

# 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, Zdenêk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluiai Gelmetti, Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

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Acting Principal

Callum Hogan

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Christopher Tingay

Alexander Morris

Principal Bass Clarinet

Guest Principal

**Alexandre Oquev** 

Principal Cor Anglais

Joshua Batty

Emma Sholl

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Katliin Saraeant\*

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Concertmaster

Lerida Delbridge Assistant Concertmaster

Fiona Ziegler

Assistant Concertmaster Jennifer Booth

Sercan Danis

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

**Emily Long** 

Alexander Norton

Léone Ziegler

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Natalia Harvey\* Ilya Isakovich\*

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Principal

Wendy Kong Acting Assistant

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Emma Hayes Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Nicole Masters

Marcus Michelsen<sup>o</sup>

Emily Oin<sup>o</sup>

Dominic Azzit Marrianne Liu\* **VIOLAS** 

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Leonid Volovelsky Stephen Wright<sup>o</sup> Harry Swainston<sup>†</sup>

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Kristy Conrau Timothy Nankervis

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Acting Principal

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Marnie Sebire Rachel Silver

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**Brett Page\*** 

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TURA

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TIMPANI

Antoine Siguré

Principal

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Principal

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Actina Associate

Principal Timpani/ Section Percussion

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Saxophone

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\* Guest Musician

<sup>o</sup> Contract Musician

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# 2024 CONCERT SEASON

**Tea and Symphony** Friday 19 July, 11am

Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

# THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA WITH JESS GILLAM INTOXICATING RHYTHMS

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor & presenter JESS GILLAM saxophone

MICHAEL NYMAN (born 1944) Where the Bee Dances (1991)

SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873–1943) Symphonic Dances, Op.45 (1940)

i. Non Allegro

ii. Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)

iii. Lento assai – Allearo vivace

# **Estimated durations**

Nyman – 21 minutes Rachmaninov – 35 minutes

The concert will run for approximately one hour.

# Cover image

Jess Gillam Photo by Robin Clewley Photography

**Principal Partner** 



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

# **UMBERTO CLERICI** conductor

After a career spanning more than 20 years as a gifted cello soloist and orchestral musician, Umberto Clerici has gained a reputation as an artist of diverse and multifaceted talents.

It was in Sydney in 2018 that Umberto made his conducting debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House. A host of acclaimed conducting engagements followed culminating in his recent appointment as the Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. Simultaneously, Umberto continues to be in high demand with all the major symphony orchestras of Australia and New Zealand.

In addition to his first season as Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Umberto's 2023 conducting engagements include returns to the podiums of the Sydney, Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. Having conducted each of the New Zealand and Dunedin Symphony Orchestras in 2022, Umberto will debut this year conducting the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. In addition, Umberto looks forward to his first collaboration with Opera Queensland for Verdi's *Macbeth*.

Umberto began his career as a virtuoso cellist making his solo debut at the age of 17 performing Haydn's D Major Cello Concerto in Japan. After years of performing on the stages of the world's most prestigious concert halls, Umberto took up the position as Principal Cellist of the Royal Opera House in Turin, which he held for four years. In 2014, he was then appointed as the Principal Cello of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, a position he held until 2021.

As a cellist, Umberto is beloved by Australian audiences. Umberto has performed internationally as a soloist at New York's Carnegie Hall, Vienna's Musicverein, the great Shostakovich Hall of St Petersburg, Auditorium Parco della Musica in Rome, the Salzburg Festival and is one of only two Italians to have ever won a prize for cello in the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition.



Umberto Clerici Photo by Jay Patel

# **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

# JESS GILLAM saxophone

Hailing from Ulverston in Cumbria, Jess Gillam is animating the music world with her outstanding talent and infectious personality. She has been forging her own adventurous path since she shot to fame becoming the first saxophonist to reach the finals of BBC Young Musician and the youngest ever soloist to perform at the Last Night of the Proms. Passionate about inspiring and bringing joy to people through music, Jess invites audiences on journeys of musical discovery through her electrifying performances and eclectic programming.

As well as performing around the world, Jess is a presenter on TV and Radio. She became the youngest ever presenter for BBC Radio 3 with the launch of her own weekly show, This Classical Life. The show is in its third year now and in 2020 won the prestigious ARIA Award for Best Specialist Music Show. Jess has presented a special live edition of *This Classical* Life at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. She has also been a quest presenter for BBC Radio 2 and co-hosted a miniseries for BBC Radio 4's Today program. Keen to explore the creative output of her home county, Jess presented a series of Cumbrian Chats on BBC Radio Cumbria. TV presenting includes the BBC Proms and BBC Young Musician.

