

30 October – 2 November 2024

# INGRID FLITER

PERFORMS CHOPIN



«SYDNEY»  
«SYMPHONY»  
«ORCHESTRA»

Principal Partner



# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**PATRON** Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC

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, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The 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. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

## PERFORMING IN THIS CONCERT

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### FIRST VIOLINS

**Andrew Haveron**

*Concertmaster*

**Harry Bennetts**

*Associate Concertmaster*

**Alexandra Osborne**

*Associate Concertmaster*

**Lerida Delbridge**

*Assistant Concertmaster*

**Fiona Ziegler**

*Assistant Concertmaster*

**Sun Yi**

*Associate Concertmaster Emeritus*

Sercan Danis

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Léone Ziegler

Robert Smith<sup>°</sup>

### SECOND VIOLINS

**Kirsty Hilton**

*Principal*

**Marina Marsden**

*Principal*

**Emma Jezek**

*Assistant Principal*

**Victoria Bihun**

*Acting Assistant Principal*

Alice Bartsch

Emma Hayes

Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Wendy Kong

Benjamin Li

Nicole Masters

Riikka Sintonen<sup>°</sup>

Mia Stanton\*

### VIOLAS

**Richard Waters<sup>°</sup>**

*Principal*

**Anne-Louise Comerford**

*Associate Principal*

**Justin Williams**

*Assistant Principal*

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Stuart Johnson

Felicity Tsai

Amanda Verner

Andrew Jezek<sup>°</sup>

### CELLOS

**Catherine Hewgill**

*Principal*

**Kaori Yamagami**

*Principal*

**Simon Cobcroft**

*Associate Principal*

**Leah Lynn**

*Assistant Principal*

Kristy Conrau

Fenella Gill

Timothy Nankervis

Christopher Pidcock

### DOUBLE BASSES

**Kees Boersma**

*Principal*

**Alex Henery**

*Principal*

David Campbell

Steven Larson

Richard Lynn

Jaán Pallandi

Benjamin Ward

### FLUTES

**Emma Sholl**

*Acting Principal*

Carolyn Harris

### OBOES

**Shefali Pryor**

*Acting Principal*

**Alexandre Oguey**

*Principal Cor Anglais*

### CLARINETS

**Francesco Celata**

*Acting Principal*

Christopher Tingay

### BASSOONS

**Matt Wilkie**

*Principal Emeritus*

Fiona McNamara

### HORNS

**Samuel Jacobs**

*Principal*

**Euan Harvey**

*Acting Principal*

Marnie Sebire

Rachel Silver

Emily Newham<sup>°</sup>

### TRUMPETS

**Brent Grapes**

*Associate Principal*

Cécile Glémot

Anthony Heinrichs

### TROMBONES

**Scott Kinmont**

*Acting Principal*

Nick Byrne

**Christopher Harris**

*Principal Bass Trombone*

### TIMPANI

**Antoine Siguré**

*Principal*

**Bold** Principal

\* Guest Musician

<sup>°</sup> Contract Musician

<sup>†</sup> Sydney Symphony Fellow

# 2024 CONCERT SEASON

## Emirates Masters Series

Wednesday 30 October, 8pm

Friday 1 November, 8pm

Saturday 2 November, 8pm

## Emirates Thursday Afternoon Symphony

Thursday 31 October, 1.30pm

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

# INGRID FLITER PERFORMS CHOPIN ROMANTIC ADVENTURES

**EDUARDO STRAUSSER** conductor

**INGRID FLITER** piano

**ROBERT SCHUMANN** (1810–1856)

***Manfred*, Op.115** (1848)

Overture

**FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN** (1810–1849)

**Piano Concerto No.1, Op.11** (1830)

i. Allegro maestoso

ii. Romanze: Larghetto

iii. Rondo: Vivace

INTERVAL

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN** (1809–1847)

**Symphony No.3, Op.56, *Scottish*** (1829–42)

i. Andante con moto – Allegro un poco agitato – Andante con moto –

ii. Vivace non troppo –

iii. Adagio –

iv. Allegro vivacissimo – Allegro, maestoso assai

## Pre-concert talk

By Genevieve Lang in the  
Northern Foyer at 7.15pm  
(12.45pm Thursday).

## Estimated durations

Schumann – 12 minutes

Chopin – 40 minutes

Interval – 20 minutes

Mendelssohn – 40 minutes

The concert will run for  
approximately two hours

## Cover image

Ingrid Fliter

Photo by Gary Houlder

Principal Partner



# WELCOME

Welcome to **Ingrid Filter performs Chopin**, a brilliant concert featuring one of the world's most celebrated interpreters of an undisputed master of the piano repertoire.

Emirates and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have enjoyed one of the longest-standing and most significant relationships in Australia's performing arts, one of which we remain extremely proud.

As the Presenter of this *Masters Series*, Emirates is a staunch supporter of exceptional local and international talent, particularly the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor, Simone Young AM.

