

2 & 3 May 2025

TCHAIKOVSKY'S SIXTH SYMPHONY



Presenting Partners



Royal Caribbean Symphonic Fridays



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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC

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

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

PERFORMING IN THIS CONCERT

FIRST VIOLINS

Andrew Haveron
Concertmaster
Harry Bennetts
Associate Concertmaster
Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
Sun Yi
Associate Concertmaster
Emeritus
Jennifer Booth
Claire Herrick
Georges Lentz
Emily Long
Alexandra Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Marcus Michelsen°
Liisa Pallandi*
Benjamin Tjoa°
Natalie Mavridis†
Liam Pilgrim†

SECOND VIOLINS

Kirsty Hilton
Principal
Marina Marsden
Principal
Victoria Bihun
Acting Assistant Principal
Rebecca Gill
Emma Hayes
Shuti Huang
Monique Irik
Wendy Kong
Benjamin Li
Nicole Masters
Robert Smith
Maja Verunica
Caroline Hopson°
Riikka Sintonen°
Jasmine Tan*

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider
Principal
Richard Waters°
Principal
Anne-Louise Comerford
Associate Principal
Emeritus
Rosemary Curtin
Stuart Johnson
Justine Marsden
Felicity Tsai
Amanda Verner
Leonid Volovelsky
James Wannan°
Stephen Wright°
Ariel Postmus†
Martin Alexander*

CELLOS

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

DOUBLE BASSES

Alex Henery
Principal
David Campbell
Dylan Holly
Steven Larson
Richard Lynn
Jaan Pallandi
Harry Young†
Josef Bisits*

FLUTES

Emma Sholl
Acting Principal
Carolyn Harris
Emilia Antoliff*
Guest Principal Piccolo

OBOES

Shefali Pryor
Principal
Miriam Cooney°
Alexandre Oguey
Principal
Cor Anglais

CLARINETS

Olli Leppäniemi
Principal
Oliver Crofts†

BASSOONS

Todd Gibson-Cornish
Principal
Fiona McNamara

HORNS

Samuel Jacobs
Principal
Euan Harvey
Acting Principal
Marnie Sebire
Emily Newham°
Joshua Davies*

TRUMPETS

David Elton
Principal
Cécile Glémot
Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Scott Kinmont
Acting Principal
Nick Byrne
Christopher Harris
Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Steve Rossé
Principal

TIMPANI

Mark Robinson
Acting Principal

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos
Principal
Joshua Hill°
Acting Associate Principal
Timpani/Section Percussion
Timothy Constable

HARP

Louisic Dulbecco
Principal
Genevieve Lang*

Bold Principal

* Guest Musician
° Contract Musician
† Sydney Symphony Fellow

2025 CONCERT SEASON

ROYAL CARIBBEAN SYMPHONIC FRIDAYS

Friday 2 May, 7pm

HANTEC GREAT CLASSICS

Saturday 3 May, 2pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

TCHAIKOVSKY'S SIXTH SYMPHONY

CONDUCTED BY RODERICK COX

RODERICK COX conductor

LI-WEI QIN cello

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun (1894)

SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)

Concerto for cello and orchestra, Op.22 (1945)

i. Allegro moderato

ii. Andante sostenuto

iii. Molto allegro e appassionato

INTERVAL

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

Symphony No.6 in B minor, Op.74, *Pathétique* (1893)

i. Adagio – Allegro non troppo

ii. Allegro con grazia

iii. Allegro molto vivace

iv. Adagio lamentoso

Pre-concert talk

By Jim Coyle in the Northern
Foyer at 6:15pm (Friday),
1.15pm (Saturday)

Estimated durations

Debussy – 10 minutes

Barber – 30 minutes

Interval – 20 minutes

Tchaikovsky – 50 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately 2 hours

Cover image

Roderick Cox

Photo by Susie Knoll

Presenting Partners



Royal Caribbean Symphonic Fridays



Hantec Great Classics

Principal Partner



WELCOME – ROYAL CARIBBEAN SYMPHONIC FRIDAYS

Welcome to **Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony**, a concert in the *Royal Caribbean Symphonic Fridays* series.

As the Presenting Partner of *Royal Caribbean Symphonic Fridays*, we are delighted to be providing audiences the opportunity to hear classical music's greatest works, performed by renowned artists in one of the world's great concert halls.

The remarkable young conductor Roderick Cox, fast gaining international attention for his originality and energy, makes his Sydney début with this beautiful program. In another first, this will be the Sydney Sydney premiere of Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto, which will be brought to life by the elegant and dynamic Australian cellist Li-Wei Qin.

Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, known as the *Pathétique*, is his final masterpiece, and one he regarded as his finest work. Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* is equally well known, celebrated for its enchanting and dreamy qualities.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's performance of these works invites us all to reflect on memorable journeys and new discoveries in unexpected places – something we at Royal Caribbean also aspire to create.

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

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

I hope you enjoy this wonderful Friday night performance of **Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony** as part of the 2025 *Royal Caribbean Symphonic Fridays* series.



Gavin Smith,
Vice President & Managing Director
Royal Caribbean

WELCOME – HANTEC GREAT CLASSICS

Welcome to **Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony**, the second concert in the *Hantec Great Classics* series.

As the inaugural Presenting Partner of *Hantec Great Classics*, we are delighted that our support will bring some of the world's best music and most exciting artists to Sydney audiences.

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

This concert features three pieces of music: two world-famous and one underrated. Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* is mesmerising and evocative, and the perfect representation of the composer's Impressionist tendencies – even if he himself hated the term. Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, known as the *Pathétique*, was his final masterpiece, premiered mere days before his death. Mysteries and conspiracy theories surround the work, but what is undeniable is that this is one of the great symphonies.

Less well-known is Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto, chiefly due to the extreme technical demands it makes of the soloist. But it is a compelling and arresting work, and we are excited to hear acclaimed Australian cellist Li-Wei Qin bring it to life.

All this is led by the young American conductor Roderick Cox, a rapidly rising star in the classical world. Not just a thrilling and insightful interpreter he is also dedicated to making this artform more accessible – his own Roderick Cox Music Initiative, founded in 2019, nurtures and provides scholarships and opportunities for young musicians to inspire the next generation.

Exceptional orchestras like the Sydney Symphony Orchestra are shaped by dedication and discipline over time. These same principles have guided Hantec Markets Australia for the last two decades, making Hantec a trusted participant in financial services specialising in CFD trading services for Australian clients.

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

I look forward to sharing these wonderful concerts with you in 2025, and I hope you enjoy this performance of **Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony** as part of the 2025 *Hantec Great Classics* series.



Damon Sze
Chief Operating Officer
Hantec Markets Australia

YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun (1894)

Debussy's ten-minute study in erotic pastoral is a defining moment in modern music: its opening flute melody coils languidly on itself, the works harmony and orchestration concentrate on momentary pleasures, not structure or argument. And then it's over...

It was completed in 1894, the year that saw the first bottles of Coca-Cola, the conviction of Alfred Dreyfus and the armed revolt of Jandamarra in the Kimberley.

Contemporary music included Brahms' Clarinet Sonatas, Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony No.2 and Massenet's *Thaïs*.



1905 photograph of Debussy by French photographer and balloonist Nadar (1820–1910). Source: Wikimedia/Bibliothèque nationale de France.

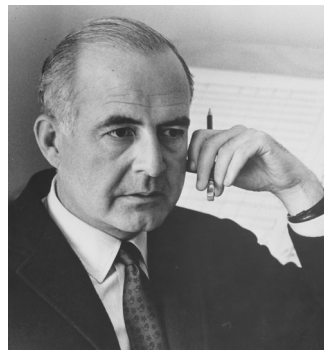
SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)

Concerto for cello and orchestra, Op.22 (1945)

Barber's second concerto is a substantial three movement piece; the first is full of active, strongly rhythmic music, the second is a songful slow piece, and an exciting completes the work.

It was premiered in 1946, the year that saw the first meeting of the United Nations, the first Indo-China war, and the Pilbara strike of Indigenous pastoral workers.

Contemporary music included Bartók's Third Piano Concerto, Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* and Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*.



Samuel Barber © G. Schirmer Archives

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

Symphony No.6 in B minor, Op.74, Pathétique (1893)

Premiered just before Tchaikovsky's untimely death, the *Pathétique* Symphony is sometime seen as a requiem for the composer himself. He would have disagreed, though admitted that the piece is a programmatic description of strongly shifting emotions: the turbulence of the first movement, the slightly lopsided waltz of the second, and the too-joyful march of the third are all ultimately swept away by music of deep pathos and grief.

It appeared in 1893, the year that saw the United States annex Hawaii, the completion of the Corinth Canal and extensive flooding in Brisbane.

Contemporary music included Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony, Sibelius' *Lemminkäinen Suite* and Verdi's *Falstaff*.



1893 portrait of Tchaikovsky by Nikolai Dmitriyevich Kuznetsov (1850–1929). Source: Wikimedia/Tretyakov Gallery.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

RODERICK COX conductor

In July 2020 Roderick Cox spoke to the *New York Times* about his commitment to changing historic and narrow perceptions of classical music. Through his own career both on and off stage he sets a standard for excellence, diversity, opportunity, and accessibility in the music he loves.

