

29 May 2025

Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre

30 May 2025

Orange Civic Theatre

THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY PERFORMS

# ORCHESTRAL FAVOURITES

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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

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### FIRST VIOLINS

**Harry Bennetts**  
*Associate Concertmaster*

**Alexandra Osborne**  
*Associate Concertmaster*

Jennifer Booth  
Sophie Cole  
Sercan Danis  
Georges Lentz  
Emily Long  
Léone Ziegler  
Natalie Mavridis†

### SECOND VIOLINS

**Marina Marsden**  
*Principal*

**Victoria Bihun**  
*Acting Assistant Principal*

Emma Hayes  
Wendy Kong  
Benjamin Li  
Robert Smith  
Maja Verunica  
Liam Pilgrim†  
Emily Qin°

### VIOLAS

**Richard Waters°**  
*Principal*

Sandro Costantino  
Justine Marsden  
Leonid Volovelsky  
Ariel Postmus†  
Stephen Wright°

### CELLOS

**Simon Cobcroft**  
*Associate Principal*

**Leah Lynn**  
*Assistant Principal*

Fenella Gill  
Adrian Wallis  
Noah Lawrence†

### DOUBLE BASSES

David Campbell  
Jaan Pallandi  
Harry Young†

### FLUTES

**Emma Sholl**  
*Acting Principal*  
Dana Alison†

### OBOES

**Shefali Pryor**  
*Principal*

Amy Clough†

### CLARINETS

**Olli Leppäniemi**  
*Principal*

Oliver Crofts†

### BASSOONS

**Todd Gibson-Cornish**  
*Principal*

Bailey Ireland†

### HORNS

**Euan Harvey**  
*Acting Principal*

Bryn Arnold†

### TRUMPETS

**Brent Grapes**  
*Associate Principal*

Isabella Thomas†

### TROMBONES

Jeremy Mazurek†  
**Christopher Harris**  
*Principal Bass Trombone*

### TUBA

**Scott Frankcombe\***  
*Guest Principal*

### TIMPANI

**Mark Robinson**  
*Acting Principal*

### PERCUSSION

**Rebecca Lagos**  
*Principal*

**Joshua Hill**  
*Acting Associate  
Principal Timpani/Section  
Percussion*

Timothy Constable

### HARP

**Louisic Dulbecco**  
*Principal*

### KEYBOARDS

**Susanne Powell\***  
*Guest Principal Piano*

**Bold** Principal

\* Guest Musician

° Contract Musician

† Sydney Symphony  
Fellow

# 2025 REGIONAL TOUR

## BATHURST MEMORIAL ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

Thursday 29 May, 7.30pm

## ORANGE CIVIC THEATRE

Friday 30 May, 7.30pm

# THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY PERFORMS ORCHESTRAL FAVOURITES

**BENJAMIN NORTHEY** conductor

**ALEXANDRA OSBOURNE** violin

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN** (1809–1847)

*A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture, Op.21* (1826)

**RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** (1872–1958)

*The Lark Ascending* (1914/1921)

**MANUEL DE FALLA** (1876–1946)

*The Three-Cornered Hat: Suite No.1* (1919)

- i. Introduction
- ii. *The Afternoon*
- iii. *Dance of the Miller's Wife*
- iv. *The Magistrate*
- v. *The Grapes*

### INTERVAL

**MAURICE RAVEL** (1875–1937)

*Mother Goose: Suite* (1910)

- i. *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty*
- ii. *Tom Thumb*
- iii. *Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas*
- iv. *Conversations of Beauty and the Beast*
- v. *The Fairy Garden*

**AARON COPLAND** (1900–1990)

*Appalachian Spring: Suite* (1944)

- i. Very slowly
- ii. Fast
- iii. Moderate
- iv. Fast
- v. Still faster
- vi. Very slowly (as at first)
- vii. Calm and flowing
- viii. Moderate

### Estimated durations

- Mendelssohn – 11 minutes
- Vaughan Williams – 15 minutes
- Falla – 10 minutes
- Interval – 20 minutes
- Ravel – 18 minutes
- Copland – 25 minutes

The concert will run for  
approximately 1 hour 45 minutes

### Cover image

Benjamin Northey conducting  
the Sydney Symphony Orchestra  
with Alexandra Osbourne as  
Concertmaster, September 2024

By Cassandra Hannigan

Presenting Partners



**ELECTRICAL  
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**ROYAL  
CARIBBEAN**

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# WELCOME

Welcome to **The Sydney Symphony performs Orchestral Favourites**, a concert of enchanting classical favourites led by Conductor in Residence Benjamin Northey.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's commitment to performing live orchestral music across New South Wales stretches back to 1938, when the Orchestra travelled to Wollongong, Katoomba, Orange and Bathurst to celebrate the 150th anniversary of New South Wales.

