Thus Spake Zarathustra

Beethoven, Brahms and Strauss

Wed 22 February 8pm
Fri 24 February 8pm
Sat 25 February 8pm
Welcome to tonight’s concert at the Sydney Opera House, featuring Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Sydney Symphony in music by three great masters of the orchestra – Beethoven, Brahms and Richard Strauss.

It promises to be an exhilarating evening, with music that captures the drama of a tragic hero, the virtuosity of the violin and the philosophy of Nietzsche. If you’re familiar with the famous opening of Thus Spake Zarathustra (as featured in Kubrick’s film 2001 – A Space Odyssey) but haven’t heard the remaining 30 minutes or so of this wonderful music, then tonight will be an experience to remember.

We’re also delighted to welcome back to Sydney and to this series the violinist Lisa Batiashvili. In 2003 she played Sibelius; this year she brings the Brahms Violin Concerto – a true masterpiece, both expansive and electrifying.

The Ausgrid network includes the poles, wires and substations that deliver electricity to more than 1.6 million homes and businesses in New South Wales. Ausgrid is transforming the traditional electricity network into a grid that is smarter, more reliable and more interactive – something we are very proud of.

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We trust that you will enjoy tonight’s performance and we look forward to seeing you again at Ausgrid Master Series concerts throughout the season.

GEORGE MALTABAROW
Managing Director
Thus Spake Zarathustra

Vladimir Ashkenazy CONDUCTOR
Lisa Batiashvili VIOLIN

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Coriolan – Overture, Op.62

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)
Violin Concerto in D, Op.77
Allegro non troppo
Adagio
Allegro giocoso

INTERVAL

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)
Thus Spake Zarathustra – Symphonic poem, Op.30
Introduction: Sunrise –
Of the Back-worlds-men –
Of the Great Longing –
Of Joys and Passions –
The Funeral Song –
Of Science –
The Convalescent –
The Dance Song –
Night Wanderer’s Song

Friday night’s performance will be broadcast live across Australia on ABC Classic FM.

Pre-concert talk by Gordon Kalton Williams at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer. Visit sydneysymphony.com/talk-bios for speaker biographies.

Approximate durations: 8 minutes, 38 minutes, 20-minute interval, 33 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 9.50pm.
Cover of the first Munich edition of Richard Strauss's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* – a tone poem ‘freely after Friedr. Nietzsche’ (1896)
INTRODUCTION

Thus Spake Zarathustra

Thus Spake Zarathustra. There is more, of course, to the concert than this one monumental and poetic work by Richard Strauss. We also get to hear Beethoven in the tragic-heroic mode of the theatre and the great Brahms Violin Concerto – an eloquent masterpiece. If there is a connecting theme in this program is might be the idea that music ‘speaks’.

In Beethoven’s Coriolan Overture the musical ideas combine to personify a tragic hero – the music itself embodies the drama. For the young Strauss, music stopped with Beethoven, and at first he thought the music of Brahms obtuse and unlovely. But soon he developed such an enthusiasm for Brahms that he was describing him as ‘colossal’, ‘fresh’, ‘energetic’ and ‘demonic’ (a compliment).

Brahms himself rarely departed from the Classical genres – concertos and symphonies among them. But Strauss abandoned them, avoiding the four-movement symphony in favour of the dramatically shaped structures of the symphonic poem (or tone poem). ‘New ideas must search out new forms,’ he said, musical forms that were to be shaped by poetic ideals.

In the case of Thus Spake Zarathustra, the inspiration is poetry itself. The music has found a niche in popular culture thanks to Stanley Kubrick using the ‘sunrise’ opening for his largely non-verbal 2001: A Space Odyssey. But for concertgoers, Strauss’s symphonic poem is much more than this sunrise, however awe-inspiring – the half hour that follows gives one musician’s free interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophical poem Also sprach Zarathustra. Strauss himself was more than a little pleased with the result: ‘of all my pieces, the most perfect in form, the richest in content and the most individual in character’.

bravo!

This year sees the addition of a new feature to Sydney Symphony program books: we’re incorporating our Bravo! newsletter into the back pages. There will be nine issues over the course of the year, which means we can share orchestra news with you more frequently. The Bravo! pages will also be available for separate download from sydneysymphony.com/bravo so you need never miss an issue, regardless of how many concerts you attend. Meanwhile, turn to page 31 to check out the debut issue in the new format.
Ludwig van Beethoven  
**Coriolan – Overture, Op.62**

Beethoven’s *Coriolan* Overture begins with strident open octaves – all the strings playing the same note, C – three times in succession, with single, dramatic chords in between. These octave Cs can sound angry, proud, imperious and strident – all the characteristics you’d expect for a hero. But the fact that they are empty octaves and not full-voiced chords is significant. When Haydn wanted to suggest chaos at the beginning of *The Creation* he gave the full orchestra a sustained, empty octave. The octave is the closest thing to musical chaos because it means nothing and implies everything. Any kind of chord – even a highly dissonant one – implies harmony and by extension cosmos and order.

The opening of *Coriolan* issues a challenge. An uncompromising hero is demanding a response and Beethoven provides one: each time the octave Cs are played, the orchestra offers a different chord in reply. And with each chord the tension thickens.

The very next musical idea is a kind of stuttering theme. Barely a minute of music has elapsed and, through this musical vacillation, Beethoven has revealed the conflicted personality of his hero. Beethoven goes beyond simply representing his dramatic character with a theme, instead he writes music that embodies the personality of Coriolanus, and in particular what has been described as his ‘tragic dithering’.

