

13 & 14 June 2025

DONALD RUNNICLES CONDUCTS

STRAUSS & BEETHOVEN



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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
Sophie Cole
Georges Lentz
Emily Long
Alexandra Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Léone Ziegler
Marcus Michelsen°
Benjamin Tjoa°
Liisa Pallandi*

SECOND VIOLINS

Kirsty Hilton
Principal
Marina Marsden
Principal
Emma Jezek
Acting Associate Principal
Wendy Kong
Acting Assistant Principal
Rebecca Gill
Emma Hayes
Shuti Huang
Wendy Kong
Benjamin Li
Nicole Masters
Robert Smith
Maja Verunica
Caroline Hopson°
Liam Pilgrim†

VIOLAS

Dor Sperber*
Guest Principal
Tobias Breider
Principal
Richard Waters°
Acting Principal
Justin Williams
Acting Associate Principal
Sandro Costantino
Rosemary Curtin
Stuart Johnson
Justine Marsden
Felicity Tsai
Amanda Verner
Leonid Volovelsky
Stephen Wright°
Andrew Jezek°

CELLOS

Catherine Hewgill
Principal
Simon Cobcroft
Associate Principal
Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Kristy Konrau
Fenella Gill
Timothy Nankervis
Elizabeth Neville
Christopher Pidcock
Adrian Wallis
Minah Choe*

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
Dana Alison†
Adrienne Hanslow*
Guest Principal Piccolo

OBOES

Shefall Pryor
Principal
Miriam Cooney°
Amy Clough†
Alexandre Oguey
Principal Cor Anglais

CLARINETS

Olli Leppäniemi
Principal
Francesco Celata
Associate Principal
Christopher Tingay
Alexander Morris
Principal Bass Trombone

BASSOONS

Todd Gibson-Cornish
Principal
Matthew Wilkie
Principal Emeritus
Bailey Ireland†
Timothy Murray*
Guest Principal Contrabassoon

HORNS

Ruben Buils Garcia*
Guest Principal
Samuel Jacobs
Principal
Euan Harvey
Acting Principal
Marnie Sebire
Rachel Silver
Emily Newham°
Bryn Arnold†
Joshua Davies*
Lee Wadenpfohl*

TRUMPETS

David Elton
Principal
Brent Grapes
Associate Principal
Cécile Glémot
Anthony Heinrichs
Isabella Thomas†

TROMBONES

Michael Mulcahy*
Guest Principal
Scott Kinmont
Acting Principal
Nick Byrne
Christopher Harris
Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Steve Rossé
Principal

TIMPANI

Mark Robinson
Acting Principal

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Joshua Hill°
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Tim Brigden*
Ian Gleworth*

HARP

Louisic Dulbecco
Principal
Kate Moloney*

Bold Principal
* Guest Musician
° Contract Musician
† Sydney Symphony Fellow

2025 CONCERT SEASON

ROYAL CARIBBEAN SYMPHONIC FRIDAYS

Friday 13 June, 7pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

HANTEC GREAT CLASSICS

Saturday 14 June, 2pm

DONALD RUNNICLES CONDUCTS STRAUSS & BEETHOVEN

A HERO'S JOURNEY

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

The Creatures of Prometheus, Op.43 (1801)

Overture

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK (1854–1921)

ARR. OMAR ABAD

Hansel and Gretel – Suite (1893)

i. Prelude

iii. *The Witches' Ride*

iv. *In the Forest*

v. *Evening Prayer*

vii. *The Witch's Waltz and Pantomime*

INTERVAL

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

Ein Heldenleben, Op 40 (A Hero's Life) (1898)

i. *The Hero*

ii. *The Hero's enemies*

iii. *The Hero's companion*

iv. *The Hero's deeds of war*

v. *The Hero's works of peace*

vi. *The Hero's retirement from the world*

Pre-concert talk

By Zoltán Szabó in the
Northern Foyer at 6.15pm
Friday, 1.15pm Saturday

Estimated durations

Beethoven – 6 minutes
Humperdinck – 27 minutes
Interval – 20 minutes
Strauss – 45 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately 2 hours

Cover image

Sir Donald Runnicles
conducting the Sydney
Symphony Orchestra
in 2023

Photo by Jay Patel

Presenting Partners



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WELCOME

Welcome to **Donald Runnicles conducts Strauss & Beethoven**, a concert in the *Royal Caribbean Symphonic Fridays* series.

