




In Concert

**Tchaikovsky
Melbourne Town Hall Series**

**Friday 27 February at 7.30pm
Melbourne Town Hall**

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Benjamin Northey Associate Conductor Melbourne Symphony Orchestra


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Welcome to Tchaikovsky

MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Welcome to the first of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's Melbourne Town Hall concerts, a series of inspiring music performances in the original home of the MSO.

This concert pays tribute to the remarkable creativity of Tchaikovsky, one of the giants of orchestral music, whose works are among the most beloved in the repertoire. You will hear the Russian master's many moods – tender, grand, melancholic – this evening as the music explores feelings, dreams, love and destiny.

The City of Melbourne is proud to be associated with the 2015 MSO's Melbourne Town Hall series, which will include the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Liszt and Gershwin.

Don't miss the final concert in the series when the Orchestra will perform Saint-Saëns' Symphony No.3, with our mighty Town Hall Grand Organ, the largest romantic grand organ in the Southern Hemisphere, in a starring role. You can also enjoy a free recital before each Town Hall concert, by gifted musician and scholar Dr Calvin Bowman.

I hope you enjoy the concert tonight and return for more popular masterpieces at the historical Melbourne Town Hall, a perfect location for lovers of music to enjoy works of genius.

Robert Doyle
Lord Mayor,
City of Melbourne

Welcome to the first of the MSO's Melbourne Town Hall series for 2015. Tonight comes the chance to hear three key works by Tchaikovsky – master of orchestration and melody.

In this concert, under our Associate Conductor, Benjamin Northey, the MSO performs a program that shows different facets of Tchaikovsky's fertile genius: *Francesca da Rimini: Symphonic Fantasy after Dante*, Op.32; Tatyana's Letter Scene from the opera *Eugene Onegin*, sung by Australian soprano Leanne Kenneally; and the fate-laden Symphony No.5.

Tchaikovsky was his own sternest critic and, on occasion, drastically undervalued himself. He said of his Fifth Symphony, 'I must say that, thank God, it is no worse than my previous ones'. Luckily, most of the rest of the world does not share this opinion.

It is always good for the MSO to be back in the Melbourne Town Hall, its home for many decades. The combination of Hamer Hall, which has seen many vivid concerts by the orchestra, and the traditional intimacy of the Town Hall gives us two of the finest performing spaces within a kilometre of each other. Players and audiences are indeed fortunate.

I wish you a fulfilling year of musical discoveries with great performances by the MSO.

André Gremillet
Managing Director, MSO

Established in 1906, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra has earned a reputation for excellence, versatility, and innovation. It currently performs live to more than 200,000 people annually, in concerts ranging from subscription series at Hamer Hall at Arts Centre Melbourne, to annual free concerts at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. The Orchestra also delivers programs to audiences of all ages through its Education and Community Engagement initiatives.

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

The Orchestra works regularly with its Principal Guest Conductor, Diego Matheuz, Associate Conductor, Benjamin Northey, the MSO Chorus, and with guest conductors such as Thomas Adès, John Adams, Tan Dun, Jakub Hruška, Markus Stenz, and Simone Young, as well as non-classical musicians such as Burt Bacharach, Ben Folds, Nick Cave, Sting, and Tim Minchin.





Tchaikovsky

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Tchaikovsky
Friday 27 February at 7:30pm

Tchaikovsky
Francesca da Rimini

Tchaikovsky
Letter Scene from
Eugene Onegin

Interval 20 minutes

Tchaikovsky
Symphony No.5

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Benjamin Northey
conductor

Natalie Aroyan
soprano

A pre-performance recital by Dr Calvin Bowman on the Melbourne Town Hall organ will commence at 6:30pm.

This concert is supported by the City of Melbourne and has a duration of approximately one hour and 50 minutes.

CITY OF MELBOURNE

Benjamin Northey
conductor

Benjamin Northey has rapidly emerged as one of the nation's leading musical figures. He holds the Patricia Riordan Associate Conductor Chair of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Internationally, he has conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, Hong Kong Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia, New Zealand and Christchurch Symphony Orchestras, and the Southbank Sinfonia of London.

In Australia, Northey has made many critically-acclaimed appearances as a guest conductor with the six state symphony orchestras as well as leading seasons of *L'elisir d'amore*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *La sonnambula*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*. In 2015, he returns to all the major Australian orchestras, the HKPO, the NZSO and conducts *Turandot* for Opera Australia.

In 2015 he also holds the position of Chief Conductor of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.



Natalie Aroyan
soprano

Armenian-Australian soprano Natalie Aroyan holds a Postgraduate Diploma of Opera from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and a double-degree in Business and I.T. from the Australian Catholic University. She is a winner of the Opera Foundation New York Competition, Herald Sun Aria, and the Italian Opera Foundation Award which enabled her to pursue further studies at Mannes College, NY and the Accademia di Bel Canto, Italy with Mirella Freni.

