air du soir

Book II, No.6: Général Lavine

RAVEL Piano Concerto in G

BEETHOVEN Symphony No.3, Eroica

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON piano



Special Event

Wednesday 27 March, 7pm

Thursday 28 March, 7pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

DONALD RUNNICLES **CONDUCTS THE PROTECTING VEIL** AN EXQUISITE UNIVERSE

TAVENER The Protecting Veil

WAGNER Parsifal: Act 3: Good Friday Spell

MENDELSSOHN Symphony No.5, Reformation

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

MATTHEW BARLEY cello



YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

COMPOSERS

PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS (1912–1990)

Three Gymnopédies (1954)

Published in 1954, the year Tolkein's *Fellowship of the Ring* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* are published.

Peggy Glanville-Hicks was a trailblazing Australian composer, critic and administrator, and a major figure in 20th century music. Throughout her life she was fascinated by ancient Greece, and these three dances evoke the hard-won grace and poise that was believed to complement the training of warriors in ancient Sparta.



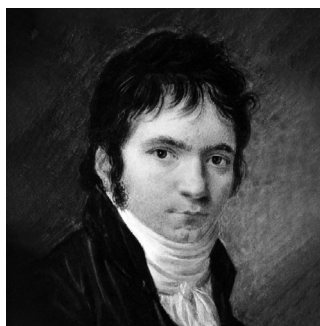
Peggy Glanville-Hicks in New York

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Symphony No.2 in D, Op.36 (1802)

Premiered 1803. The visual arts were dominated by portraits of Napoleon, who in turn dominated European and North American affairs.

Beethoven's Second is one of his most classical symphonies in form, and in its generally optimistic demeanour. Its mood quite at odds with what we know of his despair at the alarming loss of his hearing and the crisis this provoked at the time of composing this work.



Beethoven

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Symphony No.2 in C, Op.61 (1847)

Composed in 1845-6. Contemporary works include Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*.

Schumann's Second Symphony reflects aspects of the composer's life and emotions, reminding him, as he said, of the 'dark days' of the previous year when he suffered a breakdown. There is 'moody and unruly' music; an obsessive scherzo with debts to the Baroque, an expressive slow movement; and a finale in which Schumann said 'I first began to feel myself again'.

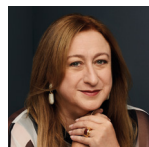


Robert Schumann

ARTISTS

SIMONE YOUNG

conductor





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 much-anticipated Bayreuth Festival debut conducting Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. She also returns to both the Berlin and Vienna State Opera companies, the Berlin, Los Angeles, Stockholm, Oslo and Goeteborg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Bavarian Radio Orchestra 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 five-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, most recently Simone Young has appeared at the Vienna State Opera (*Die Fledermaus* and *Peter Grimes*), The Metropolitan Opera New York (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Opera Nationale de Paris (*Parsifal* and *Salome*), Bavarian State Opera (*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.

In February 2024, Simone Young and the Sydney Symphony announced a two-year extension to her contract as Chief Conductor, extending her leadership of the Orchestra until the end of 2026.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS (1912–1990)

Born in Melbourne, Peggy Glanville-Hicks gained her first serious musical training at the Albert Street, later 'Melba' Conservatorium. Like many an antipodean composer before and since, she then beat the familiar path to Europe for further study, receiving the tutelage of Ralph Vaughan Williams at London's Royal College of Music, Egon Wellesz in Vienna, and Nadia Boulanger in Paris. In 1938 she became the first Australian composer to have a work performed at the International Society for Contemporary Music. Realising that for various reasons neither the UK nor Australia were where she wanted to be, she went to the USA with her first husband, Stanley Bate in 1942. There, as her marriage to the gay and occasionally abusive Bate foundered, she established herself through sheer force of will (and with a little help from the likes of composer and critic Virgil Thomson) as composer, entrepreneur and critic at the New York *Herald Tribune*. She moved for a time to Greece, whose heritage looms large in such works as the operas *Nausicaa* and *Sappho*. She also travelled to countries like Jamaica and India, whose music left its imprint on her work. There were two marriages, one ending in tears, the other in Reno; affairs including one with a sea-captain and one with Errol Flynn's father, and a years-long, mostly unrequited passion for novelist and composer Paul Bowles, which produced the evocative *Letters from Morocco*. The *dramatis personae* of her life – documented by Wendy Beckett, James Murdoch and Suzanne Robinson – also includes the Menuhin family, Indira Gandhi, numerous American composers such as John Cage and Leonard Bernstein, her stage collaborators John Butler, Robert Graves, Lawrence Durrell and Thomas Mann, and fellow Australians like Esther Rofe and Miriam Hyde. In 1975 she returned to Australia, settling in Paddington, NSW, only posthumously receiving the honour and prestige in her native country that she, certainly, felt was her due.