As the Presenting Partner of this series, we are delighted to be bringing audiences the opportunity to hear classical music's greatest works, performed by world-leading artists in one of the world's great concert halls, including this dramatic and powerful program conducted by Principal Guest Conductor Sir Donald Runnicles.

The Orchestra is the soloist in this colossal and dynamic program centred on the music of Richard Strauss, along with a suite from Engelbert Humperdinck's opera *Hansel and Gretel* and Beethoven's mighty overture from *The Creatures of Prometheus*.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's performance of these works invites us all to reflect on journeys of self-discovery – something we at Royal Caribbean also aspire to create.

When in port, our innovative ships become a part of the breathtaking scenery of Sydney Harbour, a world-famous scene shared by the equally iconic Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Royal Caribbean are immensely proud of our partnership with the Orchestra. With an unswerving focus on creating world-class experiences, Royal Caribbean and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra share a deep commitment to excellence in all that we do.

I hope you enjoy this spectacular Friday night performance of **Donald Runnicles conducts Strauss & Beethoven** as part of the *Royal Caribbean Symphonic Fridays* series.



Gavin Smith,
Vice President & Managing Director
Royal Caribbean



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WELCOME

Welcome to **Donald Runnicles conducts Strauss & Beethoven**, a concert in the *Hantec Great Classics* series.

Since its establishment in 1990, Hantec Group has grown from its roots in Hong Kong into a recognised leader in financial services and diversified industries. As we proudly celebrate our 35th anniversary, we reflect on our journey of excellence, innovation, and unwavering commitment to empowering businesses and investors worldwide.

Just as we work to build connections across the world of financial services, as the inaugural Presenting Partner of *Hantec Great Classics* in 2025, it is our great thrill to connect Sydney audiences to the world of classical music – in this concert personified by Principal Guest Conductor Sir Donald Runnicles.

Sir Donald has built an extraordinary career over nearly half a century, with long and celebrated tenures at the helm of orchestras in Berlin, San Francisco, Scotland, Atlanta and Wyoming, and has just been appointed Chief Conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic, a post he takes up later this year.

We are looking forward to today's program combining two of Sir Donald's great loves – Beethoven and Richard Strauss – with the music of Englebert Humperdinck. While lesser-known in Australia, Humperdinck's opera *Hansel and Gretel* is a staple of the repertoire in Germany and New York, and the suite you will hear today captures its charm and child-like wonder.

The beauty and power of Sydney Symphony Orchestra performances is only possible after decades of investment, discipline and mutual respect. Over almost two decades, these same principles have guided Hantec Markets Australia to its position as a trusted leader in financial services specialising in CFD trading services for Australian clients.

We are immensely proud of our inaugural partnership, which reflects our commitment to supporting cultural initiatives and Sydney's vibrant cultural life. Together with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra we share a deep dedication to excellence and investment in the future.

I trust you will enjoy this inspiring performance of **Donald Runnicles conducts Strauss & Beethoven**.



Damon Sze
Chief Operating Officer
Hantec Markets Australia

Over 35 years, the Hantec Group has become known for excellence, innovation and unwavering commitment to empowering businesses and investors worldwide.



Those shared values are at the core of our new partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and by working together we aim to enrich cultural life through orchestral music, nurture new talent through education programs, inspire the worlds of financial services and orchestral music, build stronger cultures within our industries and enrich the artistic lives of our communities.



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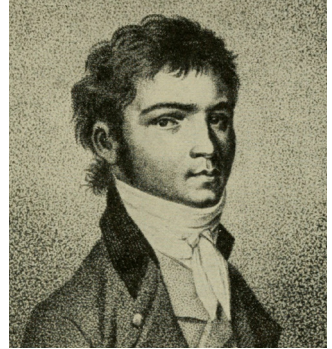
YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

The Creatures of Prometheus, Op.43: Overture (1801)

Beethoven's ballet is based on the Greek myth of Prometheus, the Titan who stole fire from the gods to give to humanity. It was strongly influenced by the idea of heroism put forward by Friedrich Schiller, whose *Ode to Joy* forms the text of the later Ninth Symphony.