From the 2024/25 season, Roderick Cox will hold the post of Music Director to Opéra Orchestre National de Montpellier Occitanie. Roderick's invitations with the highest level of international ensembles include Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. He is also founder of the Roderick Cox Music Initiative (RCMI, 2019) — a program that nurtures and provides scholarships and opportunities for young musicians in order to make music more accessible. Elk Mountain Productions' award winning 2020 documentary film *Conducting Life* maps his journey and reflects his passionate belief in the transformative power of music.

The 2024/25 season includes returns to the Philadelphia Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Halle Orchestra (UK), Lahti Sinfonia, WDR Symphony as well engagements with Rotterdam Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphoniker, Finnish National Opera Orchestra, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He will also tour with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie which will include Berlin and Hamburg. Roderick returns to the Aspen Music Festival Chamber Orchestra in summer 2024.

In 2024, Roderick made his debut with English National Opera with Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. He has conducted at the Houston Grand Opera (*Pêcheurs de Perles*), San Francisco Opera (*Barber of Seville*), Washington National Opera (Jeanine Tesori's *Blue*) and Opéra National de Montpellier (*Rigoletto* and *La Bohème*).

Roderick's notable recording with Seattle Symphony Orchestra of William Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* was released in February 2023 and received high praise by *The New York Times* as one of the top five recordings to listen to, along with receiving a five-star rating by *BBC Music Magazine*. Nominated for the 2023 *BBC Music Magazine* Opera Award, Roderick's recording of Jeanine Tesori's powerful opera *Blue*, with Washington National Opera Orchestra in association with San Francisco Classical Recording Company, was released on the Pentatone label in March 2022.

Winner of the 2018 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award by the US Solti Foundation, Roderick was born in Macon, Georgia. Roderick attended the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University, and then later the Northwestern University graduating with a master's degree in 2011. He was awarded the Robert J Harth Conducting Prize from the Aspen Music Festival in 2013 and has held fellowships with the Chicago Sinfonietta as part of their Project Inclusion program and at the Chautauqua Music Festival, where he was a David Effron Conducting Fellow. In 2016, Roderick was appointed as Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra, under Osmo Vänskä, for three seasons, having previously served as assistant conductor for a year.

This is Roderick Cox's Sydney Symphony debut.



Photo by Susie Knoll

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LI-WEI QIN cello

The winner of multiple awards and competitions, leading Chinese Australian cellist, Li-Wei Qin appears all over the world as a soloist and chamber musician.

This year Australian audiences will hear Li-Wei perform Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Haydn's Cello Concerto in C major with the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and appear in recital at UKARIA with pianist Konstantin Shamray.

Highlights in recent seasons include debuts with the London Symphony, Russian Philharmonic and Brussels Chamber Orchestras and return visits to the Finnish Radio Orchestra, China Philharmonic as well as extensive national tours throughout China as concerto soloist with all the leading Symphony Orchestras. Li-Wei was also heard in Adelaide Festival's Chamber Landscapes series, in recital at the Tasmanian Chamber Music Festival and at UKARIA, and with the Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. He also returned to perform and adjudicate chamber music with the semi-finalists of the Sydney International Piano Competition.

Twice a soloist at the BBC Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall, Li-Wei has enjoyed successful artistic collaborations with many of the world's great orchestras including all the BBC Symphony Orchestras, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, NDR Philharmonic Orchestra Hamburg, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, La Verdi Orchestra Milan, ORF Vienna Radio Orchestra, Prague Symphony, Osaka Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, among many others. Leading conductors with whom he has worked include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Andrew Davis, Marek Janowski, Jaap Van Zweden, Gianandrea Noseda, Jan Pascal Tortelier, Hans Graf, Yu Long, Tan Dun, the late Marcello Viotti, the late Jiri Belohlavek and the late Lord Menuhin. Li-Wei has also appeared with chamber orchestras such as the Kremerata Baltika, Sinfonia Vasovia, and the Munich, Manchester, Zurich and Australian Chamber Orchestras.

In recital and chamber music, Li-Wei is a regular guest at the Wigmore Hall and for the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, New York. He has appeared at the Rheingau, City of London, Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg

Festivals, collaborating with musicians such as Daniel Hope, Nabuko Imai, Misha Maisky, David Finckel, Wu Han, Vladimir Mendelssohn and Peter Frankel among many others.

Li-Wei's recordings on Universal Music/Decca include the complete Beethoven Sonatas, Works of Rachmaninov with pianist Albert Tiu, Dvořák Concerto with Singapore Symphony Orchestra and Elgar/Walton Concerti with the London Philharmonic ("A superbly stylish, raptly intuitive performer": *Gramophone Magazine*, January 2015). Most recently, courtesy of Universal Music, Li-Wei's 2013 live concert with the Shanghai Symphony and Maestro Yu Long was released on Sony Classical.

