



Mahler 4

Geelong Series

Friday 19 June at 8pm
Costa Hall, Deakin University
Geelong

Saturday Night Symphony

Saturday 20 June at 8pm
Arts Centre Melbourne
Hamer Hall

ANZ Great Classics on Mondays

Monday 22 June at 6.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne
Hamer Hall

What's On

July — September



BABE

Saturday 11 July
Sunday 12 July

George Miller's *Babe* is an icon of Australian cinema. To coincide with its twentieth anniversary, the MSO and original soundtrack composer, Nigel Westlake, join forces to present the world premiere of *Babe: The Twentieth Anniversary Concert*, an exclusive all-ages screening with the Orchestra performing the film's score.



YUJA WANG PLAYS PROKOFIEV

Thursday 23 July
Friday 24 July
Saturday 25 July

Chinese piano superstar Yuja Wang brings her acclaimed virtuosity to Prokofiev's tempestuous Second Piano Concerto, in a program that includes Tchaikovsky's *Marche Slave* and Brahms' luminous fourth and final symphony.



TCHAIKOVSKY'S PIANO CONCERTO No.1

Friday 7 August
Saturday 8 August
Monday 10 August

The very epitome of Romantic music, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 is performed by Simon Trpčeski, appearing alongside Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio espagnol* and Scriabin's Third Symphony.



RACHMANINOV 3

Thursday 20 August
Friday 21 August
Saturday 22 August

Russian-American pianist Kirill Gerstein displays his mastery of the formidable 'Rach 3', conducted by Sir Andrew Davis, alongside Rimsky-Korsakov's *Dubinchushka* and Strauss' autobiographical tone poem, *Ein Heldenleben*.



MOZART'S PIANO CONCERTO No.17

Friday 28 August
Saturday 29 August
Monday 31 August

The irrepressible overture to Rossini's *La gazza ladra* is set alongside works by Mozart and Messiaen, and the lush melodies of Brahms' Symphony No.3.



AN EVENING WITH RENÉE FLEMING

Thursday 3 September
Saturday 5 September

Famed for her magnetic performances and sheer beauty of tone, celebrated American soprano Renée Fleming joins the MSO and Sir Andrew Davis for two Melbourne-exclusive orchestral concerts.

Presented by MSO and Arts Centre Melbourne



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Welcome to Mahler 4

MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

It was once said of Audrey Hepburn that every time she walked into a room, all heaven broke loose. This irresistible image also applies to Mahler's Symphony No.4 – indeed a celestial work, whose last movement is a rhapsodic setting of Mahler's song, *Das himmlische Leben* (*The Heavenly Life*).

Welcome to this concert, in which Chief Conductor Sir Andrew Davis and the MSO not only head into the Mahlerian clouds – helped by soprano Jacqueline Porter – but, beforehand, into the dazzling world of Prokofiev's late work, the *Sinfonia Concertante*. This, the composer's own reworking of his Cello Concerto, was inspired by Mstislav Rostropovich, who said of the work's conclusion that the cello sounded 'as if spiraling up to the very summit of a domed roof'. I am sure that our soloist, the Dutch virtuoso Pieter Wispelwey, will negotiate Prokofiev's dizzying demands with his usual daring brilliance.

I hope you enjoy this evening of great music-making.



André Gremillet
Managing Director

With a reputation for excellence, versatility and innovation, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra is Australia's oldest orchestra, established in 1906. The Orchestra currently performs live to more than 200,000 people annually, in concerts ranging from subscription performances at its home, Hamer Hall at Arts Centre Melbourne, to its annual free concerts at Melbourne's largest outdoor venue, the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

Sir Andrew Davis gave his inaugural concerts as Chief Conductor of the MSO in April 2013, having made his debut with the Orchestra in 2009. Highlights of his tenure have included collaborations with artists including Bryn Terfel, Emanuel Ax and Truls Mørk, the release of recordings of music by Percy Grainger and Eugene Goossens, a 2014 European Festivals tour, and a multi-year cycle of Mahler's Symphonies.

