



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Cocktail Hour

Chamber Music in the Utzon Room

2018



Bach and Beethoven

FRI 2 MAR, 6PM

SAT 17 MAR, 6PM

Grieg and Villa-Lobos

FRI 15 JUN, 6PM

SAT 16 JUN, 6PM

Bruch and Dvořák

FRI 7 SEP, 6PM

SAT 8 SEP, 6PM



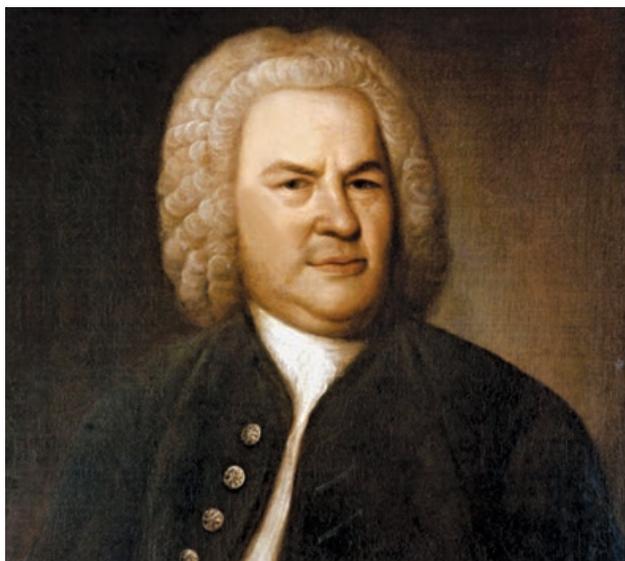
Principal Partner

Bach and Beethoven

And Timothy Constable...

SSO percussionist Timothy Constable appears in this concert as composer, arranger, chamber musician and soloist. In addition to being a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, he has been artistic director of Synergy Percussion (2009–2017). He has performed all over the world and is also a composer, writing for Noreum Machi, Synergy Percussion and Taikoz, as well as dance scores for Meryl Tankard, Shaun Parker, Legs on the Wall and Dance Makers Collective. Recent commissions include Omer Backley-Astrachan (Maholohet Festival, Israel) and Orava String Quartet (Australian Festival of Chamber Music), and recent works include *Cinemusica* (Australian Chamber Orchestra), *Ordinary Time and Spirals* (in collaboration with choreographer Rosetta Cook for Southern Cross Soloists). His recent performing and composing reflects his studies with Senegalese master drummer Aly N'Dyaye Rose, and more recently he has studied Korean Janggu with Kim Yeong-Taek and Kim Chong-Hee.

Johann Sebastian Bach himself transcribed much of his solo violin music for other instruments, so Timothy Constable is in good company. Three of Bach's works for solo violin are sonatas, three are partitas. In the second partita the first three movements – standard in Baroque dance suites – are followed by a bourrée. The special structure of this Partita is that each of its four movements is followed by a variation on it (Bach called these variations by their French name, 'double'). Omitting the *doubles*, Constable keeps the musical essence, and lets us hear it on a new instrument.



Johann Sebastian Bach

FRIDAY 2 MARCH | 6PM
 SATURDAY 17 MARCH | 6PM
 SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
 UTZON ROOM

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Violin Partita in B minor, BWV 1002

transcribed for marimba
 by Timothy Constable

Allemanda
Courante
Sarabande
Tempo di Bourrée

TIMOTHY CONSTABLE (born 1983)

Rondo. *Timelapse* for vibraphone and string quartet

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

String Quartet in F major, Op.59 No.1 (Razumovsky No.1)

Allegro
*Allegretto vivace e sempre
 scherzando*
*Adagio molto e mesto –
 Thème Russe (Allegro)*

Rondo. Timelapse is a premiere: the first outing for the first movement of Constable's new quintet for vibraphone and string quartet. He says:

I've worked with many Korean artists over the past few years, and loved the way their traditional arts embrace nature. As an artist in Australia, I've sometimes felt pressure to make work that can be described as modern and abstract, but actually much of my inspiration is very simple and humble. The first of what will be three movements of my new quintet was inspired by time-lapse images of a seed growing – beginning with a single downward tendril, then pushing out in all directions, manoeuvring into the light, retreating when things got too wet or cold or sunless, bursting into bloom, to seed, before retreating and eventually decomposing. I found myself creating a stepwise, slow, outward spiral – a motif (and structure) gently but powerfully propelling the music on its meandering life cycle. The dissolution, I'm afraid, has to wait for the second movement, which we are not performing yet. What you will hear is not 'about' what I've described, per se. It's not about anything, but I wanted to say what was in my mind's eye as I wrote it.

