WAGNER MADNESS

TEA & SYMPHONY
Fri 2 Aug 11am
A scene from *Die Meistersinger*. Walther (left) sings while the black-clad Beckmesser (Wagner's caricature of a music critic) gleefully chalks up each error and departure from the rules that will disqualify the young knight from the song contest. Meanwhile, apprentices dance and the beautiful Eva listens from a curtained booth.
Wagner Madness

Nicholas Carter CONDUCTOR
Janet Webb FLUTE

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Symphony No. 96 in D (Miracle)
Adagio – Allegro
Andante
Menuetto & Trio (Allegretto)
Finale. Vivace (assai)

Lowell Liebermann (born 1961)
Flute Concerto, Op.39
Moderato
Molto adagio
Presto

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)
Highlights from Act III of
Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg
arr. Hutschenruyter
Prelude to Act III
Dance of the Apprentices
Procession of the Mastersingers

The Ride of the Valkyries
from Die Walküre

The music in this program was recorded on Thursday evening for later broadcast by ABC Classic FM.

Estimated durations:
20 minutes, 25 minutes, 13 minutes, 5 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 12.15pm.
JOSEPH HAYDN
Austrian composer (1732–1809)

HAYDN Symphony No.96 (Miracle)

When Haydn arrived in London for the first time on New Year’s Day 1791 he was preceded by a reputation founded on publications of his music and built up by the entrepreneur Salomon, who’d succeeded in enticing the greatest living composer of the day to England.

Salomon planned a grand series of concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms and wasted no time in introducing Haydn to the music-making there. The composer was horrified to witness the first half of the concert disturbed by latecomers, copious eating by the gentlemen, and much snoring.

Haydn wanted no distractions for his music, and shrewdly insisted that his new symphony be played in the second half of the concert. Equally shrewd was his observation of English taste – the ‘antient’ music of Corelli, Geminiani and Handel still flourished, and there was a marked fondness for trumpets and drums.

Both ‘weaknesses’ emerged in the lively and brilliant Symphony No.96 (the first symphony Haydn completed in London) and ensured a unqualified success for his first London concert on 11 March 1791. At least, it’s generally believed this was the symphony performed at the concert. The reviews aren’t very specific, although they are certainly glowing. The *Morning Chronicle* declared there had never been ‘a richer musical treat’. The ‘new Grand Overture,’ as they called the symphony, ‘was pronounced by every scientific ear to be the most wonderful composition, but the first movement in particular rises in grandeur of subject, and in rich variety of air and passion, beyond even any of his own productions.’

Haydn had surpassed himself. The evidence is in the balanced structures, the luminous transparency of the orchestral textures, the marvellous economy of his musical ideas and the grace with which he develops them.

The first movement begins with a solemn introduction (Adagio). Its dramatic contrasts culminate in a brief solo for the oboe. The Allegro is perfectly formed in two balanced sections, each repeated. The first creates expectation, its single theme enunciated with elegance and spirit. The second gives satisfaction, as Haydn elaborates on and digresses from his material. Then Haydn-the-wit takes the stage: suspending play for two whole bars before returning to the opening material, and, a mere ten bars before the end, plunging into the minor mode, *fortissimo*! Knowing his audience would delight in being startled a second time, Haydn makes a rare repeat of the second half of the movement.

Haydn knew his audience would delight in being startled a second time...
The Andante sees Haydn bowing to conservative English taste in a sophisticated manner. In the fashion of a baroque concerto grosso with its multiple soloists, Haydn highlights the woodwinds and gives solos to the strings, such that ‘every instrument is respected by the muse’. The transparent textures are punctuated by airy arpeggios from flutes and oboes, and at the close a dramatic timpani roll announces a coda featuring two solo violins.

There’s an Austrian flavour to the Menuetto, but also another bow to English taste. Knowing how much the English liked trumpets and drums in their symphonies, Haydn had kept his listeners waiting until after the beginning of the Allegro before he introduced their martial sounds. Having played a low-key role in the second movement, they appear again in this sturdy minuet. The central Trio is a delightful Ländler, its striking oboe solo supported by a polite oom-pah-pah accompaniment.

The whirlwind Finale emphasises its brevity through the absolute economy and concision of its ‘circular theme’. Indulging in extremes, Haydn calls for the softest possible dynamic during the whole of the opening and its repeat, only then releasing the expected forte. He wanted a fast tempo as well, and then, adding ‘assai’ as an afterthought, even quicker. It was a risky move – fast and soft is always tricky to pull off and Haydn knew this was one movement that really should be rehearsed (!) before the performance.

