28 February – 2 March 2025 SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS ELGAR & VAUGHAN WILLIAMS ROYAL CARIBBEAN

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, Zdenêk 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

FIRST VIOLINS

Harry Bennetts

Associate Concertmaster

Alexandra Osborne

Associate Concertmaster

Lerida Delbridge Assistant Concertmaster

Fiona Ziegler

Assistant Concertmaster

Jennifer Booth

Sophie Cole

Sercan Danis

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Léone Ziegler

Benjamin Tjoao Brian Hong*

SECOND VIOLINS

Kirsty Hilton

Principal

Marina Marsden

Emma Jezek

Acting Associate Principal

Rebecca Gill

Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Wendy Kong

Benjamin Li

Nicole Masters

Caroline Hopson^o

Riikka Sintonen°

Robert Smith®

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider

Principal

Richard Waters^o

Actina Principal

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Stuart Johnson

Justine Marsden

Felicity Tsai

Amanda Verner

Leonid Volovelsky Andrew Jezeko

Martin Alexander*

CELLOS

Catherine Hewgill

Principal

Simon Cobcroft

Associate Principal

Leah Lynn

Assistant Principal

Kristy Conrau

Timothy Nankervis

Elizabeth Neville

Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis **DOUBLE BASSES**

Alex Henery

Principal David Campbell

Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Jaan Pallandi

Benjamin Ward

FLUTES

Emma Sholl

Associate Principal

Carolyn Harris Emilia Antcliff*

OBOES

Shefali Pryor

Acting Principal

Miriam Cooneyo

Alexandre Oguey

Principal Cor Anglais

CLARINETS

Francesco Celata

Principal

Christopher Tingay

Oliver Crofts[†]

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie

Principal Emeritus

Fiona McNamara Noriko Shimada

Principal Contrabassoon

Manuel Escauriaza*

Guest Principal

HORNS

Euan Harvey

Acting Principal

Marnie Sebire

Rachel Silver

Emily Newhamo

TRUMPETS

David Elton Principal

Cécile Glémot Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Scott Kinmont

Acting Principal

Nick Byrne

Christopher Harris Principal Bass Trombone

TURA

Steve Rossé

Principal

TIMPANI

Mark Robinson Acting Principal

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos

Principal Timothy Constable

HARP

Louisic Dulbecco

Principal

KEVROARDS

Catherine Davis* Guest Principal Piano

- **Bold** Principal
- * Guest Musician
- ^o Contract Musician [†] Sydney Symphony

Fellow

2025 CONCERT SEASON

ROYAL CARIBBEAN SYMPHONIC FRIDAY

Friday 28 February, 7pm

ROYAL CARIBBEAN SYMPHONIC SATURDAY

Saturday 1 March, 7pm

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Sunday 2 March, 2pm

Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS ELGAR & VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

BEAUTIFUL AND PROFOUND

SIMONE YOUNG conductor ANDREW HAVERON violin LAUREN FAGAN soprano

CARL VINE (born 1954)

Dreams Undreamt (2023)

World Premiere

Made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project, commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra supported by Geoff Ainsworth AM and Johanna Featherstone

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

Violin Concerto in B minor, Op.61 (1910)

i. Allearo

ii. Andante

iii. Allegro molto

INTERVAL

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)

Pastoral Symphony (Symphony No.3) (1922)

i. Molto moderato

ii. Lento moderato

iii. Moderato pesante

iv. Lento

Pre-concert talk

By Natalie Shea in the Northern Foyer at 6.15pm (Friday, Saturday), 1.15pm (Sunday)

Estimated durations

Vine – 8 minutes Elgar – 48 minutes Interval – 20 minutes Vaughan Williams – 34 minutes

The concert will run for approximately two hours

Cover image

By Jay Patel

Presenting Partner



Principal Partner



WELCOME

Welcome to **Simone Young Conducts Elgar & Vaughan Williams**, the opening performance of the *Symphonic Fridays* and *Symphonic Saturdays* series.

As the Presenting Partner of *Symphonic Fridays* and *Symphonic Saturdays*, we are delighted to be bringing audiences the opportunity to hear classical music's greatest works, performed by world-leading artists in one of the world's areat concert halls.

Andrew Haveron, the much-loved Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, is just such an artist. In great demand as a concertmaster and director, Andrew is a renowned soloist, collaborator and chamber musician

For this concert Simone Young and Andrew Haveron have chosen to perform Elgar's Violin Concerto. Less well known than his Cello Concerto, this is a work of extraordinary virtuosity and a truly thrilling experience for audiences.

