VARIATIONS ON AN ENGLISH THEME
Haydn, Brahms & Britten
Thibaudet plays Gershwin
Jazz Inspirations

SHOSTAKOVICH Jazz Suite No.1
GERSHWIN Piano Concerto in F
PROKOFIEV Symphony No.5

James Gaffigan conductor
Jean-Yves Thibaudet piano

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY
Thu 5 Dec 1.30pm

EMIRATES METRO SERIES
Fri 6 Dec 8pm

GREAT CLASSICS
Sat 7 Dec 2pm
MONDAYS @ 7
Mon 9 Dec 7pm
Pre-concert talk by Yvonne Frindle

Variations on an English Theme

HAYDN Symphony No.92 (Oxford)
BRITTEN The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra
BRITTEN Violin Concerto
BRAHMS Variations on a Theme of Haydn

James Gaffigan conductor
Vilde Frang violin

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Variations on an English Theme

James Gaffigan CONDUCTOR
Vilde Frang VIOLIN

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Symphony No.92 in G (Oxford)
Adagio – Allegro spiritoso
Adagio
Minuet and Trio (Allegretto)
Presto

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)
The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra, Op.34
(Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Henry Purcell)

INTERVAL

Britten
Violin Concerto, Op.15
I Moderato con moto – Agitato – Tempo primo –
II Vivace – Animando – Largamente – Cadenza –
III Passacaglia (Andante lento, un poco meno mosso)

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)
Variations on a Theme by Haydn
(St Antony Chorale), Op.56a
Benjamin Britten
Variations on an English Theme

‘Variety,’ wrote the irrepressible Nicolas Slonimsky, ‘is the spice of life, and variations are the sweet adornments of melody.’ In music, ‘variations’ can be a technique and a form, and the composing of sets of variations is one of the very oldest of strategies for building large-scale musical structures. Over the years, variation form has adopted specialised types (variations, you could say) such as the passacaglia. It will probably never go out of fashion.

This concert is a celebration of variations, with a special nod to English composer Benjamin Britten, whose centenary it has been in 2013 and who had a special fondness for variation form, as you will hear.

The finale of Haydn’s Oxford Symphony features a virtuoso set of variations on not one but two themes. Britten’s Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra was given a second title by the BBC which makes its connection to the program clear: ‘Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell’. After interval, Britten’s Violin Concerto concludes with a monumental passacaglia – an ancient type of variation form founded on a repeated bass line and chord progression.

Brahms was another composer who knew how powerful and effective a passacaglia finale could be (he finished his Fourth Symphony that way) and he was fond of variation form generally. In this program we get to hear his Variations on a Theme by Haydn, sometimes known as the St Antony Chorale variations. This would link us neatly back to the beginning of the concert if the theme were in fact by Haydn. It’s not, but never mind, Brahms gives us a spectacular finale regardless, with music that is satisfying to play and rewarding to hear.

Turn to page 27 to read Bravo! – musician profiles, articles and news from the orchestra. There are nine issues through the year, also available at sydneysymphony.com/bravo

COVER IMAGE: The Scallop, sculpture by Maggi Hambling on the beach at Aldeburgh. Commissioned as a tribute to Britten and his music. (Photo by ‘Mel Etitis’, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike)
ABOUT THE MUSIC

Joseph Haydn
Symphony No.92 in G (Oxford)

Adagio – Allegro spiritoso
Adagio
Minuet and Trio (Allegretto)
Presto

The Oxford Symphony derives its subtitle from its performance at Oxford in July 1791 on the occasion of Haydn’s admission to the honorary degree of Doctor of Music. It was not composed for that occasion, however, but was one of three symphonies (Nos. 90, 91, 92) written two years earlier at the request of the young Claude-François-Marie Rigoley, the Count d’Ogny, in Paris. It was the same count who, as a backer of the aristocratic Concert de la Loge Olympique, commissioned Haydn’s famous Paris symphonies (Nos. 82–87).

Haydn wrote the three new symphonies in the rural peace of faraway Esterháza during the summer of 1789. He worked on No.92 in the aftermath of the fall of the Bastille, and H.C. Robbins Landon sees the resulting work as a ‘tribute to all that was gracious and beautiful in pre-Revolutionary Europe’. Certainly the music sounds as if the Revolution had never happened.

The French Revolution did not prevent the authorised French publisher Le Duc from issuing all three symphonies in 1790, but because of the general political instability, no London publisher had imported them to England ahead of the celebrated composer’s arrival there on his first visit in January 1791. Haydn at the time carried manuscript copies of Nos. 90 and 92, and the latter was to be the first of his symphonies that he conducted in London, on 11 March.

The following July, Haydn was invited to conduct three celebratory concerts in the imposing Sheldonian Theatre (designed by Sir Christopher Wren) at Oxford during his doctoral festivities. He planned to perform Symphony No.92 in the first of these, but the new symphony presented too many rehearsal problems for the orchestra and a more familiar earlier symphony was substituted. The Oxford Symphony was eventually given in the second concert on Thursday 7 July, the evening before the ceremony in which Haydn actually received his degree.

