

SEASON OPENING GALA

19–22 February 2025

SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS

MAHLER'S THIRD SYMPHONY

«SYDNEY»
«SYMPHONY»
«ORCHESTRA»

Principal Partner



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

PERFORMING IN THIS CONCERT

FIRST VIOLINS

Andrew Haveron
Concertmaster
Harry Bennetts
Associate Concertmaster
Alexandra Osborne
Associate Concertmaster
Lerida Delbridge
Assistant Concertmaster
Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
Sun Yi
Associate Concertmaster
Emeritus
Jennifer Booth
Sophie Cole
Sercan Danis
Claire Herrick
Georges Lentz
Emily Long
Alexandra Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Léone Ziegler
Natalie Mavridis*

SECOND VIOLINS

Marina Marsden
Principal
Emma Jezek
Assistant Principal
Victoria Bihun
Rebecca Gill
Emma Hayes
Shuti Huang
Monique Irik
Wendy Kong
Benjamin Li
Riikka Sintonen°
Robert Smith°
Liam Pilgrim†
Emily Qin*

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider
Principal
Richard Waters°
Acting Principal
Justin Williams
Acting Associate Principal
Sandro Costantino
Rosemary Curtin
Stuart Johnson
Felicity Tsai
Amanda Verner
Leonid Volovelsky
Andrew Jezek°
Ariel Postmus†
Dana Lee*

CELLOS

Catherine Hewgill
Principal
Simon Cobcroft
Associate Principal
Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Kristy Conrau
Fenella Gill
Elizabeth Neville
Christopher Pidcock
Adrian Wallis
Eliza Sdraulig°
Noah Lawrence†

DOUBLE BASSES

Alex Henery
Principal
David Campbell
Dylan Holly
Steven Larson
Richard Lynn
Jaan Pallandi
Benjamin Ward
Harry Young†

FLUTES

Emma Sholl
Acting Principal
Carolyn Harris
Dana Alison†
Emilia Antcliff*
Guest Principal Piccolo

OBOES

Shefali Pryor
Acting Principal
Miriam Cooney°
Nicola Bell*
Alexandre Oguey
Principal Cor Anglais

CLARINETS

Francesco Celata
Associate Principal
Christopher Tingay
Oliver Crofts†
Alex McCracken*
Alexander Morris
Principal Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie
Principal Emeritus
Fiona McNamara
Bailey Ireland†
Noriko Shimada
Principal Contrabassoon

HORNS

Samuel Jacobs
Co-Principal
Euan Harvey
Acting Principal
Greg Stephens*
Associate Principal Horn
Marnie Sebire
Rachel Silver
Emily Newham°
Bryn Arnold†
Joshua Davies*
Claudia Leggett*

TRUMPETS

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

TROMBONES

Scott Kinmont
Acting Principal
Nick Byrne
Jeremy Mazurek†
Christopher Harris
Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Steve Rossé
Principal

TIMPANI

Mark Robinson
Acting Principal
Joshua Hill°
Acting Associate Principal
Timpani/Section Percussion

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos
Principal
Timothy Constable
Tim Brigden*
Ian Cleworth*
Gabriel Fischer*
Chiron Meller*
Alison Pratt*

HARP

Louisic Dulbecco
Principal
Natalie Wong*

Bold Principal

* Guest Musician

° Contract Musician

† Sydney Symphony Fellow

2025 CONCERT SEASON

EMIRATES MASTERS SERIES

Wednesday 19 February, 8pm

Friday 21 February, 8pm

Saturday 22 February, 8pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

EMIRATES THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Thursday 20 February, 1.30pm

SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS MAHLER'S THIRD SYMPHONY

SIMONE YOUNG conductor

NOA BEINART contralto

SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ELIZABETH SCOTT chorus master

SYDNEY CHILDREN'S CHOIR

LYN WILLIAMS chorus master

Rhythmic Acknowledgment of Country (2023)

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860–1911)

Symphony No.3 in D minor (1896)

Part I

i. Kräftig. Entschieden [Vigorous, decisive]

Part II

ii. Tempo di menuetto. Sehr mässig [Very moderately]

iii. Comodo. Scherzando. Ohne Hast [Without haste]

iv. Sehr langsam. Misterioso [Very slowly, mysteriously] –

v. Lustig im tempo und keck im Ausdruck [Lively in tempo and jaunty in expression] –

vi. Langsam. Ruhevoll. Empfundener [Slowly, with serenity, expressively]

Pre-concert talk

By David Larkin in the
Northern Foyer at 7.15pm
(12.45pm Thursday)

Estimated durations

Acknowledgment – 5 minutes

Mahler – 99 minutes

The concert will run
for approximately 1 hour
and 45 minutes

Cover image

By Daniel Boud

Principal Partner



WELCOME

Welcome to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 2025 Season. We begin with what is now a much-anticipated Sydney tradition, as Chief Conductor Simone Young conducts one of Mahler's brilliant symphonies to open the thrilling year ahead.