Chief Conductor Simone Young is currently leading a resurgence of interest in the lesser-known symphonies of Vaughan Williams. In this performance she turns her focus to the exquisite and moving *Pastoral Symphony* (Symphony No.3).

These two British gems are complemented by a newly commissioned work from celebrated Australian composer Carl Vine, long regarded as a particularly fine composer for orchestra.

When in port, our innovative ships become a part of the breathtaking scenery of Sydney Harbour, a world-famous scene shared by the equally iconic Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Royal Caribbean are immensely proud of our partnership with the Orchestra. With an unswerving focus on creating truly unforgettable experiences, Royal Caribbean and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra share a deep commitment to excellence in all that we do.

I hope you enjoy this performance of **Simone Young Conducts Elgar & Vaughan Williams**, the opening concert of the 2025 *Symphonic Fridays* and *Symphonic Saturdays* series.

Gavin Smith, Vice President & Managing Director Royal Caribbean



YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

CARL VINE (born 1954) **Dreams Undreamt** (2023)

World Premiere

Carl Vine's contribution to the Orchestra's 50 Fanfares project is 'a sequence of events so freakish, so other-worldly, that you wouldn't dream of it. But what if you did?'

Composed in 2023, this is the work's world premiere.



Carl Vine. Photo by Keith Saunders.

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934) Violin Concerto in B minor, Op.61 (1910)

Elgar's three-movement concerto is a Mt Everest of the repertoire, requiring flawless technique, broad expressive range and considerable stamina for the soloist.

The first movement is often pensive but more often strenuous and dramatic. The slow movement is a lyrical elegy, while the finale is dominated by march rhythms.

The work was premiered in 1910, the year that saw an appearance of Halley's Comet, the establishment of the Union of South Africa, and Australian voted 'yes' in a referendum to allow the Federal government to assume debts owed by the states.

Contemporary music included Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, Mahler's Symphony No.8 and Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia* on a theme by Thomas Tallis.



Edward Elgar in 1911, photograph by Ernest Walter Histed (1863–1947)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) Pastoral Symphony (Symphony No.3) (1922)

Vaughan Williams' third symphony appeared after he had experienced some of the horror of World War I in northern France, where he was part of an ambulance crew. While it is overall calm and visionary, it contains a thread of deeply-felt sorrow for the country and its people. It is in four movements, in mostly moderate tempos, but with moments of gleaming beauty and great tragedy.

It premiered in 1922, the year the BBC was formed, Tutankhamen's tomb was discovered, and Queensland abolished both its Legislative Council and the death penalty.

Contemporary music included Ibert's *Escales*, Nielsen's Wind Quintet and Walton's *Façade*.



Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1921, photograph by Emil Otto Hoppé (1878–1972).



Photo by Peter Brew-Bevan

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIMONE YOUNG AM conductor

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor since 2022, Simone Young has previously held the posts of General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of both the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted numerous complete cycles of Der Ring des Nibelungen at the Bayreuth Festival, Vienna Staatsoper, the Staatsoper in Berlin and again, to great acclaim, in Hamburg as part of the 'Wagner-Wahn' Festival, during which she conducted the ten major Wagner operas. Her Hamburg recordings include the Ring Cycle, Mathis der Maler (Hindemith), Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln (Schmidt), and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. She has also recorded Benjamin Britten Folksongs and songs of Richard Strauss with Steve Davislim, and songs by Wagner and Strauss with Lisa Gasteen. Her 2012 tour to Brisbane with the Hamburg Opera and Ballet, (Das Rheingold in concert, and Mahler's Symphony No.2, Resurrection), won her the 2013 Helpmann Award for the Best Individual Classical Music Performance.

Firmly established as one of the world's leading conductors, 2025 will see Simone Young return to Milan to continue La Scala's new *Ring* Cycle with the premieres of both *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*, to the Bayreuth Festival to again conduct the complete *Ring* Cycle, to the Berlin State Opera for *Elektra*, to the Opera nationale de Paris for *Don Carlos*, to Zürich Opera for *Salome* and to the Vienna State Opera for further performances of *Fin de Partie*.