Jess is the first ever saxophonist to be signed exclusively to Decca Classics and both of her albums reached No.1 in the UK Classical Music Charts. Her debut album was listed in *The Times* Top 100 albums of 2019. She has been the recipient of a Classic BRIT Award, has been nominated for *The Times* Breakthrough Award and was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list 2021 for Services to Music.

A free spirit in style and character, Jess is an advocate for the power of music in society. She is passionate about inspiring and bringing joy to people through music and during lockdown, she formed her 'Virtual Scratch Orchestra', inviting musicians of any standard to come together to play music virtually with her. The orchestra played music by David Bowie and

The Beatles as well as a Christmas special of Leroy Anderson's 'Sleigh Ride'. Over 2,000 people from around 30 different countries took part across the two projects, aged 2-94, playing a huge range of instruments. Jess is a patron for Awards for Young Musicians and London Music Fund and enjoys working and performing with young musicians.

Her infectious enthusiasm and passion for classical and non-classical music lights up every stage and she has performed in prestigious concert halls and with world-class orchestras around the globe including the NDR Hannover, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, lceland Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Lahti Symphony Orchestra and the UK's leading orchestras. She also enjoys touring with her newly-formed Jess Gillam Ensemble bringing together a group of brilliant musicians who share her bold, uplifting and open-minded approach. Jess has performed live at the BAFTAs to millions of viewers at home.

Jess is currently Artist in Association at the Royal Albert Hall and she continues to promote her own concert series, bringing international talent to her hometown of Ulverston.

Jess is a Vandoren UK Artist and became the youngest ever endorsee for Yanagisawa saxophones aged just 13.

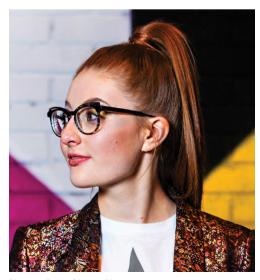


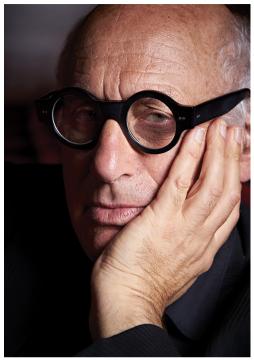
Photo by Robin Clewley Photography

# **ABOUT MICHAEL NYMAN**

Michael Nyman is undoubtedly one of the UK's most innovative and celebrated composers. His reputation is built upon a substantial body of work written for a wide variety of ensembles, not only for his own band, but also for symphony orchestra, choir and string quartet. In addition to his prolific output as a composer, Nyman is also a conductor, pianist, writer, musicologist, photographer and film-maker – his restless creativity and multi-faceted career making him one of the most dynamic and influential figures in contemporary culture.

Born in Stratford, East London on 23 March 1944, he was educated at the Sir George Monoux Grammar School. Walthamstow and studied at the Royal Academy of Music from 1961-64 with Dr Peter Fletcher, Alan Bush and Geraint Jones. Between 1964-67 Nyman was a PhD student at King's College, London under Thurston Dart, studying English Baroque music and the principles of scholarly editing, producing the first modern edition of Purcell's Catches (Stainer and Bell, 1967) and a new edition of Handel's Concerti Grossi. Op.6 (Eulenberg, 1973). He spent the academic year 1965/6 as a British Council exchange student collecting folk music in Romania.

In 1968, while working as music critic for The Spectator he coined the term 'minimal music' and in the following decade he both reflected and influenced a certain school of thought in contemporary music. Most of his important reviews, articles and interviews from The Spectator, New Statesman, The Listener and Studio International have since been published in Michael Nyman: Collected Writings, (Ashgate, 2013). In 1974, as a development of his journalistic work, Nyman published the still-classic book on new music, Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond (Studio Vista, London).



Michael Nyman

In 1969 Nyman was commissioned to write the libretto for Sir Harrison Birtwistle's opera *Down By The Greenwood Side*. A subsequent commission from Birtwistle in 1976 to write music for Carlo Goldoni's *II Campiello*, the opening production at the National Theatre, led to the formation of the Campiello Band (subsequently renamed the Michael Nyman Band), which for over four decades has been the laboratory for much of his inventive and experimental compositional work.