This year, Emirates is celebrating 25 years in Sydney, and together with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra we have created one of the most significant and enduring relationships in Australia's performing arts, one we all continue to be immensely proud of.

A work of stunning scale and ambition that celebrates nothing less than life itself, the Third is Mahler's longest symphony. With its grand scale and richly imagined points of view, this thrilling piece progresses from simple flowers to the heights of Heaven.

Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Simone Young is one of the world's greatest Mahler exponents, admired everywhere for her remarkable affinity with his music. In this concert she commands the forces of two choirs, the full Orchestra and soloist Noa Beinart to bring this astonishing work to Sydney audiences.

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

For over 22 years, the partnership between Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has been underpinned by a shared vision: to create unforgettable journeys and remarkable experiences.

This memorable concert is no exception, exemplifying 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 exhilarating performance.



Barry Brown
Divisional Vice President for Australasia
Emirates



YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

Rhythmic Acknowledgment of Country (2023)

This distinctive tribute unfolds immediately after orchestral tuning, crafting a compelling rhythmic expression to honour the traditional custodians of the land and their deep connection to the First Nations Sydney Basin rhythms, first documented in the 1800s.

It was developed as a collaboration between the musicians of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Adam Manning, a Kamilaroi man and musician, artist, producer/researcher and educator at the University of Newcastle, NSW.



Adam Manning

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860-1911)

Symphony No.3 in D minor (1896)

Mahler's longest symphony lasts nearly 100 minutes and is divided into six movements.

Originally he had written a program: an extra-musical structure which the music would illustrate. While Mahler later abandoned this idea, a sense of what was in his mind might help the first-time listener.

The titles were:

- i. *Summer marches in* – a sprawling but constantly moving piece in which everything from birdsong to marching music is born along in its current;
- ii. *What the meadow flowers tell me* – a contrastingly lyrical minuet;
- iii. *What the creatures of the forest tell me* – the forest murmurs are periodically interrupted by a distant horn call;
- iv. *What night tells me (mankind)* – here an alto soloist sings an enigmatic lyric by Nietzsche to disarmingly simple music;
- v. *What the morning bells tell me (the angels)* – the angel's song tell a story of St Peter's distress and Christ's forgiveness;
- vi. *What love tells me* – a long, overpoweringly beautiful wordless hymn to love.

The symphony was completed in 1896, the same year that Wilhelm Röntgen discovered x-rays, Nicholas II was crowned as Tsar of all the Russias; and Sir Henry Parkes, architect of Australian federation, died.

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



Gustav Mahler in 1896



Photo by Peter Brew-Bevan

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIMONE YOUNG AM conductor

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor since 2022, Simone Young has previously held the posts of General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of both the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted numerous complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festival, Vienna Staatsoper, the Staatsoper in Berlin and again, to great acclaim, in Hamburg as part of the 'Wagner-Wahn' Festival, during which she conducted the ten major Wagner operas. Her Hamburg recordings include the *Ring Cycle*, *Mathis der Maler* (Hindemith), *Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln* (Schmidt), and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. She has also recorded Benjamin Britten Folk songs and songs of Richard Strauss with Steve Davislum, and songs by Wagner and Strauss with Lisa Gasteen. Her 2012 tour to Brisbane with the Hamburg Opera and Ballet, (*Das Rheingold* in concert, and Mahler's Symphony No.2, *Resurrection*), won her the 2013 Helpmann Award for the Best Individual Classical Music Performance.

Firmly established as one of the world's leading conductors, 2025 will see Simone Young return to Milan to continue La Scala's new *Ring Cycle* with the premieres of both *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*, to the Bayreuth Festival to again conduct the complete *Ring Cycle*, to the Berlin State Opera for *Elektra*, to the Opera nationale de Paris for *Don Carlos*, to Zürich Opera for *Salome* and to the Vienna State Opera for further performances of *Fin de Partie*.

Equally impressive is the list of her return invitations to the great orchestras of the world, which this year will include the Orquesta nacionales de Madrid, the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, the New York Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Orchestra and the North German Radio Orchestra, Staatskapelle Berlin, the Orchestre nationale de Lyon and the Orchestre de Paris. Closer to home, Simone Young returns to conduct the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and will conclude her year in Sydney, performing Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Dvořák's Cello Concerto with Kian Soltani, the next opera in the Orchestra's *Ring Cycle*, *Siegfried*, and Beethoven's Symphony No.9 with an all-star local cast of soloists.

The presentation of the first two operas in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Ring Cycle* played to sold-out audiences, standing ovations and five-star reviews. A second, feature-length documentary film about Simone Young and her career, *Knowing the Score*, was internationally released in 2023.

Simone Young's many accolades include the 2024 Conductor of the year (British *Opera* magazine), Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera, the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna, a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, Helpmann Award and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NOA BEINART contralto

Noa Beinart was born in Tel Aviv and between 2020–2023 she was a member of the Ensemble at the Wiener Staatsoper. Previously, she was a member of the Opera Studio at the Bayerische Staatsoper and is a graduate of the Hanns Eisler in Berlin.

