JAZZ TRUMPET
Meets the Orchestra

TEA & SYMPHONY
Fri 8 Mar 11am
**High Art**

Graeme Koehne likes to quote a line from Noël Coward’s play *Private Lives*: ‘Extraordinary how potent cheap music is.’ He also confesses – and only partly in jest – to being a sucker for ‘cheap music’ – cartoons, pop, lounge music and musical ‘kitsch’. ‘Unlike most of my colleagues in the world of classical music,’ he writes, ‘I don’t discount this music, but feel compelled to bring the infectious spirit of the musical vernacular into the realm of the ‘classical’…each gaining from the potency of the other.’

That’s the background to *High Art*, Koehne’s trumpet concerto, and – in a way – it’s the background to this program. Rachmaninoff’s reputation as a composer has long straddled the boundary between popular and serious. His late-Romantic style – admired for its rich colours and heartfelt melodies – spoke directly to 20th-century audiences, but he has also been criticised for these exact same qualities. His Symphonic Dances was composed in 1940 – a late work and relatively modern in style, yet still full of Rachmaninoff’s trademark melody and nostalgia.

But first we hear *High Art*. In the work of James Morrison, the vigour of popular music unites with the supreme discipline of classical technique. The result, says Koehne, is ‘the kind of energetic, brilliant sound and feeling that all music should naturally aspire to’.

And that’s high art.
Jazz Trumpet Meets the Orchestra

Kristjan Järvi CONDUCTOR
James Morrison TRUMPET

Graeme Koehne (born 1956)
High Art – Trumpet Concerto

INTERVAL

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)
Symphonic Dances, Op.45

Non Allegro
Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
Lento assai – Allegro vivace

The music heard in this program was broadcast by ABC Classic FM on Thursday 7 February at 8pm. That same performance can be enjoyed as a webcast via BigPond, live at 6.30pm and available for later viewing on demand. Visit: bigpondmusic.com/sydneysymphony

Estimated durations:
16 minutes, 35 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 12.05pm.
KOEHNE High Art – Trumpet Concerto

The composer writes...

‘Extraordinary how potent cheap music is.’ With these words, spoken by the character Amanda in Private Lives, Noël Coward elegantly sums up an argument that has been and continues to be a central issue for music’s future.

We in the world of ‘classical music’ constantly strive to set ourselves apart from the ‘common’ taste, seeking instead to invest our music with a stature of superiority which we imagine makes us morally unassailable. We take every opportunity to put down music which speaks in a language that can be widely understood and enjoyed, refusing to allow the artificial barriers between popular taste and ‘high art’ to tumble down.

Throughout my life, I have been a sucker for ‘cheap music’. I find enjoyment in music from the strangest, ‘lowest’ sources: cartoons, pop, lounge music and suchlike musical ‘kitsch’. Unlike most of my colleagues in the world of classical music, I don’t discount this music, but feel compelled to bring the infectious spirit of the musical vernacular into the realm of the ‘classical’. It’s my belief that the ‘two spheres’ (as Theodor Adorno described them) should exist together, each gaining from the potency of the other.

In James Morrison’s work, I see popular music’s vigour uniting with the highly disciplined technique of the classical style to create the kind of energetic, brilliant sound and feeling that all music should naturally aspire to. The concerto is inspired by his extraordinary musicianship, notably his brilliant high trumpet playing.

High Art is a one-movement concerto that takes the form of an extended prelude followed by a series of variations on three themes: the first a nervous, rhythmic phrase based on a rapid repeated note motive; the second a more expressive, song-like tune; and an insouciant third, subsidiary theme.

After a brief flourish the contrabassoon commences the prelude – a slow and gradual build up of a montuno (a repeated, syncopated accompaniment pattern characteristic of Latin American music) that underpins much of the work. The trumpet enters tentatively during this prelude but increases in presence and virtuosity with the arrival of the two main themes that launch us into the sequence of variations – often Latin-flavoured – that constitute the body of the piece.

* * * * * *

Graeme Koehne has revised the concerto for these performances, making small cuts and – significantly – reducing the three orchestral trumpets to one.
About the composer...