It appeared in 1801, the years that saw Great Britain and Ireland become a United Kingdom, the 'removal' of some marble items from Athens to London by Lord Elgin, and the court martial of John Macarthur. Contemporary music included Haydn's *The Seasons*, John Field's Three Piano Sonatas, Op.1, and Cimarosa's *Artemisia*.



1801 engraving by Johann Joseph Neidl. Source: Beethoven-Haus/Wikimedia Commons.

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK (1854–1921)

ARR. OMAR ABAD

Hansel and Gretel – Suite (1893)

What began as a domestic entertainment for children turned into this composer's most enduring work. Based in turn on one of the best-loved stories collected by the Brothers Grimm, it tells of the narrow escape of two children from a hungry witch in a German forest.

The opera appeared, conducted by Richard Strauss, in 1893, the year that saw Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii deposed, the world's first drivers' licences issued, and a visit to Australia by the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand who hunted kangaroos and emus.

Contemporary music included Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony, and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.



Engelbert Humperdinck autograph card, produced before 1921. Source: Stadtarchiv Bonn/Wikimedia Commons.

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

Ein Heldenleben, Op 40 (A Hero's Life) (1898)

Strauss was unapologetic about making the 'hero' of his Hero's Life himself. This substantial tone-poem is a symphonic elaboration of themes that depict various events in his life, and some of the people he loved and hated most.

It was completed in 1898, the year that saw the Empress Cixi orchestrate a coup d'état in China, Lenin create the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, and a referendum to accept the constitution of a federated Australia. Contemporary music included Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*.



Photo of Richard Strauss c.1905-1910. Source: George Grantham Bain Collection, United States Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

Over the course of a career spanning 45 years, Sir Donald Runnicles has built his reputation on enduring relationships with several of the most significant opera companies and orchestras, and is especially celebrated for his interpretations of Romantic and post-Romantic symphonic and opera repertoire which are core to his musical identity. He is the music director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin (since 2009) and the Grand Teton Music Festival (since 2005) and has held chief artistic leadership roles at the San Francisco Opera (1992–2008), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (2009–2016), and the Orchestra of St. Luke's (2001–2007). Sir Donald was also Principal Guest Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for more than two decades (2001–2023), and he is the Principal Guest Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (since 2019). In February 2024, Runnicles was appointed as Chief Conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic, beginning in the 25/26 season.

Maestro Runnicles kicks off his 24/25 season with a 70th birthday celebration concert at the Edinburgh International Festival conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony in a program of Mahler and Bruckner, after which he opens the Dresden Philharmonic's season in his first concerts as Chief Conductor Designate, returning two more times over the course of the season. At the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Runnicles concludes his Strauss cycle in collaboration with director Tobias Kratzer with a new production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, alongside *Arabella* and *Intermezzo*, as well as revival performances of Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg*, Puccini's *La bohème*, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Verdi's *Don Carlo*, and a symphony concert with the DOB as part of Musikfest Berlin. In North America, he makes guest appearances with the Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Houston and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras. He also returns twice to the Sydney Symphony.

Runnicles spends his summers at the Grand Teton Music Festival in Jackson, Wyoming. This eight-week festival of symphonic and chamber music, five of which are conducted by Runnicles as music director, takes place amid the breathtaking beauty of Grand Teton National Park. Summer 2024 GTMF highlights

included a semi-staged *The Magic Flute*, concerts with Augustin Hadelich and Yo-Yo Ma, and fifth symphonies by Mahler and Vaughan Williams.

His extensive discography includes recordings of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Britten's *Billy Budd*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and Aribert Reimann's *L'invisible*. His recording of Wagner arias with Jonas Kaufmann and the Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin won the 2013 *Gramophone* prize for Best Vocal Recording, and his recording of Janáček's *Jenůfa* with the Orchestra and Chorus of the Deutsche Oper Berlin was nominated for a 2016 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording.