Argentinian pianist Ingrid Filter is a bold performer with a distinctive and memorable presence, noted especially for her performances of the music of Frederic Chopin. *The Guardian* once wrote that there is '...nothing small-scale about Filter's performances. This is very much Chopin playing in the great tradition: rich-toned, generous...'.

Brazilian maestro Eduardo Strausser is a young conductor of prodigious talent. He returns to the Sydney Symphony following acclaimed performances of Dvořák's Cello Concerto in 2022, and he is the perfect match for the Orchestra for today's performance of Mendelssohn's Symphony No.3, *Scottish*.

This vibrant concert highlights emerging talent and epitomizes the highest standards of excellence, qualities that are championed by both the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Emirates.

We are dedicated to nurturing music, arts and culture to enrich the lives of the communities we serve, while connecting the finest talents with audiences worldwide.

Our partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra is a cornerstone of our ongoing support of music and arts around the world and reflects our long-standing commitment to Australia.

I do hope you enjoy hearing the Orchestra with the bold voices of these outstanding artists.



**Barry Brown**  
**Divisional Vice President for Australasia**  
**Emirates**



# YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

Musicologist Charles Rosen called them the Romantic Generation – three composers born in 1809 and 1810 who took art music in different directions.

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## **ROBERT SCHUMANN** (1810–1856)

### *Manfred*: Overture

Byron's poem *Manfred* is set in the Swiss Alps, where the lone and tortured hero lives in a Gothic castle, summoning spirits and yearning for death, bemoaning his sins but refusing repentance, ascending the Alpine peaks and travelling to the underworld. Schumann's 12-minute overture is in classical sonata form, but vividly conveys the grandeur of its physical setting and spiritual states of the hero.

It was composed in 1848, the year of revolutions in Europe, the California gold rush, and the disappearance of Ludwig Leichhardt. Contemporary music included Verdi's *Il corsaro*, Johann Strauss I's *Radetzky March*, and Wagner's *Lohengrin* (not performed until 1850).

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1839 lithograph of Robert Schumann by Austrian lithographer and painter Josef Kriehuber (1800–1876).

## **FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN** (1810–1849)

### **Piano Concerto No.1, Op.11** (1830)

The Concerto is one of a handful of larger-scale works for piano and orchestra that Chopin – a brilliant pianist who walked away from the life of virtuoso – wrote in early life. The concerto is in the standard three-movement layout: it echoes some of Schumann's orchestral writing in the opening, triple metre movement; the slow movement may have grown out of an unfulfilled love affair, while the finale includes an energetic Polish dance, a *krakowiak*.

Composed in 1830, the year of the July Revolution in France, the publication of The Book of Mormon in the US, and the beginning of the Black Line campaign in Van Diemen's Land. Contemporary music included Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Auber's *Fra Diavolo* and George Onslow's Symphony No.1.

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Portrait of Chopin at the age of 25, painted by Maria Wodzińska (1819–96).

## **FELIX MENDELSSOHN** (1809–1847)

### **Symphony No.3, Op.56, *Scottish*** (1829–42)

Not all that Scottish (unlike the *Hebrides Overture*), Mendelssohn's symphony is in four movements, normally played without a break: an opening sonata movement, a fast scherzo, a lyrical adagio and a quick finale. Mendelssohn jotted down the opening material for the piece on a visit to Holyrood palace in Edinburgh.

It was completed in 1842, the year that the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra played its first concert, the British colony of Hong Kong was established, and Norfolk Island's convicts rebelled. Contemporary music included Rossini's *Stabat mater*, Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila*, and Liszt's *Ave Maria*.



1834 portrait of Felix Mendelssohn by Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow (1788–1862).



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **EDUARDO STRAUSSER** conductor

In the 2024/25 season, Brazilian conductor Eduardo Strausser begins his first year as Principal Conductor and Music Director of Norrlandsoperan in Umeå, Sweden. The season features an extensive Nordic tour in November 2024 and the world premiere of Jenny Wilson's debut opera, *The Lovers*, in March 2025.

Deepening his strong relationships with Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, summer 2024 sees Strausser's first appearance at the Royal Concertgebouw Hall with the orchestra and soloist Yeol Eum Son.

Strausser continues his relationships with Ulster Orchestra, the Hallé, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestre de Montpellier as well as debuts with Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa, San Diego Symphony and Pacific Symphony. Other US engagements have included the symphony orchestras of Kansas City, Utah, North Carolina, Detroit and Indianapolis.

Working extensively across Australia, Strausser appears twice this season with Sydney and Queensland symphony orchestras, as well as debuts with Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Previously Resident Conductor of Teatro Sao Paolo from 2014-2016, Eduardo has become an experienced opera conductor and productions in Sao Paolo have included *Elektra* and Carlos Gomes' *Fosca*, as well as performances of *The Nutcracker* with Balé da Cidade de São Paulo and a Stefano Poda production of Mahler's Symphony No.1. He is now based in Berlin but still returns home to Latin America for guest conducting.