Graeme Koehne was born in Adelaide, where he studied composition with Richard Meale. His orchestral work *Rain Forest* won the Young Composers Prize in the 1982 Adelaide Festival, bringing him national attention, and the following year was ranked third at the Paris International Rostrum of Composers. Around this time, he commenced his long and fruitful collaboration with choreographer Graeme Murphy, which has included a children’s ballet based on Oscar Wilde’s *Selfish Giant* and the full-evening works *Nearly Beloved, 1914* and *Tivoli*.

In 1984 a Harkness Fellowship enabled him to study at Yale University and work with Dutch composer Louis Andriessen as well as take private lessons from Virgil Thomson in New York. Koehne had been exposed to the Boulezian modernism preferred by academia in the 1970s, but he wasn’t totally embroiled in the modernistic hard-edge. Thomson, whose own style was direct and anti-modernist, encouraged him to look to the musical vernacular for inspiration.

In the 1990s, Koehne completed a trilogy of orchestral works that take elements of popular music as a starting point: *Unchained Melody* (1991), *Powerhouse* (1993) and *Elevator Music* (1997). These were followed by his oboe concerto *Inflight Entertainment* (2000), premiered by soloist Diana Doherty with Edo de Waart conducting the Sydney Symphony, and *High Art* (2003), also for the Sydney Symphony.

Graeme Koehne’s compositions have long been among the most popular by any Australian composer. And through the advocacy of some of today’s most exciting international musicians such as the conductors Vladimir Jurowski and Kristjan Järvi, his music is becoming a regular presence on the international stage.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY GRAEME KOEHNE © 2003
AND NOTES BY JAMES KOEHNE AND GORDON KALTON WILLIAMS

*High Art* was commissioned by the *Sydney Symphony* for James Morrison with the support of an anonymous group of Australian music lovers, and given its first performance in 2003, with Michael Christie conducting. This is our first performance of the concerto since then, and the first performance of the revised version.
RACHMANINOFF Symphonic Dances

Conductor, pianist and composer, Rachmaninoff often complained that he could never maintain all three activities simultaneously. His adult career as a concert pianist left him little time for composition, and for years he wrote next to nothing. Then, much to his surprise, the urge to compose began to reassert itself. A procession of ‘Indian summer’ pieces emerged between 1926 and 1940, many of which are now regarded as among his finest compositions.

‘I don’t know how it happened. It must have been my last spark,’ is how Rachmaninoff described the origins of the Symphonic Dances. Yet when Michel Fokine successfully choreographed the Rhapsody for a ballet called Paganini in 1939, the opportunity to compose an original ballet appealed to Rachmaninoff’s imagination again. He wrote the Dances the following year, 1940, giving the three movements the titles Midday, Twilight, and Midnight. At this point the work was called ‘Fantastic Dances’.

Rachmaninoff played it over on the piano for Fokine, who was enthusiastic about the music but non-committal about its balletic possibilities. In any case, Fokine’s death a short time later cooled Rachmaninoff’s interest in the ballet idea altogether. He deleted his descriptive movement names and substituted ‘Symphonic’ for ‘Fantastic’ in the title. In its new guise he dedicated the triptych to his favourite orchestra, the Philadelphia, and its chief conductor Eugene Ormandy.

It is a work full of enigmas, which Rachmaninoff, surely one of the most secretive of composers, does nothing to clarify. In the first movement, there is a transformation from minor to major of a prominent theme from his first symphony, which at that time Rachmaninoff thought was irretrievably lost. (The score was lost, but the symphony was re-constructed from the orchestral parts after his death.) The premiere of that work in 1897 had been such a fiasco that Rachmaninoff could not compose at all for another three years. But the reference to the symphony in this new piece has a meaning that remains entirely private.

There is also the curious paradox that the word ‘dance’ – with its suggestion of life-enhancing, joyous activity – is here put at the service of a work that – for all its vigour and sinew – is essentially concerned with endings. Chromaticism darkens the colour of every musical step. The sense of foreboding and finality is particularly strong in the second movement, with its evocations of a spectral ballroom, and in the bell-tolling and chant-intoning that pervade what was to be not only the last dance of the set, but the last new movement he would ever compose.