Sir Donald Runnicles was born and raised in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was appointed OBE in 2004 and was made a Knight Bachelor in 2020. He holds honorary degrees from the University of Edinburgh, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

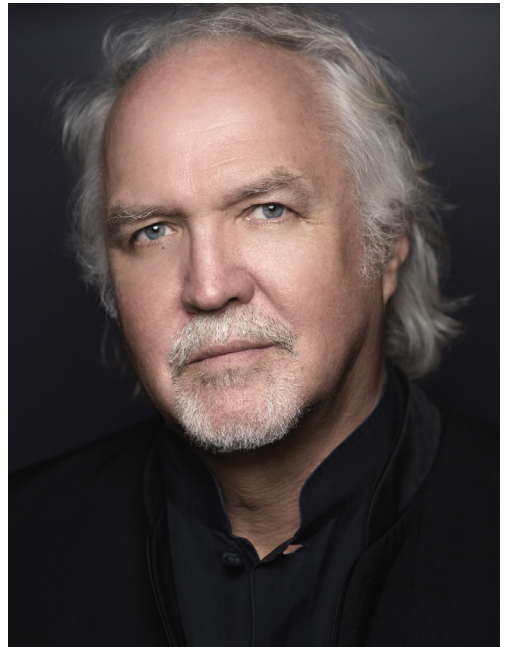


Photo by Simon Pauly

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

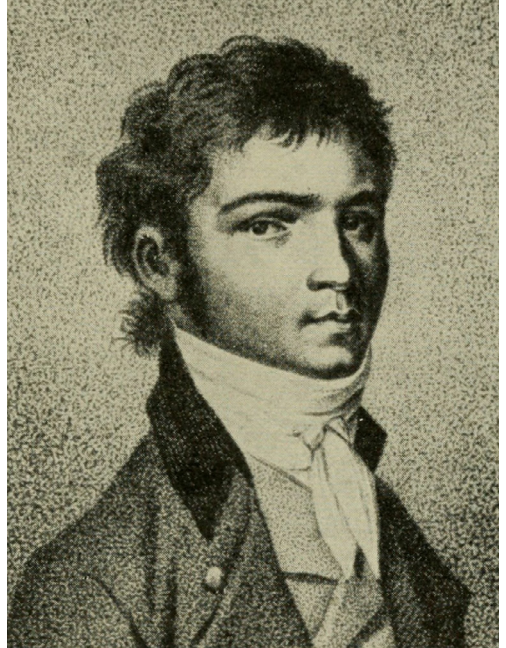
ABOUT BEETHOVEN

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.



The earliest known portrait of Beethoven: an 1801 engraving by Johann Joseph Neidl after a now-lost portrait by Gandolph Ernst Stainhauser von Treuberg, c. 1800. Source: Beethoven-Haus/Wikimedia Commons.

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 retreated from society, 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.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE CREATURES OF PROMETHEUS

In 1793 the poet Friedrich Schiller wrote *On the Nature of Pathos*, an essay about the nature of tragedy. Beethoven, whose love of Schiller was life-long and would, finally, issue in the paean to humanity in the Ninth Symphony, was much taken with Schiller's view that the most fitting subject for tragedy was not simply the idea of suffering, but the capacity of reason to resist or transcend suffering. There are numerous instances in Beethoven's work of such stoic heroism in characters like *Fidelio's* Florestan, the protagonists of *Egmont* and *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (even, arguably, Beethoven himself). Beethoven was no democrat, but he genuinely hated tyranny and injustice, and all of those figures suffer at the hand of arbitrary and cruel authority.

An archetype of such a figure is Prometheus from Greek mythology. He was a Titan, a member of the race which was supplanted by the Olympian gods, but served those gods, specifically by creating the race of mortal humans by fashioning them out of clay. Feeling sorry for humanity, obliged to eat raw food and live in cold caves, Prometheus disobeyed the gods' ban on taking fire to earth. Zeus punished him by chaining Prometheus to a pinnacle on the Caucasian mountains, where each day an eagle would come and eat his liver (which, because he was immortal, grew back again straight away) until he was eventually rescued by Hercules.

In 1801 Vienna saw Beethoven's first work for the stage, a ballet based on the Prometheus legend adapted and choreographed by the ballet master Salvatore Viganò. In Viganò's version, the 'creatures' are two *Urmenschen* (primal people), statues (male and female) who are brought to life and who represent humanity as a whole. No detailed scenario or choreography has survived, though Beethoven made notes in his sketches which have offered a few clues to what was happening on stage. After the overture, which became a popular concert item almost immediately, and an introductory storm, the ballet tells of the creation of the *Urmenschen* and then the couple's presentation to Zeus and the gods, who endow them with various human attributes. In the ballet, Prometheus is punished by death for his transgression, but is returned to life for the joyous dances that comprise the last numbers.

One diarist hated it; it 'pleased' Haydn very much. And while the consensus was that the music was far superior to the scenario and choreography, it enjoyed a run of over 21 performances, helping to establish Beethoven as the next big thing in Viennese music.