As the Regional Tour Partner of the Sydney Symphony, we at Royal Caribbean are delighted to be bringing audiences across New South Wales the opportunity to hear classical music's greatest works, performed by the world-class musicians of the Orchestra.

The music you will hear in tonight's concert showcase the incredible power of classical music to enchant, uplift, energise and delight us.

Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sparkles with magic and Ravel's *Mother Goose* captures the innocence of childhood, while Falla's rousing *The Three-Cornered Hat*, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and Vaughan Williams' exquisite *The Lark Ascending* transport us with their vivid depictions of the world around us.

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

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

I hope you enjoy this wonderful performance.



**Gavin Smith,**  
**Vice President & Managing Director**  
**Royal Caribbean**





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\*T&Cs apply.

# YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN** (1809–1847)

***A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture, Op.21*** (1826)

The teenaged Mendelssohn responded to Shakespeare's madcap comedy of enchanted fairies and mortals in a dark wood with music of extremes – delicate shimmering gives way to the pomposity of the Athenian nobility, and you can even hear the braying of an ass.

It dates from 1826, the year that saw the opening of the Paris Stock Exchange, the Greek War of Independence, and the opening of the Australian Subscription Library (later the State Library of NSW).

Contemporary music included Schubert's 'Great' C major Symphony, Beethoven's String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op.131, and Weber's *Oberon*.



Mendelssohn, painted by James Warren Childe in 1839.

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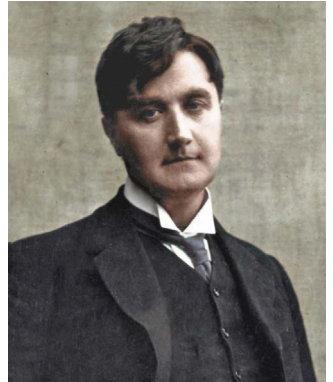
**RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** (1872–1958)

***The Lark Ascending*** (1914/1921)

This radiant romance was drafted just before, and completed just after world War I, in which the composer served. The glittering chains of sound from the solo violin and the folk-inspired themes reflect a world that had gone forever.

It was first performed in 1920, the year that saw the first flight by a KLM plane, Prohibition in the USA, and the foundation of the Communist Party of Australia.

Contemporary music included Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, Milhaud's *Le Boeuf sur la toit*, and Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*.



Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1910.  
Photo courtesy Vaughan Williams Foundation.

# YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

**MANUEL DE FALLA** (1876–1946)

***The Three-Cornered Hat: Suite No.1*** (1919)

Falla's 'ballet with songs', in which a miller and his wife outwit a lecherous magistrate, is unmistakably Spanish in sound, though premiered in London with choreography by the Russian Léonide Massine.

It appeared in 1919, the year that saw the Irish War of Independence, the establishment of the Grand Canyon National Park, and the comic strip 'The Potts' first appear in a Sydney paper. Contemporary music included Elgar's Cello Concerto, Sibelius' Fifth Symphony, and Prokofiev's *The Love of Three Oranges*.



Manuel de Falla

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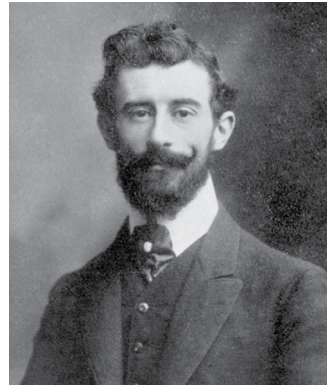
**MAURICE RAVEL** (1875-1937)

***Mother Goose: Suite*** (1910)

Ravel's Suite was originally a piano duo for two gifted children, and depicts some well-known fairy tales in music.

It premiered in 1910, the year that saw the coronation of George V, the Mexican Revolution, and the development of the Dethridge wheel.