The first movement, with its unusual tempo marking Non Allegro (‘Not fast’ – what could he have meant?) begins
hesitantly, before a bold, staccato statement of a theme that sounds very much like the plainchant for the dead, ‘Dies irae’, in disguise. It will reappear in different guises throughout the work. This leads to the main part of the movement. From this point on, most of the major musical ideas are introduced by the woodwinds, including the leaping main theme, given to flutes, oboes and clarinets. The major lyrical theme is then given to that infrequent orchestral visitor, the alto saxophone, making its solo appearance with delicately scored accompaniment for winds only. (The saxophone has no other music to play in the work.) Rachmaninoff also employs orchestral piano, and when the lyrical theme is given its second statement by the strings, in an impassioned unison, the piano traces a filigree accompaniment, creating an overall effect of shining brightness. In the coda of this movement, harp and piano together create a glistening, shimmering counterpoint to the plush, chorale-like statement of the motif plucked from the first symphony.

The waltz movement begins with muted trumpet fanfares that have a sinister fairy-tale quality to them. Woodwind arabesques swirl around them, until a solo violin passage gives way to the main waltz theme, introduced by the oboe

‘I don’t know how it happened. It must have been my last spark’
RACHMANINOFF DESCRIBES THE ORIGIN OF THE SYMPHONIC DANCES
and or anglais before being taken up by the strings. The ghostly woodwind arabesques continue to decorate this theme until the winds themselves announce the livelier second melody. Although the atmosphere becomes warmer and more passionate at times, it does not lighten, and sometimes becomes quite macabre. It is as if we are experiencing a memory of a ballroom rather than a ball itself.

The finale is the work’s most complex movement. The extensive use of the ‘Dies irae’ (a regular source of material for Rachmaninoff) and the curious inscription ‘Alliluya’, written in the score above the last motif in the work to be derived from Orthodox chant, suggest the most final of endings mingled with a sense of thanksgiving. The tolling of the midnight bell that prefaces the movement’s vigorous main section reinforces the view that the work might, after all, be a parable on the three ages of man.

Much of the main Allegro vivace material here is derived from chant, as is the motif that eventually drives away the ‘Dies irae’ and dominates the work’s forthright conclusion. But this is also the movement in which Rachmaninoff takes time out from the dance, in an extensive central section in which morbidity, regret, passion and tears commingle in a complex and beautifully scored musical design.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY PHILLIP SAMEZ © 1999

The Sydney Symphony first performed the Symphonic Dances in 1977 with Denis Vaughan, and most recently in 2012, conducted by Jakub Hrůša
James Morrison is a virtuoso in the true sense of the word. He was given his first instrument at the age of seven; at nine he formed his first band; and at 13 he was playing professionally in nightclubs. When he was just 16, he made his US debut at the Monterey Jazz Festival.

Following this were performances at the big festivals in Europe – playing with Dizzy Gillespie, Cab Calloway, Woody Shaw, Red Rodney, George Benson, Ray Charles, B.B. King, Ray Brown, Wynton Marsalis and other jazz legends – and gigs in the world’s famous jazz clubs – the Blue Note and Village Vanguard in New York, the New Morning in Paris and Ronnie Scott’s in London.

He has recorded Jazz Meets the Symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra, and performed concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and in the Hollywood Bowl. He has given two royal command performances for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and played for US Presidents Bush and Clinton at Parliament House in Australia. In 1997, he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal.

His concerts with the Sydney Symphony have included the premiere of Schifrin’s Concerto for Jazz Trumpet and Piano (2007) and tributes to Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong.
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SYDNEY SYMPHONY
Vladimir Ashkenazy, Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony 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, where it gives more than 100 performances each year, the Sydney Symphony also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales. International tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence, most recently in the 2012 tour to China.

The Sydney Symphony’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. David Robertson will take up the post of Chief Conductor in 2014. The orchestra’s history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky.

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 orchestra 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 the orchestra’s 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. In 2010–11 the orchestra made concert recordings of the complete Mahler symphonies with Ashkenazy, and has also released recordings of Rachmaninoff and Elgar orchestral works on the Exton/Triton labels, as well as numerous recordings on the ABC Classics label.

This is the fifth year of Ashkenazy’s tenure as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor.

