WITH THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

WORLD PREMIERE

14 – 15 SEPTEMBER 2018

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
In Disney’s *Mary Poppins Returns*, an all-new sequel with a fresh sensibility that celebrates the spirit of the original, Mary Poppins is back to help the next generation of the Banks family find the joy and wonder missing in their lives.

Emily Blunt stars as the practically-perfect nanny with unique magical skills who can turn any task into an unforgettable, fantastic adventure.

*Mary Poppins Returns* is drawn from the wealth of material in these additional books. The film takes place in 1930s Depression-era London 24 years after the original film was set. Michael Banks works for the same financial institution that employed his father and still lives at 17 Cherry Tree Lane with his three children, Annabel, John and Georgie, and their housekeeper Ellen. Carrying on in her mother's tradition, Jane Banks campaigns for workers' rights and provides a helping hand to Michael's family. When the family suffers a personal loss, Mary Poppins magically re-enters their lives and brings joy and wonder back into their home.

Australian-born PL Travers first introduced the world to the no-nonsense nanny in her 1934 children’s book *Mary Poppins*. However, the subsequent adventures of Mary Poppins remained only on the pages of the seven other PL Travers’ books…until now.
Disney in Concert

MARY POPPINS

World Premiere

Erik Ochsner conductor
Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Film Live with Orchestra

Music and lyrics by
Richard M Sherman and Robert B Sherman
Underscore by Irwin Kostal

Performed with one interval of 20 minutes, and concluding at approximately 9.30pm, 4.30pm (matinee).

Mary Poppins songs and underscore
Music and Lyrics by Richard M Sherman and Robert B Sherman
Underscore by Irwin Kostal
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About the Music

Following the premiere of Mary Poppins in August 1964, producer Samuel Goldwyn wrote to Walt Disney that he had never made a film ‘so wonderful, so magical, so joyous, so completely the fulfilment of everything a great motion picture should be’. High praise indeed from the legendary Hollywood pioneer. And many shared Goldwyn’s admiration. Mary Poppins received a standing ovation at its premiere, and the reviews were ecstatic. The following year the film was nominated for 13 Academy Awards and won five – Best Actress for Julie Andrews, Best Song (‘Chim Chim Cher-ee’), Best Score, Best Visual Effects and Best Editing. Never in his 40-year career had Walt Disney invested so much of his heart and soul in a project, and with Mary Poppins he inspired his animators to new heights of artistry.

Mary Poppins was the literary creation of Australian-born author P.L. Travers, who published the first of her books about the airborne English nanny in 1934. They came to Walt’s attention in the 1940s, and so convinced was he about the character’s screen potential that he pursued Travers for the film rights for the next 20 years. He assembled a key writing team of Don DaGradi and Bill Walsh, along with songwriting duo Richard and Robert Sherman, who selected several episodes from the books and wove them into an overarching narrative about a magical nanny who transforms the dysfunctional lives of the Banks family living at 17 Cherry Tree Lane. Some basic details were changed to serve the screenplay: the 1930s setting was wound back to Edwardian-era London, Mrs Banks became an evangelical, if slightly dizzy, suffragette, and the Banks children were reduced in number from four (in the first book) to two.

A few actresses were considered to play Poppins, including Mary Martin and Angela Lansbury. But the role went to relative unknown Julie Andrews, whose performance (and whistling) in the Broadway production of Camelot had charmed Walt. American TV favourite Dick Van Dyke was chosen to play Cockney chimney sweep Bert.

The Edwardian setting allowed the Sherman brothers to create a score which in many ways is almost a love letter to the music-hall tradition. In this respect, Andrews, a child of the stage who made her professional debut at the age of 12 at the London Hippodrome, was tailor-made for the film. When Walt invited her to the Disney studios in

‘I make films for the child in all of us, whether we be six or sixty.’

Walt Disney
Burbank to hear the Shermans play their songs on the piano, she recognised in them ‘a kind of rum-ti-tum vaudeville quality, and in a flash the value of my early years in music hall fell into place’.

The inspiration for the songs came from a variety of sources: some were based on old-time tunes, including ‘Step in Time’ (Knees Up Mother Brown) and ‘Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious’ (Any Old Iron); ‘Fidelity Fiduciary Bank’ evokes Gilbert and Sullivan; ‘Let’s Go Fly a Kite’ was inspired by the Shermans’ father, Tin Pan Alley songwriter Al Sherman, who made his own kites out of butcher’s paper and string; and the idea for ‘A Spoonful of Sugar’, Mary Poppins’ signature song, was born when Robert Sherman’s son received the polio vaccine on a cube of sugar. An extended interlude in ‘I Love to Laugh’ spotlights the well-worn music-hall trope of the comic-and-stooge routine, performed by Bert and Uncle Albert (played by vaudeville veteran Ed Wynn) as they float towards the ceiling. Robert Sherman considered ‘Feed the Birds’ to be the ‘heartbeat of the entire movie’, and it was Walt’s favourite song: on Friday afternoons, when he’d routinely call the brothers into his office to play it for him, ‘he’d look outside and get a little misty-eyed’. Arranger Irwin Kostal wove the songs and their motifs into the fabric of the movie; as Richard Sherman put it: ‘He embraced what you were seeing with sound.’