Glanville-Hicks was not alone in pursuing her career as an expatriate; composers like Malcolm Williamson and the late David Lumsdaine worked abroad for most of their professional lives yet remained strongly identified with this country. Glanville-Hicks' musical interests ranged widely: there are elements of Indian, Greek, North African and other non-European musics in her work, but she was nevertheless not here in Australia for the infusion of non-Western musics that inspired the younger generations of Peter Sculthorpe and Richard Meale, Barry Conyngham, Anne Boyd and Ross Edwards, and was out of sympathy with composers who sought to develop the ideas of the post-war avant-garde here (or, heaven forbid, write electronic music).

Glanville-Hicks bequeathed her terrace house in inner-Sydney Paddington as a refuge for composers, especially those in the danger zone between being an Exciting Young Composer and a Respected Senior Figure, offering them the chance to work in a pleasant environment without the stress of having to find money for the rent.



Peggy Glanville-Hicks in New York

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Three Gymnopédies (1954)

In 1935, four young Australians went on a walking tour in Spain and Portugal, ‘seemingly’, as James Murdoch notes, ‘unaware of the impending civil war’.

Two – Peggy Glanville-Hicks and Esther Rofe – were aspiring composers; with them were Glanville-Hicks’ brother Garth and the incipient Melbourne architect Robert Eggleston.

Glanville-Hicks was a student and devotee of Ralph Vaughan Williams, and was perhaps inspired by his example to compose a work based on the demotic music that she heard on the Iberian Peninsula. A *Spanish Suite* duly followed, consisting of a Pavane, Serenade, Siesta, Fandango, and Nocturne, according to Murdoch the score was largely lost in the London bombings of World War II. Around the same time, the peripatetic composer produced a miniature *Pastoral* for piano in Vienna in 1936, and a recorder trio which was first performed, she said, ‘in a snowbound cabin on a skiing weekend in Tirol.’

From 1941 Glanville-Hicks lived in the United States, establishing herself as composer and critic, notably for the New York *Herald Tribune*. As scholar Suzanne Robinson recounts, Oliver Daniel, a composer and arts administrator (notably in broadcast music) suggested to Glanville-Hicks that there was a market for short (roughly three-minute) instrumental pieces that could function as ‘interstitials’, slotted in between broadcasts that ran short.

Fortunately at least some of the *Spanish Suite* and the pieces composed in Austria had survived, and Glanville-Hicks repurposed the material for her *Three Gymnopédies*.



Glanville-Hicks in Greece

The title, of course, is familiar from the three simple, popular piano works of Erik Satie that bear it, but the name itself (meaning ‘naked’ or ‘unarmed youth’) derives from a ritual much loved in the ancient Greek city of Sparta, in which three choruses of young, mature, and older men danced. Glanville-Hicks’ take was that ‘when the athletes had acquired strength, velocity, skill, they had then to reacquire grace, and to that end slow, graceful dances were practised.’ Originally the set began with the *Molto tranquillo* and concluded with the *Lento*, before the composer settled on having the fastest movement last.

The scoring is characteristic of a composer for whom harmony was overrated as a musical parameter: the solo oboe creates a mood of antique nostalgia, while the transparent textures of the string band are pointed by deft use of harp and celesta. Vaughan Williams’ modality and use of repeated short motifs is a clear model in the opening dance. The second, of course, shows its Spanish origins in various ways, while the Allegretto, as Robinson notes, takes a four-note theme from the *Pastoral*.