Equally impressive is the list of her return invitations to the great orchestras of the world. which this year will include the Orquestra nacionales de Madrid, the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, the New York Philharmonic, the Bayarian Radio Orchestra and the North German Radio Orchestra. Staatskapelle Berlin, the Orchestre nationale de Lyon and the Orchestre de Paris. Closer to home, Simone Young returns to conduct the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and will conclude her year in Sydney, performing Mussorasky's Pictures at an Exhibition and Dvořák's Cello Concerto with Kian Soltani. the next opera in the Orchestra's Ring Cycle, Siegfried, and Beethoven's Symphony No.9 with an all-star local cast of soloists.

The presentation of the first two operas in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Ring* Cycle played to sold-out audiences, standing ovations and five-star reviews. A second, feature-length documentary film about Simone Young and her career, *Knowing the Score*, was internationally released in 2023.

Simone Young's many accolades include the 2024 Conductor of the year (British Opera magazine), Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera, the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna, a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, Helpmann Award and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ANDREW HAVERON violin Sydney Symphony Concertmaster,

Sydney Symphony Concertmaster Vicki Olsson Chair

Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra since 2013, Andrew Haveron has been described by *The Sunday Times* as '...a charismatic and brilliant soloist who needs fear no comparison.'

A laureate of some of the most prestigious international violin competitions, Andrew studied in London at the Purcell School and the Royal College of Music. Andrew is a highly respected soloist, chamber musician and concertmaster. As a soloist, Andrew has collaborated with conductors such as Jiří Bělohlávek, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Roger Norrington, David Robertson, Stanislaw Skrowachewski and John Wilson, performing a broad range of well-known and less familiar concertos with many of the UK's finest orchestras.

His performance of William Walton's Violin Concerto with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2015 was nominated for a Helpmann Award. Andrew's playing has also been featured on many film and video-game soundtracks, including Disney's Fantasia game, which includes his performance of Vivaldi's Four Seasons with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the Fields. Andrew has also appeared recently in recitals around Australia with pianists Anna Goldsworthy, Piers Lane and Simon Tedeschi.

In 1999 Andrew was appointed first violinist of the internationally acclaimed Brodsky Quartet. A busy schedule saw the quartet perform and broadcast in their unique style all over the world. Amassina a repertoire of almost 300 works, they enjoyed collaborations with outstanding artists and commissioned many new works from today's composers, and were famed for their barrier-breaking cross-genre projects. Andrew recorded more than fifteen albums with the quartet, receiving numerous industry awards. Andrew has also appeared with other chamber groups such as the Nash and Hebrides ensembles, the Logos Chamber Group, Kathy Selby and Ensemble Q.

Andrew is also in great demand as a concertmaster and orchestra director, and has worked with all the major symphony orchestras in the UK and many further afield. In 2007 he became concertmaster of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, broadcasting frequently on BBC Radio and enjoying many appearances at the BBC Proms including the famous Last Night, Joining the Philharmonia Orchestra in 2012 Andrew also led the World Orchestra for Peace at the request of its conductor Valery Gergiev, and again in 2018 at the request of Donald Runnicles, In 2004 Andrew received an honorary Doctorate from the University of Kent for his services to music.

He plays on a violin made in 1757 by GB Guadagnini; a generous loan to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra by Vicki Olsson for Andrew's use.



Photo by Jez Smith

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LAUREN FAGAN soprano

Australian soprano Lauren Fagan has grown into one of today's most accomplished sopranos, admired by international critics for her "glossy, commanding sound" and "magnificent dramatic power". Fagan's recent portrayals of Countess Almaviva (Le nozze di Figaro), Helena (A Midsummer Night's Dream), Avis (The Wreckers) and Margarita Xirgu (Ainadamar) have solidified her position as one of the most impressive and versatile singing actresses on today's operatic landscape.

In the 2024/25 season, Fagan returns to Opernhaus Zürich to debut as Komponist in Andreas Homoki's new production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* under Markus Poschner and reprises Giulietta in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, led by Antonio Fogliani. Elsewhere she returns to the Canadian Opera Company for her anticipated role debut as Tatyana in Robert Carsen's production of *Eugene Onegin*, conducted by Speranza Scappucci. In concert, she debuts with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Jaime Martin in Beethoven *Symphony No 9* and with Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra adds Verdi *Messa da Requiem* under Marios Papadopoulos.