He teaches at the YST Conservatory, Singapore, and is guest professor at Shanghai and Central Conservatory of Music, China and visiting professor, Chamber music, at the Royal Northern College of Music. Li-Wei plays a 1780 Joseph Guaragnini cello, generously loaned by Dr and Mrs Wilson Goh.

Li-Wei Qin has appeared with the Sydney Symphony many times over his career. His first appearance came in August 1996, performing Boccherini's Cello Concerto No.9 in what was also Simone Young's first time leading the Orchestra. Other notable performances include Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations (1999), Beethoven's Triple Concerto (2002) and Tan Dun's The Map (2006).

His most recent appearance with us was in 2023, performing Haydn's Cello Concerto No.1 under Sir Donald Runnicles.



Photo by Hans Goh

ABOUT THE MUSIC

WHO WAS CLAUDE DEBUSSY?

Born near Paris in 1862 to a family in modest circumstances, Debussy began learning music at the age of seven, and by ten years old was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire where he spent, on and off, twelve years studying. In the ‘off’ periods during the early 1880s he served as in-house pianist to Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky’s patron; for Meck and himself to play, Debussy produced a number of two-piano reductions of works by Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns and others.

Like most of the canonical French composers Debussy applied for the Prix de Rome, failed on his first attempt, was runner-up on his second but, on his third, won. ‘My heart sank,’ he confessed. ‘I had a sudden vision of boredom and of all the worries that inevitably go together with any kind of official recognition.’ Nevertheless, in January 1885 he arrived in Rome where he would be accommodated in the Villa Medici, hated it, and spent the bare two-year minimum there. But while in Rome he did meet Liszt and Verdi, and it is from this time that his brief but consequential love of Wagner’s music dates.

Debussy’s near contemporary, Erik Satie, took credit for persuading Debussy to write music ‘without sauerkraut’ – in practice that meant abandoning several features of the Austro-German tradition including what we might call ‘goal-directed structures’ such as symphonic forms that move away from and back to a tonal centre, and the rich upholstery of late-Romantic orchestration.

Debussy’s credo would become ‘there is no theory; pleasure is the law’, composing works that explored moments of sensual beauty with no – apparent – urgency to develop a musical argument, but we should be wary of simply assuming that his works are illustrative.



1905 photograph of Debussy by French photographer and balloonist Nadar (1820–1910). Source: Wikimedia/Bibliothèque nationale de France.

And we should certainly avoid comparisons with ‘what imbeciles call Impressionism’ (as Debussy put it) in painting, which after all gained notoriety while the composer was still in short pants. Like Beethoven in the *Pastoral* Symphony, Debussy’s musical response to the world was one of ‘feeling rather than painting’. Debussy preferred his work to be compared Symbolist poetry. One of his objections to Wagner was that ‘symphonic development and character development can never unfold at exactly the same rate’. In his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Debussy allows the text to dictate its own speed. The vocal lines are as simple and fluid as Gregorian chant. The harmony and orchestral writing, honed in such works as the *Prélude à ‘L’après-midi d’un faune’* and the *Nocturnes*, responds with infinite subtlety to the emotional fluctuation of the texts.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE FAUNE

Those nymphs, I want to perpetuate them.

So bright,

*Their light rosy flesh, that it flutters in the air
Drowsy with tangled slumbers.*

Did I love a dream?

*My doubt, hoard of ancient night,
draws to a close*

*In many a subtle branch, which,
themselves remaining true*

*wood, prove, alas! that all alone I offered
Myself as a triumph the perfect sin of roses.*

Extract from Mallarmé's *Afternoon of a Faun*
translated by Alan Edwards

Published in 1876, Stéphane Mallarmé's eclogue, *L'après-midi d'un faune* is a monument of symbolist poetry, reflecting in its sumptuous but fragmentary language the erotic fantasies of a drowsy faun - a mythical half-man, half-goat - on a hot, languid, Sicilian afternoon. Running like a thread through the imagery of fruit and flowers and naked nymphs are references to music, specifically to the syrinx. This instrument, the 'pan-pipes', was fashioned by the god Pan from reeds into which a young nymph had been transformed, desperate to escape his amorous attentions.

One such reference, to the syrinx's 'sonorous, airy, monotonous line', would become the kernel of Debussy's musical rendering of the poem. Inviting Mallarmé to hear the work in 1894, he described 'the arabesque which...I believe to have been dictated by the flute of your faun.'