Most recently he led Leonard Ever's *Die Odyssee* for Zurich Opera and other highlights include *Tosca* for Northern Ireland Opera and Theater Magdeburg which he also conducted for Staatstheater

Hannover alongside productions including *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Die Zauberflöte*. Elsewhere he has also conducted *La bohème* for Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro and Teatro Verdi di Padova.

From a young age, Eduardo developed an interest in works by contemporary composers. Through his studies at the Zurich University of Arts, he worked with the visionary Karlheinz Stockhausen. Also as a student he took part in the International Forum for Conductors at the Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, where he had the chance to work closely with composers György Kurtág and Brian Ferneyhough.

Eduardo works with top soloists, including Javier Perianes, Nobuyuki Tsujii, Alexandra Lowe, Isata Kanneh-Mason, Marie-Ange Nguci, Paul Lewis, Augustin Hadelich, Richard Galliano, Cédric Tiberghien and Steven Osborne among others. A multi-linguist, Eduardo speaks eight languages fluently including German, Italian, French, Spanish and Hebrew.



Photo by Rodrigo Levy

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **INGRID FLITER** piano

Argentine pianist Ingrid Fliter has won the admiration and hearts of audiences around the world for her passionate yet thoughtful and sensitive music making played with an effortless technique. Winner of the 2006 Gilmore Artist Award, one of only a handful of pianists and the only woman to have received this honour, Fliter divides her time between North America and Europe.

Fliter made her American orchestral debut with the Atlanta Symphony just days after the announcement of her Gilmore award. Since then, she has appeared with most of the major North American orchestras including the Cleveland and Minnesota orchestras, the Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis, Toronto, Detroit, National, Dallas, Houston, Cincinnati, New World, San Diego and New Jersey symphonies among others, as well as at the Mostly Mozart, Tanglewood, Grant Park, Aspen, Ravinia, Blossom, Tippet Rise and Brevard festivals. She made her debut at the Grand Teton Festival in summer 2022. Equally busy as a recitalist, Fliter has performed in New York at Carnegie's Zankel Hall, the Metropolitan Museum and the 92nd Street Y, at Chicago's Orchestra Hall, and in Boston, San Francisco, Vancouver and Detroit, as well as for the Van Cliburn Foundation in Fort Worth.

Fliter has recorded both Chopin concertos with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra/ Jun Märkl for Linn Records as well as the complete Chopin Preludes for the same label. Her two all-Chopin recordings for EMI earned her the reputation as one of the pre-eminent interpreters of that composer while her most recent EMI recording is an all-Beethoven CD featuring the Pathétique and Appassionata sonatas. Live recordings of Fliter performing works by Beethoven and Chopin at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam are available on the VAI Audio label. Her most recent recordings

for Linn Records feature the Mendelssohn and Schumann concertos with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the complete Chopin Nocturnes.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1973, Ingrid Fliter began her piano studies in Argentina with Elizabeth Westerkamp. In 1992 she moved to Europe where she continued her studies in Freiburg with Vitaly Margulis, in Rome with Carlos Bruno, and with Franco Scala and Boris Petrushansky at the Academy "Incontrui col Maestro" in Imola, Italy. Ms. Fliter began playing public recitals at the age of eleven and made her professional orchestra debut at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires at the age of 16. Already the winner of several competitions in Argentina, she went on to win prizes at the Cantu International Competition and the Ferruccio Busoni Competition in Italy and in 2000 was awarded the silver medal at the Frederic Chopin Competition in Warsaw. She has been teaching at the Imola International Academy "Incontri col Maestro" since the autumn of 2015.



Photo by Gary Houlder

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## WHO WAS ROBERT SCHUMANN?

Schumann was born in the Saxon city of Zwickau, where his father was a successful writer, translator (notably of English Romantic writers like Byron) and book-seller. Child Robert had access to a huge library, and began writing his own plays and poetry, as well as composing, in his teens. At 18 he went to Leipzig to study law, where he also began piano lessons with renowned pedagogue Friedrich Wieck, father of the then nine-year old virtuoso, Clara.

After a year the University of Heidelberg, Schumann returned to Leipzig in 1830, bent on becoming a musician. His first mature compositions include the *Abegg Variations*, with their theme that ‘spells’ the name of the work’s fictional dedicatee, and *Papillons*, the first of many collections of musical miniatures grouped around a poetic theme. It is at this time, too, that Schumann came under the influence of two arch-Romantic writers: Jean Paul Richter and ETA Hoffmann. In his diaries he creates fictional pseudonyms for Wieck, Clara and himself, including the characters of Florestan (representing Schumann’s virtuosic side) and Eusebius (his more introverted side). These characters would assume great importance in his music, particularly *Carnaval*, which dramatises Schumann’s (and that of his fellow *Davidsbündler* – ‘members of the league of David’) battle against philistinism in the arts. He prosecuted this also in the serious music criticism which he practically invented, founding *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* which began publication in 1835.



1839 lithograph of Robert Schumann by Austrian lithographer and painter Josef Kriehuber (1800–1876).