A former member of the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at Royal Ballet and Opera, Fagan returned in the 2023/24 season as Gretel in Antony McDonald's production of Hansel and Gretel under Mark Wigglesworth and as Musetta in Richard Jones' La bohème under Keri-Lynn Wilson. Elsewhere in the season, she debuted as Gutrune in Andreas Homoki's new production of Götterdämmerung at Opernhaus Zürich under Gianandrea Noseda, appeared at Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and Berliner Philharmonie as 5. Maad in Elektra with Kirill Petrenko and the Berliner Philharmoniker and made her Opera Australia debut as Angelica in Puccini's Suor Angelica conducted by Lydia Yankovskaya and directed by Imara Savage.

Recent seasons have seen an impressive array of appearances including her first Contessa Almaviva at Canadian Opera Company under Harry Bicket, Margarita Xirgu in Golijov's Ainadamar for Scottish Opera, Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream conducted by Dalia Stasevska at

Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Giulietta in Andreas Homoki's *Les contes d'Hoffmann* under Antonino Fogliani at Opernhaus Zürich. As Norma in Marina Abramovic's 7 *Deaths of Maria Callas* conducted by Yoel Gamzou, Lauren made debuts at both Opéra de Paris and Bayerische Staatsoper and has appeared as Woglinde in Keith Warner's *Ring Cycle* at Royal Ballet and Opera.

Elsewhere on the concert platform, Fagan appeared as Avis in Smyth's *The Wreckers* with Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin under Robin Ticciati and Roxana in Szymanowski's *Krol Roger* with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Sir Antonio Pappano. She sang her first Handel *Messiah* with Toronto Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Gustavo Gimeno and graced the Last Night of the BBC Proms under Sakari Oramo in Vaughan Williams *Serenade to Music* and performed Strauss *Vier letzte Lieder* in Malmö under Karen Kamensek.

Representing her country in the 2019 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, Fagan made her Australian operatic debut as Violetta in *La traviata* at State Opera South Australia shortly thereafter and having previously performed Beethoven *Ah! Perfido* with Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Simone Young and Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with Adelaide Symphony Orchestra under Dane Lam.



Photo by Victoria Cadisch

ABOUT CARL VINE

Carl Vine AO is one of Australia's best known and often performed composers. with an impressive orchestral catalogue featuring eight symphonies and thirteen concertos. His piano music is performed frequently around the world and recordings of his music on more than 60 CDs play regularly on Australian radio. He has an extensive range of chamber music alongside various work for film, television, dance and theatre. Although primarily a composer of modern art music, he has undertaken such diverse tasks as arranging the Australian National Anthem and writing music for the Closing Ceremony of the Olympic Games (Atlanta, 1996).

Born in Perth, he studied piano with Stephen Dornan and composition with John Exton at the University of Western Australia. Moving to Sydney in 1975, he worked as a freelance pianist and composer with a wide range of ensembles, theatre and dance companies over the following decades.



Among his most acclaimed scores are Piano Sonata (1990) and *Poppy* (1978) for the Sydney Dance Company and Choral Symphony (No.6, 1996) for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. His first six symphonies are available on the ABC Classics double-CD set *Carl Vine: The Complete Symphonies* performed by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Much of his chamber music is available on three discs from Tall Poppies Records.

From 2000 until 2019 Carl was Artistic Director of Musica Viva Australia, the world's largest chamber music entrepreneur. Within that role he was also Artistic Director of the Huntington Estate Music Festival from 2006, and of the Musica Viva Festival (Sydney) from 2008. Carl has been Senior Lecturer in Composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music since 2014. His recent compositions include Piano Sonata No 4, The Enchanted Loom (Symphony No.8) for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Implacable Gifts, a concerto for two pianos for the West Australian and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, and Five Hallucinations, a trombone concerto for the Chicago and Sydney Symphony Orchestras. In 2014 Carl Vine was appointed an Officer of The Order Of Australia (AO) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

About Dreams Undreamt, the composer writes:

I love the idea of a sequence of events so freakish, so other-worldly, that you wouldn't dream of it. But what if you did?

Dreams Undreamt was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project, commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra supported by Geoff Ainsworth AM and Johanna Featherstone.

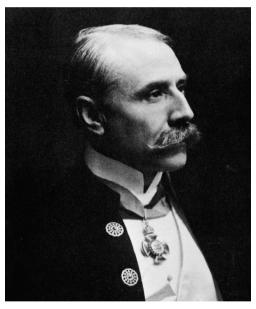
The work is scored for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, harp and strings.

This is the work's world premiere.

ABOUT EDWARD ELGAR

Elgar in some respects rose without a trace. Elgar's early musical precocity was encouraged by his father, a music-seller and piano-tuner, and his mother, a fine poet and artist, though family finances prevented him studying music abroad. He became very active as a performer and conductor in his native Worcestershire, playing violin in the orchestra for the Three Choirs Festival under Dvořák in 1884, and composing for a number of local ensembles.

