

30 July – 2 August 2025

A portrait of pianist Javier Perianes. He is a man with dark hair, wearing a black blazer over a black shirt. He is standing with his arms crossed, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Behind him is a grand piano, with its lid open, creating a dark, dramatic background.

# JAVIER PERIANES

PERFORMS SAINT-SAËNS

«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 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.

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.

## PERFORMING IN THIS CONCERT

### FIRST VIOLINS

**Andrew Haveron**

*Concertmaster*

**Harry Bennetts**

*Associate Concertmaster*

**Alexandra Osborne**

*Associate Concertmaster*

**Fiona Ziegler**

*Assistant Concertmaster*

**Sun Yi**

*Associate Concertmaster*

*Emeritus*

Jennifer Booth

Sophie Cole

Sercan Danis

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alex Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Leone Ziegler

Brian Hong<sup>o</sup>

Benjamin Tjoo<sup>o</sup>

### SECOND VIOLINS

**Lerida Delbridge**

*Principal*

**Kirsty Hilton**

*Principal*

**Emma Jezek**

*Assistant Principal*

Alice Bartsch

Victoria Bihun

Rebecca Gill

Emma Hayes

Wendy Kong

Benjamin Li

Nicole Masters

Riikka Sintonen<sup>o</sup>

Natalie Mavridis<sup>†</sup>

Caroline Hopson<sup>†</sup>

Liam Pilgrim<sup>†</sup>

### VIOLAS

**Tobias Breider**

*Principal*

**Richard Waters<sup>o</sup>**

*Acting Principal*

**Justin Williams**

*Acting Associate Principal*

**Anne-Louise Comerford**

*Associate Principal Emeritus*

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Felicity Tsai

Leonid Volovelsky

Ariel Postmus<sup>†</sup>

Stephen Wright<sup>o</sup>

James Wannan<sup>o</sup>

Charlotte Fetherston<sup>†</sup>

### CELLOS

**Catherine Hewgill**

*Principal*

**Simon Cobcroft**

*Associate Principal*

Kristy Conrau

Fenella Gill

Timothy Nankervis

Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis

Paul Stender<sup>†</sup>

Minah Choe<sup>†</sup>

Joseph Kelly<sup>†</sup>

### DOUBLE BASSES

**Kees Boersma**

*Principal*

**Alexander Henery**

*Principal*

David Campbell

Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Richard Lynn

Jaán Pallandi

Benjamin Ward

### FLUTES

**Emma Sholl**

*Acting Principal*

Carolyn Harris

**Emilia Antcliff<sup>\*</sup>**

*Guest Principal Piccolo*

### OBOES

**Shefali Pryor**

*Principal*

Amy Clough<sup>†</sup>

**Alexandre Oguey**

*Principal Cor Anglais*

### CLARINETS

**Alexander Morris**

*Guest Principal Clarinet*

Christopher Tingay

### BASSOONS

**Matthew Wilkie**

*Principal Emeritus*

Fiona McNamara

### HORNS

**Samuel Jacobs**

*Principal*

**Euan Harvey**

*Acting Principal 3rd Horn*

Marnie Sebire

Rachel Silver

Emily Newham<sup>o</sup>

### TRUMPETS

**Brent Grapes**

*Associate Principal*

Chris Moran<sup>†</sup>

### TROMBONES

**Scott Kinmont**

*Acting Principal*

Jeremy Mazurek<sup>†</sup>

**Christopher Harris**

*Principal Bass Trombone*

### TUBA

**Steve Rossé**

*Principal*

### TIMPANI

**Mark Robinson**

*Acting Principal*

### PERCUSSION

**Rebecca Lagos**

*Principal*

**Joshua Hill<sup>o</sup>**

*Acting Associate Principal*

*Timpani/Section Percussion*

Timothy Constable

Tim Brigden<sup>†</sup>

Brian Nixon<sup>†</sup>

### KEYBOARD

**Susanne Powell<sup>\*</sup>**

*Guest Principal Celeste*

**Bold Principal**

<sup>\*</sup> Guest Musician

<sup>o</sup> Contract Musician

<sup>†</sup> Sydney Symphony

Fellow

# 2025 CONCERT SEASON

## EMIRATES MASTERS SERIES

Wednesday 30 July, 8pm

Friday 1 August, 8pm

Saturday 2 August, 8pm

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

## EMIRATES THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Thursday 31 July, 1.30pm

# JAVIER PERIANES PERFORMS SAINT-SAËNS

## A FASCINATING VOYAGE

**KEVIN JOHN EDUSEI** conductor

**JAVIER PERIANES** piano

**GIOACHINO ROSSINI** (1792–1868)

*William Tell* (1829)

Overture

**CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS** (1835–1921)

**Piano Concerto No.5 in F major, Op.103, *The Egyptian*** (1896)

i. Allegro animato

ii. Andante – Allegretto tranquillo – Andante

iii. Molto allegro

## INTERVAL

**DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH** (1906–1975)

**Symphony No.15 in A major, Op.141** (1972)

i. Allegretto

ii. Adagio –

iii. Allegretto

iv. Adagio

## Pre-concert talk

By Yvonne Frindle in the  
Northern Foyer at 7.15pm,  
12.45pm (Thursday)

## Estimated durations

Rossini – 12 minutes

Saint-Saëns – 30 minutes

Interval – 20 minutes

Shostakovich – 45 minutes

The concert will run for  
approximately 2 hours

## Cover image

Javier Perianes

Photo by Igor Estudio

*These performances have  
been generously supported  
by Paolo Hooke*

Principal Partner



# WELCOME

Welcome to **Javier Perianes performs Saint-Saëns**, a wide-ranging concert of colour and drama.