In the 2024/25 Season, Noa will return to the Wiener Staatsoper as Erda (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*); to the Opernhaus Zürich as Amastre (*Serse*); to the Bayerische Staatsoper as Hannah (*The Passenger*) and to the Bayreuth Festival as 1st Norn (*Götterdämmerung*) and she will make her debut at the Royal Danish Opera singing the title role of Vivaldi's *Griselda* in a new production. On the concert platform, Noa will appear with the Wiener Symphoniker in Mahler's Eighth Symphony conducted by Philippe Jordan and also in a performance of the Brahms Alto Rhapsody conducted by Eva Ollikainen, and will return to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for a performance of Mahler's Third Symphony conducted by Simone Young.

Last season, Noa returned to the Wiener Staatsoper as Gaea (*Daphne*) conducted by Sebastian Weigle, and she made her debuts at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as 1 Magd in Christof Loy's new production of *Elektra* conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano and at the Opernhaus Zürich, where she appeared as Schwertleite (*Die Walküre*). She also made her debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as Erda in a concert performance of *Das Rheingold* conducted by Simone Young and returned to the Bayerische Staatsoper as Zita (*Gianni Schicci*), 1 Magd (*Elektra*) and as Hannah in Tobias Kratzer's new production of *The Passenger* conducted by Vladimir Jurowski. She also made her debut at the Bayreuth Festival as the 1st Norn (*Götterdämmerung*).

Noa recently made her debut at the Staatsoper unter den Linden, Berlin as 1st Norn (*Götterdämmerung*) in Dmitri Tcherniakov's new production of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* conducted by Christian Thielemann. Elsewhere, Noa's engagements have included Grimgerde in *Die Walküre* at the Opéra National de Paris conducted by Philippe Jordan, in the summer of 2021 she

made her debut at the Salzburg Festival, as 2 Magd (*Elektra*) conducted by Franz Welser-Möst and returned in summer 2022 as Dritte Dame in a new production of *Die Zauberflöte*.

As a member of the Ensemble at the Wiener Staatsoper, Noa appeared as Erda in complete performances of The *Ring Cycle*; and as Maddalena (*Rigoletto*); Dritte Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*); Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*); Mary (*Der Fliegende Holländer*); Auntie (*Peter Grimes*); Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*) and Erda (The *Ring Cycle*).

Noa Beinart first performed with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in November 2023, featuring as Erda in Das Rheingold, conducted by Simone Young.

Noa will return in November 2025 to perform the same role in the third installment in our Ring Cycle in Concert, Siegfried.



Scan this code to read an interview with Noa Beinart, where she talks Mahler, Wagner and how she feels 'taken care of' when working with Simone Young.



Noa Beinart

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ADAM MANNING

Adam Manning is a multifaceted musician, artist, researcher, and educator with Kamilaroi kinship. Currently a Lecturer in Music at the University of Newcastle, Adam's creative practice is deeply grounded in his identity as an original Custodial Descendant of Kamilaroi Barray, reflecting a profound connection to his ancestral land.

As a composer, percussionist, and visual artist, Adam draws inspiration from the rhythms of Land, People, Culture, and Story. His work resonates with the natural frequencies of Ngaya Barray (Mother Earth), offering a distinctive blend of traditional and contemporary expressions that transcend disciplines and celebrate the enduring heartbeat of Country.

Adam's rhythmic mastery has earned widespread recognition. *The Age* praised one of his performances as "a virtuosic clapstick cadenza performed by the composer, melding traditional and contemporary techniques into a captivating display of timbre and rhythm." His compositions, featured on ABC Classic, further affirm his significant contributions to Australian music.

In 2025, Adam will serve as an Artist in Residence for the Melbourne International Jazz Festival, where he continues to push the boundaries of contemporary jazz and Indigenous expression.

Through his diverse creative pursuits, Adam Manning amplifies the stories, rhythms, and essence of Kamilaroi culture, weaving the past and present into innovative and meaningful artistic expressions.



Adam Manning

NEW SYDNEY SYMPHONY RECORDING

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE RE-OPENING GALA

“This is a sound for
the generations.”

Sydney Morning Herald

RELIVE THE MAGIC OF THIS LANDMARK EVENT IN AUSTRALIAN MUSIC

Simone Young's tenure as Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra began in emphatic style in July 2022, with unforgettable performances of Mahler's Symphony No.2, *Resurrection*, and *Song of the Earth* by First Nations composer William Barton.

Broadcast live around the world, this concert also marked the reopening of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall after two years of extensive renovations.

Now you can relive the magic of that landmark event in your own home, with its release on vinyl, CD and digital via Deutsche Grammophon – the first time an Australian orchestra has been released exclusively on under the famous yellow label in its 127-year history.



Available for sale in the Southern Foyer,
or scan the QR code for digital download
and streaming options.



SYDNEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Principal Partner



ABOUT THE MUSIC

RHYTHMIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Rhythmic Acknowledgment of Country is a powerful and creative tribute to the Traditional Custodians of the land. Performed immediately after the Orchestra's tuning, this unique acknowledgment connects performers and audiences to the First Nations rhythms of the Sydney Basin, first documented in the 1800s.

Led by First Nations percussionist and University of Newcastle lecturer Adam Manning, this rhythmic journey reimagines, revives, and improvises upon these ancient patterns to foster a deep connection to Country. Manning has been performing the Rhythmic Acknowledgment of Country for many years and has developed the concept in collaboration with numerous Elders, including Uncle Ray Kelly Snr.

As a unifying conclusion, all onstage members will perform clapsticks together at the end of the Acknowledgment, symbolising shared respect, unity, and a collective recognition of the enduring cultural heritage of the Traditional Custodians.

By integrating this Acknowledgment into an orchestral setting, the performance amplifies its cultural and artistic significance, weaving rhythm into a powerful narrative that bridges the past and present and celebrates the enduring connection between people and Country.

ABOUT GUSTAV MAHLER

One day Mahler's violent father was beating his wife, as he did all too often, and the child Gustav raced into the street in terror, to be confronted by an organ grinder playing the folk-song *O, du lieber Augustin*. We have this story thanks to Sigmund Freud, whom Mahler consulted professionally in 1910 and who retailed it in a 1925 letter. Freud concluded that 'in Mahler's opinion, the conjunction of high tragedy and light amusement was from then on inextricably fixed in his mind, and the one mood inevitably brought the other with it.'

Mahler was born in 1860 into a Jewish family in Kaliště (Kalischt), Bohemia, which soon moved to Jihlava (Iglau) where Mahler, one of the few of his thirteen siblings to survive childhood, grew up. In 1871 he began studying at the Conservatorium in Prague, and then in 1875 enrolled at the Conservatorium in Vienna. He completed his First Symphony in 1887.

He was a star student in Vienna, mentored by Anton Bruckner and others, and while winning prizes for piano and composition was also drawn to conducting. He held conducting posts in Cassel, Prague, Budapest, Hamburg and, from 1897, at the Vienna Court Opera. For much of his life he composed only on summer holidays, usually in some picturesque part of Austria which offered hiking opportunities.

After ten years at the Vienna Court Opera, during which he was legendary for his high musical and dramatic standards, he was undermined by professional jealousy and anti-Semitism (despite his conversion to Catholicism many years before). In 1907 he left Vienna ultimately to work in New York with the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic, where he introduced the music of living British, European and American composers, though sadly a plan to conduct Charles Ives came to nothing. New York critics and audiences were taken aback by Mahler's impassioned readings of the classical masters; on one occasion in 1910, after a rehearsal of Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto with the idiosyncratic but inspired composer and pianist Ferruccio Busoni as soloist, Mrs Sheldon of The Committee rushed to the podium, burst into tears and said, 'No, Mr Mahler, this will never do!'



Mahler in 1896

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Leonard Bernstein famously said that the 20th century 'is the century of Death, and Mahler is its prophet', but there's more to Mahler than the Romantic cliché of the death-wish. He once discussed symphonic composition with Sibelius, who argued for internal coherence and abstraction, where Mahler explained that the 'symphony should be like the world, and contain everything.' His work is characterised by a vastness of scale (though great delicacy of orchestration) and often shocking changes of emotional register (as in the *Augustin* story) and fusion of styles that can evoke shining vistas, popular song and dance, heroic struggle, tragedy and sublimity.

ABOUT THE SYMPHONIES

Apart from the unfinished Piano Quartet of 1875 and the early cantata *Das Klagende Lied* (The Song of Lamentation, written in 1880 but not performed until 1901), Mahler's output consists of solo songs and symphonies.

It is customary to divide the symphonies into sub-groups. The first four all rely in some way on pre-existent material (there is a notorious minor-key version of *Frère Jacques* in the First), but more notably Mahler's song settings of folk texts from the collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy's Magic Horn). The Second *Resurrection* Symphony, for instance uses two songs, one as the purely instrumental Scherzo, and one, *Urlicht* (Primordial Light) sung as a standalone movement. The Third and Fourth use *Wunderhorn* texts, the Third in its penultimate movement and the Fourth in the Finale.

The Third is the longest symphony in the standard repertoire, though as the philosopher Theodor W Adorno noted, after this 'prodigal extension of time' and 'panic abundance', Mahler retreated briefly into the more classical dimensions of the Fourth.

The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh are all purely instrumental works, though not without links to extant songs – the famous *Adagietto* of the Fifth relates strongly to the song 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' (I am abandoned by the world).

The Eighth stands alone as the first fully choral symphony ever written, setting the medieval hymn to the Holy Spirit, *Veni Creator spiritus* before a slab of Goethe's *Faust*, and is something of an anomaly in its atmosphere of affirmation: as Adorno notes from the Fifth on Mahler's works

'hardly risk the notion of transcendence', their climactic moments never uncompromised.