And the miracle? Perhaps this symphony should be nicknamed the ‘Mistake’, for it has been known since the mid-1960s that the nickname was misapplied. On Haydn’s second visit to London in 1795 a chandelier in the hall came crashing down during one of his concerts. Miraculously no one was injured, for everyone had crowded towards the platform in order to catch a glimpse of the renowned composer. ‘Laus Deo’ as Haydn liked to write below the final bar. And the symphony on that program? No.102.

YVONNE FRINDLE © 1999/2013

In 1966 the Sydney Little Symphony Orchestra performed Symphony No.96 under Joseph Post. Most recently the Sydney Symphony performed the work in the 1988 Master Series under Jerzy Maksymiuk.
LIEBERMANN Flute Concerto

Lowell Liebermann’s music is known and admired for its marriage of tradition and innovation, combining technical command and audience appeal. These qualities have made him one of America’s most frequently performed and recorded living composers, and one of his most popular compositions is his Flute Sonata, which was premiered by Paula Robison and Jean-Yves Thibaudet at the 1988 Spoleto Festival (and which has since been recorded more than 20 times).

Soon after the premiere, James Galway added the Flute Sonata to his repertoire and on the strength of Liebermann’s writing for flute, commissioned him to write the Flute Concerto. Galway gave the premiere in 1992 with Leonard Slatkin conducting the St Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Not stopping there, Galway then commissioned the Flute and Harp Concerto (1995) and a trio for flute, cello and piano (2002). When the Flute Concerto was published in 1994, the American National Flute Association named it Best Newly Published Flute Work, and – together with the sonata – the concerto quickly entered the flute repertoire as a major (and much-loved) work of the late 20th century.

Liebermann claims that he normally doesn’t adapt his musical style for any particular soloist, instead always writing ‘for my imagined ideal performer’. But James Galway proved an exception, with Liebermann saying: ‘he has such an incredible sound and such incredible low notes that I did emphasise a lot of that... He can do anything on the instrument, so I wasn’t afraid to write anything.’

Listening Guide

The Flute Concerto is in three movements, following the traditional pattern of fast – slow – fast.

The first movement (Moderato) is the longest of the three and follows an arc-like form, all of whose components are variations on the harmonic progression of its principal theme. The repetitive ‘tick-tock’ motif heard in the strings at the beginning forms the basis of the movement, an example of Liebermann’s preference to develop large forms from the ‘smallest idea or seed’.

The central section of this movement is a chaconne: an explicit set of variations on a repeating chorale-like version of this progression. The movement offers an opportunity to explore the various qualities of the flute sound through increasingly elaborate variations.
The second movement (Adagio molto – very slow) presents a wistful, lyrical melody that is spun out over a pulsating, syncopated ostinato, which persists through the entire movement.

The finale (Presto – as fast as possible!) is a virtuoso work-out for the soloist. It follows a rondo-like form that closes with a coda marked Prestissimo (even faster!).

### About the composer

Lowell Liebermann was born in New York City. He began studying piano when he was eight and composition when he was 14. These two activities came together two years later when he made his debut at Carnegie Recital Hall, performing his Piano Sonata, Op.1. He studied at the Juilliard School of Music, completing bachelor’s and master’s degrees and a doctorate.

He has composed two operas (The Picture of Dorian Gray and Miss Lonelyhearts), chamber music and solo sonatas, and many orchestral works, including two symphonies, a concerto for orchestra, three piano concertos, and concertos for violin, trumpet and other instruments. These works have been performed by leading orchestras and artists throughout the world, including pianists Stephen Hough, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Garrick Ohlsson, violinist Joshua Bell, conductors Charles Dutoit and Edo de Waart, and flautist James Galway. Since he’s a pianist, it’s no surprise that Liebermann has an extensive catalogue of music for solo piano, and he remains active as a pianist and conductor.

This is the Sydney Symphony’s first performance of the Liebermann Flute Concerto.

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An evening of musical highlights from Wagner’s Ring Cycle without the horned helmets or singing. Plus pianist Ingrid Fliter will bring aristocratic elegance to a favourite Chopin piano concerto.

A Wagner 200th anniversary concert.