A much-loved favourite of Sydney Symphony Orchestra audiences, Spanish pianist Javier Perianes returns to the Concert Hall to perform Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 5, often called *The Egyptian*. The genius of the composer's vision, combined with Perianes' energy, warmth and enthusiasm, will take us all on a brilliant journey of the imagination.

Another master of colour and drama is composer Rossini, whose iconic *William Tell* Overture bursts with energy and vivid storytelling.

Shostakovich's Symphony No.15, with its surprising contrasts of humour, bright light and deep shade, is conducted by Kevin John Edusei, another world-class artist making a most welcome return to our shores.

As the Presenter of this Master Series, Emirates proudly champions exceptional local and international talent, with a special focus on the Sydney Symphony's celebrated Chief Conductor, Simone Young AM.

This is a milestone year for our Australian operations as we've just celebrated 25 years of service to Sydney. Together with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, we have created one of the most significant and enduring relationships in Australia's performing arts, that continues to make us extremely proud.

Our partnership with the Orchestra has been underpinned by a shared vision: to create unforgettable journeys and remarkable experiences, and this concert perfectly illustrates our mutual commitment to excellence at the very highest level.

We are delighted by the continuing success of our long-term partnership, and I trust you will enjoy this dynamic concert.



**Barry Brown**  
**Divisional Vice President for Australasia**  
**Emirates**



# YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

**GIOACHINO ROSSINI** (1792–1868)

***William Tell*** (1829)

Overture

Rossini's most famous overture – made so by the enthusiastic embrace of it by American popular culture, and especially Warner Bros. – is from one of his relatively few 'serious' operas, about the hero of Swiss resistance to Austrian oppression in the early 14th century.

The opera appeared in 1829, the year that saw the establishment of the Metropolitan Police in London, the end of the Greek War of Independence, and the felling of a tree to celebrate the foundation of Perth in the Swan River Colony.

Contemporary music included Fanny Hensel's *Capriccio* for cello and piano, Berlioz's *La Mort de Cleopatre* and Mendelssohn's revival of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*.



Portrait of Gioachino Rossini (1828)  
by French painter Hortense  
Haudebourt-Lescot (1784–1845).  
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

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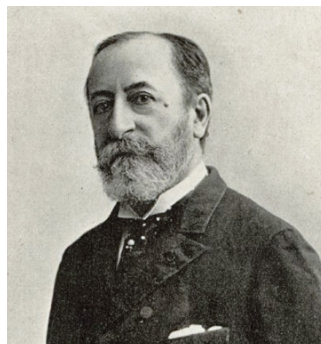
**CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS** (1835–1921)

**Piano Concerto No.5 in F major, Op.103, *The Egyptian*** (1896)

Saint-Saëns completed his Fifth Piano Concerto in an Egyptian hotel room, and claimed that there was at least one Nubian love song in it. In fact it shows the influence of Spain and China as well, but at the end of the day is a classic piece of late 19th century French elegance in three contrasting movements.

It premiered in 1896, the year that saw Leo XIII become the first Pope to appear on film, a giant octopus washed up on the coast of Florida, and the foundation of the Victorian Football League.

Contemporary music included Richard Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Sibelius' 'Lemminkäinen' Suite and Puccini's *La bohème*.



Camille Saint-Saëns c.1880,  
photo by Charles Reutlinger (1816–81).  
Source: Bibliothèque nationale de  
France/Wikimedia Commons.

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**DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH** (1906–1975)

**Symphony No.15 in A major, Op.141** (1972)

Shostakovich's last symphony returns to the four-movement 'classical' layout, and is riddled with quotations from music by Rossini, Mahler, Wagner and others that leave the listener not disagreeably baffled.

It premiered in 1972, the year that saw Bloody Sunday in the Northern Irish city of Derry, Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev sign the first SALT Treaty, and the election of the Whitlam Government in Australia.

Contemporary music included Einojuhani Rautavaara's *Cantus arcticus*, Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* and Peter Maxwell Davies' *Taverner*.



Mstislav Rostropovich, Dmitry  
Shostakovich and Sviatoslav Richter  
in 1968. Source: RIA Novosti archive,  
image #478141 / Mikhail Ozerskiy /  
CC-BY-SA 3.0.



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## KEVIN JOHN EDUSEI conductor

German conductor Kevin John Edusei is sought-after the world over. He is praised repeatedly for the drama and tension in his music-making and the sense of architecture, warmth and insight that he brings to his performances. He is deeply committed to the creative elements of performance, presenting classical music in new formats, cultivating audiences and conducting an eclectic range of repertoire.

Highlights of Edusei's 2024/25 season include debuts with the New York Philharmonic, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan Philharmonic Orchestra and at the Musikverein with the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra. His return engagements include the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra at the Concertgebouw and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in his final season as Principal Guest Conductor. A strong advocate of contemporary music, Edusei's carefully curated programmes across the 2024/25 season include premieres of works by Hannah Kendall, Thomas Larcher, Samy Moussa, Brian Nabors, Derrick Skye and Gabriella Smith.