Contemporary music included Mahler's Ninth Symphony, Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, and Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West*.



Maurice Ravel in 1905

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**AARON COPLAND** (1900-1990)

***Appalachian Spring: Suite*** (1944)

Copland's score for the Martha Graham ballet helped set the template for music that depicts big skies and open spaces.

It appeared in 1944, the year that saw the Stauffenberg plot to assassinate Hitler, Gandhi released from jail, and the Cowra breakout.

Contemporary music included Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, Shostakovich's Piano Trio No.2.



Aaron Copland in the 1940s



## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### **BENJAMIN NORTHEY** conductor

Australian conductor Benjamin Northey is the Chief Conductor of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, Conductor in Residence of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Principal Conductor, Artistic Advisor – Learning and Engagement of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. From 2019-2023 he was the Principal Conductor in Residence of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, having previously held the posts of Associate Conductor (2010-2019), Resident Guest Conductor of the Australia Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra (2002-2006) and Principal Guest Conductor of the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra (2007-2010).

As of 2025 he is the Artistic Director of the Australian Conducting Academy, a national training program for Australian and New Zealand conductors.

Northey studied conducting at Finland's Sibelius Academy with Professors Leif Segerstam and Atso Almila after being accepted as the highest placed applicant in 2002. He completed his studies at the Stockholm Royal College of Music with Jorma Panula in 2006 before returning home to Australia, where he has become one of the most sought-after conductors in the Asia-Pacific region.

He previously studied conducting with John Hopkins OBE at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, graduating with a Master's degree in 2002. In 2009/10 he was invited as one of three conductors worldwide to participate in the Allianz International Conductor's Academy with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra, where he was mentored by Vladimir Jurowsky and Christof von Dohnányi.

Northey appears regularly as a guest conductor with all the major Australian symphony orchestras. His opera credits include *La bohème*, *Turandot*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *Carmen* (Opera Australia), *Sweeney Todd* (New Zealand Opera), *La sonnambula*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (State Opera South Australia) and *Candide*, *Into the Woods* (Victorian Opera).

His international appearances include concerts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, the Hong Kong

Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia, the Malaysian Philharmonic and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Northey has collaborated with a broad range of leading artists including Pinchas Zukerman, Maxim Vengerov, Anne-Sofie von Otter, Julian Rachlin, Karen Gomyo, Piers Lane, Alban Gerhardt, Johannes Moser, William Barton, Lu Siquing, Amy Dickson, Slava Grigoryan, Marc-André Hamelin, James Morrison, Kurt Elling, Archie Roach, Ben Folds, Nick Cave & Warren Ellis, Paul Grabowsky, Tim Minchin, kd Lang, Patti Austin, Kate Miller-Heidke, Megan Washington, Barry Humphries, Meow Meow and Tori Amos.

Northey is highly active in the performance and recording of new Australian orchestral music, having premiered dozens of major new works by Australian composers. He has also been active in music education and training through concerts and workshops for the Melbourne, West Australian and Sydney Youth Orchestras, the Australian National Academy of Music, the Australian Youth Orchestra, the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and Monash University.

An ARIA Awards, AIR Music Awards, and Art Music Awards winner, he was voted *Limelight Magazine's* Australian Artist of the Year in 2018. Northey's many recordings can be found on ABC Classics.

In 2025, he conducts the Melbourne, Sydney, Queensland, Tasmanian and Christchurch Symphony Orchestras and the Hong Kong Philharmonic.



Photo by Laura Manariti



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**ALEXANDRA OSBOURNE** violin  
Associate Concertmaster  
*Helen Lynch AM & Helen Bauer Chair*

Alexandra Osborne enjoys an exciting and versatile career as a solo artist, chamber and orchestral musician, and educator. She was recently appointed as Associate Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Previously Alexandra was appointed to The National Symphony Orchestra, Washington DC, by Christoph Eschenbach as the youngest member of the violin section in 2009, and spent thirteen seasons with the NSO, including as Assistant Concertmaster. Prior to this, she performed regularly with The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Pittsburgh Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and the New York Philharmonic.