**Wed 18 Sep 8pm**

**Thu 19 Sep 1.30pm**

**Fri 20 Sep 8pm**

**Sat 21 Sep 8pm**
WAGNER Highlights from Die Meistersinger

The Mastersingers of Nuremberg (1867) is Wagner’s only comic opera and is regarded by some as his masterpiece. The story is set in the 16th century, and concerns a song festival held by the Mastersingers’ Guild. Walther, a young knight, is in love with Eva, whose father has promised her hand to the winner of the song contest. According to the Mastersingers’ rules, Walther is eliminated on his first attempt at a song. Fortunately, Hans Sachs, the philosophical, middle-aged cobbler who comes to realise that his own suit with Eva is hopeless, assists Walther in composing a prize song. This song is so inspired it sweeps away the Guild’s obsession with rules. The young knight wins the contest and Eva becomes his bride.

Today’s highlights come from Act III, beginning with the Prelude, its subdued opening blossoming to music of solemn nobility. This is Sachs’s attempt to reach spiritual happiness through renunciation. The Dance of the Apprentices introduces a merry mood and the scene is populated by apprentices and tradesmen: the middle classes from whom the Mastersingers are drawn. Never mind that the waltz wasn’t danced in the 16th century! Finally the Procession of the Mastersingers returns to the wonderful pomp and grandeur so familiar to music lovers from the overture to the opera.

The Ride of the Valkyries from Die Walküre

Wagner’s Ring cycle is opera on an epic scale: nearly 20 hours of music over four operas, with a text based on Norse mythology. Gold stolen from the bottom of the Rhine is forged into a magic ring, which is cursed to bring death to all who possess it. Siegfried is the great warrior destined to recover the ring and put an end to its evils, but he pays with his life, and with the life of his beloved Brünnhilde, herself a Valkyrie.

This concert ends with music from the second of the four operas, Die Walküre (The Valkyrie), and the most famous moment of all: The Ride of the Valkyries. In Norse mythology the Valkyries decide who will die in battle and then bring the fallen heroes to the afterlife. These fearsome females fly through the air to the exhilarating trilling of Wagner’s music.

ADAPTED IN PART FROM NOTES BY GORDON KALTON WILLIAMS
SYDNEY SYMPHONY © 2013

The Sydney Symphony first performed music by Wagner in concert as early as 1933, when the Brahms and Wagner Festival was conducted by Bernard Heinze. More recently Alexander Briger conducted a suite of orchestral highlights from the Ring cycle in the 2010 Tea & Symphony series.
Nicholas Carter CONDUCTOR

Nicholas Carter is Resident Conductor of the Hamburg State Opera, and musical assistant to Music Director Simone Young. This engagement followed his three-year association with the Sydney Symphony, as Assistant and then Associate Conductor. In Hamburg he has conducted The Barber of Seville, The Magic Flute, Hänsel und Gretel and Cleopatra (Mattheson). Future projects include Lucia di Lammermoor, Così fan tutte and L’Orontea (Cesti), and as musical assistant to Simone Young he has been involved in the preparation of ten operas for the Wagner bicentenary. As a guest conductor, he has recently conducted the Staatsorchester Braunschweig. He also serves as Associate Conductor of the Grand Teton Music Festival in Wyoming.

He collaborates regularly with the Sydney, West Australian, Melbourne, Adelaide and Queensland symphony orchestras, Orchestra Victoria, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Australian National Academy of Music. He has also appeared with the Malaysian and New Zealand symphony orchestras. Recent engagements with the Sydney Symphony include a gala with Anne Sofi e von Otter (2011), and a Mozart program (2012). Born in Melbourne in 1985, he studied violin, piano and singing, before studying conducting with Richard Gill and taking part in the Symphony Australia Conductor Development Program.

Janet Webb FLUTE

Janet Webb studied at the Canberra School of Music, and later in France with András Adorján. In 1980, aged 21, she was appointed Principal Flute with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, and won the same position in the Sydney Symphony in 1985. She has performed numerous concertos with the Singapore and Sydney symphony orchestras and other ensembles, playing repertoire ranging from CPE Bach to Honegger and including JS Bach’s Fourth Brandenburg concerto with James Galway. She has appeared as a guest principal with most of Australia’s major orchestras and worked with conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Charles Dutoit, Mariss Jansons, David Robertson, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Vladimir Ashkenazy.