Edusei is a regular guest conductor across the world with orchestras including the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, CBSO, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He has a long-standing relationship with the Chineke! Orchestra with whom he performs this season at London's South Bank Centre, Konzerthaus Berlin, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and at BOZAR, Brussels. Edusei is the former Chief Conductor of the Munich Symphony Orchestra and the Bern Opera House.

In Autumn 2022, Edusei made his debut at the Royal Opera House conducting Puccini's *La bohème*, which was streamed across cinemas world-wide, and in 2023/24 he returned for a production of *Madama Butterfly*. Previously he has enjoyed great

success with productions at the Semperoper Dresden, English National Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Volksoper Wien and Komische Oper Berlin. During his tenure at the Bern Opera House, he led highly acclaimed new productions including *Peter Grimes*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Salome*, *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Kátya Kábanová* and a cycle of the Mozart-Da-Ponte operas.

Born in Bielefeld, Germany, Edusei studied sound engineering, classical percussion and orchestral conducting at the University of the Arts Berlin and the Royal Conservatory The Hague with Jac van Steen and Ed Spanjaard. In 2004 he was awarded a conducting fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival by David Zinman, in 2007 he was a prize-winner at the Lucerne Festival conducting competition under the artistic direction of Pierre Boulez and in 2008 he won the first prize of the Dimitri Mitropoulos Competition in Athens. Edusei is an alumnus of the Deutsche Bank *Akademie Musiktheater heute* and the *Dirigentenforum* of the German Music Council. He resides with his family in Munich.



Photo by Marco Borggreve

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### JAVIER PERIANES piano

The international career of Javier Perianes has led him to perform in the most prestigious concert halls, with the world's foremost orchestras, working with celebrated conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Charles Dutoit, Zubin Mehta, Gustavo Dudamel, Klaus Mäkelä, Gianandrea Noseda, Gustavo Gimeno, Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Simone Young and Vladimir Jurowski.

The 2024/25 season features an array of high-profile concerts, including the Spanish premiere of Francisco Coll's *Ciudad sin sueño* with Les Arts, Valencia, and performances with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Gulbenkian Orchestra, Residentie Orkest and Antwerp, BBC Scottish, Stavanger, Singapore, San Diego and Vancouver symphony orchestras. Perianes will perform Jimmy Lopez Bellido's Piano Concerto with the Naples Philharmonic, FL, and play/direct Galicia Orchestra, and all five Beethoven concerti with Orquestra de la Comunitat Valencia and touring Philharmonia Orchestra. Perianes ends the season by performing with Auckland Philharmonia and Sydney, Queensland, Adelaide, Tasmania and New Zealand symphony orchestras.

Perianes frequently appears in recitals across the globe, with performances at Wigmore Hall, Radio France in Paris, Festival Pianistico Internazionale in Brescia and Bergamo and Adelaide this season. As a natural and keen chamber musician, he regularly collaborates with violist Tabea Zimmermann and the Quiroga Quartet. He also appears at prestigious festivals such as the BBC Proms, Lucerne Festival, Argerich Festival, Salzburg Whitsun, La Roque d'Anthéron, Grafenegg, Prague Spring, Ravello, Stresa, San Sebastián, Santander, Granada, Vail, Blossom, Ravinia and the Canary Island Music Festival. This season sees Perianes and Zimmermann tour to Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Regensburg and Zorneding.

Career highlights have included concerts with Wiener Philharmoniker, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Washington's National, Yomiuri

Nippon and Danish National symphony orchestras, Oslo, London, New York, Los Angeles and Czech philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre de Paris, Cleveland, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and Swedish and Norwegian Radio orchestras, Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Budapest Festival Orchestra.

Perianes exclusively records for harmonia mundi and his most recent releases feature Granados's Goyescas, and Chopin's Sonatas No.2 and No.3 interspersed with the three Mazurkas from Op.63. The 2020/21 season saw the release of *Jeux de Miroirs* and *Cantilena*. *Jeux de Miroirs* centres around Ravel's Concerto in G recorded with Orchestre de Paris and Josep Pons and includes the piano and orchestral versions of *Le tombeau de Couperin* and *Alborada del gracioso*. Together with Tabea Zimmermann, he released *Cantilena* in April 2020, an album which is a celebration of music from Spanish and Latin America.

Perianes was awarded the National Music Prize in 2012 by the Ministry of Culture of Spain and named Artist of the Year at the International Classical Music Awards (ICMA) in 2019.



Photo © Igor Studio

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT GIOACHINO ROSSINI

When Rossini met Beethoven in Vienna, he was stung by what Beethoven meant as a compliment, advising Rossini to stick to *opera buffa* ('above all, make more *Barbers!*'). Even 40 years after that 1822 meeting Rossini was still smarting under Beethoven's remark. In the ironic preface to his *Petite Messe solennelle*, Rossini says to God, 'I was born for comic opera, as you know.'

Rossini and Beethoven were the musical giants of their day. Rossini's fame was greater, since he was a composer for the theatre, whose celebrity can only be compared with the composers of world-wide hit musicals in our day. If we are surprised by this, it's partly because Rossini's way of composing operas became old-fashioned even in his lifetime. More importantly, Rossini was always treated with some suspicion by German and German-influenced musicians. Some of this was jealousy. Weber, struggling to establish a German style for the stage, left a performance of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* before it finished, exclaiming, 'I am running away. Now I'm beginning to like the stuff myself!'