Two days later, The Morning Herald reported:

The new Overture (i.e. Symphony) of Haydn, prepared for the occasion, and previously rehearsed in the morning, led on the second Act, and a more wonderful composition never was

Keynotes

HAYDN
Born Rohrau, 1732
Died Vienna, 1809

At the time of his death Haydn was the most illustrious composer in Europe: more famous than Mozart or Beethoven. Despite spending much of his working life buried in the provincial estate of Eszterháza, he became known for his symphonies and string quartets – Classical forms that he helped develop – and was widely commissioned. His commitments to the Esterházy princes meant that he didn’t travel much until late in life, and he made his first visit to London in 1791.

Of Haydn’s 104 symphonies, most of those composed before 1780 were written with Prince Esterházy’s small court orchestra in mind. From 1780, however, Haydn’s music was in such demand that his symphonies were increasingly aimed at bigger orchestras and the general public.

OXFORD SYMPHONY

Haydn’s Symphony No.92 is associated with his receiving an honorary doctorate from Oxford University in 1791, hence the nickname. But it wasn’t written with that occasion in mind: it came with him to England in his luggage, one of a set of three commissioned by a Paris aristocrat and impresario two years earlier.

This symphony is in four movements following the ‘Classical’ pattern, and beginning with a slow introduction. The two themes of the finale are put through a set of virtuoso variations.
heard. The applause given to Haydn, who conducted this admirable effort of his genius, was enthusiastic; but the merit of the work, in the opinion of all the musicians present, exceeded all praise.

There is a stillness in the short Adagio introduction to the first movement, broken only by a chromatically wandering solo cello. These brief introductory cameos are typical of Haydn’s late symphonies, and as Landon points out, when the main Allegro subject of the Oxford Symphony appears, it is only four bars long and not in the home key of G major. Nevertheless, as Haydn develops his opening movement from this fragmentary theme, he demonstrates its contrapuntal possibilities—in combination with the tripping second subject, in inversion, and in canon. The development proceeds with little warning and the recapitulation merges seamlessly into the coda, making this one of Haydn’s most unusually structured symphonic movements.

The slow movement (Adagio) is built around a series of repetitions and variations on the eight-bar opening melody on the strings. A series of loud chords lead to the striking middle section, which incorporates trumpets and drums in a powerful and unexpected dramatic turn. The principal theme returns on the oboe, accompanied by strings and horn, leading to an extended, nostalgic coda.

The Minuet begins with the full orchestra stating the boisterous theme. The Trio is built around a distinctively syncopated horn and bassoon motif punctuated by pizzicato strings, before the return of the first section of the movement.

The finale (Presto) represents Haydn at his merriest, with the strings announcing the main theme before it is taken up first by the bassoons and then the lower strings. The second theme also appears in the strings, with the flute answering. Both themes are then put through a series of virtuosic variations, demonstrating just why Haydn is so often described as the master of the symphonic finale.

ADAPTED FROM A NOTE BY ANTHONY CANE ©

The Oxford Symphony calls for an orchestra of flute; pairs of oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the symphony in 1953, conducted by Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, and most recently in a 1976 Youth Concert conducted by Peter Erős.
This is the kind of piece that doesn’t really need a program note. Even when it’s performed without narration, as it is tonight, the structure and intent of *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra* is crystal clear.

For many listeners this was their introduction to orchestral music (although not necessarily live orchestral music). Perhaps you, too, sat in the classroom while the orchestra was unfurled before your ears: the whole ensemble, the different sections, the individual instruments... In this concert, though, the didactic role of the music takes a back seat. Maybe we should be using its secondary title then – ‘Variations and Fugue on a theme of Henry Purcell’. This is informative, and sounds properly grownup, but Britten strongly preferred the original title, which better conveys the music’s spirit and intent. (The subtitle had been assigned at the insistence of the BBC.)

*The Young Person’s Guide* was commissioned in 1945 by the British Ministry of Education and the Crown Film Unit for a film that would introduce children to the instruments of the orchestra. The film – entitled *Instruments of the Orchestra*, with a narration written and spoken by Eric Crozier – was first shown in London in 1946. But the music was heard in the concert hall a month before the film’s premiere and has endured in that context as one of Britten’s most popular works.

The music’s directness and clarity ensures not only its success in an educational setting, but its appeal in concerts and to listeners of all ages. It hardly seems necessary to point out the ‘obvious’ – to provide signposts – in music such as this, but perhaps you’ll forgive a few.

If Britten’s preferred title best reflects the function and tone of the music, the alternative suggests a few musical and historical signposts. The ‘Theme of Purcell’, for example, is the Rondeau from Purcell’s incidental music to Aphra Behn’s play *Abdelazar*, or *The Moor’s Revenge*. The play has an exotic, Spanish setting but Purcell’s music conveys the brilliance of the French baroque style married to robust English tunefulness.

The choice of theme reveals Britten’s feeling of connection with the English musical past, and his treatment of it places the work firmly in its time. The 250th anniversary of Purcell’s death fell in 1945 and Britten (hailed, as were...
Britten, ‘the greatest English composer since Purcell’ – caricature by John Minnion.

Elgar and Vaughan Williams before him, the ‘greatest English composer since Purcell’) paid homage in his own compositions.

Since then we’ve marked the tercentenary of Purcell’s death. But where 1945 prompted composition – Purcell as inspiration – 1995 was the year of Purcell recordings and performances, most of them on period instruments. There is nothing ‘authentic’ in Britten’s treatment of the Rondeau – nor need there be. It is presented to us in ‘portly orchestral guise’, the full ensemble in all its grandeur.

