

MEDIA RELEASE

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra brings 'Summertime' to Sydney with an Opera in the Concert Hall presentation of *Porgy and Bess*



26 Nov; 1-3 Dec
Sydney Opera House, Concert Hall

In a magnificent finale to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 2016 season, Chief Conductor David Robertson will reveal his latest Opera in the Concert Hall presentation – arguably the greatest American opera of all time: The Gershwins®' *Porgy and Bess*® by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward and Ira Gershwin.

New Orleans-born bass-baritone Alfred Walker and Californian soprano Nicole Cabell, pictured, will perform the title roles in a cast of 20 internationally acclaimed soloists, appearing in the first Sydney production of *Porgy and Bess* in more than a decade. With multi-Helpmann Award-winning director Mitchell Butel as stage director, the SSO will utilise the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall like never before in this semi-staged production opening on November 26.

David Robertson, also the SSO's Artistic Director, said this incredible event would be “an unparalleled opportunity to hear extraordinary vocal talent”.

“Gershwin was very generous and gave great parts to all of his singers,” Robertson says. “We've assembled a cast of absolute stars to come here, many of them making their Australian debut and Sydney debut.

“Gershwin was blessed with an ability to write melodies that are instantly recognisable and go straight to the heart. At the same time, the many melodies of *Porgy and Bess* which have formed the basis of jazz standards since it was written are never heard in context – so you don't realise the actual power they have in the dramatic situations for which they were conceived.”

Porgy and Bess is the fourth instalment of David Robertson's Opera in the Concert Hall series, following Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (2015), Richard Strauss's *Elektra* (2014) and Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* (2013). Robertson has played a leading role in the resurgence of semi-staged opera productions at the SSO, often bringing to Sydney operatic repertoire too large for conventional staged productions but suited to performances with full orchestra in the Concert Hall.

Blending jazz, Spiritual and musical theatre, *Porgy and Bess* is a drama of enormous emotional power from a Broadway composer who was drawn to the epic world of grand opera. Its unforgettable characters sing beloved showstoppers such as *Summertime*, *It ain't necessarily so*, *I got plenty o' nuthin* and *Bess, you is my woman now*. The opera is a tragic love story set in America's Deep South and the Gershwin estate stipulates that African-American performers be cast in the main roles, in accordance with the composer's wishes.

"This sort of production comes along so rarely – sometimes you need to wait as much as a decade for all the stars to align," Robertson says. "To hear it with a full symphony orchestra is even rarer so this is an opportunity not to be missed."

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra thanks Kenneth Reed AM for his generous support of this production.

#ENDS#

On Backstage News+: [READ](#) 'Porgy and Charleston' by composer and music scholar Vincent Plush, who lived on Folly Beach, just outside Charleston for several years (1993–96), drawing together research for a book about the local origins of *Porgy and Bess*.

CONCERT DETAILS:

The Gershwins®' Porgy and Bess®

by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward and Ira Gershwin

Sydney Opera House, Concert Hall

Sat 26 Nov, 7pm

Thu 1 Dec, 7pm

Fri 2 Dec, 7pm

Sat 3 Dec, 7pm

GERSHWIN Porgy and Bess

David Robertson conductor

Alfred Walker Porgy

Nicole Cabell Bess

Eric Greene Crown

Karen Slack Serena

Julia Bullock Clara

Leon Williams Jake

Jermaine Smith Sportin' Life

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Stage Director Mitchell Butel

Tickets: \$69-\$220

Bookings through Sydney Symphony Orchestra
9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on 8215 4600 or
select your own seat at: www.sydneyssyphony.com

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