While working as a teacher, violinist and organist he composed salon pieces (for which he is still justly admired), music for provincial bands (including one at a lunatic asylum) and that other staple of English concert life: choral music.



Elgar in 1911, by Ernest Walter Histed

Elgar is often imagined as the quintessentially English composer. (The old *Oxford Companion to Music* has a truly awful engraved portrait complete with flannel suit, visor, cigarette holder, huge moustache and King Charles spaniel.) But apart from such things as the *Pomp and Circumstance marches*, Elgar's music is less British Imperial than modern European. The Second Symphony of 1911 is dedicated 'to the late King Edward VII', but is in fact a much more personal essay on a line from Shelley, 'Rarely, rarely com'st thou, Spirit of Delight.'

Despite his lower middle-class social status and Catholic religion, Elgar had married Alice Roberts – against the wishes of her aristocratic family – in 1889, and the couple had moved to London in the hope of securing Elgar's career as a composer. Sadly, this proved unsuccessful, so in 1891 they returned to Worcestershire where Elgar eked out a living from teaching, performing and sporadic publications until his reputation took off with the appearance of the *Enigma Variations* at the end of the decade.

The Enigma Variations showed a mature (forty-something) composer with a masterly technique, a full awareness of current European musical thinking and a sense of humour. His innate talent, his experience of working as an orchestral musician and his interest in the legacy of Wagner's musical language created a style which enabled him to write symphonic works of a quality comparable to those of his continental contemporaries such as Mahler and Richard Strauss. Like them, he was often the 'hero' of his symphonic dramas.

In The Dream of Gerontius of 1900, a setting of the long poem of Cardinal Newman, Elgar was also able to re-imagine the oratorio as a cosmic drama of salvation rather than the reflection of the values of empire that it had arguably become. In it, Elgar brought together the large-scale planning, the opulent orchestration and erotic chromatic harmony of Wagner's music-dramas. Gerontius, a kind of Catholic Pilgrim's Progress, was heard in Germany, under Elgar's German champion Hans Richter, a year after the British premiere; on the strength of a performance there Richard Strauss proclaimed Elgar the 'first English progressivist' and remained a great fan.

Elgar was never entirely comfortable with fame or the honours lavished on him in later life. In his Cello Concerto of 1919, the aging composer created an economical, spare and genuinely tragic masterpiece that mourns the world swept away by World War I – even though, he felt, that world had never fully accepted him.



ABOUT THE VIOLIN CONCERTO

Martin Buzacott writes:

A Chance Encounter

In 1910, the young WH (Billy) Reed had just become leader of the London Symphony Orchestra. A slightly-built, likeable young man, Reed was known both for his personal modesty and his dedication to the music he performed.

One day in May, Reed was walking down London's Regent Street when he encountered the unmistakeable figure of Edward Elgar, the 52-year-old doven of English composers. Elgar greeted him warmly and Reed was thrilled that such a great man should not only recognise him but actually deign to speak with him. Elgar wanted to know if Reed had any spare time. 'He was sketching out something for the fiddle, and wanted to settle, in his own mind, some question of bowing and certain intricacies in the passage-work', Reed wrote later. That 'something for the fiddle' was in fact a concerto which was being written for Fritz Kreisler - one of Elgar's many European admirers.



Fritz Kreisler, for whom the concerto was composed

Reed seized on the opportunity to become the first person to play through the sketches of Elgar's Violin Concerto. But he didn't quite get what he expected. On his arrival the next day at Elgar's temporary flat on New Cavendish Road, Reed found the composer pacing the room, laying out sheets of manuscript paper wherever he could find room – pasted to walls, resting on the mantelpiece, pinned to the backs of chairs. Almost architecturally, Elgar was laying out the plan of his masterpiece.

While Elgar kept a suitably Edwardian stiff upper lip during most of the morning's work with Reed, one passage particularly thrilled him - the violin's entry in the first movement, coming as it did (and still does) with the second, not the first, half of the principal subject. 'The novelty of this idea so pleased his fancy that I had to play that unusual opening many times with him, he thundering out the first two bars on the piano as if issuing a challenge to the solo violin to come in and see what he could make for it.' wrote Reed. The two men met again the next day and the day after that. They were destined to become firm friends and regular cycling partners.