When at last the music stabilises, we hear a proper melody – Coriolanus’s mother Volumnia makes her pleading appearance. This theme focuses the dramatic conflict of the music, and as it reappears and is transformed over the course of the overture it provides a sense of the dilemma that faces the play’s hero. But the inevitable resolution of this dilemma in the drama prevents the overture from following the model of Beethoven’s other ‘heroic’ works. Unlike the Fifth Symphony, for example, this can have no monumental and triumphant conclusion.

Instead Beethoven takes the earlier ‘stuttering’ theme, gives it to the cellos and gradually slows it down until it’s barely audible. There are three more octave Cs, very different from the opening. This music shares the fate of its hero – it expires rather than closes.

But who is that hero? As English speakers in the 21st century, we could be forgiven for assuming that Beethoven was inspired by Shakespeare’s Coriolanus. In fact, Beethoven was inspired by a contemporary play by Heinrich von Collin. The essential story is the same but the two plays are very different. Shakespeare gives us an Elizabethan action hero – depending on the production, *Coriolanus* can be very bloody. Collin’s *Coriolan* is more reflective and poetic: we hear about...
the violence but we don’t see the gaping wounds. In Collin we’re given a hero who commits suicide rather than a hero who takes deadly action.

Whose hero do you hear in Beethoven’s Coriolan? If you end up voting for Shakespeare you are in excellent company. E.T.A. Hoffmann heard Shakespeare in this music, as did Wagner.

Beethoven’s approach to musical characterisation in the Coriolan overture is very close to the idea of a Liszt or Strauss tone poem, even though no one was writing ‘tone poems’ in 1807. It would have been unusual, because in the early 19th century there was little expectation that a theatrical overture would describe the action that followed. Indeed, when Beethoven wrote overtures that were descriptive – such as his Leonore overtures for the opera Fidelio – they frequently didn’t work in the theatre.

As it turns out, although Beethoven was inspired by Collin’s play, and even though the overture was performed at least once with that play (in April 1807), the Coriolan overture was first composed as concert music, as a much-needed fresh overture for Beethoven’s orchestral programs. The happy result for modern music lovers is that this overture continues to succeed in the concert hall, and so for ten minutes at the beginning of a program we can be transported to the dramatic atmosphere of the theatre.

YVONNE FRINDLE ©2005

Beethoven’s Coriolan overture calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The Coriolan Overture was first performed in Vienna, in March 1807. The Sydney Symphony was the first ABC orchestra to perform it, in 1938 with conductor George Szell. Our most recent performance of the overture was in 2005, conducted by Alain Lombard.
Bringing the community together with music
Johannes Brahms
Violin Concerto in D, Op.77

**Allegro non troppo**
**Adagio**
**Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace**

Lisa Batiashvili **VIOLIN**
Cadenza: Fritz Kreisler, arranged Batiashvili

As with several of his greatest works, Brahms composed the bulk of the Violin Concerto at his summer retreat of Pörtschach on the Wörthersee in Carinthia. It was a place, he said, where ‘so many melodies fly about that one must take care not to tread on them’. He’d proved that point in the previous year of 1877, when he completed the sublime Second Symphony in D major in Pörtschach. Now, in the summer of 1878, he returned to the same place (and the same key signature) to create the work which many would regard as simply the finest violin concerto in the repertoire.

It was a time of some professional satisfaction for Brahms. He had now mastered the symphonic form which had given him 20 years of grief, and his reputation was such that he had no shortage of rehearsal and performance opportunities for anything he cared to write. And it cannot have escaped Brahms’s notice that he was composing a violin concerto in D major, the same key as his idol Beethoven’s own Violin Concerto. It is almost as if Brahms’s concerto, following in the wake of the successful first two symphonies, demonstrated that the ‘heavy tread of Beethoven marching behind him’ no longer held any grave fears for the mature composer.

Crucially, when it came to the composition of concertos, Brahms was by 1878 a significant enough creative figure to be able to write music which satisfied artistic criteria, rather than merely providing technical showpieces for virtuoso soloists. Indeed, a feature of all his concertos is their concentration on symphonic-style argument, rather than mere display – as the lengthy orchestral openings of the First Piano Concerto and the Violin Concerto, and the four-movement form of the Second Piano Concerto demonstrate.

Yet for all his artistic maturity, Brahms remained deeply insecure about his new works, usually ridiculing them to his friends and apparently hoping that they would do the same in return. He seemed disappointed when his colleague, the legendary violinist Joseph Joachim, examined the solo part of the new Violin Concerto in 1878 and announced that, while it was sometimes difficult to tell how a concerto would work from the violin part alone, it appeared at first glance to be a very pleasing and successful work. ‘I wish I could go through it with a violinist less good than you,’ the frustrated Brahms wrote back to Joachim, ‘for I am afraid you are not sufficiently blunt and severe.’

**Keynotes**

**BRAHMS**
**Born Hamburg, 1833**
**Died Vienna, 1897**

Brahms is often thought reactionary: he valued classical forms, admired composers of the past, and his choral music is firmly rooted in the traditions of the baroque period. Yet his musical language and manner of using the orchestra clearly represents mid-19th-century romanticism in all its richness and emotive power. It took Brahms 15 years to compose his first symphony; he was keenly aware of the looming shadow of Beethoven. But the second symphony followed swiftly four months later in 1877, and the violin concerto soon after.