Robert had fallen in love with Clara when she was 15, and the years 1839–40 were dominated by a series of court battles between the composer and Wieck. Schumann prevailed, and the couple married in 1840 when Clara was 21. The next years saw Clara consolidate her fame as a pianist; Robert, owing to repetitive strain injury (not, as Wieck asserted, caused by using a device to increase his stretch) incurred in the mid-1830s, had given up hope of becoming a virtuoso. From 1840, determined to ‘master all the forms of music’ he composed in various genres, spending roughly a year on each: song (1840), orchestral music (1841), chamber music (1842) and oratorio (1843), producing several works in each genre in concentrated bursts. In 1844 he suffered a bad episode of the depression which had affected him since 1833, but emerged with new confidence in his craft.

This period saw the Schumanns’ move to Dresden where Robert turned his attention to the stage. In 1850 they moved to the Rhineland city of Düsseldorf where Robert became municipal music director. Musical standards were low, and Schumann’s health poor. One bright spot was the arrival, in 1853, of young Johannes Brahms, whom Schumann immediately realised was a genius and welcomed into his home.

Sadly, Schumann’s illness returned in 1854 with aural hallucinations, delusions and memory loss, and he attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine. He lived out his last two years in a strikingly benign asylum near Bonn; but on doctor’s orders was forbidden to see Clara until two days before he died.



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT THE *MANFRED* OVERTURE

*David Garrett writes:*

The conductor Felix Weingartner, writing over one hundred years ago, singled out this piece as Schumann's 'only piece of orchestral music which can be compared with what he wrote for the piano'.

Nowadays *Manfred* still stands out, even for its treatment of the orchestra – usually considered Schumann's weakest point.

Committed to the idea of the overture as a tone poem, Schumann composed this overture first, in Dresden, following it later in the same year, 1848, with incidental music for Byron's 1817 dramatic poem. The overture itself was a concentrated response to Byron's enigmatic figure. Manfred is a Swiss nobleman who has secluded himself within the walls of his ancestral castle high in the Alps. From high on the Jungfrau mountain he surveys humanity's pride, degradation and mutual distrust, and is narrowly prevented from committing suicide. Like Goethe's Faust, whom he somewhat resembles, Manfred seeks an escape from unhappiness through necromancy, dealing with the spirits of nature and of evil. 'The hero,' wrote Byron, 'is some kind of a magician, who is dominated by a species of remorse, the cause of which is left half-explained.' Manfred's sin from the past concerns his relationship with his sister Astarte, and Byron may have been portraying himself and his sexual liaison with his half-sister Augusta Leigh.

What particularly appealed to Schumann was Manfred's characteristic guilt and remorse, pushing him to the edge of madness. Schumann himself was tormented by fears of mental illness – all too justifiably, as it turned out. In the overture he was interested in the poem's psychological issues. There is a kind of mania in the way in which Schumann's main themes are assembled from juggled and repeated short motifs. Some contrast comes in a group of more lyrical 'second subject' themes. (The one with wide intervals reappears in the Requiem Schumann placed at the end of his incidental music, suggesting a hope for redemption for Manfred.) But these themes add to the sense of yearning and Romantic alienation with which Schumann identified.

The *Manfred* Overture is in sonata form with a slow introduction. It was daring of Schumann to end quietly, in keeping with Romantic pessimism. In Byron, Manfred dies fearless and unrepentant.

Schumann's *Manfred* is scored for pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, three trumpets and three trombones; timpani and strings.

The overture was first performed on 14 March 1852 at the Gewandhaus concert at Leipzig, with the full work performed on 13 June that same year at the German National Theatre, with the orchestra conducted by Franz Liszt.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in April 1939, conducted by Edgar Bainton. Other notable performances include those led by Eugene Goossens (1947), Georg Tintner (1965) and Willem van Otterloo (1974 & 1977).

Our most recent performance was in 2005, under Kirill Karabits.



*Manfred and the Witch of the Alps*, by John Martin (1837)

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## WHO WAS FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN?

Chopin is one of the three major figures in Western music born in or around 1810 whom Charles Rosen describes as ‘the Romantic generation’ in his book of that name. The three, as we hear in this program, are of course very different in musical inclination and character: Mendelssohn, as Brahms later observed, was the best schooled, absorbing the manner and technique of classicism from a very early age; Schumann’s essays in large scale classical forms are arguably less successful than his more poetic and sensitive works in song, chamber and solo genres. Chopin is, in a sense, the most ‘Romantic’ of the three, at his best in highly individual short works which reflect his own prowess as a pianist. Romanticism moreover went hand in hand with the awakening movements for political and cultural self-determination across Europe in the 19th century. Chopin took and active interest in the political turmoil between Poland and Russia in the 1830s and much of his music helped to establish the ‘legitimacy’ of its folk-based forms, especially the mazurka, on the concert stage. Mendelssohn, whom Chopin counted as a friend, was unsympathetic regarding the mazurkas as ‘so mannered as to be hard to understand’. As models for concert music, polonaises and waltzes were, as Paul Hamburger puts it, ‘more civilised, though hardly better organised, ballroom and court dances of Chopin’s age’.