The concert program for Vaslav Nijinsky's ballet *Afternoon of a Faun* (1912), illustrated by Léon Bakst (1866–1924).

In fact the work's genesis was in a proposal by Mallarmé to present a staged version of his poem at an avant-garde theatre in 1891. By now he knew and admired some of Debussy's vocal music, and went so far as to announce in the newspaper that the staged version would include music by the young composer 'M de Bussy'. The project fell through, but Debussy's imagination had been whetted. The orchestral piece that finally appeared made an immediate and positive impact with the audience, if not the critics, and may be said to be Debussy's breakthrough work. In 1912 it was choreographed and danced by Nijinsky, whose erotic performance caused one of those typically Parisian fracas.

The first phrase of the solo flute arabesque with which the piece begins has rightly been described as a founding moment in modern music. Its chromatic, rhythmically ambiguous line traces and retraces the equally ambiguous interval of the tritone: like the material elsewhere in the work that is derived from the whole-tone scale, it is in no clearly discernible key, as is shown by the varied ways in which it is harmonised on its subsequent reappearances. The second half of the melody provides more 'conventional' motifs that are taken up from time to time by the rest of the orchestra.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Mallarmé's poem rhymes, but otherwise avoids traditional forms or a narrative line; similarly, Debussy's piece avoids the goal-directed development and tonal architecture that informs 19th century symphonism. As Pierre Boulez puts it 'what was overthrown was not so much the art of development as the very concept of form itself.' Musical events, like the vivid splashes of colour that first answer the flute, are there for the immediate pleasure they give; climaxes are approached by simple repetition of motifs; the most extended melody is a richly scored, Massenet-like tune at the work's midpoint, accompanied by layered, rocking ostinatos.

The faun's is overcome by sleep and the 'proud silence of noon', and the piece ends with flutes, muted horns and the glitter of harp and antique cymbals, fading to nothingness.

© Gordon Kerry 2017

Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* is written for 3 flutes, 2 oboes, cor anglais, 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns; percussion, 2 harps and strings.

It was premiered at the Société Nationale de Musique Paris on 22 December 1894, with Gustave Doret conducting and Georges Barrère playing the flute solo.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in March 1941, with Percy Code conducting a studio performance broadcast nationally on the ABC. Our first public performance came in May of that year, with Bernard Heinze conducting and Neville Amadio playing the flute solo.

It has been a regular feature of our concert seasons ever since, with notable performances including those by guest conductors Jean Martinon (1956), Constantin Silvestri (1959), Vladimir Verbitsky (1991), George Cleve (1993), Stéphane Denève (2002), Richard Gill (2007 & 2012 *Discovery* concerts), Benjmain Northey (2009), John Nelson (2009) and Robert Spano (2012).

Notable performances led by our Chief Conductors include those by Eugene Goossens (1947, 1950), Nikolai Malko (1957 tour to Lindfield, Casino, Lismore, Murwillumbah, Bathurst and Parkes; 1960, 1961), Willem van Otterloo (1962 & 1973 regional tour to Armidale, Tamworth, Goulbourn, Wollongong and Newcastle), Louis Frémaux (1979), Zdeněk Mácal (1983), Stuart Challender (1989), Simone Young (1997), Gianluigi Gelmetti (2005) and David Robertson (2008).

Our most recent performances were with Finnish conductor Jukka-Pekka Saraste in 2018.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson



Portrait of Stéphane Mallarmé (1876) by Édouard Manet. Source: Wikimedia/Musée d'Orsay.

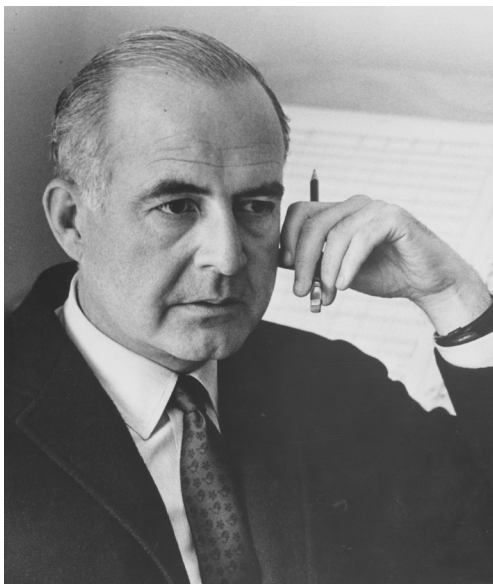
ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT SAMUEL BARBER

Samuel Barber's early precocity as composer was clear to his affluent Pennsylvania family when he produced an operetta, to a libretto by the family's cook, entitled *The Rose Tree*. He was ten years old, and his father would much preferred him to have played football.