*William Tell* was Rossini's last opera: at the age of 38, the composer virtually stopped composing altogether for over 20 years. There has been much speculation as to the reason for this 'great renunciation', though no definitive answer: the death of his parents? New trends in opera with which he was out of sympathy? Or more likely his ill-health, which research has shown to have been a disease of the urinary tract, which made him neurasthenic and depressive. Most interesting is Robert Donington's attributing to Rossini 'some strange inability to tolerate great success' – prompting the thought that Rossini could afford to retire, in more ways than one.

## ABOUT WILLIAM TELL

The story of *William Tell*, based on a play by Schiller, comes from the fight of the Swiss cantons for liberation from oppression in the 13th century. William Tell was the famous cross-bow marksman who, after being forced by the despotic bailiff Gessler to shoot an apple placed on his son's head, killed the tyrant.

The opera was not entirely favourably received by the public when first produced in Paris in 1829, and Rossini wrote no more operas. The overture, however, contains in its final section one of the most instantly recognised motifs in music. What precedes this is the most atmospherically descriptive of Rossini's overtures. The opening suggests a sunrise in the Alps, and features five solo cellos. Following ominous drum-rolls, the pace quickens and rushing passages by violins and violas suggest an approaching storm. The storm breaks, rages for some time, then subsides. The cor anglais plays the *Ranz des vaches*, an alphorn melody played to call scattered flocks for milking. The overture closes with a brilliant march, announced by a trumpet fanfare like a call to revolt.

The *William Tell* Overture is scored for flute, piccolo, 2 oboes (the second doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets and 3 trombones; timpani, percussion and strings.

The opera was premiered by the Paris Opéra at the Salle Le Peletier on 3 August 1829.

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

Other notable performances include those led by Malcolm Sargent (1938), Eugene Goossens (1948, 1955), Alceo Galliera (1954), Patrick Thomas (1980), Richard Gill (1983, 1997, 2005), Stuart Challender (1984), Tadaaki Otaka (1992), Gianluigi Gelmetti (2004) and Mark Wigglesworth (2010).

Our most recent performance was at *Symphony in the Domain* in 2013, conducted by André de Ridder.



Portrait of Gioachino Rossini (1828) by French painter Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot (1784–1845). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

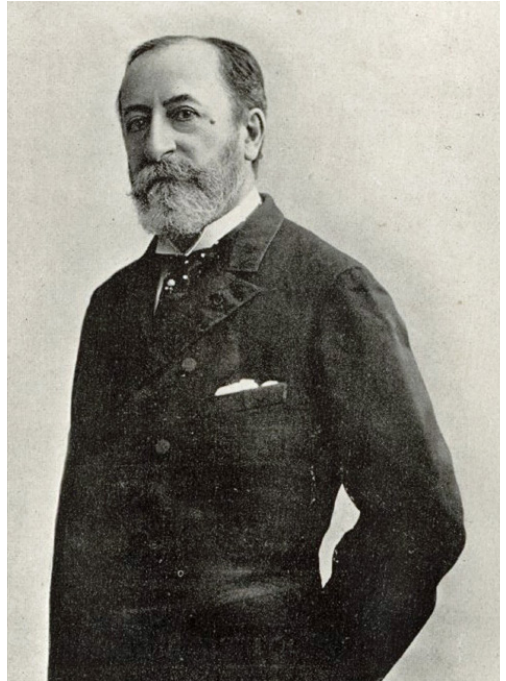


# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT SAINT-SAËNS

The Paris that we – those of us that don't actually live there, that is – all love in the springtime came into being in the 1860s. After a cycle of revolution and reaction, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was elected President of the French Republic on the abdication and flight of Louis-Philippe, King of the French, in 1848. In 1851 he staged a coup d'état, becoming President for Life; the following year he had himself crowned Emperor Napoléon III, a title he held until deposed during the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. From dictatorial beginnings, Napoléon III's regime became progressively more liberal in its politics from about 1860. The 'Second Empire' was, moreover, a time of huge renovation in Paris: Haussmann oversaw the demolition of medieval slums and the creation of those boulevards and avenues which give the city its spacious character; part of a fever of new construction, now-iconic buildings such as the Gare du Nord, L'Opéra and the Trinité church appeared. This fusion of modernism and classicism is evident in the visual arts – this is the period of the Realist painters like Corot, Manet and the young Degas – and perhaps, too, in music.

Born in Paris, Saint-Saëns began his studies at the city's Conservatoire in 1848, so by the late 1860s was in the period of his early maturity as an artist. From 1857 he had been organist at the Madeleine; in 1861 he took up a teaching position at the Ecole Niedermeyer, a school that trained musicians who were able to build on the long traditions of Catholic church music; Niedermeyer himself had written a treatise on how 'modern harmony is submitted to the form of the ancient modes', another case of the fusion of modern and classical ideas.



Camille Saint-Saëns c.1880, photo by Charles Reutlinger (1816–81). Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France/ Wikimedia Commons.