Beethoven and the Russian...

Count Razumovsky, a Russian diplomat in Vienna, kept a resident string quartet at his palace: two violinists, violist and cellist – professionals who premiered many of Beethoven's quartets. (Sometimes Razumovsky himself, an amateur violinist, took the place of the usual second violinist.) The three quartets in Beethoven's Opus 59 were written for the Count and his ensemble, and there could hardly be a better introduction to string quartets, one of the peaks of chamber music.

These are quartets both for private and public performance, treading a line between intimacy and display. When new they were played sometimes in private residences, for other connoisseurs, sometimes in public for paying audiences, as tonight. Beethoven promised Razumovsky he would include a Russian folk song in each quartet. A private tribute, or a sign of a popular quartet of wide appeal? Both.

In the first quartet, composed in the middle of 1806, the cello strides in quietly but confidently with the first theme. All the ideas are broadly developed, and strong chordal passages suggest a big space to be filled. 'Scherzando' means joking, and some early listeners thought Beethoven was pulling their leg at the beginning of the second movement, where the cello drums on just one note. Beethoven was being light-hearted here, very inventively so. His slow movement is deeply moving, broad and sad, rising to accents of lamentation and pain. The 'Russian theme' dominates the last movement – like a folk dance, but not simple-minded – as Beethoven puts it through all its paces.



Timothy Constable



Ludwig van Beethoven

Grieg and Villa-Lobos

Bach in a Brazilian idiom...

The most important Latin-American composer of his generation, Villa-Lobos probably composed more music than anyone else in the 20th century. Some claim more than 2000 works. More sober counts reach 1000. He composed in every genre, but is best known for the series of *Bachianas brasileiras* and *Chôros*.

Villa-Lobos said composing music was for him a biological necessity. For his *New York Skyline*, he used a photograph and came up with a 'graphic' composition. Always an experimenter, an original: no wonder academics at the conservatorium took offense! Villa-Lobos also rebelled against his parents, and hung out with popular musicians. His father taught him the cello, his main instrument, featuring in his most famous work, *Bachianas brasileiras* No.5 for soprano and cellos. Villa-Lobos's other teacher was Brazil itself. He didn't collect folk music systematically, but his own music shows an intuitive grasp of Brazil's popular idioms.

The young Villa-Lobos's love of Bach's music was first encouraged by a favourite aunt. He made many Bach transcriptions and pioneered the performance in Brazil of major Bach works. The nine *Bachianas brasileiras* – each one composed for a different ensemble of instruments – were composed between 1930 and 1945. The title (Villa-Lobos always used it in the plural) means something like 'pieces in Brazilian and Bachian manner'. Every movement has two titles: one European, showing its Baroque derivation, and a characterful, national one, from popular Brazilian music.

Villa-Lobos wrote of the *Bachianas brasileiras* pieces:

They are a special kind of musical composition based on the composer's intimate knowledge of the great works of Bach, and also of the harmonic, contrapuntal, and melodic atmosphere of the folklore of the north-eastern region of Brazil. The composer considers Bach a universal and rich folkloristic source, deeply rooted in the folk music of every country in the world. Thus Bach is a mediator among all races.

Bachianas brasileiras No.1 is for an 'orchestra' of eight cellos; their range of pitches and colours make for a rich and varied texture. The Brazilian title of the first, introductory movement, *Embolada*, suggests a kind of rap song, with fast diction. The music is energetic, even motoric, as in Bach's Brandenburg concertos. A *modinha* is a folk song with emphasis on lyricism, as in Bach slow movements. The 'Bach' title is *Prelúdio*; normally a prelude would come first in a Baroque suite, but this one is second, perhaps because the first movement was an afterthought, added eight years later in 1938. The 'conversation' of the last

FRIDAY 15 JUNE | 6PM

SATURDAY 16 JUNE | 6PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
UTZON ROOM

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS (1887–1959)

Duo for oboe and bassoon

Allegro

Lento

Allegro vivace

EDVARD GRIEG (1843–1907)

