JAMES MORRISON
THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK
WITH THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
2 & 3 NOVEMBER 2018
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James Morrison

THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK

James Morrison trumpet, trombone, piano
William Morrison guitar
Ben Robertson bass
Gordon Rytmeister drums
Guy Noble conductor
Sydney Symphony Orchestra

George Gershwin (1898–1937) and Ira Gershwin
(1893–1983)
arr: Steve Sidwell
A Foggy Day (in London Town)

George and Ira Gershwin
arr. Sidwell
They Can’t Take That Away from Me

Johnny Mandel (born 1925) and Paul Francis Webster
(1907–1984)
arr. Mark Nightingale
A Time for Love

Sammy Fain (1902–1989) and Paul Francis Webster
arr. Graeme Lyall
Love is a Many-Splendored Thing

Cole Porter (1891–1964)
arr. Joe Chindamo
Ev’ry Time We Say Goodbye

arr. Graeme Lyall
Don’t Get Around Much Anymore

Jerome Kern (1885–1945) and Dorothy Fields (1904–1974)
arr. Mark Nightingale
The Way You Look Tonight

William Steffe (1830–1890) and Julia Ward Howe
(1819–1910)
Battle Hymn of the Republic (‘Glory, glory Hallelujah!’)

Walter Gross (1909–1967) and Jack Lawrence
(1912–2009)
arr. William Morrison
Tenderly

George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin
arr. Andrew Cottee
Summertime

Billy Strayhorn (1915–1967)
Take the A-Train

Spencer Williams (1889–1969)
arr. James Morrison
Basin Street Blues

Ellington
It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)

Performed with one interval of 20 minutes, and concluding at approximately 10.30pm.
Printed volumes? The Great American Songbook is more the repertoire of mid-20th century popular songs. Most significantly for tonight the songs, or rather their chord-patterns and melodic outlines, are regularly the basis for extended improvisation and variation. Many of them are close to James Morrison’s heart, and some were recorded by him with orchestra in London last year. The items of the ‘Songbook’ can be interpreted in many ways - ‘jazz meets throat singing, with a hint of bagpipes’ is how critic David Cusworth recently described Morrison’s version of Duke Ellington’s ‘Don’t Get Around Much Anymore’.

George Gershwin is among the most-frequently encountered ‘Songbook’ composers. He was born in Brooklyn and began his career playing newly-composed songs in Tin Pan Alley publishers’ showrooms so that customers would buy the sheet music. Later, Gershwin wrote for Broadway shows and, later still, Hollywood films. ‘A Foggy Day’ and ‘They Can’t Take That Away from Me’ were introduced in two different Fred Astaire films in 1937. ‘A Foggy Day’ was the first song James Morrison ever played in public - on the piano, when he was ten.

Movies have been a rich source for the Songbook. Johnny Mandel’s career has stretched from 1938 to the present day. Born in New York to a garment manufacturer father and opera-singing mother, he is most famous perhaps for the song ‘Suicide is Painless’, the theme from M*A*S*H. A number of his songs have been nominated for Academy Awards including this one, ‘A Time for Love’, which James Morrison has been known to play on trombone.

‘Love is a Many-Splendored Thing’ won the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 1955. Its composer Sammy Fain, the son of a cantor, worked for a time as a ‘staff pianist’ for publisher Jack Mills. ‘Many-Splendored Thing’ was the second of Fain’s Oscar wins. He had earlier won for ‘Secret Love’ from Calamity Jane, also written with lyricist Paul Francis Webster. Ringo Starr recorded this song on Sentimental Journey, the 1970 album that sparked interest in the Songbook among a new generation of performers. ‘My family used to sing those songs,’ said Starr, ‘my mother and my dad, my aunties and uncles...’