Britten then introduces in turn what Crozier called the ‘four teams of players’ – strings, woodwind, brass and percussion – before displaying each individual instrument, from the piccolo to one of the composer’s favourite percussion instruments, the whip. The variations are short and the progression through the spectrum of orchestral colour fast paced.

A grand fugue then brings the instruments together, each making an entry in the same sequence as in the variations. The busy figurations of Britten’s countersubject evoke baroque formulae while avoiding a sense of parody. The triple-time rondeau tune is then woven in with a verve and exuberance that commands, in the words of Peter Evans, ‘breathless admiration’.

ABRIDGED FROM A NOTE BY YVONNE FRINDLE
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA © 1997

Britten’s Young Person’s Guide calls for piccolo and pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (xylophone, triangle, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, tambourine, gong, whip, castanets, Chinese block); harp and strings.

The SSO first performed The Young Person’s Guide in 1948, just two years after its premiere, in a Youth Concert conducted by Eugene Goossens. Our most recent performance was in the 2007 Meet the Music and Tea & Symphony series, conducted by Martyn Brabbins.
In September 1939 Britten wrote to a friend: ‘I have just finished the score of my Violin Concerto. It is times like these that work is so important – that humans can think of other things than blowing each other up!...I try not to listen to the Radio more than I can help.’

Britten was writing from the USA. He and the singer Peter Pears, his life-long partner, muse and interpreter, had left England for a long planned recital tour of Canada in May of that year. With the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in September, Britten and Pears decided, as committed pacifists, to remain in North America. A number of prominent British literati, such as Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden, had already travelled to the USA where they would settle for good, so the two musicians crossed the border and settled for a time in the orbit of New York City.

But while the concerto was written in the immediate build-up to the outbreak of World War II, its emotional core is Britten’s response to the Spanish Civil War. Britten had been particularly appalled by events in Spain, especially the atrocities in which soldiers as young as 14 were routinely facing firing squads. The work which appears immediately before the concerto in Britten’s list of opus numbers is The Ballad of Heroes Op.14, a work for tenor solo, massed choirs and orchestra which pays tribute to those Britons who fought and died for the republican cause.

In April 1936, Britten had flown to Barcelona with the violinist Antonio Brosa for an International Society for Contemporary Music festival and it was here that Britten had an experience which was to leave an indelible imprint on his work: he heard for the first time the Violin Concerto of Alban Berg, which he described as ‘just shattering – very simple, & touching.’ With Brosa in mind he began work on his own concerto, completing the composition sketch in Canada in 1939.

By the time the work was ready for performance, however, Britten found that his stocks at home in the UK were very low; the premiere was accordingly given at Carnegie Hall by the New York Philharmonic under Sir John Barbirolli with Brosa as soloist in 1940. When the work
was premiered in the UK its reception was mixed, notably because of Britten’s decision to leave his country in her hour of need. In New York, however, the work found favour with its audience and even with the New York Times’ critic Olin Downes, who observed drily, ‘There is modern employment of percussion instruments’.

He referred, no doubt, to the opening motif for timpani and percussion which acts as a structural pivot for the first movement and imparts a vague sense of impending doom. Between appearances of this motto, however, Britten canvasses a variety of different moods. The central movement, which follows without a break, has that kind of fevered energy found in other work of Britten’s from this time, notably Our Hunting Fathers and the ‘Dies Irae’ from the Sinfonia da requiem. It is also notable for very Brittenesque textures, such as a passage scored for two piccolos and tuba. The cadenza concludes this movement, leading into the finale which is in one of Britten’s favourite forms: the passacaglia. He introduces the theme on the trombones that have been silent, à la Brahms, up until now.

A passacaglia in a concerto presents any composer with a challenge – the repetition of a phrase which forms the basis of the form may work against the expectation of a concerto to become more expansive and virtuosic in its final movement. Britten, of course, carries it off with great flair over the considerable 15-minute span of the movement. This is not about merely scoring points, however. The music in the finale takes on the kind of Mahlerian/Bergian intensity which Britten’s compassion called forth in him in the face of ‘humans…blowing each other up’.

GORDON KERRY © 2005

The orchestra for the Violin Concerto calls for three flutes (two doubling piccolo), two oboes (one doubling cor anglais), two clarinets and two bassoons; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani and percussion (side drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, bass drum, tenor drum and tambourine); harp and strings.

Britten’s Violin Concerto was premiered by Antonio Brosa and the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Sir John Barbirolli, on 28 March 1940 in Carnegie Hall. The SSO first performed the concerto in 1949 with violinist Thomas Matthews and conductor Bernard Heinze, and most recently in 2006 with violinist Midori and conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya.
The violinist Joseph Joachim once reassured a youthful Brahms, who had pestered him anxiously for an opinion on his new Variations on a theme by Schumann, ‘If I could, I would turn every one of the Variations into a triumphal arch and the theme into a laurel wreath for you to wear as I led you through them, you young Emperor of Music!’

For Brahms, like Haydn and Beethoven before him, the variation form was central to his musical life. While he declared a ‘particular affection’ for the form, which he argued should be used more creatively and with greater freedom, his own exploration of variation form nevertheless remained conservative, a challenge to his ingenuity in remaining faithful to the theme. His creativity shone in spinning off entirely new ideas from fragments of the original theme.