Portrait of Chopin at the age of 25, painted by then-16-year-old Maria Wodzińska (1819-96). Chopin and Wodzińska became engaged in 1836 but never married each other.

Perhaps because so much of his work was written for Paris, Chopin evokes the waltz in isolated passages in numerous other works in different genres. It should be noted though that he had more or less perfected all of his favourite genres, including the waltz, by the time he arrived there in 1831. Within a few short years he had established himself as the darling of the Parisian salons for which much of his solo music was composed. In 1837 he began his decade-long affair with the novelist ‘George Sand’, spending the summers at her manor house at Nohant and composing much of his music there. His health had started to deteriorate by the late 1830s, with the first symptoms of tuberculosis that would persist until his death in 1849.

Chopin knew from very early in adult life that the career of piano virtuoso was not for him. According to his friend, colleague and rival Franz Liszt, Chopin was ‘repelled by the furious and frenzied face of Romanticism’. Where Liszt’s career traces a magnificent arc from prodigy through virtuoso to

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

distinguished composer of large-scale works, Chopin's seems a story of withdrawal from the concert platform and even from metropolitan society. But the cliché of him retreating into miniatures is inaccurate. Not only do the solo works in the genres that he made his own, such as the nocturne, ballade, polonaise or mazurka, often take on a substantial scale and an amazing intricacy, Chopin remained interested enough in 'classical' forms to complete his Third Sonata as late as 1844.

It is true, though, that after he left Poland in 1830, his piano music became ever more subtle – more suited to the salon than the concert hall – and that he wrote virtually no music involving any other instruments. The pieces for piano and orchestra, including the two concertos, were, with one exception, the work of the late-teenaged composer in his native Warsaw.

## ABOUT THE PIANO CONCERTO

There are three major works for piano and orchestra that predate the concertos. In 1828 Chopin composed the *Variations on Polish National Themes*, Op.13 and the *Rondo à la Krakowiak*, Op.14 – the latter based on a popular dance form from the Cracow region. Both, therefore, reflect Chopin's early interest in Polish demotic music, which had been cultivated by his composition teacher, Józef Elsner, and been hailed by critics as expressing 'the Polish soul'. In the previous year Chopin had composed his *Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano'* from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Op.2, the work that prompted Robert Schumann's famous review, with its conclusion: 'Hats off, gentlemen. A genius!'

The E-minor Concerto opens with a movement in triple metre that anticipates some of Schumann's symphonic writing and which builds to a climactic fanfare; after a quieter reprise of the opening the piano, again, enters with an arresting gesture.

At the time of composition, Chopin was infatuated with singer Konstancja Gladowska, and this may also lie behind the slow movement, marked *Romanze: larghetto*, of the concerto. Writing to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski, Chopin explained that this movement:

is not supposed to be strong, but romantic, soft, calm, melancholy; it should give the impression of gazing at a spot which brings back a thousand memories. It should be like dreaming in beautiful springtime – by moonlight.

This would be one of the few times Chopin indulged in any such explication of his music. Nonetheless, that the concertos continue his assertion of Polishness, in the face of growing tensions with Russia, is clear in the finales. In Op.11's finale, the ensemble solemnly introduces the piano playing a sparkling 2/4 *krakowiak* that it elaborates in ever more brilliant ways throughout.

Chopin 'premiered' both concertos in concerts in private houses, in both cases accompanied by a small scratch orchestra; there are also versions of the works as two-piano or piano and string quartet scores. The first public performances were triumphs but soon Chopin was doubting his ability to perform in large halls. He wrote to Liszt that he was 'not fit to give concerts; the crowd intimidates me and I feel asphyxiated by its eager breath, paralysed by its inquisitive stare, silenced by its alien faces'.

Sadly there exists no autograph score of Op.11, but both concertos were published during Chopin's lifetime so we can assume he took responsibility for the scoring. This has been generally regarded as less engaging than the orchestration of the earlier works with orchestra, and has tempted numerous people to 'improve' the scores – and to make the piano parts more 'Lisztian'. In fact the concerto as a genre was becoming increasingly unfashionable, as attention was focused on solo virtuoso recitals and the intimate miniatures of Romanticism. Maybe this was part of Chopin's motivation in sanctioning chamber versions of his concertos.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Charles Rosen has pointed out:

To accompany another pianist with a reduction for a second piano of the orchestral score of one of these concertos is an interesting experience. When I did this once, I felt as if I were playing the accompanying continuo or figured-bass part for organ or harpsichord of a Bach cantata. Chopin made a lifelong study of Bach, and the results are perceptible in all his work.

This goes to the heart of Chopin's music: his Romanticism was never about the illusion of unmediated spontaneity at the expense of formal coherence. Even his 'miniatures' are the product of rigorous design, which he had honed in these larger scale pieces.

Chopin's First Piano Concerto is scored for pairs each of flutes, oboe, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets and bass trombone; timpani, strings and a piano soloist.