Recent highlights include Guest Concertmaster of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Opera Australia, tours with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Offspring, Australian World Orchestra, Australian Piano Quartet, and the Australian String Quartet, her debut album of world premiere Nico Muhly and Philip Glass works on ABC Classic, Guest Artistic Director/Concertmaster of the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, the 2023 Bendigo, Blackheath, Bangalow and Coriole Music Festivals, Guest Principal work with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, curating classical music events at top Australian restaurant Bennelong, a multisensory recording project and residency at UKARIA, touring with Kathy Selby and Friends, performing *The Last Violin* soundtrack for Harry Vatiliotis documentary including an appearance at the 2023 Bangalow Film Festival, founding board member/violinist of Jackson Hole Chamber Music, a concert on the 'King Louis XIV' Amati at the Smithsonian American History Museum, mentoring at the Hawaii Youth Symphony Summer Festival, and concerts across European Festivals and the BBC Proms.

Ms. Osborne has been Principal Violinist of the 21st Century Consort in Washington DC, Chiarina Chamber Players, and the Eclipse Chamber Orchestra. She is a top laureate of the Michael Hill International Violin Competition, winner of the Gisborne International Music Competition, and a gold medalist of Symphony Australia Young Performers Award. Ms. Osborne collaborated with members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for Alice Tully Hall's highly acclaimed opening night concert and performed the Mendelssohn Octet at Lincoln Center with members of the New York Philharmonic. A chamber music lover, Ms. Osborne has appeared at the Taos, Pan Pacific, Kneisel Hall, Sarasota, Colorado and Bravo! Big Sky Music Festivals, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Fortas Chamber Music Series and was a featured artist in Symphony Magazine.

With a keen interest in fostering young talent, she has been a teaching artist for the American Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, the NSO's Youth Fellowship and Summer Music Institute programs, the DC Youth Orchestra, and the Hawaii Youth Symphony, whilst maintaining a private teaching studio. A graduate of The Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School, and after 20 years in the USA, Ms. Osborne is delighted to be based back in Australia performing, educating and mentoring.



Photo by Jez Smith

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT MENDELSSOHN'S *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM OVERTURE*

'I have grown accustomed to composing in our garden...' wrote the 16-year-old Mendelssohn to his sister Fanny in 1826. 'Today or tomorrow I am going to dream there *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This is, however, an enormous audacity...'

From Mendelssohn's own dream emerged a concert overture that captured all the magic of the siblings' 'favourite among old Will's beloved plays'. Shakespeare's plays formed a regular part of the Mendelssohns' family life; they read them in English as well as in German, frequently dividing the parts between themselves for impromptu presentations. Yet for all the overture's dreamlike deftness, elfin humour and fluent orchestration - the work of a 'finished master', albeit a young and audacious one - its composition followed Mendelssohn's habit of scrupulous self-criticism and painstaking revision.

Adolf Bernhard Marx (assuming the role of musical mentor) had complained of the first draft that, beyond the dance of the elves with its introductory chords he 'could perceive no *Midsummer Night's Dream* in it'. Mendelssohn retained the famous opening - four sustained and 'gleaming' chords in the woodwind - and the feathery, whispering fairy music of the violins, and was persuaded, too, not to dispense with the comical braying of the transformed Bottom. Later, he declared roguishly of this passage that, while there was nothing in his overture 'that Beethoven did not have and practise', perhaps he had broken new ground in using the ophicleide (the coarse-toned 'chromatic bullock', its part covered nowadays by the more refined tuba).



Mendelssohn, painted by James Warren Childe in 1839.

To these were added the lyrical wanderings of the mortal lovers, the 'rumbustious representation of the rustics', and the horns of Theseus' hunting party. Yet, while evoking the whimsy and confusion of the drama, the musical ideas neatly obey the requirements of sonata form. The central section is a fanciful development of the fairy music, and the fairies have the last word (as in the play) with the return of the four woodwind chords of the opening.