The MSO also works each season with Principal Guest Conductor Diego Matheuz, Associate Conductor Benjamin Northey and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus. Recent guest conductors to the MSO have included Thomas Adès, John Adams, Tan Dun, Charles Dutoit, Jakub Hrůša,

Mark Wigglesworth, Markus Stenz and Simone Young. The Orchestra has also collaborated with non-classical musicians including Burt Bacharach, Ben Folds, Nick Cave, Sting and Tim Minchin.

The MSO reaches an even larger audience through its regular concert broadcasts on ABC Classic FM, also streamed online, and through recordings on Chandos and ABC Classics. The MSO's Education and Community Engagement initiatives deliver innovative and engaging programs to audiences of all ages, including MSO Learn, an educational iPhone and iPad app designed to teach children about the inner workings of an orchestra.

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra is funded principally by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and is generously supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. The MSO is also funded by the City of Melbourne, its Principal Partner, Emirates, corporate sponsors and individual donors, trusts and foundations.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis
conductor

Pieter Wispelwey
cello

Jacqueline Porter
soprano

—
PROKOFIEV
Sinfonia Concertante, Op.125

—
Interval 20 minutes

—
MAHLER
Symphony No.4 in G

—
This concert has a duration of approximately 2 hours including one 20 minute interval.

Saturday night's concert will be broadcast and streamed live around Australia on ABC Classic FM.



Pre-Concert Talks

7pm Friday 19 June
Onstage, Costa Hall

7pm Saturday 20 June
Stalls Foyer, Hamer Hall

MSO Director of Artistic Planning Ronald Vermeulen will present a talk on the artists and works featured in this program.

Post-Concert Conversation

8.30pm Monday 22 June
Stalls Foyer, Hamer Hall

Join MSO Director of Artistic Planning Ronald Vermeulen for a post-concert conversation with tonight's artists.

Sir Andrew Davis conductor

Sir Andrew Davis is Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. In a career spanning over 40 years, he has been the musical and artistic leader at several of the world's most distinguished opera and symphonic institutions, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra (1991–2004), Glyndebourne Festival Opera (1988–2000), and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (1975–1988). He recently received the honorary title of Conductor Emeritus from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

One of today's most recognised and acclaimed conductors, Sir Andrew has conducted virtually all the world's major orchestras, opera companies, and festivals. This year he celebrates his 40-year association with the Toronto Symphony, and aside from performances with the Melbourne Symphony, he will conduct the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Proms, Philharmonia Orchestra at the Three Choirs Festival, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Born in 1944 in Hertfordshire, England, Sir Andrew studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he was an organ scholar before taking up conducting. His wide-ranging repertoire encompasses the Baroque to contemporary, and his vast conducting credits span the symphonic, operatic and choral worlds.

Sir Andrew was made a Commander of the British Empire in 1992, and a Knight Bachelor in 1999.



Pieter Wispelwey cello

Pieter Wispelwey is equally at ease on the modern or period cello. His acute stylistic awareness, combined with a truly original interpretation and a phenomenal technical mastery, has won the hearts of critics and the public alike.

Recent performances and coming highlights include concerto performances with the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra and Beethoven Orchester Bonn. Recital appearances include London's Wigmore Hall; the Konzerthaus, Vienna; Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; Flagey, Brussels; Toppan Hall, Tokyo; and the Seoul Arts Center.

He has over twenty recordings to his credit on the Channel Classics, Onyx Classics and Evil Penguin Records Classic labels, which have attracted major international awards. His more recent release features C.P.E Bach's Cello Concerto in A major with Musikkollegium Winterthur.

Pieter Wispelwey plays a 1760 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini cello and a 1710 Rombouts baroque cello.



ABOUT THE MUSIC

Jacqueline Porter soprano

Jacqueline Porter, an honours graduate in Music Performance and BA (Italian) from the University of Melbourne, was also the recipient of a Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust Scholarship in 2010.

She appears regularly with Australia's major symphony orchestras and choral societies, in repertoire ranging from Grieg's *Peer Gynt* and Prokofiev's *The Ugly Duckling* (Sydney Symphony Orchestra), Rachmaninov's *The Bells* and a Mozart/Haydn tour (Melbourne Symphony Orchestra), Last Night of the Proms (Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra), to Adelaide Symphony Orchestra's New Year's Eve Gala. Jacqueline's roles in opera include *Susanna* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) for Victorian Opera, and Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*) for State Opera South Australia.