Natalie joined Opera Australia's Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist Program in 2013 and has since performed Mimi (*La bohème*), Desdemona (*Otello*), Micaela (*Carmen*), High Priestess (*Aida*) and Annina (*La traviata*). She has also sung Mimi with West Australian Opera, returning later this year for Marguerite (*Faust*), and Micaela for Sugi Opera Company, Korea.



PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
(1840 - 1893)

Francesca da Rimini, op.32
Fantasia after Dante

Eugene Onegin, op.24
Act I: Tatyana's Letter Aria

Natalie Aroyan
soprano

Symphony No.5 In E Minor, op.64

Andante - allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Valse (Allegro moderato)

Finale (Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace - Moderato assai e molto maestoso)

Francesca da Rimini, op. 32
Fantasia after Dante

In his *Commedia*, Dante Alighieri's powerfully imagined journey through Hell, Purgatory and finally Heaven, figures from myth, scripture and history take time out from their particular punishment (or bliss) to tell the poet their story.

In the second circle of Hell, the souls of the lustful, damned for having given way to passion rather than following reason, are tossed around like a 'flock of starlings' in an unceasing gale. Francesca, a young bride, tells Dante how, when she and her crippled husband's beautiful younger brother Paolo were reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere one day, they were overwhelmed by the story and fell into each other's arms. Her husband found them making love and as he tried to kill Paolo, Francesca interposed herself. Both were killed, and their punishment is never to be separated. Paolo, to whom Francesca never refers by name, weeps constantly.

In 1876 Tchaikovsky considered composing a 'Wagnerian' opera on the Francesca and Paolo story, but decided instead to turn it into a symphonic poem. A baleful introduction represents the motto inscribed above the gates of hell ('Abandon hope, all who enter here') complemented by the cries of the damned. The infernal wind with its hysterical energy is

graphically treated with a series of sequences and crescendos, rising and falling. A solo clarinet, (perhaps the voice of Francesca) introduces the long central section. Here, Tchaikovsky said, she 'tells her story' in the symphonic development of her lyrical and beautiful theme. As in *Tristan*, however, the erotic idyll is brutally shattered, and the music returns us to the unrelenting wind, demonic braying from the brass and crushing chords from the full orchestra.

Eugene Onegin, op. 24
Act I: Tatyana's Letter Aria

Natalie Aroyan soprano

In 1877 Tchaikovsky based an opera on Pushkin's poem *Eugene Onegin*: a country girl, Tatyana, falls madly in love with a cynical young man, Onegin, who spurns her. Years later Onegin attends a ball where a glamorous princess turns out to be Tatyana. He now falls in love with her, but she refuses to leave her husband, Prince Gremin, leaving Onegin desolate. In Act I, the famous Letter Aria is sung by the innocent Tatyana as she spends a night composing a love-letter to Onegin. In the climactic fourth section of the aria, a simple six-note falling scale is transformed by an unexpected harmonic sidestep into the most unforgettable theme of the opera.

While writing *Onegin*, Tchaikovsky received a declaration of love in a letter from a former student, Antonina Milyukova, and they married. Antonina, it now appears, knew and accepted that their marriage would be 'platonic', as Tchaikovsky was attracted to men. Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies are often interpreted as the diary of a tormented gay man in a repressive society. Recent scholarship has shown this - and indeed the idea that Tchaikovsky committed suicide - to be incorrect. Sadly, ambiguous notes in his diary have provided fodder for inaccurate speculation.

Symphony No.5 In E Minor, op.64
Andante - allegro con anima
Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza
Valse (allegro moderato)
Finale (andante maestoso -

allegro vivace - moderato assai e molto maestoso)

Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony (like his Fourth) belongs to a genre associated with Schumann and Brahms: the 'motto' symphony, unified by a 'motto' or theme stated in the introduction to the first movement. The work too displays some of Tchaikovsky's most inspired orchestration.

The first movement's introduction features the low register of the clarinet, an instrument that also heralds the faster material of the main body of the movement. The energy gradually increases, with marvelous antiphonal writing for the winds against the passionate surges of the strings and the urgent punctuation from the brass. The 'second subject' group of themes forms a sharp contrast in its more lyrical, noble mood. The material forms the basis for dramatically contending music, but the movement ends quietly and in a sense inconclusively. The slow movement is justly famous for its long breathed horn theme, and its powerful climaxes (Tchaikovsky's directions for the second climax are 'with desire and passion'). The balletic *Valse* may have anecdotal significance, but it also provides a relaxation in the intensity of the music (despite a late reminiscence of the motto) before the finale, in which the tension between tragedy and joy is decisively concluded in favour of joy. The work does have moments of unarguably tragic tone: a number of Tchaikovsky's closest friends died at this time, including Nikolai Kondratiev whose demise provided the inspiration for the symphony. Scholar Roland John Wiley argues that the rhythm of the motto theme corresponds to a Russian Easter chant that sets the words 'Christ is risen'. He notes that 'if that connection was intentional, various aspects of meaning in the Fifth Symphony would be clarified. The triumphal variant of the motto in the last movement would be more than a defeat-to-victory cliché, while the clash between the motto and the worldly intonations of the inner movements would make sense.'

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