From *Holberg's Time* – Suite in Olden Style, Op.40

arranged for six cellos by

Werner Thomas-Mifune

Praeludium (Allegro vivace)

Sarabande (Andante)

Gavotte (Allegretto)

Air (Andante religioso)

Rigaudon (Allegro con brio)

VILLA-LOBOS

Bachianas brasileiras No.1 for eight cellos

Introdução (Embolada)

Prelúdio (Modinha)

Fuga (Conversa)



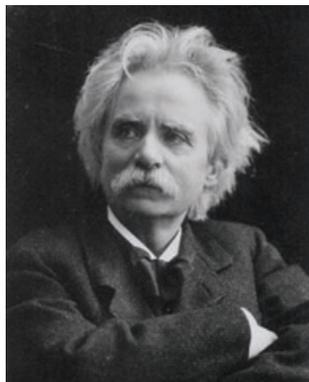
Heitor Villa-Lobos

movement is a fugue with interweaving and imitative melodic lines, but it also suggests the questions and answers of serenading street musicians in Rio.

In the **Duo for oboe and bassoon** – a late work, written in Paris in 1957 – Villa-Lobos revisits the idiom of *Bachianas brasileiras* No.6, a duo for flute and bassoon. Like Bach's Two-Part Inventions, these duos of Villa-Lobos show a playful resourcefulness. Two instruments are enough here: the texture never becomes monotonous. The central movement, marked *Lento* (very slow), is in fact constantly varied in pace.

Baroque disguise...

Whereas Villa-Lobos 're-invented' Bach, **Grieg** in his **Holberg Suite** disguised himself in 'old' music. The Holberg Suite and the music for Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, two of Grieg's most popular creations, both have to do with plays and playwrights. For a festival in 1884 commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Ludvig Holberg, Grieg wrote a suite of piano pieces, which he played in his home town Bergen, in Norway. Later Grieg got away with claiming to his publisher, in far away Leipzig, that the more familiar string orchestra version was composed first!



Edvard Grieg



Ludvig Holberg in the coffee shop of Madame N.N. – detail from an oil sketch by Danish artist **Wilhelm Marstrand (1810–1873)**, who found endless inspiration in the 'Molière of the North', painting many scenes from his plays.

Though centuries apart, Grieg and Holberg were both Norwegians and both spent part of their lives in the more cosmopolitan Copenhagen, Denmark. Grieg was attracted to French culture, as was Holberg, whose comedies led to his being called 'the Molière of the North'. Grieg evoked Holberg's era with a Romantic take on the suites of Johann Sebastian Bach – Holberg's contemporary – composed following French models as a set of dances. Grieg's neo-Baroque dances are prefaced by a prelude, toccata-like as in a keyboard suite, but translating wonderfully to strings. In this concert we hear another arrangement, by a cellist, which proves – as the following piece by Villa-Lobos will confirm – that cellos can make a very satisfying string orchestra.

Bruch and Dvořák

Bruch rediscovered...

Although he wrote lots of music, Max Bruch remains famous mainly for his evergreen Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, happily combining heartfelt emotion, memorable tunes and highly effective violin writing. Bruch never quite repeated that success, but the recent rediscovery of some forgotten chamber music from Bruch's last years was a delightful surprise. In 1918–1919 Bruch composed three quintets for string quartet with an extra viola; one of these he recast as a string octet. The stimulus was the composer's friendship with leading violinist Willy Hess. No surprise then that Bruch's quintets have brilliant first violin parts, and the other instruments are often accompanying, with the second viola enriching the texture. (This style of 'concertante' chamber music goes back to the early 19th century quartets of Louis Spohr.)

So attractive is the music that its disappearance is a matter for wonder. Admittedly, when it was new Bruch's reputation was in decline. The first performance of tonight's quintet (20 years after its composition) seems to have been a BBC broadcast on 15 February 1938, with Australian violist Keith Cummings among the performers. Then Bruch's manuscript disappeared, probably when the BBC music library was bombed. A copy made by Bruch's daughter-in-law Gertrude turned up in 1991, and the concert



Max Bruch

FRIDAY 7 SEPTEMBER | 6PM

SATURDAY 8 SEPTEMBER | 6PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
UTZON ROOM

MAX BRUCH (1838–1920) **String Quintet in E flat major, Op. Posth. (1918)**

Andante con moto –

Allegro

Andante con moto

*Andante con moto – Allegro
ma non troppo vivace*

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK **(1841–1904)**

String Quintet No.2 in G major, B.49 (Op.77)

Allegro con fuoco

Scherzo (Allegro vivace)

Poco andante

Finale (Allegro assai)

premiere was given in London's Wigmore Hall just ten years ago, in 2008.