Peggy Glanville-Hicks’ *Three Gymnopédies* are scored for strings, oboe, harp and celesta.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed *Gymnopédie No.1* in our 2022 People’s Choice concert under Chief Conductor Simone Young. Today’s concert marks the Orchestra’s first performance of the set of three, however they were recorded for ABC Classic in 1986 with conductor Myer Fredman.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

In the late eighteenth century Germany was a loose grouping of small principalities. The city of Bonn was the seat of the Archbishop Elector of Cologne and Beethoven was born here in 1770. His grandfather was a chief musician in the Elector's household; his father Johann was also a musician employed there. Johann was a violent alcoholic, and family life was far from happy, but young Ludwig nonetheless showed early promise as a musician and soon joined the Archbishop's retinue.

Beethoven almost certainly met Mozart briefly in Vienna in 1787, but in 1792 returned to that city to study with Joseph Haydn. They didn't get on. Late in life, Haydn was suddenly enjoying superstar status throughout Europe. Beethoven could be extremely rude and arrogant and felt that Haydn wasn't paying him enough attention.

Beethoven's status in Vienna was helped by the relative ease with which he was accepted into aristocratic circles. This is partly because he allowed people to think that the 'van' in his name meant he himself was noble (in German, 'von' indicates nobility), and he allowed a rumour to circulate that he was the illegitimate son of the King of Prussia! But it was mostly about the music, and a group of Viennese nobles supported him for the rest of his life (despite appallingly bad behaviour on occasions).

From the later 1790s he had been aware of the deterioration of his hearing, and by the early years of the new century his deafness caused him gradually to retreat from society. His was also chronically unlucky in love. This, along with his deafness, led him to the point of suicide and the heroic resolution to carry on which is documented in a kind of will he wrote at Heiligenstadt, his favourite holiday village, in the summer of 1802. The crisis launched his middle or 'heroic' period.

In May 1809 Napoleon's armies attacked Vienna and bombarded it with considerable violence. Beethoven took shelter with his

brother Caspar Carl and his wife Johanna and to protect what was left of his hearing hid with pillows over his ears in the cellar. He wrote to his publisher: 'What a destructive, disorderly life I see and hear around me: nothing but drums, cannons and human misery in every form'. Despite his misery, Beethoven managed to work.

Beethoven's deafness was only part of the chronic ill-health which dogged him for most of his life, but it certainly made things worse. He became grumpy and paranoid (occasionally to the point of violence) and despite relative financial security often lived in squalor. His music, though, tells a completely different story. Beethoven's late works encompass a bewildering array of moods and styles, leaving classical music changed forever.



Heiligenstadt

Symphony No.2 in D, Op.36 (1802)

Like many composers, Beethoven liked to withdraw to the country to concentrate on his work in peaceful surroundings, but in that summer of 1802 there was an additional purpose: the deafness which had become noticeable in the previous years was now becoming serious, and the composer's physician suggested a prolonged period away from the potentially damaging noise of the city.

As he was preparing to return to Vienna in October 1802, Beethoven wrote a curious document that was found among his papers after his death. Now known as the 'Heiligenstadt Testament', it was a kind

ABOUT THE MUSIC

of will, addressed to the composer's two brothers (though Beethoven only refers to one by name and the other by a blank space in the manuscript). In it, Beethoven expresses his anguish about his condition:

what humiliation when someone stood beside me and heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or heard the shepherd singing and again I heard nothing. Such incidents brought me to the verge of despair, but little more and I would have put an end to my life – only my art held me back.

The saving art at this time included a number of violin sonatas, piano sonatas and bagatelles and the Second Symphony, which Beethoven completed during his stay at Heiligenstadt. It is difficult to find evidence of a composer in deep despair in this work, however, reminding us of the complex relationship between the life and work of any artist. But there is a nice symmetry at play. The Second might be seen as a leave-taking of the pastoral/classical tradition in favour of the more 'heroic' style of the middle period music, but it is Heiligenstadt which Beethoven portrayed in a work which marked his victory over fate some years later: the *Pastoral Symphony*.