Other 2015 performances will include appearances at the Woodend Winter Arts Festival, and Isabelle in *L'amant jaloux* with Pinchgut Opera.



Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Sinfonia Concertante

Symphony-Concerto for cello and orchestra, Op.125

Andante

Allegro giusto

Andante con moto – Allegretto – Allegro marcato

Pieter Wispelwey cello

—
The last five years of Prokofiev's life were miserable. Following a series of cultural crackdowns instigated by Stalin's most powerful cultural warrior Andrei Zhdanov, Prokofiev in particular was singled out for the crime of 'formalism' – Soviet code for writing music which experimented with bourgeois 'western' techniques and which 'rejected the principles of classical music'. Much of his music was effectively banned, and the composer – in serious ill-health – was forced to write a public recantation of his 'errors'. Moreover, the lack of performances was matched by a lack of commissions for new work, so Prokofiev's financial situation became ever more dire.

One of the few happy aspects to Prokofiev's last years is the friendship he enjoyed with the young cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. Not only was Rostropovich the inspiration for a number of new works, he was also fierce in his defence of the composer.

Prokofiev had written his Cello Concerto Op.58 in the mid-1930s but had been dissatisfied with both the work and its first performance in 1938. Meeting Rostropovich a decade later made Prokofiev return to the piece, rewriting it substantially enough to label it his Concerto No.2 in which form Rostropovich performed it in 1952. Still dissatisfied, Prokofiev made further revisions, expansions and re-workings with much technical advice from the cellist so that the work reached its definitive form as the Symphony-Concerto Op.125 later that year. (Contrary to rumour, however, Rostropovich didn't actually compose any of the music except for an eight-bar section of the solo part for which Prokofiev had already worked out the harmony and rhythm.) Another work for Rostropovich, the Concertino in

G minor, was begun at the same time but only completed by the cellist and Dmitri Kabalevsky after Prokofiev's death the following year.

The Symphony-Concerto has a valedictory feel to it. Notwithstanding its occasionally extreme virtuosity, there are numerous reflective passages throughout the work, not just in the Andante sections of the outer movements, but in the central scherzo as well. The first movement contains echoes of the earlier Prokofiev: a hint of the march from *The Love for Three Oranges*, a swelling melody or woodwind solo that recalls *Romeo and Juliet*; but the music remains generally spare and the movement almost peters out in a series of evanescent cello figurations.

The central movement has some of the energy and harmonic tartness of earlier Prokofiev (and indeed hints of the sardonic wit of Shostakovich) at first, but soon falls into a dreamy reverie characterised by a songful line and delicate icy orchestral textures. The spell is soon broken by timpani and dissonant winds. The music briefly regains its scurrying energy before another episode of lyrical cello writing against a spare orchestral background; yet again the momentum increases with rapid cello figurations and a goose-stepping orchestral march which in turn seems to dissolve before the movement ends in classic Prokofievian style.

A single tutti chord introduces the finale. To his original *Allegro* finale, Prokofiev added a new opening – *Andante* again but now *con moto* (with movement). Shades of Prokofiev's humour can be heard as the music ratchets through increasingly fast tempos to a breathtaking passage of high intensity solo writing at the work's conclusion.

Sadly Prokofiev didn't live to hear the final version, which Rostropovich premiered in Denmark in 1954.

Abridged from an annotation by Gordon Kerry © 2007

The only previous performances of Prokofiev's Sinfonia Concertante by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra took place in October 1995 with conductor Lawrence Foster and soloist Mischa Maisky.



ABOUT THE MUSIC

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Symphony No.4 in G

Bedächtig – Recht gemächlich
(Deliberately – Really unhurried)

In gemächlicher Bewegung, ohne Hast
(In a leisurely tempo, without haste)

Ruhevoll (Peacefully)

Sehr behaglich
(Very homely and comfortable)

Jacqueline Porter soprano

—
'It is too beautiful: one shouldn't allow oneself such a thing!' exclaimed Mahler one day in 1900. He was standing on the balcony of his newly-built summer residence at Maiernigg, on the shores of the Wörthersee. Mahler's career as a conductor usually left him only the summer months for composition; when he became Director of the Vienna Court Opera in 1897 and conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic in 1898 the intensity of the workload meant that he composed nothing during those years. The house at Maiernigg was a perfect retreat, and the perfect place to complete his Fourth Symphony which he had begun in the summer of 1899.