She is regularly heard on radio and her CD, Tango and All That Jazz, features works written for her and accompanist Jocelyn Edey-Fazzone by Andy Firth. In 2001, a Whelan Trust scholarship allowed her to travel to the United States to collaborate with composers. She performs chamber music and gives recitals and masterclasses across Australia. She has taught at several universities and is a tutor at the Australian International Summer Orchestra Institute. She was also on the jury for the Nicolet Flute Competition (Beijing 2010). Janet Webb is a Powell Flute Master.
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If you don’t have access to the internet, ask one of our customer service representatives for a copy of our Musicians flyer.

The men of the Sydney Symphony are proudly outfitted by Van Heusen.
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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It's all about getting some runs on the board. Universally acknowledged to be no easy task. And David admits the pressure doesn't end there. ‘It’s all about getting some runs on the board. To really earn the respect and confidence of your peers, you have to play at a level where people are absolutely sure about you, across all the repertoire.’

David and his wife Rachel Silver, the newest member of our Horn section, have shared a workplace for several years now, first in the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and now in Sydney. Is that tricky? ‘You’ve got to remember to switch off after work, try not to obsess about it.’ But there’s a big plus side to a shared work-and-play life together. ‘There’s a good understanding between us that we can’t take too many days off [before losing condition]. We’ve been known to pull over in the middle of a road trip to practise for half an hour. The cows in Margaret River have been occasional beneficiaries…’

David Elton is also a Patron Ambassador for the orchestra.
How does a conductor convey his or her intentions to the orchestra in a concert? And how is it different to what they do in rehearsal?

Whether in rehearsal or concert, conducting is all about communication. Every aspect of a conductor’s physicality will encourage the orchestra to play in a particular way. Imagine how you might express something to someone in a foreign language for which you didn’t have the vocabulary: you’d use gestures and facial expressions. In essence, this is what a conductor does.

The connection between conductors and players is often subtle. More often than not it works on a subconscious understanding. On a basic level, the ‘baton hand’, apart from establishing tempo, joins the other hand in shaping the sound. The nature of a downbeat, whether delicate or impassioned, imparts to the orchestra the quality of sound needed. Using the baton with a sweeping motion, for example, can encourage more lyrical playing.

Second to the arms are the conductor’s face and, most powerfully, the eyes. George Szell’s penetrating glare had such compelling potency that his orchestra would be alert to even the smallest of gestures of musical intent. Valery Gergiev is similarly noted for his unflinching eye contact, especially for those players at the back of the orchestra: ‘Looking at a player means I am interested in him. If I’m interested in him, that means he is interested in me. Correct? Everything I do, I try to do relying on expression and visual contact.’

In rehearsal, the gestures are often smaller and a little less energetic. Most conductors leave a bit in reserve, allowing the possibility of something truly cosmic to take place in performance.

Jessica Cottis, Assistant Conductor

The sweet sounds of the Sydney Symphony Fellowship ensemble recently captivated an unusual audience – a group of 30 maximum-security inmates from the South Coast Correctional Centre. Clarinet Fellow Som Howie wrote about the experience for the Fellowship blog…

In May I went to prison. And it was one of the best things I’ve ever done. My ‘crime’? Being a 2013 Sydney Symphony Fellow. Our recent Bundanon residency included a workshop-performance at the local jail. I knew nothing of prisons other than what I’d seen on TV shows like Oz, so I was a bit nervous. But standing in front of the inmates, we were greeted by warm applause and welcoming smiles. I was amazed at the inmates’ attentiveness and enthusiastic participation during the workshop. They were totally engaged in what they were watching.

I have never felt more fulfilled and humbled. The inmates were so incredibly grateful for our visit and I know each one of them took something away from it. If you asked me to go back, I would easily say “yes”. It’s amazing how powerful the effect of a little bit of happiness can be in the cold, grim environment of a prison.

To read Som’s complete post, visit blog.ssofellowship.com

In June our musicians dusted off legwarmers and sweatbands for a special gathering of the Sydney Symphony Vanguard. This dynamic group of Sydneysiders is changing the way modern generations support the orchestra. For our 80s ‘Flashdance’ event, they were entertained by double bass quartet: David Murray, Kees Boorsma, David Campbell and Alex Henery – all suitably attired.

Photo: Ken Butti

Photo: Ken Butti

Photo: Ken Butti
DAVID AT HOME

David Robertson shares the role of music in his life away from the podium.