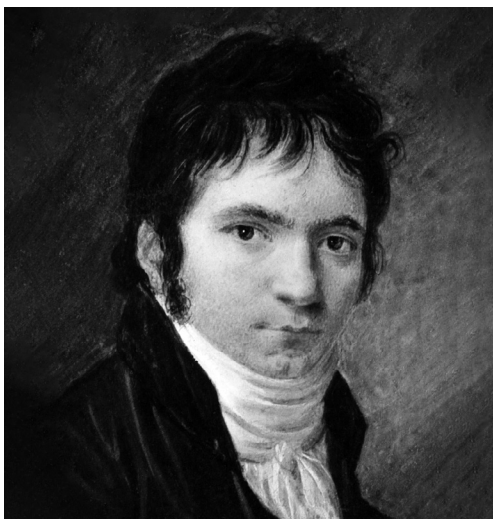
Beethoven's First Symphony had been greeted as an honourable, if not always elegant, contribution to the tradition of Haydn and Mozart. To a modern listener, the Second seems a more assured but still essentially 'Classical' work. Like Haydn, Beethoven generates tense expectation in the first movement by using a slow introduction (and the great scholar Tovey has shown that Beethoven borrows a specific sequence of chords from Haydn's *Creation* in this work). Some hints of the mature Beethoven are in evidence, such as the breathtakingly simple means by which he extends the scale of the first movement with its lengthy concluding section or coda. The *Larghetto* is one of Beethoven's most serene, pastoral slow movements, and for the first time in an orchestral work he uses the term *Scherzo* (Italian for 'joke' – and it is genuinely

funny) for the dance-like third movement. The finale juggles wit and seriousness in a way that is worthy of, but never sounds like, Haydn. For one thing, the movement, balancing the first, is broad in scale and has an extended coda. Beethoven's orchestral music to date includes the first three of his piano concertos, but, as one commentator has suggested, in this work he fully engages with the orchestra for the first time.

While we hear a piece of wonderfully crafted Classical music, contemporary critics were not so sure. After the first performance (which also included the premieres of the Third Piano Concerto and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*) one praised the work's 'new and original ideas'. Some years later, however, a colleague famously described the finale as 'a repulsive monster, a wounded tail-lashing serpent, dealing wild and furious blows as it stiffens into its death agony', referring, perhaps to the extended coda (Italian for 'tail'). He hadn't, as they say, heard nothing yet!

Beethoven's Second Symphony is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, plus timpani and strings.

The Sydney Symphony's first documented performance of the Second Symphony was in 1940 under Georg Schnéevoigt, and was most recently performed in 2016 with Vladimir Ashkenazy in concerts that marked Dene Olding's final performances as Concertmaster.



Beethoven in 1802

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Robert Schumann was born in the Saxon city of Zwickau, where his father was a successful writer, translator (notably of English Romantic writers like Byron into German) and book-seller. Child Robert began writing his own plays and poetry, as well as composing, in his teens. At 18 he went to Leipzig to study law, where he also began piano lessons with renowned pedagogue Friedrich Wieck, father of the then nine-year old virtuoso Clara.

After a year at the University of Heidelberg, Schumann returned to Leipzig in 1830, bent on becoming a musician. His first mature compositions include the *Abegg Variations*, with their theme that ‘spells’ the name of the work’s fictional dedicatee, and *Papillons*, the first of many collections of musical miniatures grouped around a poetic theme. It is at this time, too, that Schumann came under the influence of two arch-Romantic writers: Jean Paul Richter and ETA Hoffmann. In his diaries he creates fictional pseudonyms for Wieck, Clara and himself, included the characters of Florestan (representing Schumann’s virtuosic side) and Eusebius (his more introverted side). These characters would assume great importance in his music, particularly *Carnaval*, which dramatises Schumann’s (and that of his fellow *Davidsbündler* – ‘members of the league of David’) battle against philistinism in the arts. He prosecuted this also in the serious music criticism which he practically invented, founding *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Journal for Music) which began publication in 1835.

Robert had fallen in love with Clara when she was 15 and the couple married in 1840, when Clara was 21. The next years saw Clara consolidate her fame as a pianist; Robert, owing to repetitive strain injury (not, as Wieck asserted, caused by using a device to increase his stretch) incurred in the mid-1830s, had given up hope of coming a virtuoso. From 1840,

determined to ‘master all the forms of music’ he composed in various genres, spending roughly a year on each: song (1840), orchestral music (1841), chamber music (1842), the oratorio (1843), producing several works in each genre in concentrated bursts. In 1844 he suffered a bad episode of the depression which had affected him since 1833, but emerged with new confidence in his craft.

This period saw the Schumanns move to Dresden where Robert turned his attention to the stage. In 1850 they moved to the Rhineland city of Düsseldorf where Robert became municipal music director. Musical standards were low, and Schumann’s health poor. One bright spot was the arrival, in 1853, of young Johannes Brahms, whom Schumann immediately realised was a genius and welcomed into his home.