The next three songs come from three of the biggest names in American popular music. Cole Porter was classically-trained but drawn to the musical theatre. His show Kiss Me, Kate! won the first Tony Award for Best Musical in 1949. ‘Ev’ry Time We Say Goodbye’ was introduced in the 1944 Billy Rose revue, the Seven Lively Arts, and in the manner of Songbook staples has been recorded by numerous artists, ranging from John Coltrane on My Favorite Things [1961] to Lady Gaga in 2014’s Cheek to Cheek.

‘Don’t Get Around Much Anymore’ was originally recorded in 1940 by Duke Ellington’s orchestra. When we say ‘orchestra’ we’re reminded that Ellington introduced a degree of formal composition to jazz renditions. Could we say classicism? ‘Don’t Get Around Much Anymore’ was No.1 on the R&B charts twice in 1943, in versions by Ellington’s band and The Ink Spots.

Versions of ‘The Way You Look Tonight’ can range from the swank 1964 Frank Sinatra/Nelson Riddle version [chomping horns and velvet strings] to the trio heard on James Morrison’s 2015 album Three’s Company. The Academy Award-winning song was written by Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields for 1936’s Swing Time [another Fred Astaire film, with Ginger Rogers]. Dorothy Fields later said, ‘The first time Jerry played that melody for me I went out and started to cry... I couldn’t stop, it was so beautiful.’

‘Glory, Glory Hallelujah’ is maybe the oldest number in this concert. The familiar words come from The Battle Hymn of the Republic, an 1861 poem anti-slavery campaigner Julia Ward Howe wrote as a literary response to John Brown’s Body, a song popular with Union soldiers in the US Civil War. Various individuals are credited with the final written-down tune. What is most noteworthy though in a concert showcasing jazz is the song’s importance to the US Civil Rights movement. Dr Martin Luther King quoted it in a sermon the night before his assassination.

‘Admirers of Frank Sinatra’s romantic crooning can now hear him for a solid half hour Thursday nights with Walter Gross’s orchestra and Bobby Tucker’s Voices,’ said Billboard of a new radio program in 1942. Walter Gross was working as a recording executive but still capable of Billboard’s
‘close-your-eyes-and-dream’ music in 1946 when Jack Lawrence approached him and asked permission to add lyrics to one of his untitled tunes, which became Tenderly, later Rosemary Clooney’s signature tune.

‘Summertime’ is a rare Songbook contribution from the classical repertoire. Gershwin wrote it in 1933 for his opera Porgy and Bess, where it is heard most notably as a languid lullaby in the opening moments. This is the mood caught in James Morrison’s 2017 Songbook album; a more raucous, slinkier tone is emphasised in the version he recorded with Deni Hines on The Other Woman in 2007.

The sophistication of Duke Ellington’s numbers was due in large part to arranger Billy Strayhorn who met Ellington in Pittsburgh one night in 1938 and showed Ellington how he (Strayhorn) would play Ellington’s ballad, Sophisticated Lady. Strayhorn stayed on as Ellington’s arranger (Ellington’s ‘eyes in the back of my head’) for the next quarter-century. He wrote (or co-wrote) such hits as Satin Doll as well as Ellington’s signature tune, Take the A-Train.

‘The Shadow of Your Smile’, another Mandel movie contribution, was written for 1965’s The Sandpiper. In the opening credits, it’s an instrumental that accompanies spectacular aerial footage along California’s Big Sur coastline. The song was later recorded by such artists as Tony Bennett and Barbra Streisand. In an instrumental version in 1966, Oscar Peterson, and friends treated it initially as a bossa nova - an example of the way you can throw around ‘standards’, as Songbook items are also called.

With Basin Street Blues, we return to jazz’s origins, for Basin Street refers to the main street of Storyville, New Orleans’ 19th century ‘red light district’. The song was written by Spencer Williams (in New York) in 1923. Williams is not particularly well known but his career followed jazz’s path from New Orleans to Chicago to New York. According to historian Gary Giddins, his songs ‘propelled the careers’ of many jazz greats. So why is he not better known? Racial discrimination? The fact that he ended up in Europe? Or because songwriters are often eclipsed in an artform that promotes performance and improvisation? Basin Street Blues was the first piece of jazz James Morrison learnt on the trumpet.