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Stuart was the one who gave us self-belief. Then Edo came – he was a builder...

The Sydney Symphony has been at the centre of Lawrence’s musical life since he joined as an associate principal in 1982. (He was appointed principal in 1985.) Over three decades, he’s played under Mackerras, Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart, Gelmetti and now Ashkenazy.

‘Stuart was the one who gave us self-belief. Then Edo came – he was a builder, the demanding maestro. In the 30 years, it’s been fantastic just to be in the orchestra as it gets better and better with every performance.’ Later he adds: ‘The orchestra’s in excellent form. I think I practise more now than I used to – to maintain the standard.’

The concerts that stand out in his memory include Challender’s Mahler 2 and Sinfonia domestica with de Waart in Carnegie Hall. ‘It was astonishing to hear how good the orchestra sounded in a great space,’ he says. ‘Touring every year, as we do now, and playing in other halls has made a huge difference to the culture of the orchestra.’

Among the more recent highlights are ‘most of the concerts’ with Ashkenazy. ‘I don’t know what it is, but he’s got something! He’s such a great musician, and you just respond to his love of the music.’

Principal Clarinet Lawrence Dobell on playing in an orchestra that gets better and better with every performance, and what it’s like to return from an injury.

Lawrence Dobell didn’t choose the clarinet. His father, a bird dealer and Benny Goodman fan, traded a pair of parrots for a clarinet when Lawrence was 12. ‘I was given the instrument and I just never put it down.’

Playing the clarinet always came easily, which is why it was so devastating when, last year, he broke the little finger of his left hand, enforcing a three-month rest from playing.

The first day back in the practice room was terrible. ‘I put the clarinet together, played for about a minute and my finger kept missing the key. I just lay on the couch in a catatonic state, thinking “I can’t play!”’

The left pinkie controls five keys on the clarinet, making its job especially demanding. Recovering his technique presented psychological as well as physical challenges. ‘I’d never picked up the clarinet and not been able to play it, technically,’ Lawrence explains. ‘My fingers had always worked.’ So if a note didn’t speak ‘it felt like a major catastrophe’. ‘Then finally, by the end of last year, I’d started to clear my mind of the finger and just play again.’
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Philanthropy Highlight

New Sinfonia Scholarship

Last year we mourned the passing of Joan MacKenzie, a member of the Sydney Symphony Council and one of our most committed supporters and advocates. Joan had enjoyed a long career in fashion – from modelling in New York to leading the David Jones couture department – and she ensured that her support for the orchestra would live on in a characteristically vibrant way through a substantial bequest in her will.

This gift has been generously matched by her nephew Gavin Solomon and his wife Catherine, and the funds have been invested to establish an annual scholarship for a violinist in our Sinfonia mentoring orchestra. The new scholarship will support travel for a regional or interstate participant and private lessons with SSO musicians.

The recipient of the inaugural scholarship will be announced, in the presence of Joan’s relatives and friends, at the Sinfonia’s first concert of the year: Discover Beethoven’s Pastoral on 5 March at City Recital Hall Angel Place.

If you’re considering making a notified bequest to the Sydney Symphony, write to philanthropy@sydneysymphony.com or call (02) 8215 4625.

From the Managing Director

A summer break is a welcome opportunity to recharge. Yet I always find myself missing the music-making and looking forward to the return of the Sydney Symphony musicians to the stage. I hope you feel the same, and I welcome you to the 2013 season and its celebration of Vladimir Ashkenazy’s continuing relationship with the orchestra and the people of Sydney. This celebration is being expressed in the best way of all: through music, with some of Ashkenazy’s favourite composers and leading guest artists who’ve responded to his invitation to join us here in Sydney.

We have some extraordinary music for you this year; and I also look forward to the visit in July of our Chief Conductor designate David Robertson, who’ll be performing two masterpieces: Verdi’s Requiem and Wagner’s Flying Dutchman. Concerts such as the Requiem will reach not only concert hall audiences but music lovers across the world via live webcasts. These are made possible by our partnership with Telstra BigPond, and with our mobile app you don’t even have to be at home to watch! You are the reason we perform, and as a music lover I look forward to sharing this year’s concerts with you.