The symphony is at once the culmination of certain aspects of the previous two and their complete antithesis. The Second Symphony is Mahler's musical dramatisation of nothing less than death and resurrection, while in the Third, as he put it, 'all nature finds a voice'. The Fourth, by contrast, is on an altogether more modest scale: it consists of the 'standard' four movements (the first time Mahler

adhered to that pattern), plays for a comparatively short 55 minutes or so, and is scored for a much smaller orchestra. What it shares with its two predecessors is a preoccupation with ideas of life and death, and a relationship to the collection of folk poetry, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth's Magic Horn), which Mahler mined for various song settings. The final movement – which Mahler first set in 1892 and which was originally planned for inclusion in the Third Symphony – is taken from the *Wunderhorn* collection, and describes a child's vision of heaven.

Commentator Paul Bekker has suggested that the whole symphony was germinated by the song, and Michael Kennedy has noted that all the movements are 'thematically interconnected'. Dramatically, too, the work is unified by a pervasive sense of innocence: Mahler's music is never naïve, and its simplicity is deceptive given the formal sophistication of its structure and elaboration of its counterpoint, but the work is careful to avoid the obtuse, the rhetorical and the monumental. The philosopher Theodor Adorno points out that the whole work's 'image-world is of childhood. The means are reduced, without heavy brass; horns and trumpets are more modest in number. No father figures are admitted to its precincts.'

This first movement quickly establishes the mood of childish innocence with the sound of four flutes and sleigh bells, simple melodies with pizzicato accompaniment from low strings. But as the great Mahler scholar Deryck

Cooke once put it, the serene surface of the work conceals figures whom he described as 'moving behind a veil which obscures their naked horror and makes them like the bogeymen who appear in illustrations to books of fairy tales'. There is perhaps latent danger in the brief eruption of the Fifth Symphony's tempestuous fanfare in the first movement of this work, but the movement ends with a moment of seraphic peace before its good-humoured conclusion.

One 'bogeyman' is 'Freund Hain', a devilish fiddler such as we also meet in Saint-Saëns' *Danse macabre*. In an early sketch for his scherzo Mahler wrote 'Freund Hain spielt auf' (Our friend Hain strikes up). In the final version of this movement with its ländler (a peasant dance in triple time) Trio section, there is a prominent solo for a violin which is tuned higher than normal to make it sound like 'ein Fiedel' (a fiddle). Mahler compared composing this work with 'wandering through the flower-scented garden of Elysium and it suddenly changes to a nightmare of finding oneself in a Hades full of horrors.'

There is no horror in the opening of the central *Adagio*, by far the longest movement in the work. A set of variations, it is unified by the device of the pizzicato double bass which plays a repeated figure or ostinato. There is a violent passage towards the end of the movement, where the timpani take over the basses' figure, playing, as Adorno says, 'as drums once seemed before the age of seven'.

In the final movement the orchestra is joined by the soprano soloist for the *Wunderhorn* song, 'Das himmlische Leben' (The Heavenly Life), and it is here that the work's ambiguities come into clear focus. Ostensibly a cute account of how a child might see heaven, it is actually a cleverly disguised set of variations which allows Mahler to seem simple while constantly spinning new and fascinating sounds. It characterises various saints carrying on their earthly tasks to produce the gastronomic delights of the afterlife: St Martha cooks, of course; St Peter fishes; Herod (somehow admitted through the pearly gates) is the butcher. As Adorno notes:

These are not only the modest joys of the useful south German vegetable plot ... Immortalised in them are blood and violence; oxen are slaughtered, deer and hare run to the feast in full view on the roads. The poem culminates in an absurd Christianity.

After hymning St Cecilia, the work ends quietly. For Cooke it is a 'peaceful close', for Adorno this 'fairy-tale symphony is as sad as the late works ... Joy remains unattainable, and no transcendence is left but yearning.' Like Maiernigg, this work is perhaps 'too beautiful' to be true.