Sadly, Schumann’s illness returned in 1854 with aural hallucinations, delusions and memory loss, and he attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine. He lived out his last two years in a strikingly benign asylum near Bonn; but on doctor’s orders was forbidden to see Clara until two days before he died.



Robert Schumann

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Symphony No.2 in C, Op.61 (1847)

Schumann's Second Symphony begins with a motto theme. This assertive repetition of the tonic then the dominant chord may or may not be a reference to the identical opening of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No.104. Schumann's use of his motto to unify the symphony, making it return in three of the four movements, also recalls Beethoven, and especially that composer's Fifth Symphony. Schumann belonged to the first generation of composers who wrote in full awareness and sometimes in awe of what their great predecessors had done. Any symphony composed in Germany in 1845 was written for audiences for whom Haydn, Mozart, and especially Beethoven provided the models of what a symphony should be. Felix Mendelssohn, who conducted the first performances of Schumann's First and Second Symphonies, had done much to create this public awareness of past music in his representative programs at the Leipzig Gewandhaus. The Second Symphony pays tribute to Mendelssohn, with whom Schumann had an exceptionally close artistic collaboration. But by the already backward-looking standards set by its first critics, Schumann's symphonies did not seem Classical enough, nor were their novelties convincing. Even a sympathetic musical colleague of Schumann's in Leipzig, Moritz Hauptmann, found the First Symphony 'somewhat curious, but always musical'.

The curiousness is just what makes Schumann's symphony original. The form may be classical, but the language is new. Even as the motto is being stated – not with Haydn's luminous clarity, but with what has been well described as a 'mysteriously muted solemnity' – another theme is outlined by the strings, rather ominous and chromatically creeping. This begins a movement Schumann described as of a 'very moody and unruly character'. As he was about to begin the symphony, he wrote

to Mendelssohn that for several days he had been hearing drums and trumpets in C major – 'I don't know what will come of it.' The trumpets and drums are not in the first statement of the motto, but they are there, with a vengeance, when it returns in the first movement recapitulation. The symphony, written with great difficulty and, according to Schumann himself, documenting in music his recovery from serious illness, demands to be 'read', or rather heard, for its sub-text, a record of a changing mental state, from despair, through healing, to redemption.

Between Schumann's First Symphony of 1841 and the Second, begun in late 1845, came his serious nervous breakdown beginning in 1844, marked by depression and lapses of memory. On his doctor's advice he moved from Leipzig to the quieter Dresden. He finished the Piano Concerto for his wife Clara, but both Schumanns saw in the symphony the sign of his full recovery, and a return of confidence to attempt large-scale orchestral works. Schumann's tribute to Clara's support is encrypted in the symphony's finale. The difficulties did not end with the burst of creativity which saw the symphony drafted in piano score in December 1845. Schumann had to put the orchestration aside when he had an attack of ringing and clicking in the ears in 1846. The symphony's premiere was conducted by Mendelssohn in the Leipzig Gewandhaus on 5 November 1846, but Schumann made many changes, including adding the trombones, before the second performance 11 days later. The inseparability of the creation of the music from Schumann's mental and physical state appears in his admission: 'In the finale, I first began to feel myself again; and indeed, I was much better after I had completed the work.'

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Schumann did indeed master his materials, and created a new kind of Romantic symphony inside a Classical scaffolding. This has been increasingly recognised, against those who find in Schumann's formal devices – such as mottos – simplistic attempts at thematic unity, and in the poetic element, with its wealth of references and associations, parentheses rather than the 'real', convincing thread of the music. The struggle of the first movement is a real one: from the slow introduction with its germinal themes the music seems almost with difficulty to gear itself up to begin a fast movement 'but not too fast', and the development section is very long – the working-out is not straightforward. The victory is not yet won, in spite of the return of the motto.