By June 2 – Elgar's 53rd birthday – the piano score of the work was virtually complete. Only the orchestration remained.

While the Violin Concerto was Elgar's first mature work for solo instrument and orchestra, in a sense it was predestined that he would write such a work. He was, after all, an accomplished violinist, had made sketches for a violin concerto as early as 1890 (though since abandoned), and was renowned for the excellence of his string writing in works which had emerged since 1899's *Enigma Variations*.

ANOTHER ENIGMA

And there was more than a hint of an 'enigma' about the Violin Concerto as well. It too bore traces of Elgar's friends and relations — of his wife, of his friend Alice Stuart-Wortley, of Reed himself. But most of all, like the *Enigma*, the concerto contains a cryptic inscription facing the title page: 'Aquí está encerrada el alma de.....' (Herein lies enshrined the soul of.....).

Elgar had found the words in the novel *Gil Blas* by Alain-René Lesage (1668-1747). There, the inscription appears on a poet's tomb, but in his own adaptation of it Elgar pointedly left the name blank. Subsequent commentators have speculated on the identity of the person whose 'soul is enshrined'.

The most plausible candidate is Stuart-Wortley, the amateur pianist whose friendship with Elgar is documented in more than 400 letters written between 1909 and 1931. Within that correspondence, Elgar consistently referred to the Violin Concerto as 'our concerto' and he sent her a handwritten copy of the quotation from Lesage. His private name for her was 'Windflower' and Elgar described the work as containing more than one 'Windflower' theme. But Elgar was always one who liked to complicate his enigmas, and later in life he confided to his friend Ivor Atkins that the inspiration for the concerto had actually been his former fiancée Helen Weaver. also a fine violinist.

No matter who the inspiration was, the 'subject' of the concerto, as always, remains Elgar himself. 'I have written out my soul,' Elgar wrote to Stuart-Wortley shortly after its completion. 'This concerto is *full* of romantic feeling,' he assured his friend Frank Schuster.

When Kreisler was shown the short score on 1 July 1910, he exclaimed, 'It will shake Queen's Hall!' and word soon got around that Elgar had another major triumph looming. The London orchestras fought for the right to give the premiere, with the Philharmonic Society winning the right to have its dedicatee Kreisler perform it twice, with the composer conducting, in November 1910.

Before that could happen, Elgar had to finish the orchestration, a task he completed by August, and Kreisler and the composer had to work through the piece in private performances – which were often marred by Elgar singing along at the piano when he ran out of fingers to achieve the desired orchestral sonority.

Billy Reed had a go at it too, in a semi-public performance at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester. 'I felt a little overwhelmed at being asked to play the solo part at what would actually be the very first performance before an audience,' Reed said. And Kreisler told an interviewer at the time, 'From the player's point of view it is perhaps the most difficult of all concertos for endurance.' Certainly it's a test of technique, with the soloist called upon to range widely through difficult passagework while maintaining the essentially poetic spirit of the work as a whole.

LISTENING GUIDE

The concerto's three movements are separated by pauses but there are clear thematic links between them (in his later Cello Concerto, Elgar would run his first two movements together). The initial movement of the theme is upwards by a semitone, and then falling, as if representing some kind of nostalgic sigh, whose second half is elaborated by the soloist on entry. But it takes some time for that entry to arrive, for Elgar follows Beethoven and Brahms in providing a hefty orchestral ritornello before the star of the show appears. The sublime. semplice melody for the soloist represents Elgar at his lyrical best and that distinctive 'Windflower' theme undergoes some majestic transformations as the movement proceeds, ending back in the tonic B minor.

Elgar was never averse to the occasional post-Wagnerian harmonic leap. He begins the slow movement, for instance, in the comparatively distant key of B flat, with, again, a small upward leap getting the theme underway and the violin introducing new material in keys as diverse as E and D flat. It's an elegy of uncommon beauty and here, surely, we come closest to the musical depiction of 'the soul of....'

The march-like last movement is substantial and, in its cadenza, contains one of the most extraordinary instrumental effects in all of Elgar's music. The soloist's virtuoso extravaganza is accompanied by the orchestral string players 'thrumming' with the soft part of their fingers, as if playing guitars. Elsewhere, themes from the previous movements are recalled, the mood lurches between joy and nostalgia, the keys of B minor and major struggle for supremacy, before a brilliant flourish announces the conclusion.



Elgar recording the concerto with a young Yehudi Menuhin

Edward Elgar's Violin Concerto is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani, strings and violin soloist.