It was first performed on 12 October 1830, at Teatr Narodowy (the National Theatre) in Warsaw, Poland, with Chopin himself as soloist and Carlo Evasio Soliva conducting.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the concerto in 1946, with Gualtiero Volterra conducted by Percy Code.

Other notable performances include those with Raymond O'Connell conducted by Eugene Goossens (1949); Jascha Spivakovsky/Goossens (1951); Maureen Jones/Nikolai Malko (1956); Tamás Vásáry/Antonio de Almeida (1972); Vladimir Ashkenazy/John Hopkins (1977); Jorge Bolet/Kurt Sanderling (1981); Roger Woodward/Werner Andreas Albert (1982); Leslie Howard/Georg Tintner (1983 regional tour to Goulburn, Wollongong, Armidale and Tamworth); Nikolai Demidenko/Hermann Michael (1996); Evgeny Kissin/Vladimir Ashkenazy (2011 in Sydney and on our Asian Tour to Fukuoka, Tokyo and Seoul) and Yundi Li/David Robertson (2015 in Sydney and on our Asian Tour to Daegu and Seoul).

Our most recent performances were in 2019, with Andrey Boreyko conducting Yulianna Avdeeva as soloist.

## WHO WAS FELIX MENDELSSOHN?

Mendelssohn was born into a milieu of enormous cultural and material privilege. He was a grandson of celebrated philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, and the friends of his family in Mendelssohn's childhood and early adult life reads like a who's who of German philosophy and literature; he would later enjoy friendships with everyone from Queen Victoria through Berlioz to the brothers Grimm.

Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg, but grew up in Berlin, where Abraham became indispensable in financing the Prussian war effort against Napoleon. Soon after, Prussia issued an emancipation act aimed at giving Jewish citizens greater rights. (In fact, the family of Mendelssohn's mother, Lea, had, owing to his great-grandfather's distinction in banking, been given 'all the rights of Christian citizens' as early as 1791, and Moses Mendelssohn's family had been given the protection of the Prussian king after the philosopher's death.) Despite the family's assimilation and social status, however, the four Mendelssohn children were all secretly baptised in the Lutheran church in 1816, and in 1822 Abraham and Lea converted. It was at this time that they adopted the less Jewish-sounding Bartholdy as a surname.

Felix and Fanny showed early talent for music. Both had the finest available teachers, and Abraham Mendelssohn initiated a series of Sunday concerts at the family home where Felix and Fanny would perform with paid members of the Royal Court Orchestra. For these concerts Felix wrote his celebrated string sinfonias, five early concertos, and five *Singspiele* (opera with spoken dialogue) that were fully staged at the family home. Fanny, despite promise comparable to Felix's, was discouraged by Abraham from considering music as a career. Her husband, painter Wilhelm Hensel, was more supportive of her gifts and Fanny remained a sounding-board for Felix until her death, a few months before Felix's own in 1847.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

In 1821 the premiere of Weber's *Der Freischütz* was a revelation to Mendelssohn. The supernatural element, a staple of the new Romantic aesthetic, was also to be found in the work of the brothers Grimm as well as in new translations of Shakespeare by German writers Schlegel and Tieck, whose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* inspired Mendelssohn in part of his Octet of 1825 and of course his celebrated Overture in 1826.

In 1823 the teenaged Mendelssohn received a present from his maternal grandmother, Bella Salomon: a score, copied out at her request by Mendelssohn's violin teacher, of JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. It changed Mendelssohn's life, and, in doing so, indirectly changed the way that 'art' music would be presented from then until the present day. The beginning of 1829 saw Mendelssohn's performance of his version of the *St Matthew Passion*, still occasionally done in Bach's last home-town, Leipzig, but elsewhere unknown. The experience of the *St Matthew Passion*, and of hearing still-popular works like *Messiah* in England, sparked his determination to revive the oratorio as a contemporary genre.

He was committed to new music, but paradoxically his enthusiasm for reviving novelties of Baroque and Classical music led indirectly to the 'masterpiece culture' that drives out the new. (A letter written to his friend Ferdinand Hiller in 1838 shows he was aware of that risk.) Mendelssohn's enthusiasm for the Baroque naturally feeds into the language of his own sacred music throughout his career, just as his love of Mozart and Beethoven suffuses his own mature symphonies.

Mendelssohn spent 1833-35 as music director in Düsseldorf. He was appointed to the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig from 1835; there he helped found the Conservatory, bringing in great musicians like Schumann and Ferdinand David, for whom he wrote the Violin Concerto.



1834 portrait of Felix Mendelssohn by Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow (1788-1862).



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT THE 'SCOTTISH' SYMPHONY

*Gordon Kalton Williams writes:*

Like the Piano Concerto No.1, the *Italian* Symphony and the *Hebrides* Overture, this work dates from the period of what we may call Mendelssohn's 'Grand Tour' – a period of roughly four years during which Mendelssohn, entering his twenties, toured the British Isles and Europe.