Barber's musical gift was hardly surprising – his aunt, Louise Homer, was a celebrated alto at the Met, her husband a composer, and Barber himself was also a fine singer. From the age of 14 he studied at the Curtis Institute, where he specialised in singing, piano and composition. It was there that he met Gian Carlo Menotti, also a student, who would be his long-term partner and collaborator.

Barber's career was assured when in 1938 Arturo Toscanini (who had heard Barber's performance, with string quartet, of his song *Dover Beach* on the wireless) asked for two pieces for the NBC Symphony Orchestra. The composer obliged with his First Essay for Orchestra and an arrangement of the slow movement of his String Quartet. The latter, the Adagio for Strings, was an enormous hit. In the late 1930s this led to a series of commissions for major orchestral works, including three concertos: the Violin Concerto of 1938, the Capricorn Concerto of 1944 and the Cello Concerto composed the following year.



Samuel Barber © G. Schirmer Archives

Barber's best-known pieces, like the Adagio, the vocal masterpiece *Knoxville – Summer of 1915* and the Violin Concerto are unashamedly nostalgic in tone, and as the composer himself notes, it took 'a certain kind of courage' to write his heartfelt lyrical music in seeming defiance of various contemporary trends. Above all Barber was a fine craftsman (he once earned opprobrium for describing the doyen of American experimentalism, Charles Ives, as 'an amateur...who didn't put pieces together well.')

His Piano Sonata was commissioned by Richard Rodgers and Irving Berlin, and premiered by Horowitz; he wrote a ballet on the ancient myth of *Medea* for the equally legendary Martha Graham; and won his first Pulitzer Prize for the 1958 opera *Vanessa* – a work of Gothic opulence which has been rightly compared to certain works of Richard Strauss, and which was the first opera by an American to be produced at the Salzburg Festival. For the 1966 opening of the Met, he was commissioned to write the opera *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Barber represented US music at major European conferences in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, becoming the first US composer to attend the Congress of Soviet Composers, which he did in 1962. That year also saw the premiere of his Piano Concerto, commissioned for the inauguration of the Philharmonic Hall at New York's Lincoln Center.

Barber's image of defiant conservatism may have contributed to the neglect of his work. Even the sympathetic composer and critic Virgil Thomson was forced to say of the Violin Concerto that 'the only reason Barber gets away with elementary musical methods is that his heart is pure'. But the truth is that Barber quietly observed and absorbed element of more experimental music into his own when it enabled him to more clearly realise his vision. His Piano Sonata actually uses techniques derived Schoenberg's twelve-note serial method, and the Piano Concerto is notable for rhythmic action which suggests the twin influences of Stravinsky and jazz.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE CELLO CONCERTO

Barber's craftsmanship extended, much as his contemporary Benjamin Britten's did, to intimately acquainting himself with the technical strengths and weaknesses of any performer for whom he was composing; his Piano Sonata, for instance, was written for, and in a sense, 'on' the technique of Vladimir Horowitz.

He was commissioned to write the Cello Concerto in 1944 by a wealthy Rhode Islander John Nicholas Brown for the cellist Raya Garbousova, who premiered it with the Boston Symphony under Serge Koussevitzky in 1946. Born in Georgia, Garbousova (who also commissioned new works from Martinů and Prokofiev) emigrated to the USA in the 1930s, living there until her death in 1997. Barber's 'research' for the piece was to ask Garbousova to play through her entire repertoire noting her technical strengths (which were phenomenal). In response, and after lengthy further collaboration, he came up with a work which is wholly in the tradition of the 19th century virtuoso concerto – indeed Virgil Thomson likened it to Brahms. Thanks to Garbousova the cello writing is idiomatic, if hugely challenging. As to any extra-musical intent, Barber instead it was 'the wishes of the composer that no analysis be printed'.



A photograph of Raya Garbousova from 1938

Though the orchestra forces are relatively modest, it is a substantial work, cast in three expansive movements. The first opens symphonically, outlining three thematic ideas: a lithe and fast moving theme opens the work, to be followed by a more obsessively compact rhythmic idea. Both of these then give way to a more characteristically lyrical line. These are all stated before the soloist enters with a kind of cadenza, and then developed in the course of the movement. The orchestration is frequently powerful, but never obscures the soloist as the music explores several contrasting sonic landscapes. If this movement is nostalgic it is nostalgia for a muscular kind of Romanticism; its rhythms are taut and powerful, and the virtuosity required of the soloist is breathtaking.