What are your earliest recollections of music?

One of my earliest memories is of my mother singing. Her repertoire consisted of popular songs of the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s, as well as Broadway show tunes, country music folksongs, and hymns. With my dad playing Dixieland jazz and big band numbers on clarinet and sax, bluegrass and folksongs on guitar, harmonica and banjo – it seemed there was all kinds of music, all the time. I remember when I was about seven, we got a big reel-to-reel tape machine but we only had one tape at first: Ravel’s Rapsodie espagnole and Bolero. One day I put it on when no one else was around and became aware of the act of listening; I could hear how each repetition of the Bolero melody sounded different. I was hooked.

What would be your advice for music lovers who are keen to nurture a love of music in their children?

Children are very much aural creatures, so listening to music is something they all enjoy. Find ways to participate in making music with them. Music is an activity, not a ‘passivity’. When a child begins playing music at an early stage, there is a marked increase in the number of connections the brain makes in the corpus callosum, leading to better inter-hemispheric communication. The instrument doesn’t matter so much, nor does the proficiency level, but the activity itself proves stimulating to our whole being. This is a life-long gift we give them, whether or not they become musicians!

How do you balance the demands of travelling with your role as a husband and father? And will your new post here in Sydney make that easier or more difficult?

It is a huge juggling act! As a parent you quickly realise that your children are changing all the time and need different things at different stages, making the long-range planning that music requires very challenging. But I don’t think it’s easy for any parent. When I’m away from home, we speak on the phone or skype on the computer everyday if possible. My wife [Orli Shaham] is a busy performer as well, so we sometimes feel as though we’re in a relay race, handing off the kids before starting the next lap! It’s important to remember that you can always wait to do a piece of music or a concert at a later date, but your child will only be five once. Luckily, my family loves Sydney as much as I do, so they are looking forward to joining me during the New York school vacations.

What have your children taught you about music and conducting?

Not to forget that it is enormous fun! There is a reason we say that we ‘play’ music.

For many people, music is a source of relaxation, or perhaps even ‘background’ to their lives. What part does music play in your life when you’re not working?

It’s almost always going on in my head. I agree that music has a strong influence on mood. The thing I can’t do is have music going on and not listen to it! For me personally, there is no such thing as ‘background music’. It may be soft, but it immediately jumps into my foreground. Sometimes I really wish I could turn off the music in restaurants. The change happened when I was around 16; it became clear that I couldn’t read while listening to music. A lot of people seem to be able to do this but I can’t. I am so not the target audience for the iPod!
HAZEL HAWKE TRIBUTE
We were honoured to perform at the State Memorial Service for Hazel Hawke AO in June. Mrs Hawke was a Council Member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Founder of the Hazel Hawke Alzheimer’s Research and Care Fund 2003, Patron of the Kendall National Violin Competition, and Chair of the NSW Heritage Council 1996, as well as a tireless campaigner in social policy areas.

DOUBLE HELPING
For this year’s Helpmann Awards, our concert performance of Tchaikovsky’s opera The Queen of Spades has been nominated in the category of Best Symphony Orchestra Concert. And we’re delighted that Stuart Skelton’s portrayal of Herman has also earned him a nod in the category of Best Individual Classical Performance. Winners will be announced on Monday 29 July at the Sydney Opera House. www.helpmannawards.com.au

TCHAIKOVSKY TREAT
In December last year we presented a set of all-Tchaikovsky concerts with pianist Garrick Ohlsson performing the original version of the Piano Concerto No.2. This performance was captured in recording and forms the centerpiece of a new release on the Sydney Symphony Live label. The CD also includes three piano miniatures by Tchaikovsky: Romance Op.5, Chant sans paroles Op.2 No.3 and Humoresque Op.10 No.2. Available through our website: sydneysymphony.com/shop

LAST SEEN RUNNING...
A small group of SSO musicians and staff competed in the recent Sydney Men’s Health Urbanathlon in June. Ben Jacks (Team Captain) was joined by David Elton, Euan Harvey, Abbey Edlin, Chris Pidcock and Rachel McLaren. They had to negotiate their way around ten obstacles – ranging from monkey bars to leaping (clean) skip bins – over a 12 km course through Pyrmont, Darling Harbour and Barangaroo. David Elton crossed the line first for the team but, of course, sport was the real winner on the day.

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