Some time in the summer of 1828, Mendelssohn's parents decided that their young man needed to travel to broaden his mind. Unlike so many 19th-century composers Mendelssohn was born into middle class comfort. His home was a cultural hub, and it could be asked how much more broadening was needed by someone whose family home buzzed with the company of people such as the scientist Alexander von Humboldt, the philosopher Hegel, the actor Eduard Devrient and music critic and theorist Adolph Bernhard Marx, among others. In any case Felix left Berlin on 10 April 1829 bound for England, Scotland and Wales. There in the British Isles, Mendelssohn was enthusiastically received as a concert and salon pianist, but he also spent time touring and observing, soaking up the sights and sounds of fascinating new environments. Mendelssohn's correspondence from the time includes some beautifully descriptive travel writing. He said vividly of London, for example, that it was 'the most grandiose and complicated monster that the world has to offer'.

In the summer of 1829 Mendelssohn and Carl Klingemann, with whom he had roomed on arrival in London, set off for Scotland. There he was taken in by the wild atmosphere of the country. He wrote home from Blair Atholl (3 August), for example:

A wild affair. The storm is howling, blustering and whistling around outside causing doors to slam shut down below and blowing the shutters open, but one can't tell whether the sounds of water are from the rain or from the blowing spray, since both are raging. We're sitting here around the burning hearth which I poke a bit from time to time making it flare up. Otherwise, the room is large and empty, water is dripping down along one of the walls; the floor is thin, and conversation from the servants' quarters can be heard echoing up from below; they're singing drunken songs and laughing – dogs are barking as well.

A few days later, undaunted by the weather, Mendelssohn set sail for the Hebrides, where he visited Fingal's Cave and made a sketch for what later became the *Hebrides* Overture. The Third Symphony can also be traced to a sightseeing visit, this time to Holyrood House, Edinburgh, about which Mendelssohn wrote:

The chapel beside it has now lost its roof. It is overgrown with grass and ivy, and at the altar Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland. Everything is ruined, decayed and open to the sky. I believe I have found there the beginning of my Scottish Symphony.



Holyrood Palace and Abbey



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Mendelssohn continued to work on this and the *Hebrides Overture* during his travels, but in Italy, understandably, his mind turned more to the *Italian Symphony*. As he said, ‘Who can wonder that I find it difficult to return to the Scottish mood?’

It is probably in terms of overall mood that the *Scottish Symphony* most noticeably reveals its original impetus. One can perhaps glimpse, through the overall sombreness, the Scottish landscape ‘looking so stern and robust, half-wrapped in haze of smoke or fog’, but this work is not as pictorial as the *Hebrides Overture*. The portrait is somewhat muted.

Although many of Mendelssohn’s works during the period bore the sign of literary or pictorial inspiration, his aesthetic probably owes more to the philosophy of a family friend, Hegel, who was to say in *Vorlesung über die Aesthetik* (Lecture on Aesthetics, Berlin, 1836) that the composer ‘should devote equal attention to two aspects – musical structure, and the expression of an admittedly indeterminate content.’ It is probably towards the creation of a piece which is satisfying on purely musical terms that the composer directed his energy in this instance. The symphony is composed in the standard symphonic four-movement plan, but structurally, Mendelssohn was trying to break new ground, not only linking the four movements, but relating them through some cross-referencing of themes.

The first movement rarely leaves the minor mode, even for the lyrical second subject. The second movement is an example of the fleet-footed *scherzando* style which we have typically come to associate with the composer of the *Octet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The finale provides an affirmative conclusion but also binds the work together thematically. Here we may recognise the music of the opening – purged of its brooding, but retaining its regal quality.

How Scottish is the work? Certainly there are no bagpipe competitions, though Mendelssohn wrote home about one:

[the bagpipers] with long red beards, tartan plaids, bonnets and feathers, naked knees, and their bagpipes in their hands...passing along the half-ruined grey castle on the meadow, where Mary Stuart lived in splendour and saw Rizzio murdered...

And there is no folksong quotation, which would have been the easiest way to make a Scottish association. The nearest Mendelssohn actually comes to folk-like sources is in the scherzo, where the main melody could be thought to possess a ‘folkish’ pentatonicism. Even so perceptive a critic as Schumann, hearing this symphony and thinking it was the *Italian*, was moved to remark on how appropriately it portrayed its subject! It was, he said, ‘so beautiful as to compensate a listener who had never been in Italy’ – which should console those listeners who simply wish to enjoy the superbly well-written music.

Mendelssohn’s ‘Scottish’ Symphony is scored for pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns and two trumpets; timpani and strings.

It was first performed on 3 March 1842 in the Leipzig Gewandhaus.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in 1941, conducted by Percy Code.

Other notable performances include those conducted by Eugene Goossens (in 1947, and on our 1952 regional tour); Willem van Otterloo (1978); Sergiu Comissiona (1982); Edo de Waart (1995) and Asher Fisch (2019).

Our most recent performances were under Umberto Clerici in 2022, at Sydney Town Hall.