It was premiered on 10 November 1910, performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, with Fritz Kreisler as soloist and Elgar himself conducting.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the concerto in August 1942, with Thomas Matthews as soloist conducted by Bernard Heinze. Other notable performances include those by Ronald Woodcock conducted by Eugene Goossens (1950), Wilfred Lehman conducted by Dean Dixon (1964), Donald Hazelwood conducted by John Hopkins (1973 Proms), Hazelwood conducted by Willem van Otterloo (1978), Geoffrey Michaels conducted by Maurice Handford (1981 Elgar Festival) and Nigel Kennedy conducted by Edo de Waart (2001).

Our most recent performances were in 2008, with James Ehnes as soloist conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

ABOUT RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

It fell to a generation younger than Elgar to write music with a British accent, inspired partly by a growing interest in that great efflorescence of music during the Tudor dynasty. With the *Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis*, premiered in 1910, Ralph Vaughan Williams refreshed English music by returning to that distant source.

After the early death of his father, an Anglican clergyman, Vaughan Williams was raised in the liberal bosom of his mother's family – relations of the Wedgwood pottery dynasty and the Darwins of natural history. A Wedgwood aunt instructed the child in thorough-bass and harmony, while some years later another aunt, Etty Darwin, described 'that foolish young man Ralph Vaughan Williams who will go on working at music when he is so hopelessly bad at it...They say it will simply break his heart if he is told that he is too bad to hope to make anything of it.'



Vaughan Williams in uniform, 1917

Nevertheless, Vaughan Williams persisted, studying at the Royal College of Music under Hubert Parry, whose Piano Concerto of 1880 is said to have inaugurated the so-called English musical Renaissance. After taking his degree at Cambridge, in 1895 Vaughan Williams returned to the RCM to study under the redoubtable Irish composer Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, whose assessments included 'damnably ugly, my boy. Why do you write such things?', or, more succinctly, 'all rot, my boy...' In 1897 he studied with Max Bruch in Berlin, and, more consequentially, in 1907 in Paris with Maurice Ravel.

In 1893, Vaughan Williams had been shown one of the few English folksongs then in print: 'Dives and Lazarus', which elaborates Jesus' parable (in Luke 16) of the rich man and the beggar, Lazarus, and God's judgement on them. Vauahan Williams' famous response to the tune was 'here's something which I have known all my life, only I didn't know it!' And, like colleagues such as Gustav Holst, Percy Grainger and Béla Bartók, Vaughan Williams became an active collector of folk sonas in. as it were, the wild - or, in the case of the first song he notated, 'Bushes and Briars', at an 'old people's tea party' in 1903 where a shepherd sang a 'song which set all my doubts about folk song at rest.'

Folk-song and Tudor music would prove inexhaustible sources of inspiration, and with the advent of the First World War, (in which Vaughan Williams served as an ambulance orderly) the wish also to be free of any Germanic tendencies is understandable: The Lark Ascending, for instance, is far from being a piece of boneless pastoralism, but is rather an elegy for a world on the brink of destruction. By the time of the Second World War, Vaughan Williams was a master symphonist, with his first three symphonies' expansive meditations on the sea, city and countryside respectively. Now he would balance the expressionist extremes in the Fourth and Sixth Symphonies with the transcendentally beautiful vision of peace in the Fifth. He brought all these elements together in his operatic masterpiece, The Pilgrim's Progress and in a further three symphonies of exquisite poise and craft.

ABOUT A PASTORAL SYMPHONY

Vaughan Williams' colleague (and later his second wife) Ursula stood in the roof-garden of her home in London on the evening of VE day in 1945. A trumpeter friend arrived and played the long trumpet cadenza from the *Pastoral Symphony*. 'The melancholy, romantic sound', she wrote, 'faded over the roofs just as people started putting on lights at windows uncurtained after five and a half years of darkness.'

A Pastoral Symphony, the composer's third, had come in for its share of unkind remarks after it premiered in 1922. One critic imagined Vaughan Williams 'rolling over and over in a ploughed field on a wet day' while a fellow composer sneered that it reminded him of 'a cow looking over a gate'. Some critics clearly imagined that the work was a piece of mere nostalgia for the pleasures of the English countryside – long walks, fox-hunting and the like. But musicologist Michael Kennedy is much nearer the mark when he describes the piece as 'Vaughan Williams' War Requiem'.