This overture is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 2 horns and 2 trumpets; timpani and strings.

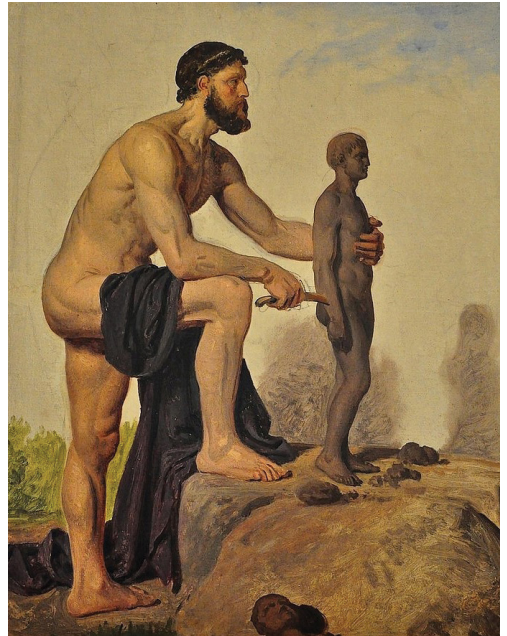
Beethoven's only ballet premiered on 28 March 1801 at the Hofburg Theater in Vienna, with choreography by the well-known dancer Salvatore Viganò.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the overture in February 1938, conducted by Percy Code.

It featured heavily on Schools and Regional Tour performances across NSW throughout the 1960s and 70s, often conducted one of either Ernest Llewellyn or Robert Miller, two of the great figures in Australian music education, both of whom served as our Concertmaster for various periods.

Other notable performances include those led by guest conductors Walter Susskind (1954), Jean Martinon (1956), Hiroyuki Iwaki (1987), Bruno Weil (2001); and by Chief Conductors Eugene Goossens (1954), Nikolai Malko (1959), Charles Mackerras (1963), Moshe Atzmon (1968), Dean Dixon (1975), Stuart Challender (1985) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (2011, including on our Asian Tour).

Our most recent performances were under Chief Conductor Simone Young in July 2023.



Prometheus Creating Man in Clay (1845) by Dutch painter Constantin Hansen (1804–1880).



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3 Orlando, Florida

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4 Nassau, Bahamas

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8 Cape Liberty, New Jersey

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK

But for the pop singer who appropriated his name, Humperdinck's continuing fame rests on this one opera, yet he could be credited with leading Romantic music out of 'the Wagnerian-impasse'. Many 19th- and early 20th-century composers attempted to find a place for themselves in musical history by outdoing Wagner – more myths, more symbolism, more dissonance piled upon dissonance. Humperdinck turned back to fairy tales and folk tunes, and his *Hansel and Gretel* might be described as the Wagnerian universe seen through the eyes of a child.

Born in Siegburg, near Bonn, Humperdinck began his musical education at the age of seven, studying at the University of Cologne with Ferdinand Hiller and later in Munich with Josef Rheinberger. He later taught in Barcelona and Frankfurt.

He heard Lortzing's *Undine* in 1868 and this opera, based on German legend, remained a model. Coming under Wagner's spell, Humperdinck went to Bayreuth in 1881 to help Wagner with the first production of *Parsifal*, and composed a few extra bars of 'transformation music' to help cover an unexpectedly lengthy scene change. But there were lighter sides to Wagner's genius, Humperdinck told friends; sides more congenial to his own Mendelssohnian inclinations, and these point the way to *Hansel and Gretel*.

Although he was a prolific composer, his opera *Königskinder* is the only other work of his that achieved any real prominence, yet it is now considered a novelty, whereas *Hansel and Gretel* is imperishable. It was the first opera to be broadcast on radio (from Covent Garden in 1923) and the first to be transmitted live from the Metropolitan Opera (in 1931). A simplified arrangement by Ludwig Andersen in 1927 brought it within the reach of amateur groups and schools, further popularising the work.



Engelbert Humperdinck before 1921.
Source: Stadtarchiv Bonn/Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT HANSEL AND GRETEL

The project started life as some songs for a *Hansel and Gretel* performance given by the children of Humperdinck's sister in 1890. The success of this little family entertainment led the composer to the creation of his most successful piece. On receiving the score of the opera in October 1893, Richard Strauss declared it a masterpiece and conducted the premiere just two months later. The lush simplicity of the work literally captivated the world – Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* was eventually translated into 20 languages – and the composer was able to retire from public life in 1897 largely thanks to the royalties. It was that rare masterpiece that was both immediately popular and deeply enduring.