Nyman has also enjoyed a highly successful career as a film composer, a role in which, somewhat to his regret, he is best known to the general public. His reputation was established through a series of highly successful scores for films directed by Peter Greenaway, including The Draughtsman's Contract, Prospero's Books, A Zed and Two Naughts and The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover. Other scores include Neil Jordan's The End Of The Affair, Michael Winterbottom's Wonderland,

A Cock And Bull Story, and The Trip;
Andrew Niccol's Hollywood sci-fi
blockbuster Gattaca (1997), and his
enchanting music for Jane Campion's
1993 film, The Piano, the soundtrack
album of which has sold more than three
million copies. His music was used in
the BAFTA Award-winning and Oscarnominated film Man on Wire, while his
score for Erasing David (2009) was
awarded Best Original Soundtrack at The
London East End Film Festival.

More recently Michael has focused on composing soundtracks for silent films from the late 1920s: Jean Vigo's A Propos de Nice, Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin and new soundtracks for three Dziga Vertov films – Man with a Movie Camera, The Eleventh Year and A Sixth Part of the World.

Although the range and scope of his musical output is a clear demonstration of his versatility, Nyman's preferred musical form is opera, for which he has composed a number of influential works including *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat* (1986), *Facing Goya* (2000), and the critically acclaimed *Man and Boy: Dada* (2003).

His ten song cycles set texts from diverse writers including Shakespeare, Neruda, Octavio Paz, Paul Celan, Milton, and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz as well as Mexican 'folk' poets, amongst others. Additionally, Michael has composed music for a number of the world's most distinguished choreographers including Siobhan Davies, Ashley Page, Lucinda Childs, Stephen Petronio, Karine Saporta and Shobana Jeyasingh.

In addition to his composing and filmmaking activities, Nyman has a full international touring schedule with the Michael Nyman Band as well as a series of unique one-off performances with a variety of collaborators, including musicians from outside the western/ classical/experimental traditions such as the Orqestra Andalusi de Tetouan, Rajan and Sajan Misra, U. Shrinivas, Estrella Morente, Seijin Noborakawa, Ute Lemper, Evan Parker, Peter Brotzmann, Paolo Fresu, Mike Giles, the Flying Lizards, Dagmar Krause, Sting, Damon Albarn, David McAlmont and Alva Noto.

Michael was awarded the CBE for services to British music in 2008.

# Where the Bee Dances (1991)

The composer writes:

This saxophone concerto, written in one continuous movement with a wide variety of tempi, celebrates the talents of John Harle, who has been a central player in the Michael Nyman Band for over ten years. The title has a double reference; on the one hand to the circular orientation dances which a foraging bee performs to communicate the location of food source, and on the other hand to my setting of 'Where the bee sucks', composed for Peter Greenaway's film Prospero's Books and quoted sporadically during the concerto. However, most of the material is derived from a 4-chord sequence that John once overheard me playing and for which he expressed a particular liking.

# Notes by Michael Nyman © 1991/2024

Where the Bee Dances is scored for two flutes (the second doubling piccolo), oboe, cor anglais, clarinet, bass clarinet and two bassoons; two horns, trumpet and bass trombone; piano, strings and saxophone soloist.

This is its Sydney Symphony premiere.

# SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873–1943) Symphonic Dances, Op.45 (1940)

After the Rachmaninov family left Russia in 1917, the seizure of Rachmaninov's Russian income by the Soviets meant he had to earn a living. He did not want to become an orchestra's musical director so he set about establishing himself as a concert pianist.

At the age of 44 he began building up a soloist's repertoire. This left little time for composition, and he wrote no original work for nine years. Then the urge to compose began to re-assert itself. A fitful procession of 'Indian summer' pieces emerged between 1926 and 1940, many of which are now regarded as among his finest compositions.

Leaving Russia had meant exile from the culture that had nurtured his musical style; in spirit, Rachmaninov remained an exile from his homeland for the rest of his life, and to his friend Medtner's question, 'Why do you no longer compose?', there is Rachmaninov's oft-quoted reply: 'The melody has gone.' But to use this typically self-deprecating remark as a stick with which to beat the composer's later music is to ignore the vigour with which Rachmaninov sought to re-shape his compositional style in these final years.

His orchestral style was now marked by great clarity of texture, a freer and more independent approach to brass and woodwind writing, and a tendency to express ideas more concisely than in his earlier large-scale pieces. Harmonically and rhythmically his music of the 1930s bears traces of the influence of Prokofiev and Stravinsky, but very much on Rachmaninov's own terms. His melodies still move, on the whole, in stepwise fashion, in the manner of Russian Orthodox chant, and although he clothes his melodies in lighter textures, he is not ashamed to write tunes that could be called 'vintage Rachmaninov'.