**Adapted from a note by Yvonne Frindle © 1998**

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT VAUGHAN WILLIAMS' *THE LARK ASCENDING*

*He rises and begins to round,  
He drops the silver chain of sound,  
Of many links without a break,  
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.*

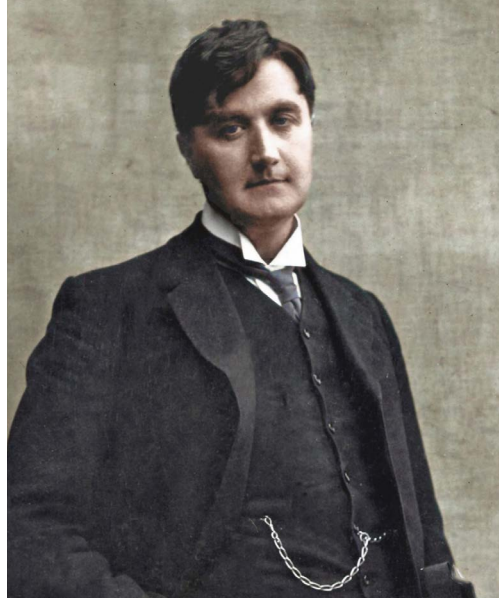
*For singing till his heaven fills,  
'Tis love of earth that he instills,  
And ever winging up and up,  
Our valley is his golden cup,  
And he the wine which overflows  
To lift us with him when he goes.*

*Till lost on his aerial rings  
In light, and then the fancy sings.*

*The Lark Ascending* by George Meredith  
(1828-1909)

*The Lark Ascending* has undoubtedly become Vaughan Williams' most popular work. It was fully drafted in 1914 as a work for violin and piano, but the composition had to be set aside due to the outbreak of the First World War. Vaughan Williams' professional musical life ceased completely for the next four years as he served as an ambulance driver during the war, shuttling wounded and dying soldiers from the battlefield to temporary field hospitals in France and Greece. It was only after the war ended that he was able to return home to England and to his compositional work.

One of his first tasks was to revise *The Lark Ascending*. It was eventually premiered in its violin and piano form in December 1920 by the English violinist Marie Hall, to whom the work is dedicated. The orchestration of the score was completed in early 1921, and Hall gave the first performance of this, the more frequently played version, shortly afterwards in London's Queen's Hall with the British Symphony Orchestra under Adrian Boult.



Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1910.  
Photo courtesy Vaughan Williams Foundation.

Despite the work's lengthy gestation period and the harrowing, life-changing experiences endured by the composer at the time, none of the terror or anguish of war is evident in the music. It is, in fact, an ideal example of Vaughan Williams' contemplative and nostalgic musical style. The solo violin spins unbroken arches of melody and swirling arabesques almost continually throughout, and there is no contrasting material or abrupt formal changes to disturb the organic unfolding and rapturous atmosphere. The orchestration is restrained, gently supporting the solo violin for most of the work's duration. The 'Romance' of the subtitle, perhaps a reference to Beethoven's two violin Romances, alludes to Vaughan Williams' long-standing love and adoration of nature.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

*The Lark Ascending* could be described as a musical reflection upon the poem of the same name written by the English novelist George Meredith in 1881. Only selected lines from the poem are printed in the musical score and the poetic content is used as a point of stimulus for the composer's lyrical reverie. The solo violin clearly embodies the spirit of a bird singing and taking flight (with occasional bird calls also provided by the woodwind instruments), whilst the sustained chords, played by the strings, could be understood as the aural depiction of a flat pastoral landscape.

The form of the work is rhapsodic, with lengthy ornamental solo cadenzas beginning and concluding the piece. These are notated without bar lines and in no strict tempo, thus giving the interpreter considerable freedom and liberty in interpretation. The floating quality of the harmony is partly due to Vaughan Williams' characteristic use of a pentatonic (five-tone) mode, which weakens the strong directional pull of conventional tonality. This modality continues in the central dance-like section, which is initiated by the woodwinds. Throughout his life, Vaughan Williams collected and studied English folk-music, and although no specific folk tune is directly quoted here, its strong influence is apparent.

© James Cuddeford 2017

## ABOUT FALLA'S *THREE-CORNERED HAT*

In 1907 Falla had left his native Spain in some frustration. Two years before, he had won a prize for his opera *La vida breve* ('Life is short'), a work in which he established the principles of working with distinctly Spanish sounds and forms; but when the promised production failed to eventuate, the composer left for Paris.

Sergei Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballets Russes, was keen to add Falla to a stable of composers that included Stravinsky and Ravel and suggested a ballet of *El corregidor y la molinera* ('The Magistrate and the Miller's Wife'), a novel by Pedro de Alarcón. The war (and the Russian revolution, which meant that Diaghilev was forbidden to enter Spain) intervened, but by way of a 'dry run' Falla produced a pantomime of the story for performance in Madrid. When Diaghilev finally saw the pantomime he suggested several major revisions out of which the 'ballet with songs' *El sombrero de tres picos* ('The Three-Cornered Hat') was born. The new work, which was premiered in London in 1919, had sets by Pablo Picasso and choreography by Léonide Massine.