**VIOLIN CONCERTO**

Brahms wrote this concerto for his good friend and violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim. Since Brahms was not a violinist, he consulted Joachim as he worked, sending him drafts and urging him to ‘mark those parts that are difficult, awkward, or impossible to play’. A composer himself, Joachim enthusiastically offered suggestions and composed a cadenza, which he performed at the concerto’s premiere in 1878. In the second movement Adagio, the solo violin steps back from the spotlight and plays ‘second fiddle’, accompanying an exquisitely lyrical solo from the oboe.

The virtuosic last movement, an exuberant rondo, has a distinct gypsy character – a tribute by Brahms to his Hungarian violinist friend and collaborator.
Brahms then sent the score to another friend, the conductor Hans von Bülow, and also to the violinist and composer Wieniawski – and with them he more than satisfied his desire for pithy and merciless abuse. Bülow called it ‘a concerto against the violin’, while Wieniawski, himself the composer of some fiendishly difficult violin concertos, declared it to be simply unplayable. At last Brahms was happy, declaring the work in general to be a ‘failure’ and the slow movement in particular to be ‘feeble’. He immediately set about a savage revision, reducing the original four movements to three, with the intended scherzo being dropped altogether. (Brahms’s long-promised four movement concerto form had to wait until the Second Piano Concerto was completed three years later.) But he left in many of the technical challenges – the wide melodic leaps, the more outrageous double and sometimes triple-stops, and a notorious passage in tenths.

While Brahms was a great admirer of the violin, he didn’t play the instrument himself, and he relied heavily on the advice of Joachim as he completed his revision of the concerto. But even after Joachim gave the premiere on New Year’s Day in 1879 with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Brahms refused to have the score published, concentrating instead on still further revisions. Joachim himself got in on the act, suggesting changes not just to the solo part but also
to the orchestration – often as detailed as the omission of double-bass notes and the shortening of chords – while continuing to perform the work throughout Europe. Nearly a decade later, in 1888, he was still writing to Brahms from England with news of his most recent performances of the work. (The ma non troppo attached to the vivace of the finale’s tempo marking was actually contributed by Joachim!)

Perhaps because of Joachim’s significant input, Brahms ensured that this was to be the last great concerto in which the soloist was left to improvise a solo cadenza in the first movement (the practice had been all but abandoned since Beethoven had written out the cadenzas for his Emperor Piano Concerto). Joachim’s cadenza, written out, soon became the ‘standard’ cadenza for the concerto, but this hasn’t stopped others from creating their own versions. One particularly fine cadenza – admired for its references to the concerto’s thematic material – is Fritz Kreisler’s, heard in tonight’s concert.
Behzod Abduraimov and the Sydney Symphony

Behzod Abduraimov has performed with the Sydney Symphony on tour overseas, and now we’re delighted to introduce this exceptional young pianist to Sydney audiences.

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Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor

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“For all the drama, aural spectacle and electricity in his playing, it’s substantial, disciplined and accurate. He doesn’t splash, he doesn’t fake. It’s real.” *The Telegraph*
Listening Guide
As in the First Piano Concerto, Brahms allows the orchestra to state the main thematic material of the first movement before the soloist enters. Typically, there is a wealth of thematic material, with the opening eight-bar phrase being extended by the oboe and then a surging forte. The melodic second subject features suspended chords and elaborate figurations in the violas, before the soloist’s delayed but unforgettable entry brings a fiery minor-key variation of the opening theme. The development section is initiated by the orchestra, with the soloist weaving a variety of counter-melodies around it. After a restatement of the main themes, the cadenza then leads to a lyrical reworking of the initial theme, and a vigorous coda.

As if to demonstrate that the concerto is for solo instrument with orchestra, rather than against it, the magnificent slow movement features the oboe almost as much as it does the violin. After a chord on bassoons and horns, the oboe introduces one of the greatest tunes which Brahms ever composed, and the soloist never really approaches it directly, preferring instead to weave all manner of counter-melodies and variations around it. While some of his contemporaries criticised Brahms for neglecting the soloist in this movement, the fact remains that these prominent passages for wind instruments serve only to highlight the beauty of the solo part, which can take the breath away on each successive entry.

Brahms (not to mention Joachim) loved nothing more than the gypsy melodies of neighbouring Hungary, and he closes the Violin Concerto with one of his finest appropriations of this joyous, rhythmically vital music. The energetic, bouncing theme of the finale is instantly memorable and both soloist and orchestra give it a thorough working-over, keeping just enough in reserve to step up the intensity in the coda. Essentially a rondo (the description rondo alla zingarese is applied to similar movements elsewhere in Brahms’s music), there is nevertheless enough contrast provided, in passages such as the brief meditative pause just before the conclusion, to remind us that in this finale, there is a distinctive master at work – and at play.

MARTIN BUZACOTT
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA ©1997

The orchestra for Brahms’ Violin Concerto calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the concerto in 1939 with soloist Jeanne Gautier and conductor Malcolm Sargent. In recent seasons the orchestra has performed it with Viktoria Mullova and conductor Donald Runnicles (2009) and Ray Chen and conductor Peter Oundjian (2011).
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Richard Strauss

*Also sprach Zarathustra* – Symphonic poem, Op.30
*(Thus Spake Zarathustra)*

*Introduction: Sunrise –*
- Of the Back-worlds-men –
- Of the Great Longing –
- Of Joys and Passions –
- The Funeral Song –
- Of Science –
- The Convalescent –
- The Dance Song –
- Night Wanderer’s Song

In 1891–92 the usually robust Strauss suffered a period of serious illness, including bouts of pneumonia, bronchitis and pleurisy. In the summer of 1892 he took leave of his duties at the Weimar Opera and travelled extensively through Italy, Greece and Egypt, soaking up the sun, but more importantly enjoying the awesome physical remains of the ancient pagan civilisations in those countries. It was at this time that he began to think about a musical response to some of the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, particularly those expressed in his poem *Also sprach Zarathustra*, though the work’s composition had to wait until 1896.