Of course, improvisation is one of the defining features of jazz - probably the most important. But there are other defining features as well. In 1931 during intermissions at Chicago’s Lincoln Tavern, Duke Ellington wrote a piece that serves as kind of a credo of jazz. It refers to jazz’s ‘feel’, or as the title of the Duke’s song says, ‘It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing’.

Gordon Kalton Williams © 2018
James Morrison
At the age of seven, James Morrison was given his first instrument, at nine he formed his first band and at 13 he was playing professionally. His international career developed just as quickly. At 16, he made his US debut at the Monterey Jazz Festival.

Following this were performances at the big festivals in Europe including Montreux, Bern, Pori, North Sea, and Nice, playing with many of the legends of jazz including Dizzy Gillespie, Cab Calloway, Woody Shaw, Red Rodney, George Benson, Ray Charles, B.B. King, Ray Brown and Wynton Marsalis. There were also gigs in the world’s most famous jazz clubs – The Blue Note and Village Vanguard in New York, the New Morning in Paris, The Tokyo Blue Note and Ronnie Scott’s in London.

James Morrison’s career has been diverse. He has performed at the Royal Albert Hall with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He has performed his own concerto with the Tonkünstler Orchestra at Vienna’s Musikverein and appeared as guest with the Berlin Philharmonic, Czech National Symphony and other major orchestras. He has given Royal Command performances for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and performed for US presidents Bush and Clinton at Parliament House, Australia. On International Jazz Day 2016, he was a guest of President and Mrs Obama at the White House.

In a recording career spanning three decades, James has released a huge variety of albums from gospel to big band to electronic fusion, including "Jazz Meets the Symphony" with Lalo Schifrin and the London Symphony Orchestra. Nominated for seven ARIA Awards, James won his first ARIA in 2010 and again in 2017.

In 2018, James’s activities included a return to the Bern Jazz Festival in Switzerland and guest performance at the UNESCO International Jazz Day at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. His new quartet released its debut album "Midnight Till Dawn" and toured Europe (Austria, Ireland, Portugal and the UK). In London, James presented a 4-part documentary series "Top Brass" for the BBC.

In 2017, highlights included the world premiere of a jazz concerto written specially for James by Gordon Goodwin, a debut at the BBC Proms in London alongside Dianne Reeves, return performances at Jazz at Lincoln Center, Ronnie Scott’s and the Jazz Cruise, a debut at The Green Mill in Chicago, headline appearances at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival, Canberra International Music Festival, Oslo Jazz Festival, Vail Jazz Festival Colorado and Grahamstown International Music Festival South Africa. 2017 recording releases included a recording of the Great American Songbook at Abbey Road Studios with the BBC Concert Orchestra.

James Morrison’s other career highlights have included performing at the Hollywood Bowl with Dave Brubeck and guest performances with artists such as Phil Collins, Chaka Khan and rock legends INXS. In 2000, James composed and performed the opening fanfare for the Olympic Games in Sydney. He was also the artistic advisor to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s Kaleidoscope series, which included performances by Chick Corea, Dianne Reeves, Gary Burton and Kristjan Järvi.

James spends much time in education, giving masterclasses and workshops in many countries. This aspect of his career has seen James in Mount Gambier, South Australia, establishing the James Morrison Academy of Music, an innovative school dedicated to teaching jazz and offering a Bachelor Degree in Music.

James Morrison has been recognised for his service to the arts by being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia. He was also made Doctor of Griffith University at Queensland Conservatorium of Music and has received honorary doctorates in music from Edith Cowan University and the University of Adelaide. He is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of South Australia and Vice-Chancellor’s Professorial Fellow. In 2013, James was inducted into the Australian Jazz Hall of Fame.