Alarcón's story tells of an ugly miller and his beautiful wife who are devoted to each other. In Act 1, which more or less corresponds to the first of the suites, a distant song warns that all women should lock their door. The suite itself begins with an evocation of afternoon with its shrill bird calls. The local magistrate passes in a procession past the mill, and returns shortly thereafter to try and seduce the miller's wife. She dances a provocative *fandango*, colluding with her husband to lead the magistrate on and humiliate him, and then teases him with a bunch of grapes. The magistrate realises that he is being set up and leaves angrily. (The Magistrate's Dance in Suite No.1 actually occurs in Act 2.)

© Gordon Kerry 2005



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT RAVEL'S *MOTHER GOOSE SUITE*

In some exasperation, Ravel once asked a friend, 'Doesn't it ever occur to those people that I can be "artificial" by nature?' He was responding to the criticism that his music was more interested in technique than expression. There is some truth in the charge: Stravinsky described him – affectionately – as the 'Swiss watchmaker of music', and Ravel's stated aim was indeed 'technical perfection'. In fact, his love of mechanical intricacy led Ravel to collect various automata and other small machines, and he dreamed, as he put it in a 1933 article, of 'Finding Tunes in Factories'. Many of his pieces are exquisite simulacra of earlier or other forms and styles – Renaissance dances, Spanish music, jazz, or the music of the French Baroque.

Scandalously, between 1900 and 1905 Ravel failed several times to secure the prestigious award for composers, the Prix de Rome, ostensibly because of musical 'errors' and despite his already having established himself as a major new voice. In 1909, partly in response to his outsider status, he helped to found the Société Musicale Indépendante – independent, that is, of the Parisian musical and academic establishment – and its inaugural concert saw the premiere of the first version, for piano duo, of the *Ma Mère l'oye* (Mother Goose) Suite.



Maurice Ravel in 1905

Ravel was born in south-western France to a Basque mother and Swiss father but spent his entire life in Paris. Like Tchaikovsky, he saw a strong connection between childhood and enchantment. In his opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, for instance, a destructive child learns the value of compassion when furniture, trees and animals in the garden all come magically to life. The evocation of 'the poetry of childhood' in the original piano duo version of *Mother Goose* led Ravel to 'simplify my style and refine my means of expression' – or so he said. Certainly we can hear echoes of the deceptively simple piano music of Erik Satie, whose music Ravel championed.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

*Mother Goose* began life as the 'Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty' for piano, four hands. Ravel composed it for Mimie and Jean Godebski (aged six and seven respectively), to whose parents he had dedicated his Sonatine for piano. Ravel then composed four more *pièces enfantines*, depicting characters from the fairy-tales anthologised by three 17th century authors: Charles Perrault ('Sleeping Beauty' and 'Tom Thumb'), the Baroness d'Aulnoy ('Laideronette') and the Prince of Beaumont ('Beauty and the Beast'). 'The Fairy Garden' was an original inspiration.

Mimie later recalled:

neither my brother nor I was of an age to appreciate such a dedication and we regarded it rather as something entailing hard work. Ravel wanted us to give the first public performance but the idea filled me with a cold terror. My brother, being less timid and more gifted on the piano, coped quite well. But despite lessons from Ravel I used to freeze to such an extent that the idea had to be abandoned.

Nevertheless, the work's premiere at the SMI concert in 1910 was given by two children, Jeanne Leleu (later a professor at the Paris Conservatoire) and Geneviève Durony. In 1911 Ravel made this orchestral version of the suite.

The 'Pavane' is a slow and stately dance Renaissance dance which Ravel also used for his *Pavane for a Dead Infanta*. with gently repeated motifs and modal harmony that establishes Ravel's characteristic use of pungent dissonances on the strong beats of the bar. 'Tom Thumb' is shown at the moment where he realises that he is lost; the breadcrumb trail he left has been eaten by the birds. 'Laideronette' ('little ugly girl') is represented in music where glinting pentatonic ('black-note') figures give the piece its 'oriental' flavour. Much closer to home, 'Beauty and the Beast' is a waltz where any menace is dispelled by the Beast's eventual transformation, graphically depicted, into Prince Charming. Finally, 'The Fairy Garden' is imagined in music that gathers power through simple repetition until an ecstatic, climax of rippling scales.