RORY JEFFES

From the Managing Director

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RORY JEFFES
True counterpoint belongs to the age of Bach, but this way of composing – note against note – endures as a fundamental aspect of musical technique, like classical draughtsmanship for the artist. So it’s no surprise that Richard Gill chose it as the focus for the 2012 Sinfonietta Project.

This national program culminated last November with the assembling of seven talented young teenage composers and the Sydney Symphony Fellows for three days of inspiring workshops. The experience left one participant, Jessop Maticevski-Shumack, ‘flying like a kite’!

The 2012 Sinfonietta Project was supported by major partner Leighton Holdings and Copyright Agency Cultural Fund. Entries for 2013 close on 11 October and the project is open to all Australian high school students. This year’s open workshop will take place on 28 November.

sydneysymphony.com/sinfonietta

Ask a Musician

Ever wondered who decides which musicians in the orchestra appear in any given performance, or where they sit? Wonder no more...

The composer tells us which and how many instruments are needed. But in a large symphony orchestra, there’s still some decision-making to be done. Before each season begins, the woodwind, brass and string principals decide amongst themselves who will play in each concert and how individual parts will be distributed within their sections. Factors include personal preference and musical strengths as well as more pragmatic issues, such as when individuals can be rostered off for a week of guest music-making elsewhere (this practice goes by the unexpected name of ‘black box week’).

The rostering of the tutti string players is vastly more complicated. The many variables – which are determined by the musicians’ enterprise bargaining agreement – include ensuring each musician doesn’t exceed the maximum number of calls (rehearsals and performances) permitted for the year, or for any given week. In addition, SSO tutti string players rotate their positions on the stage, changing stand partners as well as how to where they sit. To manage all the intricate details, each section votes one of its number to be the rosterer for two years.

With thanks to orchestra manager Chris Lewis.
NEW FACES BEHIND THE SCENES

With the beginning of a new year and the new season, we welcome three new staff members to the Sydney Symphony administration. Eleasha Mah is the new Artistic Administration Manager, replacing Elaine Armstrong, who departed for Melbourne in January. Elaine will be sorely missed, but we’re delighted to gain Eleasha, who brings with her experience from the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Globe Theatre in London.

Matthew Hodge joins us from Musica Viva Australia – the third person to have made this chamber–symphonic transition in recent years. He takes on the role of Marketing Manager, Database and Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

And Caitlin Benetatos joins us in a new part-time role as the Fellowship Social Media Officer, looking after the blog that follows our Fellows through their musical and educational journey each year (blog.ssofellowship.com).

Late last year we also welcomed two new members to our orchestra management team, both of whom play a crucial role in what goes on behind the scenes at concerts: production manager Laura Daniel and stage manager Elise Beggs.

VALE GUY HENDERSON (1934–2013)

It was with sadness that we learned of the death of former principal oboe Guy Henderson on 4 January after a difficult battle with cancer. Guy was principal in the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra during the 1950s and 60s, and played in the Australian Chamber Orchestra’s first concert in 1975. He was principal oboe of the Sydney Symphony from 1967 until 1998.

Guy will be missed not only as an admired and respected musician and teacher but as a generous colleague and friend to a true gentleman.

Hear Guy Henderson as the oboe soloist in Peter Sculthorpe’s Small Town, performing with the Sydney Symphony: bit.ly/SmallTownSSO

WELCOME TO THE 2013 FELLOWS

We’re delighted to announce that eight outstanding young performers from across the country have been selected for the 2013 Fellowship program. A very warm welcome to Rebecca Gill (violin, 26), Kelly Tang (violin, 26), Nicole Greenstreet (viola, 24), James Yoo (cello, 24), Laura van Rijn (flute, 26), Som Howie (clarinet, 22), Jack Schiller (bassoon, 21), Brendan Parravicini (horn, 23).

Supported by Premier Partner Credit Suisse and directed by our Principal Viola Roger Benedict, the Fellowship program provides Australia’s top young aspiring musicians with an invaluable opportunity to undertake a full-time apprenticeship with the orchestra.

NEW CO-CONCERTMASTER

Our search for a second concertmaster has come to a close, and in January we announced the appointment of Andrew Haveron, from the Philharmonia Orchestra in London. Andrew joins us in May.