In 1907 Mahler, recently diagnosed with a serious heart ailment, knew better than to tempt fate by announcing that he was writing a ninth symphony, nevertheless producing a symphony by any other name, *Das Lied von der Erde* (The song of the earth) with its final, gentle vision of eternity.

But it wasn't to be Mahler's last word – nor indeed was the Ninth Symphony. And even though the sketches for the Tenth contain verbal indications that Mahler is saying 'farewell', we need to remember also that he no doubt intended to finish the piece, were he to be spared. Fortunately this work has been completed – quite differently – by musicologist Deryck Cooke and conductor Rudolf Barshai.

Phillip Sametz takes up the story:

It is still possible to hear the remark 'a great fuss about nothing' made after Mahler performances. This response is less common now than when Mahler's music was emerging, in the 1960s, from some 40 years in the shadows, but he still has the capacity to divide audiences, with a consistency rivalled perhaps only by Wagner and Bruckner.

It is true that Mahler's symphonies are 'a great fuss' – they are often lengthy, sometimes occupying a whole program, like this evening, and demand large orchestral (and sometimes vocal and choral) forces, each symphony cradling within it a musical universe spanning a hushed quietude and a primal roaring. So 'fuss', yes, but it cannot be said that they are 'about nothing'; in their extravagant rhetoric, their journey through an intense inner life, and their concomitant sense of heightened tonal drama, they continue to have meaning for audiences all over the world.

While Mahler had a fear of his symphonic programs being taken too literally, there is no doubt that a well-spring of creativity flowed from the explicit, interior dramatic structures he devised for much of his music. This is particularly so in his first four symphonies, which are infused with the words and spirit of the collection of German folk poetry called *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. As writer Philip Barford has put it: 'The *Wunderhorn* symphonies are all other-worldly. They unashamedly proclaim faith in love, redemption and the life in heaven.'

ABOUT THE MUSIC



Illustration from the first edition of the collection,
Des Knaben Wunderhorn

Mahler's second symphony – the *Resurrection* – charts a course from the deep despair of earthly death to the radiant certainty of a heavenly afterlife. The Third is equally ambitious, more complex and, while calling for slightly smaller forces, is far longer: at some 95 minutes it is one of the longest symphonies in the standard orchestral repertoire, the first movement alone being longer than, say Mozart's *Jupiter* or any of Haydn's *London* symphonies. Its length is matched by a program of tremendous scope, for in it Mahler attempts, in Mosco Carner's words, 'to show the birth and growth of consciousness from an initially soulless nature to living things – flowers, animals and man – leading to the sphere of the Supreme Being' as the creator of creation. In August 1895, at the point where he had finished sketching all the movements except the first, he outlined this program for the work:

THE JOYFUL KNOWLEDGE *A Summer Morning's Dream*

- i. *Summer marches in*
- ii. *What the meadow flowers tell me*
- iii. *What the creatures of the forest tell me*
- iv. *What night tells me (mankind)*
- v. *What the morning bells tell me (the angels)*
- vi. *What love tells me*
- vii. *The heavenly life (what the child tells me)*

After he composed the first movement the following summer, he changed the symphony's subtitle to 'A Summer Noonday's Dream' and dropped the seventh movement, which became the finale, and the well-spring, of the Fourth Symphony. He deleted the Nietzschean title *The Joyful Knowledge* and re-titled the first movement *Pan Awakes. Summer Comes Marching In (Bacchic Procession)*. Since he often found his programs taken too literally, he eventually withdrew the descriptive movement titles altogether, but while he was at work on the piece the program's link to the music was absolute. In other words by the end of the northern summer of 1896 Mahler had completed a deeply personal, epic meditation on nature as a metaphor for human suffering and triumph, and as a key to faith. To begin a symphony of epic dimensions by invoking pagan divinity and to end it with a hymn to what Mahler called 'blessed faith'; to set a text by Nietzsche, as Mahler does in the fourth movement, and then to reject his pessimism with a shining, vigorous life force a few moments later – these are the ways of an artist determined to do things his own way.

Mahler's correspondence at the time of his most intensive work on this symphony tells us plainly of the high task he had set himself:

'I think it strange how most people, in speaking of nature, only think of flowers, birds, the forest etc. No one seems to know anything of Dionysus, the great god Pan. [In my symphony] it is the world itself, nature as a whole, which, so to speak, is awakened to music out of an unfathomable silence...Just imagine a work of such magnitude that it actually mirrors the whole world – and is, so to speak, only an instrument, played on by the universe...My symphony will be something the like of which the world has never heard.'