The songwriter in Barber comes to the fore in the slow movement with its lilting *siciliana* rhythm and long-breathed melodies which at first feature a duet for cello and oboe. There is more than a hint of the sense of space and serenity that Aaron Copland introduced into American music. This is achieved in the use of melodies full of stable intervals like the perfect fourth, and colourful effects like muted brass. But the movement reaches, not without emotional turbulence, a radiant climax before ebbing away. In the finale, however, the gloves come off again, as announced by a full scored call to attention. Here it is clear that Barber was alive to the rhythmic complexity that composers like Stravinsky had cultivated: a pervasive pulse of 3+3+2 is offset by the unexpected insertion of irregular bars to keep soloist, orchestra and audience on their toes. The work ends in jubilation, though not before some brief reminiscences of earlier moods.

Gordon Kerry © 2025

Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto is scored for 2 flutes, oboe, cor anglais, 2 clarinets (second doubling bass clarinet) and 2 bassoons; 2 horns and 3 trumpets; timpani, percussion, strings and cello soloist.

It was premiered at Symphony Hall, Boston, on 5 April 1946, by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitzky, with Raya Garbousova as soloist.

This is its Sydney Symphony premiere.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson



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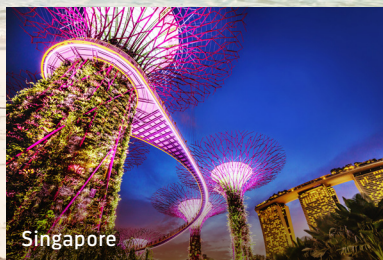
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ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT TCHAIKOVSKY

Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk, in the Urals, where his father was a mining engineer. His musical education began with the orchestrion, a mechanical contraption that played popular operatic excerpts. He also began piano lessons in 1845. The family moved to St Petersburg in 1852, where Tchaikovsky attended the School of Jurisprudence. On graduating in 1859 he was employed at the Ministry of Justice, but attended classes run by the Russian Musical Society. Under the leadership of Anton Rubinstein, the Society founded the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1862, and Tchaikovsky enrolled in its first class, with Rubinstein as his composition teacher. After three years there, Tchaikovsky was invited by Rubinstein's equally illustrious brother, Nikolai, to teach harmony for the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society, which would soon become the Moscow Conservatory.

Around 1868 he became, briefly, quite friendly with the group of composers known as the Kuchka ('The Five' or 'Mighty Handful'), led by Mily Balakirev. Balakirev believed that Russian composers should create distinctly Russian music, unpolluted by the techniques of Western composition. But although Tchaikovsky had used some traditional melodies, he was an internationalist at heart, and by 1877 he had broken with the Five.

Despite being homosexual, Tchaikovsky became engaged to the Belgian soprano Désirée Artôt in 1868. It didn't last.

Tchaikovsky saw no reason not to marry, and in 1877 the hour produced the woman, in the form of Antonina Milyukova, from whom Tchaikovsky received a series of love letters. It didn't last either, with Tchaikovsky abandoning Antonina for his sister's estate at Kamenka in Ukraine. He did at least provide for her in her old age.



1893 portrait of Tchaikovsky by Nikolai Dmitriyevich Kuznetsov (1850–1929). Source: Wikimedia/Tretyakov Gallery.

A year before the marriage, Tchaikovsky had received a letter from another woman, Nadezhda von Meck, who was a huge fan, but expressly did not want to meet Tchaikovsky. She did, however, want to use some of the considerable wealth her railway-tycoon husband had left her to commission new music, and for 14 years supported Tchaikovsky so that he could give up teaching and concentrate on composition. He and Meck corresponded frequently, offering us an insight into Tchaikovsky's aesthetics and methods.

As symphonist, and great composer for ballet, Tchaikovsky was fêted as far afield as the United States and Britain. In November 1893, days after conducting the premiere of his Sixth Symphony in St Petersburg, he became ill and was treated for cholera which was epidemic in the city. The treatment was successful, but Tchaikovsky died of complications.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE SIXTH SYMPHONY

So, the old story – that Tchaikovsky suffered shame and anguish and who, in order to hide this and, perhaps, to change himself, unwittingly married a nymphomaniac who drove him to at least one attempt at suicide before he fled, leaving her to die, insane and derelict, later pouring his torment into his Sixth Symphony and then committing suicide – has been largely discredited. As has the conspiracy theory that originated in the former Soviet Union in the 1980s, that, owing to a dangerous liaison with a young nobleman, Tchaikovsky had been called upon by his former schoolmates (themselves under pressure from the Tsar) to go into the library with a loaded revolver and do the honourable thing – as soon, of course, as he'd finished his symphony.