Saint-Saëns' classicism is evident in his concertos and symphonies, and in his elegantly-turned chamber music, where he seems to emulate what he admired in Bach and Mozart, saying that as high as their expression may soar, their musical form remains supreme and all-sufficient.' Debussy who loathed Saint-Saëns nevertheless paid him this tribute:

[his] scientific approach to music has meant that Saint-Saëns will never allow himself to overload his music with too many of his personal feelings. We are indebted to him for having recognized the tumultuous genius of Liszt, and we should remember that he professed admiration for old Bach at a time when such an act of faith was also an act of courage.

Balancing his classicism, of course, is Saint-Saëns' mastery of Romantic opera in *Samson et Dalila*, his distinction in being possibly the first composer to provide a through-composed score for film, the 1908 *The Assassination of the Duc du Guise*, and the sharply witty humour of his Grand Zoological Fantasy – *The Carnival of the Animals*.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT SAINT-SAËNS' 'EGYPTIAN' CONCERTO

Descriptive music, especially of the exotic kind, is unexpected in a concerto. It is unexpected, also, from Saint-Saëns, whose models were usually classical. These are reasons, perhaps, why his Fifth Piano Concerto, tagged 'Egyptian', has had to wait until recently to climb back into the concert repertoire.

The concerto was premiered in Paris in 1896, with the composer as soloist, in a concert celebrating the 50th anniversary of Saint-Saëns's debut as a pianist. He was also heard in the same Mozart concerto he'd played as a ten-year old (when he'd offered to play any one of Beethoven's 32 sonatas as an encore!). In the new concerto, a critic noted the 'clarity, logic and form', remarking that Saint-Saëns, 'even when he appears to give way to the most bewildering fantasies, building up a thousand witty and exquisite episodes, he coordinates logically the most unexpected elements...'

The celebration of Saint-Saëns's anniversary followed a period of withdrawal, both physical and spiritual. His increasingly frequent travels outside France were partly an escape from losing battles in the struggles of new French music, against the pupils and disciples of César Franck, not to mention the revolutionary Claude Debussy. More telling was the void left by the death of Saint-Saëns's two young sons and the break-up of his marriage. Travel was a distraction, if not a balm.

In 1894, Saint-Saëns made the long journey to Saigon in French Indo-China. He had travelled by way of Spain and Egypt, where he returned in January 1896, beginning his Fifth Piano Concerto on an expedition to Luxor, and completing it in a Cairo hotel room. The concerto soon received the epithet 'Egyptian', but Saint-Saëns pointed to other sources for its 'Eastern' colour:

The second movement is a kind of journey eastward, which in the F sharp episode actually extends to the Far East. The passage in G is a Nubian love song that I heard boat operators sing on the Nile as I travelled downriver.

The exoticisms of this concerto are to some extent a veneer. After preludial wind chords and plucked strings, the piano states a simple theme. It took a German musicologist, Michael Stegmann, to point out that these lilting chords

in the first movement are really a broken chorale. The feeling could well be, as another writer finds, 'a feeling of wellbeing under a warm, tropical sky'. But there is a classical, rather objective lucidity here, as imitative procedures lead to the second theme with a rhapsodic broadening of tempo. The piano begins to dominate the weightier matters of the development, and contributes glittering cascades in the ingeniously varied reprise, before a serene coda.

With noisy folkloric intensity, the journey eastward begins in the second movement – not yet in Egypt, but perhaps the Moorish, Arab-influenced part of Spain. Next comes the love song from the Nile (the piano's right-hand figures painting the watery setting), then a tune with a Chinese scale, complete with gong. Saint-Saëns told the dedicatee, pianist Louis Diémer, that this passage, with its repeated notes high in the piano, and sustained note for muted violins, portrayed the croaking of frogs at twilight – impressions from the near and the far East have mingled. These elements are juggled, in a free fantasia, full of delicate orchestral effects and brief cadenza-like musings for the soloist.

Saint-Saëns said the finale expresses 'the joy of a ship's journey', beginning with an imitation of the thud of the engines. He also wrote 'It is virtuosity itself I mean to defend. It is the source of the picturesque in music...' He succeeded – so much so that this finale, bristling with difficulties, was for many years a test piece at the Paris Conservatoire. The first subject's anticipation of the ragtime style of Scott Joplin may be the 'little turd' which fastidious French musicians claim Saint-Saëns left somewhere in each of his compositions. Those less inclined to severity will find it another of the features which make this concerto so unpretentiously entertaining.

This concerto is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets and 3 trombones; timpani, percussion, strings and piano soloist.

Saint-Saëns wrote the concerto for himself to perform at his own Jubilee Concert at the Salle Pleyel in Paris on 6 May 1896, a concert organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his debut at that venue.

This concerto has not been heard often in Australia: the only recorded performances by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have taken place in the 21st century, and both by French pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet. The first was in 2010, conducted by Alexander Lazarev, the other occurring in 2018 under Jukka-Pekka Saraste.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT SHOSTAKOVICH

Shostakovich was an adolescent at the time of the 1917 revolution. Unlike his near contemporary Prokofiev, or the slightly older Stravinsky, Shostakovich saw no need to travel abroad, let alone emigrate. The twenty-one year old composer's First Symphony premiered in his home town of Leningrad (St Petersburg) in 1928; its introduction to the West by Bruno Walter assured Shostakovich of world celebrity, but was also an announcement of the optimistic, outward looking Russia of the immediate post-Revolutionary period. That Shostakovich was broadly in sympathy with the ideals of early revolutionary Russia is suggested by his Second and Third Symphonies, subtitled 'To October' and 'The First of May' respectively. It should be noted, however, that these works pre-date the official promulgation of the concept of 'socialist realism'; in them, Shostakovich displays an exuberant interest in the techniques of Western art music, such as dissonance and irony.