When not writing film scores, composing or serving as patron of some of Australia’s major music institutions, James relaxes in some fairly unconventional ways – flying his private plane or driving in a rally championship. His love of cars is well known as he was a host on the TV program "Top Gear Australia."
Guy Noble has conducted the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Western Australian, Tasmanian, Queensland and Canberra symphony orchestras, the Auckland Philharmonia, and the Hong Kong Symphony and Malaysian Philharmonic orchestras. He is the host and accompanist each year for Great Opera Hits (Opera Australia) at the Sydney Opera House. He conducted Opera Queensland’s 2014 production of La Bohème, is conductor and host for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra’s Classics Unwrapped series at the Adelaide Town Hall, and for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra’s Music on Sundays series at QPAC. His Opera! The Opera was premiered at WAAPA in 2016, and has since been workshopped by Opera Australia. He is also the host of Concert Hall on Qantas Radio.

Guy Noble has worked with a wide variety of international performers appearing with orchestras across Australia, including Harry Connick Jr, Ben Folds, The Beach Boys, The Pointer Sisters, Dianne Reeves, Glenn Frey, Randy Newman, Clive James, Conchita, The Two Cellos, Alfie Boe and Olivia Newton John. He has worked with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra over many years, first appearing with them as a boy soprano soloist in Mendelssohn’s Elijah in 1977 at the Sydney Opera House.

William Morrison has conducted the Auckland Philharmonia, and the Hong Kong Symphony and Malaysian Philharmonic orchestras. He is the host and accompanist each year for Great Opera Hits (Opera Australia) at the Sydney Opera House. He conducted Opera Queensland’s 2014 production of La Bohème, is conductor and host for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra’s Classics Unwrapped series at the Adelaide Town Hall, and for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra’s Music on Sundays series at QPAC. His Opera! The Opera was premiered at WAAPA in 2016, and has since been workshopped by Opera Australia. He is also the host of Concert Hall on Qantas Radio.

William started playing violin at the age of five, switching to cello at seven and guitar at 12. His passion for jazz was inspired by the great Joe Pass and by the age of 15 he was working professionally as a jazz guitarist.

William is also an award-winning writer, having his composition Connection chosen for a nation-wide campaign in China, promoting relations with South Australia. Collaborating with many of the country’s top artists, including Kate Ceberano, Mat Jodrell, Emma Pask and James Morrison, he also performs with international artists such as Marian Petrescu, Konrad Paszkudski, Wycliffe Gordon, Jeff Clayton and many more.

Currently in his fourth (honours) year at the James Morrison Academy of Music, William was the recipient of the 2015 Award for Academic Excellence as a Composition Major. He has recorded several albums including a recent project at Abbey Road Studios with the BBC Orchestra and in Australia with the Matthew Nicholls Septet. Having toured extensively throughout Europe, the US and Southeast Asia, William also plays with many symphony orchestras and featured in 2016 at the Prague Proms. His touring schedule in 2017 has included dates at Ronnie Scott’s in London, performances in Spain, Hungary, Austria and South Africa.
Ben Robertson bass

A graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, bassist Ben Robertson has developed a reputation for musical excellence and inventiveness in a wide variety of musical settings, with recording studio credits of over 60 jazz and commercial CD releases and performing experience with many well-known Australian and international artists. Among these are Vince Jones and James Morrison and Lee Konitz, Barbara Cook and Warren Vache. Ben Robertson is a harmonic and listening musician, a great asset to an ensemble as both an improvising soloist and arranger. The Australian Financial Review has written of his ‘...glorious sound and tasteful playing...’ while Loud Mouth says, ‘...Bassist Ben Robertson takes only one solo on this disc – a superb construction – but he is constantly aiding and abetting spontaneously...’

Ben Robertson is highly regarded as a teacher, with wide experience in secondary and tertiary educational environments. A number of his compositions have been published internationally and his pieces feature on the current Victorian Certificate of Education contemporary bass syllabus. Ben Robertson recently was awarded a Masters in music performance from the Australian National University. Apart from performing, he spends any spare time fixing up bikes, exercising and fantasizing about restoring a vintage car.