Alexander Poznansky in 'Tchaikovsky: A Life Reconsidered' (the first essay in Leslie Kearney's book, *Tchaikovsky and his world* argues that urban nineteenth-century Russia was in practice more tolerant than Victorian England. Tchaikovsky's sexuality was an open secret; he enjoyed pre-eminent status within and outside Russia and his social and professional dance cards (including the Sixth's premiere on 16 October in St Petersburg) were extremely full in October 1893. He drank infected water almost certainly as a result of carelessness, and was given a State funeral at the Tsar's immediate behest. Weeks later, Moscow heard the Symphony for the first time at a performance in Tchaikovsky's memory, and as Poznansky notes:

Stunned by the recent tragedy, the public was especially sensitive to the funereal moods of several of the symphony's passages. It is not surprising that many listeners (including some of the journalists writing about the concert for the press) gained the impression that Tchaikovsky had written a requiem for himself.

The impression would have been fed by the unusual layout of the piece, with its up-tempo third movement followed by a lugubrious slow finale, and as Tchaikovsky noted, 'Something strange is happening with this symphony! It's not that it displeased, but it has caused some bewilderment. So far as I myself am concerned, I'm more proud of it than any of my other works...'

Tchaikovsky subtitled his symphony the *Pateticheskaya* ('impassioned' than 'pathetic'), believing in music's capacity to represent specific psychological states, but only, as he himself pointed out, in retrospect – that is, after the individual had passed through any given state. And, we might add, only with the degree of technical skill which this work so amply demonstrates. The composer, in various letters, indicated that he was working very carefully on the piece – which, even so, he did at great speed – and was far from depressed at the final result, saying 'I think it will be successful; it is rare for me to write anything with such love and enthrallment' and 'I can honestly say that never in my life have I been so pleased with myself, so proud, or felt so fortunate to have created something as good as this.' To his nephew Vladimir (aka Bob) Davidov, the work's dedicatee, he wrote that the piece would have a program (that is, an extra-musical narrative) but that it 'will remain an enigma to everyone—let them guess.'



Tchaikovsky with his nephew Vladimir (Bob) Davidov in 1892.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The introduction, which struggles to pull free of gravity and silence is masterful, as is Tchaikovsky's blend of dark sound; the apparent volatility of the first movement's dynamics and tempo is achieved by a welter of extremely detailed directions in the score. In the midst of all this there is a brief quiet passage for brass intoning a fragment of Orthodox hymnody 'With thy saints, O Lord, give peace to the soul of thy servant'. The themes of the outer movements generally have a downward vector – even those with an upward scale embedded in them begin higher than they end; the almost Janáčekian texture of the first movement's *allegro vivo* section is dominated by a downward scale from the brass. The harmonic movement mirrors this trend, as does the way in which the second movement's 5/4 waltz peters out. The third movement march appears at first to have an upwards-tending theme (but listen to its bass line) yet soon enough a downward scale emerges from the brass. The *Finale* gathers a number of strands from the previous movements: the ultimately fruitless gestures of rising scales and sequences, the inexorable fall towards deeper sounds and eventual silence.

This work may well stem from the composer's psychological experience, but whatever the experience might have been, it is mediated by Tchaikovsky's genius and his craft.

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Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony is scored for 3 flutes (the third doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, two clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion and strings.

It was premiered in Saint Petersburg on 28 October 1893, conducted by Tchaikovsky himself, a mere nine days before his death.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in September 1939, conducted by Malcolm Sargent.

A pillar of the repertoire, there have been dozens of notable performances over the years. Those by guest conductors include Bernard Heinze (1942 & 1944); Paul Klecki (1948); Walter Susskind (1953); Alceo Galliera (1954); Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt (1956); Constantin Silvestri (1959); Antal Dorati (1965); Arvids Jansons (1969); Vanco Cavdarski (a free concert at Sydney Opera House in August 1973, mere weeks before its official opening); David Zinman (1977); Leif Segerstam (1979); Kurt Sanderling (1981); Georg Tintner (1984 & 1985); János Fűrster (1989); Tadaaki Otaka (1992); Vernon Handley (1993); Marin Alsop (1998); Paavo Järvi (2001); Richard Gill (2001 *Discovery* concert) and Alexander Lazarev (2003).

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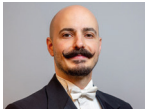
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Artist Liaison Manager

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 Jelicio
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 Garnerio
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
Publicity Manager
Craig Abercrombie
Content Producer
Hugh Robertson
Editorial Manager
Andrea Reitano
Head of Growth Marketing
Nicola Solomou
Senior Marketing Manager
Ann He
Marketing Manager
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

ORCHESTRA MANAGEMENT

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

PEOPLE & CULTURE

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

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