Brahms was at a crossroads when he came, aged 40, to consider a theme from an old manuscript apparently by Haydn. He was in 1873 still three years from completing his long-gestating first symphony. His experience of the art of orchestration was limited to a first piano concerto and a pair of serenades, all composed long before he had even arrived from his native Hamburg in 1862 to make a permanent home in Vienna.

Now, in his Variations on a Theme by Haydn, the composer turned two notable corners. Composing the work in two separate versions more or less concurrently, one for two pianos (Op.56b) and one for orchestra (Op.56a), Brahms on one hand closed his career as a composer of major piano works – henceforth there would be only miniatures; and on the other hand he created, triumphantly, a monumental set of free-standing variations for orchestra. At the same time, in his confident and subtle mastery of a constantly varying instrumental palette through ten distinct environments (theme, eight variations and finale), he announced his arrival as an orchestrator.

Brahms in his opening statement of the theme consciously imitates the early Classical wind sonorities in the original divertimento. He reserves his upper strings for the actual variations, which follow, as John Horton has suggested, in a loosely symphonic sequence – energetic in the first three variations; Romantically melancholy in the fourth (“Andante con moto”); scherzo-like in 5, 6 and 8,
with Variation 7 (Grazioso) a contrasting centrepiece; and
gloriously cumulative in a passacaglia finale which builds
in Bachian fashion from a ground bass constantly
reiterating the first five bars of the St Antony theme.

The bell-like tolling of the note B flat from the end
of the theme echoes constantly through Variation 1,
interwoven with sweeping string figures. Variation 2,
in the minor, propels each scampering phrase with a
peremptory shove, but the more delicate Variation 3 flows
placidly, evoking Romantic horn sighs. The poignant
expressiveness of the minor-key Variation 4, based on
two new, wistfully flowing melodies, is achieved with a
deceptive simplicity which refuses to proclaim its
extraordinary contrapuntal skill.

The impetuous Variation 5 pits different rhythms against
each other within a basic 6/8 metre and a swaggering
march follows in the equally brilliant Variation 6. The
languorous siciliano of Variation 7 is another contrapuntal
tour de force with glowing Brahmsian harmonies. A final,
fleeting ghost-like variation – the third in the minor –
leads to the solemn ground bass of the finale, a mere ten
notes from which Brahms builds a kaleidoscopic edifice,
rising inexorably to a majestic return of the full chorale
theme.

Brahms’s unprecedented use of a passacaglia, or
ground bass, finale to a set of variations is both a homage
to the towering example of Bach and an advance hint of
the great passacaglia, based on a theme of Bach himself,
with which, 12 years later, he would close his fourth, and
final, symphony.

ANTHONY CANE © 2004

Brahms’s Haydn Variations call for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes,
two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, two
trumpets; timpani and percussion, and strings.

The SSO first performed the Variations on a Theme by Haydn in 1941,
conducted by Dr Edgar Bainton, and most recently in 2009, conducted
by Simone Young.

Not by Haydn

The ‘theme by Haydn’ was
discovered and shown to
Brahms in 1870 by a librarian
friend in Vienna, Carl Ferdinand
Pohl, who also wrote the first
comprehensive biography of
Haydn. Pohl had unearthed a
manuscript of six wind band
divertimentos, in which it
appeared, as the second
movement of the last, under
the heading ‘Corale St Antonii’.
These pieces are now thought
to be by Ignaz Pleyel, certainly
not by Haydn, and the St Antony
Chorale itself is possibly an old
Austrian pilgrims’ hymn.
This week’s performances mark the retirement of three Sydney Symphony Orchestra musicians: violinist Julie Batty, violist Robyn Brookfield and percussionist Colin Piper. Each has made a significant contribution to the life of the orchestra over the years and we are sad to say farewell to these fine musicians and esteemed colleagues.

Julie, Robyn, Colin – your friends and fans wish you health, happiness and a fulfilling retirement!

**Julie Batty** FIRST VIOLIN

Julie Batty has been a highly valued member of the first violin section and her many years of experience and her wisdom in all matters musical and otherwise will be difficult to replace. Julie can be well satisfied with her contribution to the musical life of Sydney, not only as a long-standing member of the SSO but as a member of the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. In her quiet way, Julie has been a positive influence on all around her and an important contributor to the making of the close-knit and well-honed first violin section that you are able to hear today. We express our heartfelt thanks for her role in many wonderful years of music-making.

**Robyn Brookfield** VIOLA

Robyn Brookfield travelled the world and played in orchestras from Melbourne to Manchester before joining the SSO in 1991, and under her calm demeanour and warm smile is a great sense of adventure. Everyone who’s shared these past two decades of her musical journey has enjoyed her kindness and her cheerful personality. Away from the main stage, Robyn has been a tutor in the SSO’s Playerlink programs, bringing her wealth of experience and a gift for teaching to hundreds of young musicians in regional NSW. Robyn has also been one of several violists in the SSO who’ve played an Australian-made A.E. Smith viola. It has been a great pleasure to work with Robyn and we’ll miss her presence in the orchestra.