Gordon Kerry © 2003

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra first performed Mahler's Symphony No.4 in 1949 with soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and conductor Otto Klemperer, and most recently in 2013 with soloist Siobhan Stagg and Benjamin Northey conducting.

Symphony No.4

*Wir geniessen die himmlischen Freuden
d'rum thun wir das Irdische meiden.
Kein weltlich' Getümmel
hört man nicht im Himmel!
Lebt Alles in sanfterster Ruh'!
Wir führen ein englisches Leben!
Sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben!
Wir tanzen und springen
wir hüpfen und singen!
Sanct Peter in Himmel sieht zu!*

*Johannes das Lämmlein auslasset,
der Metzger Herodes drauf passet!
Wir führen ein geduldig's,
unschuldig's, geduldig's,
ein liebliches Lämmlein zu Tod!
Sanct Lucas den Ochsen thät schlachten
ohn' einig's Bedenken und Achten,
der Wein kost kein Heller
im himmlischen Keller,
die Englein, die backen das Brot.*

*Gut' Kräuter von allerhand Arten,
die wachsen im himmlischen Garten!
Gut' Spargel, Fisolen,
und was wir nur wollen!
Ganze Schüsseln voll sind uns bereit!
Gut' Äpfel, gut' Birn' und gut' Trauben!
Die Gärtner, die Alles erlauben!
Willst Rehbock, willst Hasen,
Auf offener Strassen
sie laufen herbei!*

*Sollt ein Fasttag etwa kommen
alle Fische gleich mit Freuden
angeschwommen!
Dort läuft schon Sanct Peter
mit Netz und mit Köder
zum himmlischen Weiher hinein.
Sanct Martha die Köchin muss sein!*

*Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
die uns'rer verglichen kann werden.
Elftausend Jungfrauen
zu tanzen sich trauen!
Sanct Ursula selbst dazu lacht!
Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
die uns'rer verglichen kann werden.
Cäcilia mit ihren Verwandten
sind treffliche Hofmusikanten!
Die englischen Stimmen
ermuntern die Sinnen!
dass Alles für Freuden erwacht.*

Text: *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

We taste the joys of Heaven
leaving behind all that is earthly.
No worldly strife
is heard in Heaven.
We live here in sweetest peace!
We live an angelic life,
yet we are merry as can be.
We dance and spring
and skip and sing
while St Peter in heaven looks on.

St John lets the lamb go running,
the butcher Herod is waiting for it.
We lead the patient,
meek, guiltless
dear little Lambkin to death!
St Luke is slaughtering the oxen
without care or consideration,
The wine is free
in the heavenly tavern,
and the angels, they bake the bread.

Fine vegetables of every kind
grow in the gardens of Heaven,
good asparagus and beans,
whatever we fancy,
big bowls are prepared for us!
Good apples and pears and grapes!
The gardeners let us take all!
Do you want a roebuck or hare?
Here in the open streets
they run about!

And when there is a fast day
the fish come swarming
in merrily!
St Peter, he runs
with net and with bait
to fish in the heavenly pond.
St Martha is the cook, who else?

No music on earth
can compare with ours.
Eleven thousand virgins
come forward to dance!
Even St Ursula laughs to see that!
No music on earth
can compare with ours.
Cecilia and her relations
are excellent court musicians!
The angelic voices
lift our spirits
and all things awaken to joy!

Translation: Hedwig Roediger
ABC/Symphony Australia © 1986

PHILANTHROPY AND MAHLER — A SPECULATION

That Gustav Mahler was a tortured soul no-one today doubts, but whether his health was weakened by the need to work incessantly at conducting roles, pushing his time for composing into his summer holidays, is still under debate. It is well known that this musical iconoclast drove himself and his colleagues relentlessly to achieve ever greater heights of musical achievement. It is interesting, then, to speculate what a difference to his life a major benefactor might have made – more symphonies? More song cycles? More time spent creating? We will never know.

What we do know though, is how very grateful the MSO is to those people whose benefaction is realised in the Mahler Syndicate, making possible our presentation of the complete Mahler Cycle over the years 2014–2018.

If you would like to join this committed group, please contact Ben Lee on (03) 9626 1248 or philanthropy@mso.com.au





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