The political backdrop to Shostakovich's early career was the power struggle between Trotsky and Stalin that began with the death of Lenin in 1922. By the early thirties the ascendancy of Stalin was complete and in 1934 the purges, or Great Terror, began.

Within that period (1934-38) were two particularly bloody years where N. I. Yezhov, chief of the NKVD (later the KGB) oversaw the imprisonment and murder of Stalin's principal remaining Party rivals as well as leading scientists, writers and musicians. The effect of the purges was to rob the USSR of millions of its citizens, especially leading figures in most fields, so that by the end of the 1930s the country's intellectual infrastructure was almost fatally weakened.

Despite having enjoyed a spectacularly successful two year run, Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, was attacked in the pages of *Pravda* in 1936 as 'chaos instead of music' and its composer warned that 'this could all end very badly'. Shostakovich, or the orchestral management in Leningrad, immediately withdrew his demanding Fourth Symphony, a powerfully disturbing behemoth of dissonance and irony. The composer, like many of his generation, is said to have slept for a time in the hallway of his apartment so that the seemingly inevitable arrest wouldn't traumatise his young family. (Shostakovich suffered several reversals of fortune: he was denounced in 1936, rehabilitated with the premiere of the Fifth Symphony, denounced again in 1948, despite having been awarded the Stalin Prize in 1940 and the Order of Lenin in 1946.)



Mstislav Rostropovich, Dmitry Shostakovich and Sviatoslav Richter in 1968. Source: RIA Novosti archive, image #478141 / Mikhail Ozerskiy / CC-BY-SA 3.0.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT SHOSTAKOVICH'S SYMPHONY NO.15

Dmitry Shostakovich, arguably the greatest symphonist of the 20th century, produced this 15th Symphony in his 65th year, returning to a standard four-movement instrumental form after the more unconventional symphonies, Nos. 13 and 14. Shostakovich's music embodies some of the most fascinating exercises in musical expression in our history, and his 15 symphonies – the greatest repertoire of works in this genre since Bruckner and Sibelius – deserve detailed attention.

What Shostakovich's music appears to be about on the surface isn't always so. Some of the symphonies have overt programs. Two, in fact, chronicle particular years: 1905 and 1917, important years in the development of the Soviet state. But others are unclear in meaning. There are works with cryptic musical quotes (a parody of Stalin's favourite song, *Suleika*, for example, or the recollection of a melody which previously accompanied an acerbic line in a song cycle), as if Shostakovich was saying something 'on the inside', according to the technique of inner programs which Russian composers learnt to develop – for the sake of their lives. Sometimes Western listeners misunderstand, as when they once assumed that the Fifth Symphony was very obviously a penitent Soviet citizen's craven 'reply to just criticism'.

Ian McDonald, writing in *The New Shostakovich* says of the Symphony No.15: 'In terms of ambiguity, it is generally agreed that [here] Shostakovich surpassed himself.' And let's face it, why does he quote the *William Tell* Overture? Or the trumpet call from Mahler's Fifth? What is the meaning of the strange mix of cheerfulness and turmoil in the first movement? Is it really cheerfulness? The last movement opens clearly enough, it seems, with a premonition of death – the 'Announcement of Death' theme from Wagner's *Die Walküre*, another quote – but what is the enigmatic ticking that ends the work?

Shostakovich wrote this symphony when conscious of his own mortality, and though it may be hindsight to say that a composer summarises his achievement in his last symphony (for how did he know he was going to die?), in this case there probably really was a retrospective gaze. It is interesting that Shostakovich had so perfected his style by this stage that it could easily subsume the music of such contrasting forerunners as Rossini and Wagner. There is certainly a climax of craftsmanship here.

Shostakovich usually completed a work in about two months. The 15th Symphony was sketched in April 1971, and Venyamin Basner, coming to pick up Shostakovich for their daily walk, witnessed the composer completing and dating the final bars on 29 July 1971. Shostakovich suffered a second heart attack during rehearsals for the piece, which was premiered on 8 January 1972 under the baton of his son Maxim. In the autumn and winter of 1972 he was hospitalised again with renal, colic and lung cancer and underwent radiation therapy. Although he created orchestral versions of his superb last two song cycles – the *Six Poems of Marina Tsvetayeva* (summer, 1973) and the *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo* (1974), the composer never returned to symphonic form.

According to Ian McDonald the basic problem confronting the listener to the Symphony No.15 is identifying its tone. The composer himself described the first movement as 'childhood – just a toy-shop, with a cloudless sky above.' The innocuous chimes and the opening flute melody, even the *William Tell* quote on a *Boutique fantasque*-like trumpet, may indeed represent this; but what about the nightmarish polyrhythmic passages of the development section? This is music from Brezhnev's USSR, a country populated not so much by wind-up dolls as by wind-up people, paralysed by 'conformist mediocrity, rampant corruption, and alcoholism', in McDonald's words. 'Anyone feeling cheerful after the opening allegretto of the Fifteenth Symphony will find the rest of the work rather bemusing.'