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Making allowances for Mahler's likely manic-depressive personality, and for the fact that he had just experienced his first major public success as a symphonic composer with a performance of the *Resurrection* in Berlin, one almost gasps at such audacity. Had Mahler been nothing but vaulting ambition his music would now be profoundly obscure, but it was his genius to find a voice to match his dreams. To some commentators, that voice is one into which all the triumphs and tragedies of the 19th century poured themselves; to others it is prophetic of the calamities of the centuries to come. But it is important to note that Mahler had a dual career as a conductor *and* composer; while he was highly regarded by his contemporaries as a performer, his successes as a composer were intermittent at best; and in the decades after his death, his music was largely forgotten.

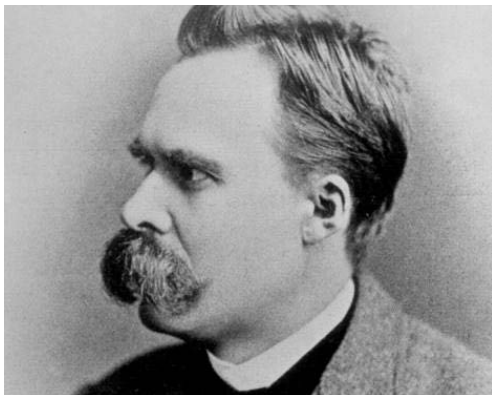
His relationship to his musical heritage is salient here also. For all his indebtedness to Bruckner, Brahms, Schubert, indeed the Austro-German tradition – and of course the music he loved as a conductor, which included Puccini and Tchaikovsky – you can hear his determination to find his own musical solutions to the questions he wanted answers to so fiercely. Among the first things an attentive listener will notice, for example, are his then-radical references to what he called his 'trivialities,' the found objects of the musical life of his time: military marches, Austrian country dances, woodwinds imitating hurdy-gurdies and simultaneous musical events taking place together, 'out of time.' These 'intrusions' were part of Mahler's universe some years before it became apparent that, on the other side of the Atlantic, Charles Ives was making similar explorations.

It was musicologist Donald Tovey who described Mahler as a composer without inhibitions, and this is a key to understanding his broad appeal. His fine ear for orchestral colour, his sure understanding of how to dramatise each musical episode, means that every moment of universal triumph, every presentiment of cosmic catastrophe, every encounter with an object of almost unbearable loveliness, is made palpable to you in his work. After hearing the Third Symphony for the first time, the young Arnold Schoenberg wrote to Mahler: 'I sensed... *truth*, the most ruthless truth!'

LISTENING GUIDE

Mahler's grandest, strangest, wildest symphony begins with that extraordinary picture of nature awakening from its slumber. As writer and broadcaster Stephen Johnson has put it: 'Attempts to make sense of its structure along traditional formal lines usually end in sad confusion.' In broad terms, this big, fervent fantasy makes three kinds of music: the proud, sometimes raucous sounds of nature roused to life (as in the very opening and the laughingly triumphant final minutes); the almost subterranean music given to the lower brass to suggest nature in its inert, primordial state, and the rapturous, and occasionally terrifying murmurs on strings and woodwinds suggesting the heartbeat of nature and the leadership of Pan. As writer William Mann said of this movement: 'You and I, as well as the daisies and the dinosaurs and the volcanic rocks are there.'

The minuet that follows is a musical flower picture, the serenity of which is nudged only by a swift-moving central trio that evokes the spirit of Mendelssohn. The third movement, the scherzo, is more complex, even enigmatic, as the twittering of the forest animals is interrupted by a distant solo on the post-horn. For generations, post-horns were used by postilions and guards on mail coaches to announce arrival and departure. Mahler's use of it here is open to many interpretations; the one that seems most plausible sees it as the first 'human' moment in the work, the expression of the tender ecstasy of human feeling on being at one with the world of nature. It is also wonderfully evocative of the heat and haze of high summer, and sure enough Pan makes an unexpected re-appearance in the movement's final moments.



Friedrich Nietzsche in the early 1880s, around the time he wrote *Also sprach Zarathustra*

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The next two movements form a wondrous duality. The human voice enters to present the symphony's dark night of the soul, in a section of profound stillness. Between each line of Nietzsche's poem of human doubt, taken from *Thus Spake Zarathustra* – 'the world is deep, and deeper than the day imagined' – you are to imagine a note of the bell striking midnight.

*O Mensch, gib Acht!
Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht?
Ich schlief! Aus tiefem Traum bin ich erwacht!
Die Welt ist tief!
Und tiefer, als der Tag gedacht!*

*Tief ist ihr Weh!
Lust tiefer noch als Herzeleid!
Weh spricht: Vergeh!
Doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit,
Will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit.*

O Man, take heed!
What does the deep midnight say?
I slept. From deep dreaming I was wakened!
The world is deep,
And deeper than the day imagined!

Deep is its grief!
Longing, deeper still than heartache!
Grief says: Go hence!
But all longing craves eternity,
Craves deep, deep eternity.



St Peter Weeping before the virgin (1647) by Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri) (1591–1666).