Schumann owed much to Mendelssohn's advice, not least on the orchestral scoring at which he was a novice. It seems Mendelssohn suggested the transfer of the theme in triplets in the first of the *Scherzo's* two trios from strings to winds. This movement, which comes second, is the most explicit tribute by imitation to Mendelssohn of many in Schumann's first two symphonies. Much in the brilliant non-stop dashing of the strings sounds Mendelssohnian, as do some of the wind interventions. But this is no 'fairy scherzo'. The music is restless, and as Michael Steinberg notices, 'a layer of melancholy underlies the jocularity.' The two trios give complete contrast from the *perpetuum mobile*. In the second, a fugato section points to the B-A-C-H fugues for pedal piano Schumann had been writing in 1845 as part of an intensive study of Bach's music. At one point the notes B-A-C-H (B flat, A, C, B natural) can be heard played in longer values by the first violins.

Schumann's dialogue with Mendelssohn continues, Steinberg suggests, in the slow movement. In this Romantic and eloquent music Schumann seems to be saying,

'I am not Mendelssohn.' Again there is a fugato section, where the strings are joined by what Schumann called 'the melancholy bassoon'. The movement starts in C minor, but ends in E flat major – it is full of felicitous scoring, for the wind soloists in particular, and has always escaped critical strictures. The conductor Felix Weingartner considered this 'the best movement in all of [Schumann's] four symphonies'.

Especially after Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the finale had become a challenge to composers to clinch the whole symphony with a telling conclusion. Given Schumann's 'program' in this symphony, he was seeking an expression of victory over the dark, disturbing forces. This movement falls into two parts, the second so substantial that it has struck some as a 'finale in the finale'. As in the first movement, the first part is dominated by a single rhythmical pattern, to which the theme of the slow movement provides a contrast, when it is introduced as a second subject. Then come a series of pauses, punctuated by string chords, following which Schumann introduces as new material a quotation from Beethoven's song cycle *To the Distant Beloved*. This reference, which he has already made in his C major *Fantasie* for solo piano, was to Clara. In the symphony it leads to a long and exultant conclusion, in which the opening motto is gradually reintroduced, shedding the mystery in which it was first heard, and affirming the light.

Robert Schumann's Second Symphony is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in Newcastle, Lismore and Grafton, on tour with Eugene Goossens in 1948. We first performed the symphony in Sydney in 1952, again with Goossens, and most recently at Sydney Town Hall in 2021, conducted by Asher Fisch.

**Composer biographies, Glanville-Hicks
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How long have you been playing with the Sydney Symphony?

34 years

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

Managing to perform the Brahms Double Concerto fourteen months after crushing all the bones in my wrist – and realising that my career had not ended.

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

I love to perform Mahler...the architecture, the intensity, the passion...

To listen to? Bach. Like a musical religion, so pure.

When did you realise that you could make a career out of music?

After five minutes of playing the cello. I loved it too much to ever doubt myself.

What was the last book, podcast or TV series you really loved?

Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan – short enough to read between practice sessions, thought provoking, no words wasted ... just like Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony which wastes no notes. And *White Lotus*, of course.

Do you have any pre-concert rituals or superstitions?

Enter the stage on the violin side for rehearsals, then the cello side on the night of the performance. And always wipe the rosin off the bow after the final rehearsal, or beware!

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

Musical advice: make sure to find a reason for the way you play every note, and think of the space between your shoulder blades.

General advice: in order to have friends you need to be a friend.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



1948 – CARRYING ORCHESTRAS TO NEWCASTLE

The Sydney Symphony's first Chief Conductor, Eugene Goossens (1947–1956) takes a ride in the driver's compartment of a train – possibly on the 1948 tour of NSW during which the Orchestra first performed Beethoven's Second Symphony.

A long-serving member of our viola section, Helen Bainton, recalled a similar scene in her memoir *Facing the Music*:

'[Goossens] had a passion for trains and it was said he owned one of the largest collections of pictures of them in America. During his travels he had once driven the Ohio express ten miles, which he found a most exhilarating experience because he loved the feeling of controlling a powerful machine. On one of our tours he travelled up to Newcastle, New South Wales, sitting in the driver's cabin. Rumour had it, of course, that he was actually driving us so that we wondered if we would reach our destination alive, but when we arrived in Newcastle he stepped off the train as urbane as ever, even though he was dressed in dungarees and an old cap, with a somewhat grubby face and carrying an oily rag in his hand! The welcoming committee received a shock when they saw their famous conductor, but as usual he was the complete master of the situation and enjoyed himself hugely.'

Helen Bainton – *Facing the Music* (Currawong Publishing Co., Sydney, 1967)

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