**Colin Piper** PERCUSSION

Colin Piper leaves the orchestra after 46 seasons doing what he loves best: making music. He is the consummate team player – not only contributing as a performer of the highest standard (quite possibly the best cymbal player in the business) but supporting his colleagues and inspiring everyone around him with his positive attitude and an overwhelming love for music. As he once explained, ‘the music is more important than the instrument’. Colin was a graduate of the ABC’s National Training Orchestra and in turn has contributed to the SSO’s Education program. Throughout the organisation, we’ve come to rely on Colin’s knowledge and experience and his deep interest in the life of the orchestra, and all of us will miss his joyous and passionate spirit.
**SYDNEY SYMPHONY** 17

**HAYDN SYMPHONIES**
If you want to get to know the 104 symphonies of Joseph Haydn, an excellent place to start would be the complete recordings made by Antal Doráti and the Philharmonia Hungarica in the 1960s. They stand up to the test of time, with consistent and stylish performances, and the 33 CDs are packaged in a compact boxed set.
DECCA 448 5312

For Haydn symphonies with a period instrument sound, look for Sigiswald Kuijken and La Petite Bande performing Nos.88 to 92 in a 2-CD collection in Virgin’s Veritas series.

**GUIDE TO BRITTEN**
Britten himself conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in a 1963 performance of his Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra, collected in a 4-CD set entitled Britten: The Masterpieces. His fondness for variation technique is further represented with the youthful Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, and other delights include Les Illuminations and the Serenade for tenor, horn and strings (both with tenor Peter Pears), A Ceremony of Carols, and the Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes. Janine Jansen and the LSO conducted by Paavo Järvi contribute a fine performance of the Violin Concerto.
DECCA 478 5723

For Britten’s Violin Concerto on its own, look for the highly praised recording by Frank Peter Zimmermann, with Manfred Honeck conducting the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. On the same disc you’ll find the two violin concertos of Karol Szymanowski (Antoni Wit conducting the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra).
SONY 743999

Britten’s own recording of the concerto from 1970 with violinist Mark Lubotsky and the English Chamber Orchestra is a fascinating and valuable document. If Britten’s interpretation somewhat diverits from the fire he wrote into the concerto, it’s an effect that’s entirely idiomatic. Available with Sviatoslav Richter playing Britten’s piano concerto in Decca’s London series, or as part of the 13-CD Complete Orchestral and Instrumental Music released in November.
DECCA LONDON 417 3082
DECCA 478 5451

**BRAHMS VARIATIONS**
There are plenty of fine recordings of Brahms’s Haydn Variations to choose from. Among the most recent releases is Riccardo Chailly’s three-disc recording with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, which also includes the four Brahms symphonies (with a bonus in the form of the original first performance version of Symphony No.1).
DECCA 478 5344

Or look for Bernard Haitink and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in a 7-CD collection of Brahms’s complete symphonies and concertos. Overtures and the serenades as well as the Variations on a Theme by Haydn fill out this top-value set.
DECCA 479 9022

**VILDE FRANG**
Vilde Frang’s most recent release (from 2012) pairs the Tchaikovsky and Nielsen violin concertos in performances with the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Eivind Gullberg Jensen, and has been described as ‘showcasing a lovely and truly individual violinistic voice’.
EMI CLASSICS 602570

This followed her concerto recording debut, with its pairing of the Sibelius concerto and Prokofiev’s first violin concerto. On this disc the West German Radio Symphony Orchestra of Cologne is conducted by Thomas Sondergård.
EMI CLASSICS 84413

To hear her in recital repertoire with her regular recital partner Michail Lifits, look for their recording of the Bartók, Grieg and Richard Strauss violin sonatas.
EMI CLASSICS 47639

**JAMES GAFFIGAN**
James Gaffigan’s first recording with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra was an acclaimed performance of Wolfgang Rihm’s Symphony, Nähe Fern (Near Far). Hans Christoph Begemann is the bass soloist.
HARMONIA MUNDI 902153

He is currently preparing a second Harmonia Mundi recording with the Lucerne orchestra, featuring Dvořák’s Sixth Symphony and American Suite, and is also recording the Beethoven symphonies with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra for Naxos.

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For Haydn symphonies with a period instrument sound, look for Sigiswald Kuijken and La Petite Bande performing Nos.88 to 92 in a 2-CD collection in Virgin’s Veritas series.

**GUIDE TO BRITTEN**
Britten himself conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in a 1963 performance of his Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra, collected in a 4-CD set entitled Britten: The Masterpieces. His fondness for variation technique is further represented with the youthful Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, and other delights include Les Illuminations and the Serenade for tenor, horn and strings (both with tenor Peter Pears), A Ceremony of Carols, and the Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes. Janine Jansen and the LSO conducted by Paavo Järvi contribute a fine performance of the Violin Concerto.
DECCA 478 5723

For Britten’s Violin Concerto on its own, look for the highly praised recording by Frank Peter Zimmermann, with Manfred Honeck conducting the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. On the same disc you’ll find the two violin concertos of Karol Szymanowski (Antoni Wit conducting the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra).
SONY 743999