Eugene Goossens also recorded the symphony in 1952, a recording released initially on RCA Victor.

**Notes by David Garrett (Schumann © 2005); Gordon Kerry (composer biographies, Chopin Concerto © 2024); GK Williams/Symphony Australia (Mendelssohn Symphony © 1999).**

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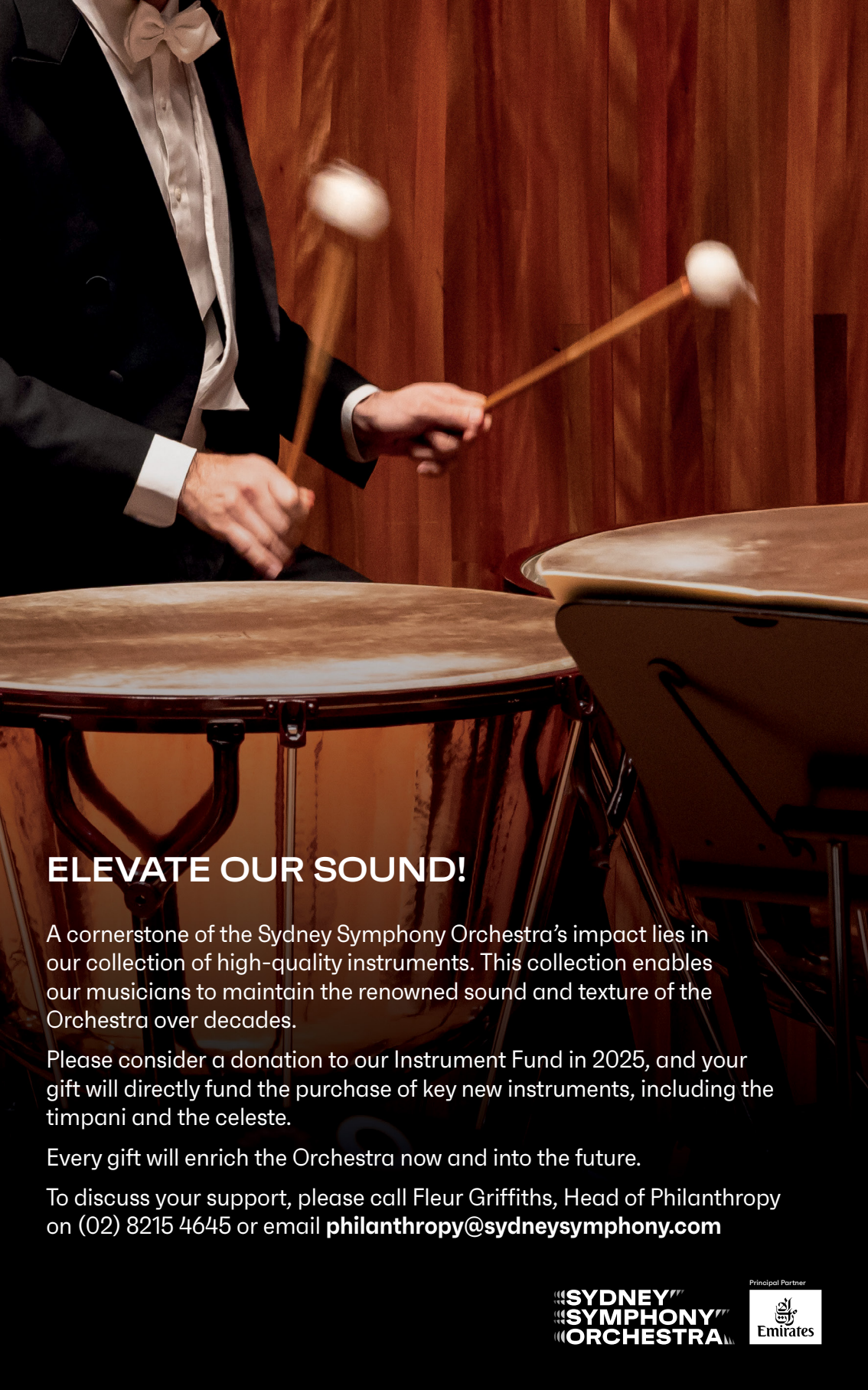
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Aernout Kerbert  
*Director of Orchestra Management*  
Brighdie Chambers  
*Orchestra Manager*  
Emma Winestone  
*Orchestra Coordinator*

## **PEOPLE & CULTURE**

Daniel Bushe  
*Director of People & Culture*  
Rosie Marks-Smith  
*Senior Advisor, Culture & Wellbeing*  
Yen Sharratt  
*People & Culture Advisor*  
Keanna Mauch  
*People & Culture Coordinator*

*A perfect*  
**ARRANGEMENT**



SYDNEY  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

Principal Partner



FLY BETTER

As Principal Partner of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, we know how to exceed audience expectations. That's why you can choose from a varied gourmet menu and enjoy fine dining at any time with our hand-picked exclusive wines, perfectly arranged.