Zoroaster (as he was known to the ancient Greeks) was a Persian prophet living in the sixth century BCE who taught that the universe, and humankind in particular, is subject to the eternal struggle of two gods, represented by light and darkness; his religion survives among the Parsees of modern India. Nietzsche’s relationship to Zoroastrian ideas is fairly loose, and as Norman Del Mar puts it, he used these ‘as a prop on which to clothe his own ideas on the purpose and destiny of mankind’. The most famous – indeed, notorious – of these is the idea of the Übermensch or Superman. ‘Man,’ in Nietzsche’s words, ‘is a thing to be surmounted...what is the ape to man? A jest or a thing of shame. So shall man be to the Superman.’ While Nietzsche (and, it must be admitted, the younger Strauss) were disdainful of Christianity’s compassion for weakness, it is drawing a long bow to make Nietzsche responsible for the atrocities of Nazism. Indeed, Nietzsche scholar Joachim Köhler argues that *Also sprach Zarathustra*, with its celebration of the individual will, partly grew out of the poet’s freeing himself from the dominating personality of the composer Richard Wagner. And Wagner’s widow Cosima, writing to her son-in-law Houston Stewart Chamberlain (whose racist ideas definitely did influence Hitler), condemned Nietzsche’s book for its ‘Jewishness’.

**Keynotes**

**R STRAUSS**
*Born Munich, 1864*
*Died Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 1949*

Richard Strauss wrote two symphonies as a teenager, but this was not the musical genre that captured his imagination. Instead he made his name in the theatre and with the evocative and storytelling possibilities of the symphonic poem (or tone poem, as he preferred to call it). Even his Alpine ‘Symphony’ and the ‘Symphonia’ domestica are large-scale symphonic poems with an underlying narrative.

**THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA**

*Thus Spake Zarathustra* was composed in 1896 – a relatively early work – and takes its name from a philosophical poem by Nietzsche. The inspiration is loose, but Strauss does name the individual sections of the music (which are performed without pause) after different chapters in Nietzsche’s poem. The famous Sunrise is followed by musical explorations of the tensions between nature and mankind. Although Nietzsche is frequently associated with the concept of the ‘Superman’ and his poem ends in triumph, Strauss’s free interpretation closes in a mysterious and tranquil mood.
Listening Guide

Strauss’s work is, as he said, ‘freely after Fr. Nietzsche’: he takes some of the chapter headings as the defining images for each section of his tone poem. It begins with the famous invocation to the sun (Introduction: Sunrise), with low rumbling accompanying the trumpets’ simple C-G-C theme (which in much of Strauss represents primeval nature). The increasing blaze of full chords establishes C major as one pole of the work (and as Del Mar notes, the sound of the organ at the end of the section adds a liturgical note). Of the Back-worlds-men depicts humanity in its primitive, or rather naïve state (in B minor, significantly – B being the other tonal pole of the piece). Strauss includes those who profess Christianity in this category, quoting a fragment of the plainchant for the Credo to underline his point.

Of the Great Longing, which follows a gorgeous climax for the strings, is a depiction of humanity’s search for something beyond mere superstition, but Strauss’s music dramatises the conflict between nature (the trumpet theme) and humanity’s tendency to create dogma with more hints of plainchant and the unresolved conflict between the keys of C and B. A new chromatic motif leads into the Of Joys and Passions section with a theme that Strauss described as ‘A flat (brass: dark
blue’. Actually the section tends to be in C minor, linking it to the idea of nature, whereas the following Funeral Song is in B minor, and therefore linked to the idea of man.

Of Science is based on a deep-voiced fugue that Strauss described as ‘spine-chilling’ and Del Mar regards as having a ‘strangely mysterious quality’ despite its dour timbre. In The Convalescent, part of which Mahler sets in his Third Symphony, Nietzsche describes Zoroaster’s spiritual and physical collapse, after which he emerges as the Superman. The Dance Song of the Superman is, like the ‘Dance of the Seven Veils’ in Salome, a Viennese waltz – a Straussian joke, perhaps. Here poet and composer part company: Strauss’s Zoroaster displays none of the triumphalism that Nietzsche’s does, and the work closes with a mysterious and tranquil Night Wanderer’s Song in which the keys of nature and man still quietly contend.

After the final rehearsal for the premiere, Strauss, with characteristic modesty, wrote to his wife: ‘Zarathustra is glorious...of all my pieces, the most perfect in form, the richest in content and the most individual in character... I’m a fine fellow after all, and feel just a little pleased with myself.’