Britten’s own recording of the concerto from 1970 with violinist Mark Lubotsky and the English Chamber Orchestra is a fascinating and valuable document. If Britten’s interpretation somewhat diverits from the fire he wrote into the concerto, it’s an effect that’s entirely idiomatic. Available with Sviatoslav Richter playing Britten’s piano concerto in Decca’s London series, or as part of the 13-CD Complete Orchestral and Instrumental Music released in November.
DECCA LONDON 417 3082
DECCA 478 5451

**BRAHMS VARIATIONS**
There are plenty of fine recordings of Brahms’s Haydn Variations to choose from. Among the most recent releases is Riccardo Chailly’s three-disc recording with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, which also includes the four Brahms symphonies (with a bonus in the form of the original first performance version of Symphony No.1).
DECCA 478 5344

Or look for Bernard Haitink and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in a 7-CD collection of Brahms’s complete symphonies and concertos. Overtures and the serenades as well as the Variations on a Theme by Haydn fill out this top-value set.
DECCA 479 9022

**VILDE FRANG**
Vilde Frang’s most recent release (from 2012) pairs the Tchaikovsky and Nielsen violin concertos in performances with the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Eivind Gullberg Jensen, and has been described as ‘showcasing a lovely and truly individual violinistic voice’.
EMI CLASSICS 602570

This followed her concerto recording debut, with its pairing of the Sibelius concerto and Prokofiev’s first violin concerto. On this disc the West German Radio Symphony Orchestra of Cologne is conducted by Thomas Sondergård.
EMI CLASSICS 84413

To hear her in recital repertoire with her regular recital partner Michail Lifits, look for their recording of the Bartók, Grieg and Richard Strauss violin sonatas.
EMI CLASSICS 47639

**JAMES GAFFIGAN**
James Gaffigan’s first recording with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra was an acclaimed performance of Wolfgang Rihm’s Symphony, Nähe Fern (Near Far). Hans Christoph Begemann is the bass soloist.
HARMONIA MUNDI 902153

He is currently preparing a second Harmonia Mundi recording with the Lucerne orchestra, featuring Dvořák’s Sixth Symphony and American Suite, and is also recording the Beethoven symphonies with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra for Naxos.

**WEBCASTS**
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James Gaffigan is considered by many to be one of the most outstanding young American conductors working today and continues to attract international attention. He is Chief Conductor of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, and in 2012 was named Guest Conductor of the Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne.

In North America he has conducted the Cleveland, Philadelphia and Minnesota orchestras, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the orchestras of Chicago, St Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Houston, Baltimore, Vancouver and Milwaukee, as well as the National Symphony Orchestra and New World Symphony. His festival appearances include Blossom, Aspen, Grand Teton, Grant Park and the Music Academy of the West, and he has twice conducted the Juilliard Orchestra at the Lincoln Center. In August he made his Hollywood Bowl debut.

Born in New York City in 1979, he studied at the New England Conservatory of Music and the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, Houston. He participated in the inaugural American Academy of Conducting in Aspen (2000) and was a conducting fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center. From 2006 to 2009 he was Associate Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony and Artistic Director of the SFS Summer in the City festival. Previously he was Assistant Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra.

His international career was launched when he won the 2004 Sir Georg Solti International Conducting Competition in Frankfurt. Since then his European engagements have included the Munich, Rotterdam, London and Czech philharmonic orchestras, Dresden Staatskapelle, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. In the 2013–14 season he makes debut appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin and Orchestre de Paris.

He made his professional opera debut with La Bohème at the Zurich Opera in 2005, and more recently has conducted productions for the Aspen Music Festival, Glyndebourne, Houston Grand Opera and Vienna State Opera.

James Gaffigan made his Australian debut conducting the SSO in 2011.
**Vilde Frang** VIOLIN

Born in 1986 in Norway, Vilde Frang studied at the Barratt Due Music Institute in Oslo, with Kolja Blacher at the Musikhochschule Hamburg and Ana Chumachenco at the Kronberg Academy. At the age of 12 she was engaged by Mariss Jansons to perform with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and since then she has established herself as one of the leading young violinists of her generation.

Last year she made her debut with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Bernard Haitink at the Lucerne Summer Music Festival, where she also received the 2012 Credit Suisse Young Artists Award.

Highlights among her recent and forthcoming engagements include performances with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Munich, Orchestre de Paris, Philharmonia Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Basel Chamber Orchestra as well as a major US tour with the St Petersburg Philharmonic and Yuri Temirkanov.

She also performs as a recitalist and chamber musician, appearing at festivals in Schleswig-Holstein, Verbier and Lucerne, among others. Her collaborators have included Gidon Kremer, Yuri Bashmet, Martha Argerich, Julian Rachlin, Leif Ove Andnes and Maxim Vengerov. She has also toured Europe and the US with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Camerata Salzburg, playing Bach’s Double Concerto. In the 2013–14 season she will tour extensively with her recital partner, pianist Michail Lifits, including performances in London, Geneva, Amsterdam and Milan, and a residency focusing on the Mozart violin sonatas at the Park Avenue Armory in New York.

Her recordings have won high praise from critics and audiences, with her concerto recording debut receiving the Edison Klassiek Award, and a Classic BRIT Award for Best Newcomer. Her recital disc was equally praised, and was selected as Editor’s Choice by Classic FM Magazine and Diapason d’Or by Diapason magazine, as well as being awarded the Echo Klassik Award. Her most recent release, featuring concertos by Tchaikovsky and Nielsen, received the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis and was named Editor’s Choice by Gramophone.