The first movement turns out to be a substantial slow introduction to the faster second movement (*Allegro*), after a dramatic transition. The same relationship obtains between the third and fourth movements: a lyrical slow movement marked *Andante con moto* leads into the rondo finale via a slow introduction (also marked *Andante con moto*), which recalls the winding idea that began the quintet.

A bass makes a difference...

As you can see, not only have the musicians of the ensemble changed for Dvořák's string quintet but the instruments too, and the unexpected addition to the string quartet – a double bass – makes its presence felt immediately with a ruminative descending phrase. Many quintets add to the standard string quartet (two violins, viola and cello) an extra cello. Boccherini composed over 150 quintets with two cellos, and Schubert (memorably!) just one. Mozart added a second viola; so did Beethoven, Brahms and many other composers, including Bruch, as we just heard, and Dvořák, in his very first chamber music composition.

Dvořák's G major String Quintet with double bass is also an early work (the first publisher's opus number is misleading), part of the outpouring of creativity after 1874, when Dvořák was awarded an Austrian government state stipend by a jury that included Brahms. This string quintet has fluency and charm, and a rather free form. There are imitations of folk tunes, and the tone is mostly light, lively and carefree.

The cello, liberated from having to provide a bass line, soars freely in lyrical flight, most notably in the slow movement. In the first movement (*Allegro con fuoco*) most of the ideas develop from a phrase including a triplet. The *Scherzo* movement, in E minor, may be most typical of Dvořák: a hopping theme alternates with a kind of lullaby. The slow movement (*Poco andante*) is the core of the work, and violin and cello sing, sometimes together, against imaginative patterns from the other strings. Dvořák biographer Otakar Šourek described it as 'one of the most entrancing movements in the whole of Dvořák's chamber music creation'. The *Finale* is a lively and good-humoured rondo based on two themes.

A footnote for further listening: Initially this quintet was in five movements, incorporating a slow intermezzo (originally written in 1870 for a string quartet) in second spot. But Dvořák withdrew it before publication and repurposed it yet again, as a Nocturne for strings.

DAVID GARRETT © 2018



Antonín Dvořák

THE MUSICIANS

MARCH

Bach/Constable

Timothy Constable *marimba*

Constable

Timothy Constable *vibraphone*

Andrew Haveron *violin*

Georges Lentz *violin*

Stuart Johnson *viola*

Christopher Pidcock *cello*

Beethoven

Andrew Haveron *violin*

Georges Lentz *violin*

Stuart Johnson *viola*

Christopher Pidcock *cello*

JUNE

Villa-Lobos Duo

Diana Doherty *oboe*

Todd Gibson-Cornish *bassoon*

Grieg and Villa-Lobos

Bachianas

Catherine Hewgill *cello*

Leah Lynn *cello*

Kristy Conrau *cello*

Fenella Gill *cello*

Timothy Nankervis *cello*

Elizabeth Neville *cello*

Adrian Wallis *cello*

David Wickham *cello*

SEPTEMBER

Bruch

Sophie Cole *violin*

Nicole Masters *violin*

Rosemary Curtin *viola*

Sandro Costantino *viola*

Fenella Gill *cello*

Dvořák

Kirsty Hilton *violin*

Emma Jezek *violin*

Roger Benedict *viola*

Kristy Conrau *cello*

David Campbell *double bass*

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

David Robertson *The Lowy Chair of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director*

Founded in 1932 by the ABC, the SSO 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 gives more than a hundred performances throughout Sydney and NSW each year, and its international tours have earned it worldwide recognition.

The SSO's orchestral performances encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, special events, and collaborations with guest artists and ensembles from all genres, reflecting the orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal.

The musicians of the orchestra also perform in chamber music, both in independent presentations as well as under the auspices of



KEITH SAUNDERS

the SSO, appearing over the years in concerts at City Recital Hall, the Sydney Opera House, Verbruggen Hall at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, in venues on tour and in suburban Sydney, and in regular lunchtime concerts at St James' King Street.

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