At the time, the result was too 'modern' and lean-sounding for audiences who wanted him to keep re-writing the Second



Sergei Rachmaninov in his office in 1935

Piano Concerto, and too conservative for critics whose twin gods were Stravinsky and Schoenberg. But collectively, the *Symphonic Dances* represent perhaps the richest results of Rachmaninov's new approach to the orchestra. They were also his last original composition.

'I don't know how it happened. It must have been my last spark,' is how Rachmaninov described the work's origins. Yet the idea of a score for a programmatic ballet had been at the back of his mind since 1915, and when Michel Fokine successfully choreographed the Paganini Rhapsody in 1939 the opportunity presented itself again. He wrote the Dances the following year, giving the three movements the titles Midday, Twilight and Midnight respectively. At this point the work was called *Fantastic* Dances and Rachmaninov played it, in short score, to Fokine, who was enthusiastic about the music but non-committal about its balletic possibilities. Fokine's death a short time later cooled Rachmaninov's interest in the ballet idea. He deleted his descriptive titles, substituted the word 'Symphonic' for 'Fantastic', and dedicated the triptych to his favourite orchestra. the Philadelphia, and its chief conductor Eugene Ormandy.

It is a work full of enigmas which the eversecretive Rachmaninov does nothing to clarify. In the first movement, there is a transformation from minor to major of a prominent theme from his first symphony. The premiere of that work in 1897 had been such a fiasco that Rachmaninov could not compose at all for another three years. The reference in this new piece had a meaning that was entirely private.

There is also the curious paradox that the word 'dance', with its suggestion of life-enhancing, joyous activity, is here put at the service of a work that is essentially concerned – for all its vigour and sinew – with endings, with a chromaticism that darkens every musical step.

The first movement, with its unusual tempo marking (what could *Non Allegro* mean?) begins hesitantly, before a bold, staccato statement of a theme that sounds very much like the plainchant for the dead. Dies Irae. in disguise. This leads us to the main part of the movement. From this point on, most of the major musical ideas are introduced by the woodwinds. The major lyrical theme is then given to the alto saxophone, making its solo appearance with delicately scored accompaniment for winds only. Rachmaninov also employs orchestral piano, and when the lyrical theme is given its second statement by the strings, in an impassioned unison, the piano traces a filigree accompaniment, creating an overall effect of shining brightness. In the coda, harp and piano together create a glistening, shimmering counterpoint to the plush, chorale-like statement of the motif plucked from the first symphony.

The waltz movement begins with muted trumpet fanfares that have a sinister fairy-tale quality to them. Woodwind arabesques swirl around them, until a solo violin passage gives way to the main waltz theme, introduced by the oboe and cor anglais before being taken up by the strings. The ghostly woodwind arabesques continue to decorate this theme until the winds themselves announce the livelier second melody. Although the atmosphere becomes

warmer and more passionate at times, it does not lighten, and sometimes becomes quite macabre. It is as if we are experiencing a memory of a ballroom rather than a ball itself.

The finale is the work's most complex movement. The extensive use of the *Dies irae* (a regular source for Rachmaninov) and the curious inscription 'Alliluya', written in the score above the last motif in the work to be derived from Orthodox chant, suggest the most final of endings mingled with a sense of thanksgiving. The tolling of the midnight bell that prefaces the movement's vigorous main section reinforces the view that the work might, after all, be a parable on the three ages of man.

Much of the main Allegro vivace material here is derived from chant, as is the motif that eventually drives the Dies irae away and dominates the work's forthright conclusion. But this is also the movement in which Rachmaninov takes time out from the dance, in an extensive central section in which morbidity, regret, passion and tears commingle in a complex and beautifully scored musical design.

# Notes by Phillip Sametz @ 1999

Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* is scored for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and multiple percussion; harp, piano, alto saxophone and strings.

It was given its world premiere on 3 January 1941 by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, to whom it is dedicated.

The earliest known performance by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra was in March 1977, conducted by Denis Vaughan. Other notable performances include those led by Eduardo Mata (1990), David Stanhope (1999, subsequently released on CD), Mark Elder (2000, and on tour in Kuala Lumpur), Charles Dutoit (2006), Vladimir Ashkenazy (2007, as part of his Rachmaninov Festival, and subsequently released on CD), Jakub Hrusa (2012), Kristjan Jarvi (2013) and James Gaffigan (2017).

Our most recent performance was in September 2022, under our former Chief Conductor Edo de Waart, in his last-ever performances in Sydney. He had conducted the work once before, in 1995.

All scoring and history by Hugh Robertson

# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Aernout Kerbert

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**Brighdie Chambers** Orchestra Manager Emma Winestone Orchestra Coordinator

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