GORDON KERRY ©2004

Thus Spake Zarathustra calls for four flutes (doubling piccolo), three oboes (doubling cor anglais), four clarinets (doubling E flat clarinet), four bassoons (doubling contrabassoon); six horns, four trumpets, three trombones and two tubas; timpani and percussion; two harps, organ and strings.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the complete symphonic poem in 1947 under Bernard Heinze and most recently in 2007 in Charles Mackerras’s final concerts with the Sydney Symphony.
Selected Discography

CORIOLAN
Vladimir Ashkenazy’s concept of the Coriolan overture – capturing the hero’s nobility and the weightiness of the tragedy – can be heard in his recording with the Philharmonia Orchestra. The main work on the disc is Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony and the Egmont overture completes the program. Currently out of print, it can be obtained as an ArkivCD from arkivmusic.com.
DECCA 411 491

For a collection of (nearly) all the Beethoven overtures, try Kurt Masur’s recording with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. All that is missing is the final overture to the opera Fidelio.
DECCA 488 1012

BRAHMS VIOLIN CONCERTO
Vladimir Ashkenazy recommends the recording by the great Russian violinist David Oistrakh, whose interpretations are an inspiration to many musicians and listeners. Oistrakh recorded the concerto several times – the one to look for is the 1954 monophonic recording with the Dresden Staatskapelle and Franz Konwitschny in a generous 2CD ‘DG Originals’ collection that also includes the Tchaikovsky violin concerto, Beethoven romances and several Bach concertos.
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 447 4272

ZARATHUSTRA
Also recommended by tonight’s conductor is Herbert von Karajan’s 1959 recording of Thus Spake Zarathustra with the Vienna Philharmonic. You can find it in a Decca ‘Legends’ release, together with Till Eulenspiegel, Don Juan and the Dance of the Seven Veils from Salome.
DECCA 488 3882

Or you can seek out Ashkenazy’s own recording of the tone poem with the Cleveland Orchestra, paired with Death and Transfiguration. It’s out of print but can be obtained as an ArkivCD from arkivmusic.com.
DECCA 425 942

LISA BATIASHVILI
Last year Lisa Batiashvili released Echoes of Time, a recording with Esa-Pekka Salonen and Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Shostakovich’s Violin Concerto No.1 is programmed with shorter pieces by Giya Kancheli and Arvo Pärt, and Rachmaninoff’s Vocalise (accompained by pianist Hélène Grimaud).
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 477 9299

One of the composers Batiashvili has championed is Frenchman Nicolas Bacri, described by one critic as ‘one of those living composers who offer hope for the future’. Four of his works for soloist and orchestra are included on Sturm und Drang, the recording of his Fourth Symphony, all with the Tapiola Symphony and Jean-Jacques Kantorow. Batiashvili can be heard with her husband, François Leleux, in Le Printemps, a concerto amoroso for violin and oboe.
BIS 1579

Broadcast Diary
February–March

Friday 24 February, 8pm
THUS SPEKE ZARATHUSTRA
Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor
Lisa Batiashvili violin
Beethoven, Brahms, R Strauss

Wednesday 7 March, 8pm
AN ALPINE SYMPHONY
Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor
Stephen Kovacevich piano
Beethoven, Richard Strauss

Saturday 17 March, 8pm
STRAVINSKY REMEMBERED
Matthias Pintscher conductor
Isabelle Faust violin
Ravel, Pintscher, Stravinsky

Friday 23 March, 8pm
FIREWORKS & FANTASY
Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor
Behzod Abduraimov piano
Roger Benedict viola
Gyger, Prokofiev, Berlioz

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Gianluigi Gelmetti conducts Schubert’s Unfinished and R Strauss’s Four Last Songs with Ricarda Merbeth. SSO 200803

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A 2CD set featuring Sir Charles’s final performances with the orchestra, in October 2007. SSO 200706

Brett Dean
Brett Dean performs his own viola concerto, conducted by Simone Young, in this all-Dean release. SSO 200702

Ravel
Gelmetti conducts music by one of his favourite composers: Maurice Ravel. Includes Bolero. SSO 200801

Rare Rachmaninoff
Rachmaninoff chamber music with Dene Olding, the Goldner Quartet, soprano Joan Rodgers and Vladimir Ashkenazy at the piano. SSO 200901

Webcasts

Selected Sydney Symphony concerts are webcast live on BigPond and Telstra T-box and made available for later viewing On Demand. Our most recent webcast:

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MAHLER ODYSSEY ON CD

During the 2010 and 2011 concert seasons, the Sydney Symphony and Vladimir Ashkenazy set out to perform all the Mahler symphonies, together with some of the song cycles. These concerts were recorded for CD, with eight releases so far and more to come.

Mahler 7 OUT NOW
The most recent addition to the catalogue is Symphony No.7, sometimes known as the ‘Night Music’ symphony. SSO 201104

ALSO CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

Mahler 1 & Songs of a Wayfarer
SSO 201001

Mahler 8
(Symphony of a Thousand)
SSO 201002

Mahler 5
SSO 201003

Song of the Earth
SSO 201004

Mahler 3
SSO 201101

Mahler 4
SSO 201102

Mahler 6
SSO 201103

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Sydney Symphony
200803
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Vladimir Ashkenazy
PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC ADVISOR

In the years since Vladimir Ashkenazy first came to prominence on the world stage in the 1955 Chopin Competition in Warsaw he has built an extraordinary career, not only as one of the most renowned and revered pianists of our times, but as an inspiring artist whose creative life encompasses a vast range of activities.

Conducting has formed the largest part of his music-making for the past 20 years. He has been Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic (1998–2003), and Music Director of the NHK Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo (2004–2007). This is his fourth season as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Sydney Symphony.

Alongside these roles, Vladimir Ashkenazy is also Conductor Laureate of the Philharmonia Orchestra, with whom he has developed landmark projects such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich Under Stalin (a project which he toured and later developed into a TV documentary) and Rachmaninoff Revisited at the Lincoln Center, New York.