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

The second movement is shocking in its desolation. Solemn brass chords preface a series of statements by a solo cello, which could almost be an outpouring of the solo player's personal grief. The mood is bleak, as is proven by the blasts of high winds. There is no way to go but further inwards, and a funeral march initiated by the trombone leads to a huge full orchestral climax, the symphony's very bitter heart. Once again the texture thins out. Bassoons begin what sounds like the Shostakovich musical signature, a transposition of D-E flat-C-B (which, in German nomenclature, spells DSCH for Dmitri Shostakowitsch), but it ends 'wrongly'.

The brief third movement is a humoresque, but is it a respite? This is not one of those stridently sardonic Shostakovich scherzos, whose meaning is unambiguous. The texture is sketch-like, consisting for the most part of pencil-thin solos. A truncated percussion ensemble pattern at the end is almost a musical version of an ellipsis.

The finale begins with three statements of Wagner's 'Announcement of Death' motif, followed by violins playing the first three yearning notes from *Tristan and Isolde*. Without lingering long enough for the listener to ponder the meaning, Shostakovich slides into a tender and lyrical D minor theme. Another quote here is Glinka's song *Do Not Tempt Me Needlessly*. Could this be a reference to the rewards the post-Stalinist government might have offered Shostakovich for writing the sort of music that could come to him easily?

The movement builds to a climax in a passacaglia founded on a deconstructed version of the march theme from the 'Leningrad' Symphony, but there is no easy conclusion. As McDonald says, 'Shostakovich's last symphonic movement tapers gradually away to the spasmic twitch of puppet-strings, the dispiriting click and whirr of clockwork.'

Assuming an artist such as Shostakovich gains greater insight and wisdom the more they advance in years, how shall the listener interpret the fact that the greatest symphonic cycle of the century ends not with a bang but a whimper?

**Notes by David Garrett © 2004 (Rossini) 2004/2010 (Saint-Saëns), Gordon Williams/Symphony Australia © 2008 (Shostakovich) Gordon Kerry © 2025 (Saint-Saëns, Shostakovich biographies).**

Shostakovich's Fifteenth Symphony is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani and extended percussion, celeste and strings.

Its world premiere occurred on 8 January 1972, at the Large Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, performed by the All-Union Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer's son, Maxim Shostakovich.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra gave the Australian premiere of the work just two years later, in February 1974, at a Proms concert conducted by John Hopkins.

Other Sydney Symphony performances were conducted by Louis Frémaux (1980 & 1981), Claus Peter Flor (1994), Eri Klas (2001) and Mark Wigglesworth (2010).

Our most recent performances came in 2014, conducted by Alexander Lazarev.

**Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson**





Kevin John Edusei. Photo by Marco Borggreve.

# KEVIN JOHN EDUSEI ON THE MYSTERIES OF SHOSTAKOVICH

**At first glance, Rossini, Saint-Saëns and Shostakovich seem miles apart – geographically, historically, musically. But as conductor Kevin John Edusei explains, there are connections between them that make for a fascinating concert program...**

**By Hugh Robertson**

In *High Fidelity*, Nick Hornby's beloved novel (and later film) about the neuroses of a certain type of music-obsessed man, our protagonist has a long monologue about how 'the making of a compilation tape is a very subtle art,' with many dos and don'ts about sequencing, the juxtaposition of one track with another and so on. 'This is a delicate thing.'

The same is true of designing a concert program, but with so many more variables thrown in. What is the soloist prepared to play? What is the conductor an expert in? How many musicians, and what instrumentation, are available to us? How long is the concert? When did the orchestra last perform these pieces? What comes before and after this concert in the season? It is a high-wire act juggling so many competing demands.

At first glance, then, today's concert featuring works by Rossini, Saint-Saëns and Shostakovich might seem completely incoherent. What could possibly link these three composers from three different countries, spanning three centuries, and stylistically worlds apart?

Conductor Kevin John Edusei completely agrees – but there is method to the madness!

'It's a program that when you look at it on the page, and you're not familiar with the pieces, you might see a clash of different styles and composers that looks very, very weird,' he says with a smile. 'But when you look into the pieces, there's a very strong connection – we are dealing with three *last* pieces, in a way.'

## BACKSTAGE NEWS

‘*William Tell* was the last opera that Rossini wrote, and we’re playing that famous overture by him. We are playing the last piano concerto of Saint-Saëns, which also has a certain meaning for him, being a pianist himself. And then also we encounter Shostakovich’s last symphony, which he wrote just a couple of years before he passed away, knowing that this would be his last effort to produce a larger orchestral form.’

But it’s not just that these pieces were written at similar times in their composers’ lives. Shostakovich goes so far as to quote Rossini’s overture in his symphony.

‘There’s this little connection, that haunting motif that Shostakovich used in the first movement of his symphony, which is taken really as a quote from Rossini,’ continues Edusei. ‘It’s a very weird quote that starts to live its own life, in a way, within the symphony.’

‘Shostakovich was often asked why he used this motif, and he couldn’t explain it himself. He said, ‘there was no way I could *not* have used this motif – but I can’t tell you why.’ And that speaks to the enigmatic character of Shostakovich, and also the enigmatic qualities of his music in general.’

‘That’s probably the greatest quality of Shostakovich’s music. He is one of the greatest symphony composers after Gustav Mahler, and you can find meaning in every corner of his writing, but still in general the enigma stays.’