Critics have sometimes wondered if style overpowers content in Humperdinck's telling of the familiar fairy tale, but his use of folk elements was a counterbalance to any heaviness. 'Overpowering' is certainly not the case with the Prelude, which Humperdinck described as 'Children's Life'.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The **Prelude** begins with the Romantic sound of a quartet of horns playing the prayer which the two children will offer in Act II, when, sent from their house by their harassed mother, they find themselves lost in the woods. This innocent theme is developed in counterpoint until interrupted by a trumpet, representing the counter-charm, the means by which the witch is vanquished. We next hear the theme of the Dew Fairy, who drives sleep from the children's eyes, and the dance melody heard at the end of the opera, as the characters celebrate their victory over the witch who had tried to cook the children in the oven in her Gingerbread House. Musical themes are combined ingeniously and the Prelude ends with the prayer music.

The scope of Humperdinck's operatic conception is apparent from **The Witches' Ride** which progresses from folk-dance to rich orchestral tone-painting in under three minutes. This short section serves as a Prelude to Act II, or an interlude in productions that dispense with an interval.

Act II itself begins with the children **in the forest**, where their mother has sent them to search for food. As Hansel hunts about for strawberries, Gretel sings a song about a little mannikin who lives in the wood as she weaves a garland of leaves. Hansel refuses to wear it, but when Gretel puts the garland on her head, he says that she looks like 'the Queen of the Wood with sceptre and crown'.

In the last two scenes of Act II. Hansel and Gretel try to sleep after realising they are lost in the forest. The Sandman visits, easing the children's fears and making them sleepy; they comfort themselves with their **Evening Prayer**, to the same music that began the overture.

In the end Hansel and Gretel outsmart the witch by pushing her into the oven she was pre-heating for them; the **'Witch is dead' waltz** is one of several dances with which Humperdinck leavens his score.

Omar Abad's suite concludes with music for the **Pantomime** of the fourteen angels who descend to protect the sleeping children in Act II. It includes themes now familiar from the Sandman and Evening Prayer.

Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* might be described as the Wagnerian universe seen through the eyes of a child. It is a wonderful combination of naivety and sophistication. Even the counterpoint is as delightful as children's play. As a side note, Humperdinck is reported to have applied in 1914 to be founding director of the NSW Conservatorium, but didn't get the post. A German director in 1914 – it might have been awkward.

Omar Abad's arrangement of music from Humperdinck's opera is scored for 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes (the second doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, harp and strings.

Hansel and Gretel was first performed in Weimar in 1893, conducted by Richard Strauss, followed by its Hamburg premiere on 25 September 1894, conducted by Gustav Mahler.

The first performance of the complete opera in Australia was on 6 April 1907, at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT RICHARD STRAUSS

In 1945, as the Nazi regime fell, American soldiers began commandeering villas in the Bavarian town of Garmisch. At one door, an elderly man greeted them with now famous words: 'I am Richard Strauss, composer of *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Salome*'. Fortunately for Strauss, the commanding officer knew him and his work, and the Strauss family was not evicted from its home.

Strauss was born in 1864 – Clara Schumann was still performing, Brahms and Wagner were contemporary composers. His father, Franz, was one of the finest horn players of his day. Richard Wagner regarded the elder Strauss as an 'intolerable blighter, but when he plays his horn one cannot stay cross with him'. Strauss senior loathed most of Wagner's music and said so often, yet regularly went to Bayreuth to play in Wagner's festival orchestra. Nevertheless, the older Strauss tried to ensure that his gifted son would never be seduced by Wagner's work, and Richard's earliest pieces include a very Mozartian wind Serenade.

At 17, however, young Strauss heard, or as he put it, 'wolfed the score of *Tristan*, as if in a trance'. Wagner's highly expressive chromatic harmony was a decisive influence on Strauss, and one which he put to good use in the series of massive tone-poems such as *A Hero's Life* or *Death and Transfiguration*. These in turn equipped him with the ability to write opera on something like a Wagnerian scale.