He also holds the positions of Music Director of the European Union Youth Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. He maintains strong links with a number of other major orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra (where he was formerly Principal Guest Conductor), San Francisco Symphony, and Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin (Chief Conductor and Music Director, 1988–96), as well as making guest appearances with orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic.

Vladimir Ashkenazy continues to devote himself to the piano, building his comprehensive recording catalogue with releases such as the 1999 Grammy award-winning Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, Rautavaara’s Piano Concerto No.3 (which he commissioned), Rachmaninoff transcriptions, Bach’s Wohltemperierte Klavier and Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations. In 2009 he released a disc of French piano duo works with Vovka Ashkenazy.

A regular visitor to Sydney over many years, he has conducted subscription concerts and composer festivals for the Sydney Symphony, with his five-program Rachmaninoff festival forming a highlight of the 75th Anniversary Season in 2007. In 2010–11 he conducted the Mahler Odyssey concerts and live recordings, and his artistic role with the orchestra also includes annual international touring.

In 2011 Limelight magazine named Vladimir Ashkenazy Music Personality of the Year. To watch his acceptance speech on YouTube, go to bit.ly/AshkenazyLimelight

KEITH SAUNDERS
Lisa Batiashvili

VIOLIN

Born in Georgia, Lisa Batiashvili studied with Mark Lubotsky and then with Ana Chumachenco at Hamburg’s Musikhochschule. In 1995 – the youngest-ever competitor, aged 16 – she was awarded second prize in the Sibelius Competition. Four years later she became one of the first of the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists. Since then she has appeared frequently with many of the world’s greatest orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

This season her engagements include the Cleveland Orchestra (with Franz Welser-Möst), New York Philharmonic (Alan Gilbert) and NHK Symphony Orchestra (Charles Dutoit), as well as a European tour with Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra (Sakari Oramo), concerts with the London Philharmonic and Rotterdam Philharmonic orchestras (both with Yannick Nézet-Séguin), and with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and Orchestre National de France (David Zinman).

Chamber music has always played an important part in her schedule, with appearances at festivals such as Salzburg, Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, Tanglewood, Schleswig-Holstein and Verbier. This season she tours as part of a quartet with oboist François Leleux, violist Lawrence Power and cellist Sebastian Klinger. Other chamber music partners include cellist Adrian Brendel and pianist Till Fellner. Her commitment to new music has seen her give several world premieres in recent seasons, including Magnus Lindberg’s Violin Concerto and Nicolas Bacri’s Le Printemps, a concerto for violin, oboe and chamber orchestra.

Her accolades include the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival’s Leonard Bernstein Award (2003); the Beethoven Ring Prize from the Beethoven Festival Bonn; the MIDEM Classical Award and a Choc de l’année for her recording of the Sibelius and Lindberg concertos (2008). She was recently announced as the winner of the International Accademia Musicale Chigiana Prize in Siena, and received an ECHO Klassik award for her recording of Shostakovich’s Violin Concerto No.1 with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Lisa Batiashvili made her Australian debut in 2003, during which she performed the Sibelius Violin Concerto with the Sydney Symphony.
MUSICIANS

FIRST VIOLINS
Dene Olding
Concertmaster
Sun Yi
Associate Concertmaster
Katherine Lukey
Assistant Concertmaster
Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
Julie Batt
Jennifer Booth
Marianne Broadfoot
Brielle Clapson
Sophie Cole
Amber Davis
Jennifer Hoy
Georges Lentz
Nicola Lewis
Alexandra Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Léone Ziegler
Kirsten Williams
Associate Concertmaster

SECOND VIOLINS
Kirsty Hilton
Marina Marsden
Susan Dobbie
Principal Emeritus
Maria Durek
Emma Hayes
Shuti Huang
Stan W Kornel
Benjamin Li
Emily Long
Nicole Masters
Philippa Paige
Biyana Rozenblit
Maja Vennica
Claire Herrick*

VIOLAS
Roger Benedict
Tobias Breider
Anne-Louise Comerford
James Wannan*
Assistant Principal
Robyn Brookfield
Sandro Costantino
Jane Hazelwood
Graham Hennings
Stuart Johnson
Justine Marsden
Felicity Tsai
Tara Houghton*
Leonid Volovelsky

CELLOS
Catherine Hewgill
Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Fenella Gill
Timothy Nankervis
Christopher Pidcock
Adrian Wallis
David Wickham
Eleanor Betts†
Rowena Crouch°
Rachael Tobin*
Kristy Comrau
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FLUTES
Janet Webb
Emma Sholl
Carolyn Harris
Rosamund Plummer
Principal Piccolo

OBOES
Diana Doherty
Shefali Pryor
David Papp
Alexandre Oguey
Principal Cor Anglais

CLARINET
Lawrence Dobell
Christopher Tingay
Craig Wernicke
Principal Bass Clarinet
Rowena Watts†
Francesco Celati

BASSOONS
Matthew Wilkie
Nicole Tait*
Fiona McNamara
Noriko Shimada
Principal Contrabassoon
Roger Brooke

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David Elton
Paul Goodchild
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* = Principal
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Grey = Permanent member of the Sydney Symphony not appearing in this concert

To see photographs of the full roster of permanent musicians and find out more about the orchestra, visit our website: www.sydneysymphony.com/SSO_musicians
If you don’t have access to the internet, ask one of our customer service representatives for a copy of our Musicians flyer.
The Sydney Symphony's award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, developing audiences and engaging the participation of young people. The Sydney Symphony promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Liza Lim, Lee Bracegirdle, Gordon Kerry and Georges Lentz, and a recording of works by Brett Dean was released on both the BIS and Sydney Symphony Live labels.