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The fifth movement, the joyous song of the *morning* bells, brings in the boy's and women's voices for a setting of the *Wunderhorn* poem 'Three angels were singing a sweet song'. The mezzo joins them for the darker middle section, in which the text focuses on sin and repentance.

*Es sungen drei Engel einen süssen Gesang;
Mit Freuden es selig in dem Himmel klang,
Sie jauchzten fröhlich auch dabei,
Dass Petrus sei von Sünden frei,
Und als der Herr Jesus zu Tische sass,
Mit seinen zwölf Jüngern das Abendmahl ass:
Da sprech der Herr Jesus: Was stehst du denn hier?
Wenn ich dich anseh', so weinest du mir!
Und sollt' ich nicht weinen, du gütiger Gott,
Ich hab' übertreten die zehn Gebot.
Ich gehe und weine ja bitterlich.
Ach komm und erbarme dich über mich!*

*Hast du denn übertreten die zehen Gebot,
So fall auf die Kniee und bete zu Gott!
Liebe nur Gott in alle Zeit!
So wirst du erlangen die himmlische Freud'.
Die himmlische Freud' ist eine selige Stadt,
Die himmlische Freud', die kein Ende mehr hat!
Die himmlische Freude war Petro bereit't,
Durch Jesum und Allen zur Seligkeit.*

Three angels were singing a sweet song,
With blessing and joy it rang in Heaven,
They shouted for joy, too,
That Peter was set free from sin.
And as the Lord Jesus sat at table,
With his twelve disciples at the evening meal,
Lord Jesus said: 'Why stand you here?
When I look at you, you weep before me.'
'And should I not weep, thou God of goodness,
I have broken the ten commandments.
I go my way and weep bitterly,
Ah, come and have mercy on me!'

'If you have broken the ten commandments
Then fall on your knee and pray to God,
Love only God for all time!
So you will attain heavenly joy.'
Heavenly joy is a blessed city,
Heavenly joy, that knows no end!
Heavenly joy was granted to Peter,
Through Jesus, and for the delight of all.

The symphony's progression from inanimate darkness to divine light is made complete by the slowly unfurling, radiant finale, which begins as a hushed adagio, as if, in the words of novelist Colin Wilson, 'the world has established a truce.' Gradually, through moments of tremendous longing, and recollections of music from the first movement, the work ends in hymn-like glory.

Mahler's Third Symphony is scored for a large orchestra, consisting of 4 flutes (all doubling piccolo), 4 oboes (the fourth doubling cor anglais), 5 clarinets (the third doubling bass clarinet, and fourth and fifth doubling E flat clarinets) and 4 bassoons (the fourth doubling contrabassoon); 8 horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones and tuba; two sets of percussion, timpani; 2 harps, strings, contralto soloist, women's choir and children's choir.

The symphony was premiered on 9 June 1902 in Krefeld, Germany, by the Orchester des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins conducted by the composer.

The Sydney Symphony's first performance was in February 1969, conducted by John Hopkins. Other notable performances include those by guest conductors José Serebrier (for our 1980 Mahler Festival), Martin Turnovský (1987) and Mark Elder (1998), and by Chief Conductors Willem van Otterloo (1973 & 1977), Stuart Challender (1989), Edo de Waart (1994 & 2003) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (2010).

Our most recent performances were under Chief Conductor David Robertson in 2017.

Notes by Gordon Kerry (biography and overview © 2025), and Phillip Sametz (program note © 2008/2025). Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson.

SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRETT WEYMARK OAM

Brett Weymark OAM Artistic and Music Director
Dr Elizabeth Scott Associate Music Director
Tim Cunniffe Assistant Chorus Master and Principal Rehearsal Pianist
Alan Hicks Language Coach

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs presents the art of choral singing at the highest standard, and develops the talents of those with a passion for singing in Sydney and beyond. Founded in 1920 as Hurlstone Park Choral Society, it has become Australia's finest choral organisation and is a Resident Company of the Sydney Opera House. Led by Artistic and Music Director Brett Weymark OAM and Associate Music Director Dr Elizabeth Scott, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs comprises three auditioned and three community choirs that perform repertoire from choral classics to musical theatre and commissions by Australian composers. It presents its own season of concerts as well as collaborating with leading conductors, soloists and orchestras.

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs first appeared with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra when it was an ABC orchestra. In 1941, the ABC awarded it the contract as the ABC choir, beginning an enduring relationship as the choir for the SSO which continues to today.

In 2002, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs was the first Australian choir to sing at the BBC Proms (Mahler's Eighth Symphony under Sir Simon Rattle), returning again in 2010 to celebrate the Choirs' 90th anniversary. In 2020 the Choirs celebrated their centenary with an inspiring commissioning project – *100 Minutes of New Australian Music*. In 2024 the new Emerging Composer Awards and Choral Conducting Fellowship programs were launched.

In 2025, SPC's season includes great choral masterpieces including Bach's St Matthew Passion and Christmas Oratorio, Charles Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, Brahms' *A German Requiem*, and ChorusOz to sing Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*.