Gordon Rytmeister drums

Born in Sydney in 1968, Gordon Rytmeister started playing drums at 13. He studied at the NSW Conservatorium of Music, 1988–89. During that time he began playing in Mike Nock’s band and later joined The Don Burrows Quartet, remaining with Burrows for 16 years and gaining international touring and performing experience. Between travel commitments, he established himself as one of Sydney’s busiest freelance musicians.

In 2003, Gordon began filling in with James Morrison’s Quintet before joining as a full-time member by 2006 and touring and recording with the Quintet for the next 10 years. During that time and since, Gordon has worked with an extraordinarily diverse range of people, including Wynton Marsalis, Josh Groban, Lalo Schifrin, Tom Jones, Bob Geldof, Lee Konitz, Glenn Shorrock, Tina Arena, Eartha Kitt, Jimmy Barnes, Richard Clapton, Lucinda Williams, and many more.

Gordon Rytmeister was resident drummer on TV’s Australian Idol, as well as Tonight Live with Steve Vizard in the early 1990s. He can be heard on movie soundtracks, albums and television themes. From 1996 through 2002 he taught at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He has conducted many educational clinics, workshops and masterclasses and endorses Vic Firth drum sticks, Remo drum heads, Sabian cymbals and Yamaha drums.
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years. I’m sure that this experience has enriched all of us.’
Catherine Hewgill, Principal Cello

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Ian & Pam McGaw
Barbara Maidment
Renée Markovic
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Founded in 1932 by the ABC, the SSO has evolved into one of the world’s finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world’s great cities. Resident at the Sydney Opera House, the SSO also performs regularly at City Recital Hall, tours NSW and internationally, and it is well on its way to becoming the premier orchestra of the Asia Pacific region.

The SSO’s concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres. These collaborations reflect the orchestra’s versatility and diverse appeal, and have included concerts with Human Nature, Ben Folds, The Whitlams, Burt Bacharach, Dianne Reeves, George Benson, John Farnham, Sting, Tim Minchin, Kenny Rogers, Natalie Cole, Olivia Newton-John, Idina Menzel, Dame Kiri te Kanawa and Tina Arena. More recent highlights include concerts with Josh Groban, Diana Krall, Lea Salonga and Conchita Wurst, and tribute concerts for David Bowie and George Michael.

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Jenny Booth
George Lentz
Alexandra Mitchell
Léone Ziegler
Sercan Danis°
Elizabeth Jones°
Lachlan O’Donnell°
Emily Qin°

SECOND VIOLINS
Emma Jezek
Assistant Principal
Alice Bartsch
Rebecca Gill
Shuti Huang
Monique Irik
Stan W Kornel
Benjamin Li
Nicole Masters

VIOLAS
Justin Williams
Assistant Principal
Sandro Costantino
Graham Hennings
Justine Marsden
Felicity Tsai
Leonid Volovelsky

CELLOS
Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Elizabeth Neville
Christopher Picock
David Wickham
Rowena Macneish*

DOUBLE BASSES
David Campbell
Steven Larson
Richard Lynn
Jaan Pallandi

FLUTES
Lisa Osmialowski°
Associate Principal
Kate Proctor*

OBOES
Diana Doherty
Principal
Alexandre Oguey
Principal Cor anglais

CLARINETS
Christopher Tingay
Alexander Morris
Principal Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS
Matthew Wilkie
Principal Emeritus
Melissa Woodroffe°

HORNS
Ben Jacks
Principal
Katy Crisdale*
Jenny McLeod-Sneyd*
Alice Yang*

TRUMPETS
David Elton
Principal
Anthony Heinrichs
Daniel Henderson*
David Johnson†

TROMBONES
Ronald Prussing
Principal
Nick Byrne
Christopher Harris
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Acting Principal

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* = Guest Musician
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Sydney Symphony Orchestra

David Robertson Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

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