Salome was a turning point. Oscar Wilde's play is a self-consciously 'artificial' piece of work. Strauss, however brings all he had learned from Wagner to make it a gripping document of psycho-pathology. Its companion piece, *Elektra* likewise essays madness in an ancient mythic setting are the extreme points of Strauss at his most post-Wagnerian. As time went on, Strauss turned, or returned, to the example of Mozart, who had been the inspiration for some of his earliest compositions. *Der Rosenkavalier*, the greatest result of Strauss' collaboration with playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal is set in a highly Romanticised, late-18th-century Vienna. In works like *Ariadne auf Naxos* or *Capriccio* he moved even closer to a neo-classical manner; at the end of his life, in instrumental works like the Oboe Concerto, Strauss took great solace from the example of Mozart in the face of the horror of World War II.

Strauss, like Mozart, loved the human voice. Strauss and Mozart were married to singers, and some of their greatest works celebrate just that. Strauss was an inveterate composer of song, and even the opulence of the Four Last Songs never obscures his intense sensitivity to the beauty of the voice. The apparent differences between *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Salome* are largely superficial.



Photograph of Strauss conducting, c.1900. Photo by Esther Singleton.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT *EIN HELDENLEBEN*

In 1900 the French writer Romain Rolland described his friend Richard Strauss as ‘the typical artist of the new German empire, the powerful reflection of that heroic pride which is on the verge of becoming delirious, of that contemptuous Nietzscheism, of that egotistical and practical idealism which makes a cult of power and disdains weakness’. Strauss was, of course, a quintessentially and proudly German artist, whose symphonic poems attempt to bring together the philosophical and descriptive with the abstract ideals of the symphonic tradition. And he was blessed with a healthy ego. Rolland also quotes Strauss as saying, with specific reference to *Ein Heldenleben*, ‘I don’t see why I should not compose a symphony about myself; I find myself quite as interesting as Napoleon or Alexander’. Strauss was, however, given to self-conscious (and often self-deprecating) hyperbole, and not only in his music. For instance, he once remarked that the purpose of life ‘was to make art possible. Christianity had to be invented to make possible the Colmar altar, the Sistine Madonna, the *Missa solemnis* and *Parsifal*.’ Accordingly, we should take his gag about being ‘as interesting as Napoleon’ with a grain of salt, especially in light of his remark to his father that it was only partly true that Strauss himself was the ‘hero’ of *Ein Heldenleben*.

The idea for *Ein Heldenleben* evidently came to Strauss while he was at work on the symphonic poem *Don Quixote*. That work, with its theme of the ‘crazy striving after false ideals’ seemed to cry out for a companion piece, one which, as Strauss put it, would embody ‘a more general and free ideal of great and manly heroism’. In 1898 he wrote, slightly facetiously, that Beethoven’s ‘*Eroica*’ is so little beloved of our conductors, and is on this account now only rarely performed that to fulfil a pressing need I am composing a largish tone poem entitled *Heldenleben*, admittedly without a funeral march, but yet in E flat, with lots of horns, which are always a yardstick of heroism.

The score uses eight horns, to be precise, not to mention five trumpets, two tubas, quadruple woodwind and two harps. But while the hero of *Ein Heldenleben* must in some respects be identified with Strauss, Norman del Mar points out that Strauss had ‘too much sense of humour to pompously proclaim himself a hero to the whole world’. In other words, it is Strauss’s life *as an artist* which furnishes the ‘autobiographical’ elements of *Ein Heldenleben*, elements which, like comparable moments in the poetry of Walt Whitman, can be seen as analogous to elements in the life of any creative individual. Moreover, the ‘self-portrait’ Strauss draws of himself in the *Symphonia Domestica* is markedly different from that of the Hero introduced in the first section of *Ein Heldenleben*.

The Hero ‘sings himself’ in a long, and significantly unaccompanied, theme beginning low in the horns and strings and bounding up the arpeggio of E flat through two octaves in its first bar. The theme contains a number of strongly profiled motives, which are subjected to development representing the ‘primary unfolding of abilities’. After a fully scored climax, a new theme appears, described by del Mar as the hero’s ‘ultimatum’ which is stated six times and each time answered by silence. Finally, a magisterial chord of the dominant seventh leaves the hero waiting for the world’s response.