Vilde Frang plays the 1709 ‘Engleman’ Stradivarius violin, lent by the Nippon Music Foundation. This is her Australian debut.
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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

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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
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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, where it gives more than 100 performances each year, the SSO 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 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. 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 Orchestra’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 recordings of works by Brett Dean have been released on both BIS and Sydney Symphony Live.

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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LISTENING INTENTLY

Assistant Principal Second Violin, Emma Jezek, takes an intimate view of listening to the orchestra.

Emma West was, for many years, the Assistant Principal Second Violin with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Then she got married. Changing her name was a no-brainer: ‘I wanted us [husband Andrew and daughter Lila] to have the same name as a family. But West-Jezek sounds like a suburb, so that wasn’t an option. So does Jezek-West, come to think of it.’ It’s an interesting dilemma for a performer: the decision to give up their ‘stage name’. Emma Jezek now finds she sometimes has to remind people of who she ‘was’, and that she’s still the same violinist, just with a new name.

Always an active chamber musician, Emma recently performed with her SSO colleagues in a chamber music series at Turramurra Uniting church. ‘I think playing chamber music is really important. The Haydn [we played] was so difficult it kept me on my toes for months. Playing chamber music I have more energy, and I’m listening more intently.’ Emma says those skills translate to more intimate listening in the orchestra. ‘I think it takes years to learn to play the violin, so learning my instrument was all about technique, facility, intonation, and not so much listening. I’ve learned more about that by watching my colleagues. Andrew Haveron [SSO co-concertmaster], for instance, has a way of listening so intently that encourages you to listen in the same way. He brings a sense of chamber music to the orchestra.’ Revisiting repertoire allows for further refinement. ‘Take a Mahler symphony; there are lots of notes to learn, but once that’s done, and we play it several times, I find myself listening more profoundly. I learn new things each time.’

Emma’s job requires her to rotate through the first two desks of the Second Violins on a regular basis. ‘It’s amazing the difference between sitting in the front desk and anywhere further back. On the front desk there’s a sense of chamber music, and you don’t have to strain to hear the conductor in rehearsals.’ When the Australian World Orchestra blew into town recently – the ‘Who’s Who’ of Australian musicians from at home and around the world – Emma found herself sitting a little further back in the section. ‘I discovered you have to know the music really well: it’s harder to hear, and you’ve got to keep an eye on the conductor all the time!’
In celebration of a formidable 11-year partnership, the SSO’s training ensemble Sinfonia presented an encore performance of their Discover Britten program for Leighton Holdings’ guests in October. Conducted by Richard Gill, the Sinfonia was joined by singer Katie Noonan (pictured here with Leighton Holdings Chairman Bob Humphris, left, and Richard Gill). With the support of Leighton Holdings, more than 550 tertiary music students have had the opportunity to play in Sinfonia, and 29 of those participants have gained either permanent or contract positions with the orchestra.

Introducing Jandamarra

One freedom fighter. A fight for ancestral lands. Forbidden love and banishment.

Jandamarra: Sing for the Country, Ngalyanyu Muyaw, has the makings of a Wagnerian opera. This new choral cantata by Paul Stanhope with a libretto by Steve Hawke (son of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke) will centre on Jandamarra, the 19th-century Indigenous Australian rebel from Bunuba Country. Jandamarra was reputed to have magical powers; he survived mortal wounds and regularly escaped certain capture by police. And he led one of the few organised armed uprisings against European settlement in Australia – a three-year guerrilla war in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The Kimberley Diamond Company is the major partner for the new commission, with help from SSO donors, Vicki Olsson and Geoff Ainsworth. KDC recognises the Bunuba People as the traditional owners of the Ellendale Mine Site near the town of Fitzroy Crossing. Leaving a positive legacy for the community is vital and KDC sees this project as an important educational and historical initiative to support the Bunuba People.

After success as a book and theatre piece, a cantata is the logical next step for this story. ‘A major theme of the play is the power of song,’ says June Oscar ao, the Bunuba language coach and cultural adviser for the project. ‘Its central role in the life of the community; its role in celebrating and remembering country; and Jandamarra’s quest to “sing home” the rainbow snake Yilimbirri Unggud in order to heal the land, made the notion of a choral work…seem especially appropriate and exciting to the Bunuba Community.’

The performances in July 2014 will feature the Yilimbirri Ensemble from Fitzroy Crossing, with 400 children and youth performers of Gondwana Choirs. For more information about supporting the creation of new orchestral works, contact the Philanthropy team at philanthropy@sydneysymphony.com or call (02) 8215 4625.

Artistic Highlight

Be silent and dance!

‘Be silent and dance!’ – not what you’d expect an opera character to sing, but those are Elektra’s final words. For chief conductor David Robertson and artistic planner Peter Czornyj, it seemed an obvious cue to place a bold and unexpected emphasis on dance in our production of Richard Strauss’s Elektra in February 2014.

Staging an opera with dancers in a concert hall brings constraints – fortunately for Melbourne-based choreographer Stephanie Lake, that’s her favourite way to work. ‘A concert version of an opera opens up more space in the imagination of the audience,’ she says, ‘and allows the choreographic world to inhabit an abstract place rather than having to describe the narrative in a literal sense.’