Having completed his major ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* in 1912, Ravel revisited *Mother Goose* to make it the basis for a ballet score in which the movements, in rearranged order and with new prelude and interludes, represent the Sleeping Beauty's enchantment, dreams, and her awakening by Prince Charming.

**Gordon Kerry © 2010**

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT COPLAND'S *APPALACHIAN SPRING*

Aaron Copland met the choreographer Martha Graham in 1931. She wanted to do a ballet on his *Piano Variations*. Copland threw back his head and laughed – until he saw *Dithyramb*. A collaboration was born.

In 1942 Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge commissioned Graham to stage three ballets – Copland was one of three composers asked for a score. *Appalachian Spring* was the result. It premiered in Washington in October 1944. The score eventually won a Pulitzer Prize and a Music Critics' Circle Award.

Springtime was not in the creators' heads at the time of writing. A poem by Hart Crane actually contains the words:

I took the portage climb, then chose  
A further valley-shed; I could not stop.  
Feet nozzled wat'ry webs of upper flows;  
One white veil gusted from the very top.  
O Appalachian Spring!...

The reference is actually to a spring of water on a trail through the Appalachian Mountains.

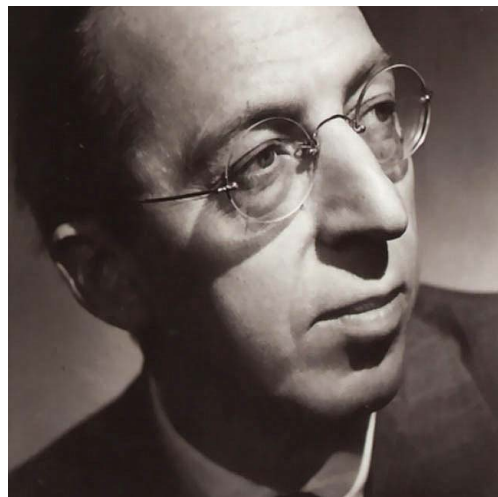
*Appalachian Spring* is one of those works which defines the American spirit in music. Graham's original scenario included Bible quotations, a central character who resembled Pocahontas, and several references to the Civil War. Eventually the story revolved around a pioneer farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hill country in the early 1800s – a stark symbol of American values.

Graham's unique choreographic style was spare and restrained. The values of simplicity and directness led to the use of the Shaker hymn *The Gift to be Simple*, a song 'previously... unknown to the general public,' recalled Copland. With the benefit of hindsight, we can tell that much of Graham's aesthetic was in accord with Copland's own compositional inclinations. 'Plain, plain, plain!...', said Leonard Bernstein in admiration, 'one of those Puritan values like being fair – you're thrifty.'

In the spring of 1945, Copland arranged the ballet as an orchestral suite. He trimmed 15 minutes of primarily choreographic material, and expanded the original 13-member chamber ensemble to full orchestra. Even in the suite it is possible to discern the broader features of the ballet. Slow music: the characters are introduced one by one. After a fast section introduced by unison strings, the bride and her intended dance to a moderate tempo, a scene of tenderness. Next a folksy feeling – suggestions of square dancers and country fiddlers suggesting the Revivalist and his flock. The music speeds up as the Bride experiences presentiments of motherhood, joy, fear and wonder. A slow transition leads to scenes of activity for the Bride and her farmer-husband, and the appearance of *The Gift to be Simple*. In a coda the bride takes her place among her neighbours; the couple left 'quiet and strong in their new house'.

'*Appalachian Spring* had a great deal to do with bringing my name before a larger public,' recalled Copland in later years, and Copland's orchestration of *Simple Gifts* has become a secondary American anthem. The storyline of the original ballet implies good Yankee values – sobriety, industriousness, community spirit – but even in the suite Copland's wide-open folksy breeziness, stoically heroic melodies and simple colours have come to represent these qualities.

**Gordon Kalton Williams**  
**Symphony Australia ©2006**



Aaron Copland in the 1940s

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