Photo by Keith Saunders

SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

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ELIZABETH SCOTT chorus master

Associate Music Director
Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Dr Elizabeth Scott is a highly skilful choral conductor who has led Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' young adult choir VOX since 2008. A former SPC Assistant Chorus Master (2006 – 2008) and Acting Music Director (2013), she was appointed Associate Music Director in 2022. She is a Lecturer in Conducting at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (University of Sydney) and has been the Choral Director of the NSW Schools Spectacular since 2009.

After graduating from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 1995, she completed postgraduate studies in choral conducting, vocal performance and aural training in Hungary and Germany. Through Symphony Australia's Conductor Development Program she has worked with the Queensland, Adelaide and Melbourne symphony orchestras and Orchestra Victoria, among others, and was awarded the 2008 Sydney Choral Symposium Foundation Choral Conducting Scholarship. Elizabeth holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting.

Elizabeth is a regular chorus master for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and has prepared choirs for Simone Young, David Robertson, Maasaki Suzuki and Sir Simon Rattle. She also regularly works with Gondwana Choirs and Cantillation.

In 2017, Elizabeth became the first Australian woman to conduct SPC's *Messiah* concerts at the Sydney Opera House. Recent performance highlights include 2024's *Fauré's Requiem* and *Aurora*, *The Little Match Girl Passion* and *Carols at the House (2023)*, *Mozart: Requiem & Revelations* and *Bach Mass in B Minor (2022)*, *Berliner Messe* and *St John's Passion Reimagined (2021)* and *Considering Matthew Shepard (2020)*.

Elizabeth is a passionate champion of contemporary composers such as Arvo Pärt, Eric Whitacre, Ola Gjeilo and Ēriks Ešenvalds, as well as Australian composers such as Paul Stanhope, Joseph Twist, Brooke Shelley, Matthew Orlovich and Sally Whitwell.



Photo by Keith Saunders

SYDNEY CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Over its 35-year history, the Sydney Children's Choir has forged a reputation for artistic innovation and spell-binding performance. Recognised for their crystal-clear sound, their precision and artistry, they possess a courageous and compelling performance style. Founded as a single ensemble by Lyn Williams AM in 1989, it now includes approximately 400 young people, comprising performing choirs and training ensembles.

Close to the choir's heart is its repertoire of over 200 specially commissioned works, and it continues to premiere new music from leading and emerging composers annually. The choir enjoys rich artistic collaborations with musicians from a wide range of cultures such as Suara Indonesia Dance and Mongolian singer and horsehead fiddle player, Bukhchuluun Ganburged. The choir has a long history of performing with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and

other leading ensembles, and has worked with conductors including Simone Young, David Robertson and Vladimir Ashkenazy. Over the decades it has performed at many high-profile events including the Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony, World Youth Day, Sydney Festival and with the YouTube Symphony Orchestra. The choir has toured extensively, presenting their signature performances of contemporary Australian music to new audiences across the world.

In 2022, the choir premiered the daring staged work *Hypnopompia*, directed by Alexander Berlage and performed in William Barton's *Of the Earth* to celebrate the re-opening of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall. In 2024, the choir performed the first concert with the new Dobson pipe organ at St James' King St and performed with The Cat Empire and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.



Sydney Children's Choir. Photo by Lyn Williams AM.

SYDNEY CHILDREN'S CHOIR

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LYN WILLIAMS AM Artistic Director and Founder

For 35 years, Lyn has harnessed the incredible power of young voices through her world-renowned ensembles: the Sydney Children's Choir, Gondwana Voices, the Gondwana Indigenous Children's Choir and Marliya. Her choirs have appeared with the world's leading orchestras and conductors and at festivals including the BBC Proms and Polyfolia.

Lyn has commissioned over 250 works from composers across Australia and around the world and her ability to forge innovative and meaningful collaborations is widely recognised. She continues to foster strong relationships with First Nations artists across Australia, bringing together cultural custodians and composers to create new works which preserve and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages and cultures. Lyn enjoys a long-standing collaboration with singer-songwriter Felix Riebl of The Cat Empire and the singers of Marliya, presenting the critically-acclaimed show *Spinifex Gum*, which has featured at almost every Australian arts festival since its premiere at the Adelaide Festival in 2018. In 2024, Lyn directed the performance of *Spinifex Gum* at London's Barbican Hall which received a standing ovation. In 2024, Lyn also toured with Gondwana Voices to France and Spain, giving the premiere of *Following the Sky* by Lisa Young.

Lyn's visionary work with young musicians has been recognised widely. In 2024, Lyn received the Richard Gill Award for distinguished services to Australian music. Lyn's outstanding contribution to Australian music has also been recognised by the Don Banks Music Award (2017) and the Sir Bernard Heinze Memorial Award (2021) and as a Member of the Order of Australia (2019). In 2024, Lyn presented one of the four Boyer Lectures for the ABC on *Future Classic*.



Lyn Williams

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