Eight members of the Sydney Dance Company will spend around five weeks with Stephanie developing the dance. She employs a number of specific movements to display the energy in Elektra, particularly gravity and force with ‘dancers stomping in unison, hitting the floor with force, being blown in a storm, push and pull, as well as highly detailed choreography, speed, manipulation of time and interplay between bodies’. Her unique movement style combines recklessness and precision, marrying abstraction and emotion.

Stephanie plans for the dancers to come and go throughout the opera. ‘I approached it as a choreographed embodiment of the emotion of the music.’ And there may be elements of a Greek chorus in the dance ‘inspired by the ferocity and delicacy of the sound’.

Commissioning Highlight

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Absolutely Beethoven with David Robertson

A concert season can’t stand in isolation from its community or from what’s come before. Creators are the same: we shouldn’t forget that every creative person works in the shadow of those who’ve come before. And this stands out in our first program for 2014: Absolutely Beethoven. It begins with music by Stravinsky, picking up on the use of rhetorical gestures that Beethoven trademarked in the 19th century.

Then there’s Absolute Jest by John Adams. The influences in this piece include both Stravinsky and Beethoven. Stravinsky, because he liked to take the music of other composers and make it his own – as he did in Pulcinella – and also because, like Adams, he uses that texture of string chamber music against a larger orchestra. Beethoven, because Adams’s inspiration (and even some of his musical ideas!) come from the late Beethoven string quartets. Adams says it’s like ‘Beethoven that’s been passed through a hall of mirrors’ and the result is a turbo-charged showpiece for string quartet and orchestra.

In the second half there’s the sheer dancing energy of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony. And the whole thing hangs together with these wonderful parallel worlds.

Absolutely Beethoven Master Series
12, 14, 15 February | 8pm
And join us for David Robertson’s pre-concert talk at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer.

FEELS LIKE CHRISTMAS

‘We don’t get gifts like this every day and it feels like Christmas,’ said Elizabeth McGlynn, Principal of Plunkett Street Public School. The gift was a specialised kit of percussion instruments, and it arrived in October when we launched our Music for Schools program at the school.

This program, funded by SSO Education Partner Tenix and managed by the SSO, aims to provide musical instruments to NSW schools that can’t afford them, and Elizabeth McGlynn is thrilled to be a participant: ‘This gives kids variety [and] a chance to communicate and cooperate through the use of music.’

SSO Head of Education Kim Waldock agrees: ‘Participating in musical activities can help with maths; it develops problem solving, creative thinking, motor skills and social skills. Learning can be so much more significant and fun when you do it with music.’ And, she adds, ‘learning through music is great for the squirmers!’

For as little as $1200 per school, an entry-level musical package can make all the difference to a disadvantaged school that wants to participate in the SSO’s Education Program. So we’re especially grateful to be working with the Tenix Foundation, which has raised over $25,000 through their social club to support this wonderful program. Tenix employees will not only continue to raise money for the program, but will also help deliver the instruments to each nominated school.

‘Tenix have a found a practical way to do something that’s small but has a really big impact,’ says Kim Waldock. ‘It will be a great legacy. It is such a simple thing but accessing instruments opens up so many more ways of learning.’

Plunkett Street Public School is one of 10 disadvantaged primary schools in the greater Sydney area chosen to be part of the Music for Schools program and receive instruments as well as teacher training and support. The other schools are: Shalvey, Bourke Street, Glebe, Lurnea, The Meadows, Punchbowl, Bankstown and Warwick Farm.

Watching the students enjoy their new instruments, SSO Principal Timpani Richard Miller said: ‘When we look at these children enjoying it in the most innocent, wonderful way it’s just great for an old percussion player like me.’

For information about the SSO Education Program, email education@sydneysymphony.com
MUSIC4HEALTH

Musicians from the SSO presented an interactive Halloween-themed performance for adults living with disabilities, and their carers, at the Powerhouse Museum on 31 October as part of the NSW Government campaign Don’t DIS my ABILITY. Thinkspace’s Special Access Kit participants from the museum performed alongside the musicians using brand new toy instruments and paraded their incredible Halloween costumes to the sounds of Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’.

EDUCATION TUNE-UP

This January, 20 non-specialist primary school teachers will have the chance to tune up their music teaching skills in TunEd-UP, an inspiring five-day residency with SSO staff and musicians. SSO patrons Mr Fred Street AM and Mrs Dorothy Street have generously supported the 20 scholarships for the residency. TunEd-UP 2014 is now full, but if you or someone you know is interested in participating in 2015, email education@sydneysymphony.com

NO ONLINE BOOKING FEES FOR 2014!

That’s right! As of 2014 SSO concert-goers can say goodbye to booking fees when buying tickets for classical season performances via our website. So visit us at www.sydneysymphony.com, choose your concerts, and pay only for the cost of your tickets. Only online.

QUEEN AND VIDEO GAMES

You’re in for a treat in February and March with two entertaining concerts: Queen and the Symphony (7 and 8 February) featuring the hits of Freddie Mercury, and rePLAY, a video game symphony (7 and 8 March). Both concerts are at the Sydney Opera House and are on sale now!

GUEST EDITOR Jacqui Smith CONTRIBUTOR Genevieve Lang Huppert sydneysymphony.com/bravo

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