Other releases on the Sydney Symphony Live label, established in 2006, include performances with Alexander Lazarev, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Sir Charles Mackerras and Vladimir Ashkenazy. The orchestra has recently completed recording the Mahler symphonies, and has also released recordings with Ashkenazy of Rachmaninoff and Elgar orchestral works on the Exton/Triton labels, as well as numerous recordings on the ABC Classics label.

This is the fourth year of Ashkenazy's tenure as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor.
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For information about the Directors’ Chairs program, please call (02) 8215 4619.
The Sydney Symphony gratefully acknowledges the music lovers who donate to the orchestra each year. Each gift plays an important part in ensuring our continued artistic excellence and helping to sustain important education and regional touring programs. Donations of $50 and above are acknowledged on our website at sydneysymphony.com/patrons.

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SYDNEY SYMPHONY
The Sydney Symphony is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

The Sydney Symphony is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW.
The oboe section of the Sydney Symphony makes for an interesting study in lineage: Shefali Pryor (Associate Principal) is a former student of Alexandre Oguey (Principal Cor Anglais), who, in turn, is married to Diana Doherty (Principal Oboe), whose former student was David Papp (Second Oboe).

Simple!

Those close relationships, says Shefali, have a three-fold positive impact on the oboe section: ‘We all have a very similar concept of sound, which is vital in a section. And having a strong rapport translates into a fabulous sense of camaraderie. It’s so much fun to make music with people whose company you also enjoy – the oboe section really feels like a family. And even though I’ve graduated from the role of student, I continue to learn from all my colleagues.’

When Shefali won her first job (Second Oboe) with the orchestra, making the transition from student to colleague was tricky. ‘It did pose some challenges, because the teacher / student line was blurred.’ But taking a year out to study overseas ‘made it easier to renegotiate that paradigm’.

Ironically there was a degree of regret about later securing the Associate Principal position (a promotion, in effect). ‘I had – and still have – such a great friendship with Diana. And always really enjoyed playing second oboe to her, playing with an old friend who I really know and understand. But now I’m glad for the extra responsibility that comes with playing Associate Principal. It really developed my playing, and my personality. The more I expect from myself, the more I’m able to achieve.’

‘If I could offer one piece of advice to my younger self, it would be “be braver”. I was quite shy and retiring as a student, and that translated into my playing; I was a little afraid to give it my all, in case my “all” was wrong. But I now know that there’s no right or wrong in music. Diana has been a great inspiration to me in that regard – she just puts it all out there, wears her heart on her sleeve when she plays. And I believe that musicians’ personalities are very much reflected in their playing.’

The Associate Principal Oboe Chair is supported by Rose Herceg
Your Say

I wanted to thank you for the Sydney Symphony Brass Ensemble’s very moving tribute to Japan during your visit here [Nov 2011]. The audience was tremendously moved and emotional. I have lived in Japan for over 20 years and I was ever so proud to be an Australian here, sharing the incredible spirit of solidarity your musicians displayed.
Best wishes for a stable and peaceful 2012.
Melanie Brock

I would like to congratulate the Sydney Symphony, concertmaster Dene Olding and conductor Mark Wigglesworth for the thrilling performance of Lutosławski’s Symphony No.4 [Oct 2011]. I had enjoyed the piece in recordings, but the impact of this live performance was far greater.

Since the publicity for this concert emphasised the Mozart and Dvořák pieces, I wanted to assure you that, as much as I enjoyed hearing the excellent performances of those well-known works, the chance to hear the Lutosławski was the reason that I bought the tickets.

Anthony Henderson

The visiting conductors and soloists last year were wonderful. In recent months two British conductors Mark Wigglesworth and Jonathan Nott brought new freshness to old favourites like Dvořák and Schubert. And having Brett Dean’s brilliant and complex violin concerto brought to this town in such a dazzling way by Frank Peter Zimmermann rounded out the year’s programs wonderfully.

Alex Kan

Wow! What a great concert today [Signature Sounds, Dec 2011]. The orchestra was on fire, Zimmermann was consummate and Jonathan Nott was brilliant to watch. Please can we have more of Jonathan Nott in the future if you can lure him down here? He was so expressive it reminded me of Louis Frémaux, who was always a joy to watch.

Alexander Stitt

Welcome to the Sydney Symphony’s 2012 season, and to Bravo! a new feature of our program books. Bravo! is our way of staying in touch with you, offering insights into our behind-the-scenes activities, musician profiles, and the latest news and views about the Sydney Symphony.

This year offers a tremendous variety of performances. I’m particularly looking forward to presenting stellar artists such as violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter in her Australian debut, young Australian saxophonist Amy Dickson and jazz trumpeter Chris Botti. We also welcome back conductors such as David Robertson, Donald Runnicles and young Russian firebrand Tugan Sokhiev.

The Sydney Symphony is going from strength to strength under the inspiring leadership of Vladimir Ashkenazy, with international tours and remarkable cycles of music by Mahler, Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff. 2012 promises to be another great year of music-making. Outstanding performances are built on the excitement of connection between musicians and audience – and we look forward to you being a part of these in this our 80th anniversary year.