With the outbreak of World War I the composer volunteered for service, becoming, like his friend and teacher Ravel, an ambulance officer in the battlefields of northern France. It was at this time that he started to sketch ideas for the symphony. In later years he himself wrote:

It's really wartime music – a great deal of it incubated when I used to go up night after night with the ambulance wagon at Écoivres and we went up a steep hill and there was a wonderful Corot-like landscape in the sunset – it's not really lambkins frisking at all as most people take for granted.



Landscape at sunset, Normandy (c.1872) by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875).

The piece is in four movements, each of them moderate to slow in tempo, with the exception of the final coda of the third movement, though this, as he points out. 'that is all *pianissimo*.' Vaughan Williams succeeds in avoiding boredom, however, by using orchestration which is subtle, varied and colourful, by usually having active parts moving within the texture, and by letting themes gradually metamorphose and meld into one another. (The modal palette suggests folk-song, but no actual folk-tunes are quoted.)

The opening of the work shows the composer's orchestral skill: a flowing passage of parallel major and minor triads provides a lush, modally tinged harmony, pointed by lower moving chords in the lower strings and harp, out of this emerges a radiant if melancholy violin solo, which in turn is taken up by other solo instruments. The modal harmony allows for seamless transitions between nostalgic minor and more hopeful major sections.

Another wartime experience is central to the second movement, which begins with a quiet horn call. Vaughan Williams frequently heard a bugler practicing of an evening, but this particular player had trouble playing an octave. The central section of this movement is the trumpet solo to which Ursula Vaughan Williams alludes. The composer stipulates that it be played on an E flat trumpet using only natural notes - that is, avoiding the use of the valves which make for 'perfect' tuning in modern equal temperament. The result is, or should be, that certain notes are slightly out of tune, an image both of the practicing bugler but also of a state of innocence which the war helped to destroy. The trumpet tune returns in the horn towards the end of the movement.

The third movement, while also in moderate tempo, is the 'scherzo' of the piece. It begins with rhythms reminiscent of the ghostly dancers imagined by T S Eliot, 'Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter/ Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes'. This is contrasted with a still birdcall-like solo for the flute. The central section — corresponding to the Trio in a classical symphony, is a lively trumpet

tune in galliard rhythm. There are two statements of each of these sections before the music suddenly becomes very quiet and fast for the movement's coda.

The final movement begins with a master stroke – a solo soprano, offstage, sings a long and beautiful wordless melody accompanied only by a soft drum tremolo. The composer no doubt heard the occasional young woman singing in the distance, but this could also be a lament by the earth itself. When the orchestra enters it is with a new, gradually rising modal theme which builds in intensity until the climax where the soprano's melody returns, played by the full orchestra over impassioned, mildly dissonant harmony. The work concludes with the solo soprano, singing under a high, sustained string note.

As Ursula Vaughan Williams wrote, A Pastoral Symphony has 'something of a Monet landscape and the music unites transience and permanence as memory does'.

Vaughan Williams' Pastoral Symphony is scored for a large orchestra including three flutes (third doubling on piccolo), two oboes, cor anglais, three clarinets (third doubling bass clarinet) and two bassoons; four horns (one doubling natural horn), three trumpets (one doubling natural trumpet), three trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, harp, celeste and strings, with a soprano soloist in the fourth movement.

It was first performed in London on 26 January 1922 with Adrian Boult conducting the Orchestra of the Royal Philharmonic Society.

The Sydney Symphony first performed this symphony in March 1950, led by Chief Conductor Eugene Goossens and featuring tenor Ronald Dowd. Our only other performance was in 1986, conducted by Vernon Handley featuring soprano Jennifer Bates.

Notes by Carl Vine (©2023, 2025), Martin Buzacott (Elgar Concerto © 2001), Gordon Kerry (Vaughan Williams © 2006) Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson



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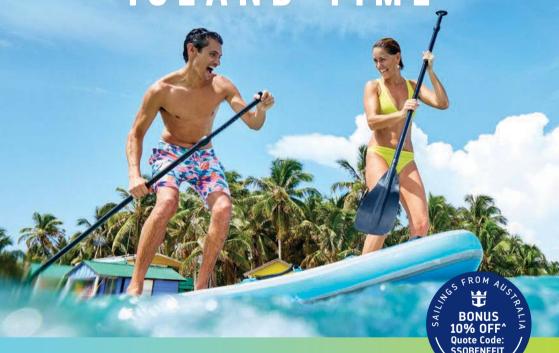
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