It certainly speaks to this enigmatic quality to both the man and his music that, 50 years after his death, we are still debating the minutiae of Shostakovich’s life, poring over his contested biography for any clues about the music. But, as Edusei points out, the biography wouldn’t be nearly so fascinating if the music didn’t hold up to so much scrutiny.

‘That’s the fascinating thing about the last symphony, because I think this is really boiled down to what the artistic process for him as a composer is, and where the difficulties to produce music of meaning lie for him as a composer. I think this symphony is really the essential Shostakovich and how he molds motives, how he creates tension, how he filled space and how he reflects also on his musical biography.’

‘I think it’s a very special symphony out of his canon of fifteen symphonies. And it is really great to explore this with the Sydney Symphony.’

It is exciting for us, too, to welcome Edusei back to Sydney. It has been a big two years for the conductor, with debuts with the New York Philharmonic and at Vienna’s famed Musikverein, plus return visits to the London Philharmonic, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and the conclusion of his tenure as Principal Guest Conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in America.

And of course there was his Sydney debut in 2024, in concerts *Limelight* praised as ‘first-rate’, acknowledging ‘Edusei’s finely judged tempi and spacious, nuanced reading’ of Grieg’s Piano Concerto and Dvořák’s New World Symphony.

Some conductors – and some orchestras too – can occasionally fall into a paint-by-numbers approach to such famous pieces. Happily, that is not Edusei’s approach – nor, as he found out, is it the Sydney Symphony’s.

‘It was very exciting week in Sydney, my first time not only with the orchestra but also in the city of Sydney,’ recalls Edusei. ‘We had a quite accessible and popular program, but it was really revelatory in terms of what we discovered in the music. That was a very intense musical experience that I’m really grateful for.’

Certainly we are grateful – and excited – for another week with this fabulous musician.



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Dr John Lam-Po-Tang  
Gary Linnane  
Helen Lynch AM  
David Maloney AM  
Danny May  
Fran Meagher  
Taine Moufarrige  
Dr Eileen Ong  
Andy Plummer  
Deirdre Plummer  
Seamus Robert Quick  
Dr Anne Reeckmann  
Chris Robertson  
Paul Salteri AO  
Sandra Salteri  
Rachel Scanlon  
Juliana Schaeffer  
Ali Smyth  
James Stening  
Russell Van Howe  
Mary Whelan  
Brian White AM  
Kathy White  
Rosemary White  
Andrew Wiseman

**HONORARY COUNCIL**

Ita Buttrose AC OBE  
Yvonne Kenny AM  
Wendy McCarthy AO  
Dene Olding AM  
Leo Schofield AM

**MANAGEMENT & STAFF**

Craig Whitehead  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Milena Stajcic  
*Executive Assistant*

**ARTISTIC PLANNING**

Melissa King  
*Director of Artistic Planning*  
Sam Torrens  
*Associate Director – Concerts and Programming*  
Andrew Groch  
*Executive Producer*  
Vico Thai  
*Producer Artistic Planning*  
Sarah Thomas  
*Concert Manager*  
Ilmar Leetberg  
*Artist Liaison Manager*

**Library**

Alastair McKean  
*Head of Library*  
Victoria Grant, Mary-Ann Mead  
*Library*

**BUSINESS SERVICES**

Sarah Falzarano  
*Director of Finance*  
Daniela Ramirez  
*Finance Manager*  
Laura Soutter  
*Payroll Manager*  
Jonathan Zaw  
*IT Manager*  
Alex Hong  
*Assistant Accountant*  
Julian Konle  
*Accounts Officer*

**DEVELOPMENT**

Jennifer Drysdale  
*Director of Development*  
Rachel Shafran  
*Development Manager*  
Benjamin Moh  
*Head of Corporate Relations*  
Sabrina Jelacic  
*Corporate Relations Officer*  
Fleur Griffiths  
*Head of Philanthropy*  
Patricia Laksmono  
*Events Manager*  
Gabriela Postma  
*Philanthropy Officer*  
Alison Eom  
*Philanthropy Coordinator*

**LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT**

John Nolan  
*Director of Learning & Engagement*  
Daniella Garner  
*Program Manager, Schools & Families*  
Giulian Favrin  
*Interim Program Manager, Artist Development & Public Engagement*  
Alice Jarman-Powis  
*Learning & Engagement Coordinator*

**MARKETING**

Charles Buchanan  
*Director of Marketing*  
Alexandra Barlow  
*Head of Communications & Content*  
Craig Abercombie  
*Content Producer*  
Hugh Robertson  
*Editorial Manager*  
Tina Ma  
*Publicity Coordinator*  
Andrea Reitano  
*Head of Growth Marketing*  
Nicola Solomou  
*Senior Marketing Manager*  
Ann He  
*Marketing Manager*  
Laura Dang  
*Marketing Coordinator*  
Amy Zhou  
*Graphic Designer*  
Chris Slavez  
*Digital Marketing Coordinator*  
Lynn McLaughlin  
*Head of Lifecycle Marketing*  
Douglas Emery  
*Senior Marketing Manager & Insights Analyst*

**Customer Relations**

Pim den Dekker  
*Head of Customer Relations*  
Georgia Mulligan  
Jennifer Calacoci  
Meg Chaseling  
*Customer Relations Team Leads*

**OPERATIONS & PRODUCTION**

Kerry-Anne Cook  
*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  
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