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Harold in Italy
1834. Niccolò Paganini, violinist extraordinaire, had taken possession of a marvellous, century-old Stradivarius viola, but he had nothing to play on it. So he approached the French composer Hector Berlioz and asked him to write a viola concerto.

Berlioz recalled it this way: ‘No sooner was the first section completed than Paganini wanted to see it. At the sight of all the viola's rests in the Allegro, he exclaimed: “This won’t do!…I must be playing the whole time.”

...Now realising that my scheme could not suit him, I thought of writing a series of orchestral scenes in which the solo viola would be involved like a character…By placing it amid poetic recollections of my wanderings in the Abruzzi, I intended to turn the viola into a sort of melancholy dreamer in the style of Byron’s Childe Harold. Hence the title of the symphony…’

The result is a strange hybrid: it’s a symphony, but with a viola soloist, and a narrative that contains not one incident from Byron’s poem. The viola-hero – introduced at the beginning with his own motto theme – wanders through the mountains, encounters pilgrims, witnesses a lover’s serenade and (finally) a frenetic orgy of brigands.

Fireworks and Fantasy with Roger Benedict, viola
Thursday Afternoon Symphony
Thu 22 March | 1.30pm
Emirates Metro Series
Fri 23 March | 8pm
Great Classics
Sat 24 March | 2pm
Sydney Opera House

Visit sydneysymphony.com/fellowship to find out when you can hear the 2012 Fellows in concert.

The NEXT GENERATION

Each year the Sydney Symphony Fellowship program takes nine of Australia’s most talented young musicians under its wing to help them achieve their dreams. We talk to four.

Every year, hundreds of instrumentalists graduate from tertiary institutions across Australia hoping to join an orchestra. But as 2012 Sydney Symphony Fellow Neil Thompson explains, ‘There’s lots that can’t be taught at university.’ And this violist knows that only a handful – the best of the best – will ever enter the profession. ‘The Fellowship gives me the chance to ask the pros every question I can think of. Even though I’ve done casual work with a few of the orchestras, that’s not really the time or place to be asking. But I’m sure the SSO musicians will be anticipating my questions.’

Now in its 11th year, the Fellowship program is a world leader in orchestral training and has been supported since 2011 by Premier Partner Credit Suisse. Through intense training and mentoring, the Fellows develop their orchestral technique and musicianship, while preparing for life as a professional musician.

This year’s Fellows come from all corners of the country. ‘Growing up in Whyalla, I hadn’t even heard a French horn until I went to university,’ explains Sharn McIver. ‘But I heard Barry Tuckwell, who’s a legend, in a masterclass and switched to horn from trumpet straight away; my embouchure [the shape of the mouth] and sound quality immediately improved.’ Now, just four years later, Sharn has been selected for the Fellowship. ‘This is the real deal. I know I need a serious, professional mindset to work alongside the Sydney Symphony musicians.’

Clarinetist Rowena Watts and bassoonist Melissa Woodroffe so valued the Fellowship in 2011 that they applied again this year. ‘The variety of opportunities offered to the Fellows is just invaluable. I’m an “old hand” now,’ jokes Melissa, ‘but I’m so looking forward to playing more chamber music, and working in the orchestra again.’

Visit sydneysymphony.com/fellowship to find out when you can hear the 2012 Fellows in concert.
NEW FACES ON STAGE
Over the new year we welcomed three new musicians to the Sydney Symphony: Alexander Norton as a member of the First Violins; Christopher Podick in the Cellos; and David Elton, who comes to us from the West Australian Symphony Orchestra as our new Principal Trumpet. Among new contracts, Adam Szabo and Tara Houghton have been appointed to the Cellos and Violas respectively. Musicians who win their audition for a permanent place in the orchestra join us on what’s known as a ‘trial’ – a period of three months to a year, during which musician and orchestra determine whether there’s a good fit of musicianship and style for the section.

STUDENTS TURNING PROFESSIONAL
You might recognise three of the names above from our Fellowship program. Alexander Norton was a violin Fellow in 2006; Adam Szabo and Tara Houghton were in last year’s Fellowship program. Their achievement of a place in the orchestra is a common one for program alumni – oboist David Papp is another musician who joined us after his Fellowship year. Among other recent Fellowship and Sinfonia alumni achievements: Francesco Lo Surdo, a 2010 horn Fellow, has been awarded a trial with the WASO, and Lisa Bucknell, a Sinfonia violinist in 2010 and 2011, is heading to London to take up a position with the Southbank Sinfonia, an orchestra of young, emerging professionals.

NEW SOUTH WALES – ONE BIG MUSIC CLASSROOM
On Friday 17 February the first of our Meet the Music professional learning seminars will be streamed to regional conservatoriums, using the Sydney Opera House’s connected classroom network. By harnessing technology in this way, the 400 teachers and students from Sydney will be joined by teachers and students from all over New South Wales – not just as observers but able to participate and ask questions of their own.

NEW PARTNER
We’re delighted to welcome Roses Only as a Silver Partner.

CONCERT AT ST JAMES’
The Chanterelle Quartet will give a free lunchtime concert at St James’ King St on Wednesday 29 February at 1.15pm – performing music by Bach and Mozart’s String Quartet in D, K575.

NEW FACES OFF STAGE
We recently welcomed two very small newcomers to the orchestra family. Congratulations to cellists Kristy Conrau and Elizabeth Neville, on the arrival of Asha and Louis respectively.

Find out more about our Education and Artist Development programs: sydneysymphony.com/education

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