The film’s mix of live action and cartoon animation was enhanced by Peter Ellenshaw’s exquisite matte paintings on glass of a stylised London, notably the sweeping panorama of the city skyline during the opening credits. One of Dick Van Dyke’s passions was mime, and so acting against an animated backdrop with cartoon characters came naturally to him (although when animators came to overlay the penguin waiters in the ‘Jolly Holiday’ number, they had to come up with inventive ways of having the cartoon figures avoid Bert’s jumps and kicks during their soft-shoe shuffle).

The studio employed all of the techniques at its disposal, including Audio-Animatronics (the Disneyland theme park had opened a few years earlier), puppeteering, wire work and stop-motion animation, many of the ideas emanating from Walt himself. But it’s a testament to the skill and dedication of Disney’s artists and technicians that none of this springs to mind while watching the movie. Whether we be six or sixty, we are magically transported to a world of childhood fantasy that is, like Mary Poppins herself, ‘practically perfect in every way’.

Lorraine Neilson
Symphony Services International © 2018
About the Conductor

Erik Ochsner

Finnish-American conductor Erik Ochsner is acclaimed for his versatility and his repertoire ranges from conducting as few as five performers in contemporary and modern works to leading 300 performers across 14 different Live in Concert films. As Principal Touring Conductor of La La Land Live in Concert he has conducted close to 50 concerts worldwide. Audiences and critics alike have praised his energy, attention to detail and precise synchronisation.

He has conducted two very different live performances of Beauty and the Beast in Concert: the first, in English, with only 40 hours’ notice to fly to Taiwan, and the second, in a 10,000 seat arena, in Polish! Upcoming engagements include four Star Wars films in Taipei, and his debut with the San Francisco Symphony with Love Actually.

Other credits include music director of the SONOS Chamber Orchestra and the 2017 Opera America New Works Showcase; guest conductor for the Nanjing Forest Music Festival; the premiere of The Music of Star Wars with the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa); and recordings of Brian Wilbur Grundstrom: An Orchestral Journey (CD) and Tan Dun’s Tea: A Mirror of Soul (DVD).

Erik Ochsner attended the Pierre Monteux School and is a graduate of Dartmouth College. He lives in New York City, loves travelling, wine and collecting requiem recordings. This is his Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut.

www.erikochsner.com

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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.

The SSO also celebrates the role of the symphony orchestra in movies, television and video games with concerts such as Final Fantasy, Star Trek, The Music of John Williams, The Wizard of Oz, Bugs Bunny, Gladiator, The Godfather, the Lord of the Rings trilogy, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Babe, the Harry Potter™ film franchise and Amadeus.

www.sydneysymphony.com

The Musicians

FIRST VIOLINS

Sun Yi  Associate Concertmaster
Kirsten Williams  Associate Concertmaster
Jenny Booth
Georges Lentz
Alexander Norton
Léone Ziegler
Sercan Danis
Elizabeth Jones
Lachlan O’Donnell
Emily Qin

SECOND VIOLINS

Marianne Edwards  Associate Principal
Alice Bartsch
Rebecca Gill
Shuti Huang
Monique Irk
Wendy Kong
Stan W Kornel
Maja Verunica

VIOLAS

Roger Benedict  Principal
Graham Hennings
Stuart Johnson
Felicity Tsai
Amanda Verner
Leonid Volovelsky

CELLOS

Leah Lynn  Assistant Principal
Elizabeth Neville
Christopher Pidcock
Adrian Wallis
Paul Ghica
Bethan Lillicrap

DOUBLE BASSES

David Campbell
Steven Larson
Benjamin Ward
John Keene

FLUTES

Lisa Osмialowski  Associate Principal
Nicola Crowe
Kim Falconer

OBOES

Shefali Pryor  Associate Principal
David Papp

CLARINETs

Francesco Celata  A/ Principal
Christopher Tingay
Alexander Morris
David Papp

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie  Principal Emeritus
Fiona McNamara

HORNs

Ben Jacks  Principal
Euan Harvey
Jenny McCleod-Sneyd
Wendy Page

TRUMPETS

Paul Goodchild  A/ Principal
Daniel Henderson
David Johnson
Tyler Wilkinson

TROMBONES

Scott Kinmont  Associate Principal
Nick Byrne
Christopher Harris
Ashley Carter

Tuba

Scott Francombe

TIMPANI

Brian Nixon  Assistant Principal

HARP

Louise Johnson  Principal

KEYBOARDS/EXTRAS

Sally Whitwell
Tim Firth - Drum Kit
Graeme Brown - Guitar
Gary Daley - Extras

° = Contract Musician
* = Guest Musician
† = SSO Fellow

This is a Playbill / Showbill publication

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