In a masterly dramatic stroke, the answer comes from *The Hero’s enemies*, or critics in a complex of themes ranging from thin-lipped solos for flute and oboe to the trudging motive for tubas said to represent rhythmically the Munich critic Doktor Döhring. The hero responds with a long and beautiful melody, which serves only to provoke the critics to more hysterical attacks.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Ignoring the critics, the music now turns to *The Hero's companion* by far the longest and most elaborate movement in the whole work. The burden of representing the hero's companion falls largely to the solo violin – reminding us that Pauline Strauss was a singer, whose voice inspired so much of Richard's work. According to Rolland, Strauss said 'it's my wife I wanted to portray. She is very complex, very much a woman, a little depraved, something of a flirt, never twice alike, every minute different to what she was the minute before'. Certainly, Strauss's portrait is of a complex character, and is not, as del Mar notes, always flattering.

The love scene is interrupted by a call to battle, which Michael Kennedy takes pains to point out is about the battlefield of the soul, rather than crude militarism. *The Hero's deeds of war* are depicted with uncompromising violence, though the progression of the music leaves it in no doubt that the hero will prevail, and the pervasive ¾ waltz time suggests some ironic distance on the composer's part. When the tumult and the shouting dies, the music describes *The Hero's works of peace*, which Strauss depicts in thirty quotations from eight of his works. Who else's works would have been appropriate?

The Hero's retirement from the world formally recapitulates material and synthesises it. The home key of E flat is re-established, notably in some luminous, quiet writing for eight horns. Memories of battle are dissipated, memories of love are comforting. Strauss (aged 34 when he composed the work) can't have been thinking of retirement, but convincingly describes a state in which the hero's soul has been refined by experience. The work originally ended with the ecstatically beautiful passage for horn and violin (again representing the love of his life) which we hear before the final brass apotheosis. Strauss was stung by a friend's criticism that he could only ever compose quiet endings (so much for his egotism). In old age he derided the work's final chords as 'the Hero's State Funeral'.

Adapted from notes by Phillip Sametz and Gordon Kalton Williams © 2014/2015 (Humperdinck); Gordon Kerry © 2019 (Beethoven) © 2002 (Strauss)

Ein Heldenleben is scored for a large orchestra consisting of 3 flutes, piccolo, 4 oboes (the fourth doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, E flat clarinet, 3 bassoons and contrabassoon; 8 horns, 5 trumpets, 3 trombones, tenor tuba and tuba; timpani, percussion, two harps and strings.

The piece was premiered by the Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester on March 3 1899, with the composer conducting.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in May 1946, conducted by Bernard Heinze and broadcast nationally on the ABC.

Other notable performances include those by guest conductors Walter Susskind (1954), Tibor Paul (1961), Vladimir Verbitsky (1991), Muhai Tang (1992), Hiroyuki Iwaki (1994), Alexander Lazarev (2001), Lorin Maazel (2002) and Jeffrey Tate (2005); and by Chief Conductors Eugene Goossens (1954), Willem van Otterloo (1972, 1974), Zdeněk Mácal (1986), Edo de Waart (1996 in Sydney and Perth Festival) and Simone Young (2009).

Our most recent performances were under Chief Conductor David Robertson in 2014, who led concerts in Sydney and subsequently in Beijing, Xi'an, Hangzhou and Guangzhou on our Asian Tour.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson



BACKSTAGE NEWS

Scan this QR code with your phone's camera to read more from Sir Donald Runnicles and Chief Conductor Simone Young on the genius of Strauss, and their insights into the man and his music.

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Director of Operations & Production
Aeva O’Dea
Operations Manager
Tom Farmer
Production Manager
Elissa Seed
Production Manager
Jacinta Dockrill
Production Administrator
Shanell Bielawa
Production Coordinator
Jordan Blackwell, Jess Hughes, Rory Knott, Matthew Landi, Harvey Lynn, Ella Tomkins
Production Assistants
Georgia Holmes, Reede Palmer
Production Interns

ORCHESTRA MANAGEMENT

Aernout Kerbert
Director of Orchestra Management
Brighdie Chambers
Orchestra Manager
Emma Winestone
Deputy Orchestra Manager

PEOPLE & CULTURE

Daniel Bushe
Director of People & Culture
Rosie Marks-Smith
Head of Culture & Wellbeing
Yen Sharratt
People & Culture Manager
Keanna Mauch
People & Culture Coordinator
Sue Burnet
Work Health & Safety Specialist

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