

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

CONCERT PROGRAM



Hrůša Conducts Suk's *Asrael* Symphony

Thursday 1 September at 8pm
Arts Centre Melbourne,
Hamer Hall
Presented by Emirates

Friday 2 September at 8pm
Robert Blackwood Hall,
Monash University



Principal Partner

ARTISTS

Melbourne
Symphony Orchestra
Jakub Hruša conductor

REPERTOIRE

Mozart
Symphony No.25

— Interval —

Suk
Symphony No.2 *Asrael*

This concert has a duration of approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.



Series
Presenters

Pre-Concert Talk/Post-Concert Talk

7pm Thursday 1 September, Stalls Foyer, Hamer Hall

7pm Friday 2 September, Foyer, Robert Blackwood Hall

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

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) was established in 1906 and is Australia's oldest orchestra. It currently performs live to more than 250,000 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. The Orchestra also delivers innovative and engaging programs to audiences of all ages through its Education and Outreach initiatives.

Sir Andrew Davis gave his inaugural concerts as the MSO's Chief Conductor in 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, Truls Mørk and Renée Fleming, and the Orchestra's European Tour in 2014 which included appearances at the Edinburgh Festival, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival and Copenhagen's Tivoli Concert Hall. Further current and future highlights with Sir Andrew Davis include a complete cycle of the Mahler symphonies. Sir Andrew will maintain the role of Chief Conductor until the end of 2019.

The MSO also works with Associate Conductor Benjamin Northey and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus, as well as with such eminent recent guest conductors as Thomas Adès, John Adams, Tan Dun, Charles Dutoit, Jakub Hrůša, Mark Wigglesworth, Markus Stenz and Simone Young. It has also collaborated with non-classical musicians including Burt Bacharach, Nick Cave, Sting, Tim Minchin, Ben Folds, DJ Jeff Mills and Flight Facilities.

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra reaches a wider audience through regular radio broadcasts, recordings and CD releases, including a Strauss cycle on ABC Classics which includes *Four Last Songs*, *Don Juan* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as well as *Ein Heldenleben* and Four Symphonic Interludes from *Intermezzo*, both led by Sir Andrew Davis. On the Chandos label the MSO has recently released Berlioz' *Harold en Italie* with James Ehnes and music by Charles Ives which includes Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, as well as a range of orchestral works including *Three Places in New England*, again led by Sir Andrew Davis.

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.

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we perform – The Kulin Nation – and would like to pay our respects to their Elders and Community both past and present.

Jakub Hrůša succeeds Jonathan Nott as Chief Conductor of the Bamberg Symphony in September, 2016. He is Permanent Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic, Principal Guest Conductor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (TMSO), and served as Music Director and Chief Conductor of PKF-Prague Philharmonia from 2009–2015.

He is a regular guest with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. The 2015/16 season saw debuts with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam and Filarmonica della Scala, a new production of Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* at Vienna State Opera and Puccini's *Il trittico* at Frankfurt Opera. He has appeared regularly at Glyndebourne.

Jakub Hrůša's recordings include Smetana's *Má vlast* from the Prague Spring Festival, Tchaikovsky and Bruch Violin Concertos with Nicola Benedetti, and Suk's *Asrael* Symphony with TMSO for Octavia Records.

Originally from Brno, Jakub Hrůša studied conducting at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

Jakub Hrůša is a regular guest with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756–1791)

Symphony No.25 in G minor, K183

Allegro con brio

Andante

Menuetto e trio

Allegro

In the early 1770s, when Mozart was in his late teens, he wrote a number of symphonies as he assimilated the lessons of Haydn, J.C. Bach and others. Few of them are 'great', and indeed Mozart was, for most of his career, temperamentally better suited to the concerto than the symphony. But there are two indisputably important pieces among the early symphonies: the serenely gracious Symphony No.29 in A (K201) and its polar opposite, the 'little' G minor work, K183.

Minor-key symphonies were relatively rare at the time, and Mozart only wrote two: this and the late K550 (No.40, also in G minor). But composers like C.P.E. Bach and Joseph Haydn had experimented with 'extreme' modes of expression – a number of Haydn's symphonies from around 1770 are characterised by minor tonality, dramatic gestures, hefty unison passages, sudden changes of volume, and a self-conscious use of Baroque counterpoint. They are now often known as *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) works, a term retrospectively borrowed from a literary movement that only occurred a few years later.

Mozart's first G minor Symphony displays many of the stylistic traits of Haydn's *Sturm und Drang* work, and its orchestration – including two pairs of horns and the independent use of the bassoons – gives the work its dark colour and rhetorical force. It opens with driving syncopations that outline, in unison, a jagged falling 'baroque' figure that is answered by a phrase built on an emphatic minor arpeggio. The second group of themes is in the relative major key, B flat – a contrast to which Miloš Forman provided a brilliant visual analogy in the film *Amadeus*: Mozart's (fictional) nemesis, the mad, wounded composer Salieri, is carried through snow-bound streets in the minor-key sections, while dancers whirl in a bright ballroom to the major-key themes. As the movement's recapitulation unfolds, the major-key themes appear in the minor, with disturbing new implications.

As the four-note figure dominates the first movement, a tiny three-note 'cell' economically powers the Andante. The *Menuetto* has stark unisons and octaves, but a contrasting pastoral *trio* for winds. Then, more *Sturm und Drang* in the finale, made even more substantial by Mozart's insistence, as in the first movement, that both halves should be repeated.

Gordon Kerry © 2010

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra first performed this symphony on 10 February 1962 under conductor Sir Charles Mackerras, and most recently on 29-31 August 2002 with Graeme Jenkins.

JOSEF SUK
(1874–1935)

Symphony No.2 in C minor, Op.27 *Asrael*

Part One

I. *Andante sostenuto – Andante con moto e risoluto – Più pesante e maestoso –*

II. *Andante –*

III. *Vivace – Andante sostenuto – Appassionato – Maestoso*

Part Two

IV. *Adagio –*

V. *Adagio e maestoso – Allegro appassionato – Adagio e maestoso – Andante maestoso – Adagio e mesto*

Suk began work on his symphony in January 1905, intending to make it a memorial and homage to his late, great mentor Antonín Dvořák. He had completed the first three of five movements by July of that year, when his wife, Otilka (Dvořák's daughter), died. It was at this time that he gave the work its title, after the name for the angel who, according to Islamic tradition, carries the souls of the dead to paradise. The first three movements are played without a break; after a long pause, the fourth and fifth are played with only a short break between them.

In the first, a simple, low melody that is associated with Fate opens the piece. There follows an unstable motif to represent Death; and music that conveys a sense of nostalgia for past happiness.

The second movement *Andante* is much simpler in form, beginning quietly with music in which some have heard an echo of Dvořák's Requiem. This gives way to a funeral march that dissolves into a bleak texture of pizzicato strings. The third movement dances in the face of death, with a heartbreaking, lyrical section that in turn leads to an opulent, passionate passage. The scherzo music returns, now seemingly even more urgent, but is crushed by a fully scored unison statement of the Death motif.

Part Two begins with a ten-minute *Adagio* which is dedicated to Otilka and which clearly represents the depth of the composer's feeling for her in two passages where the solo violin soars above the texture. The Fate and Death motifs are transfigured into fully fledged songlike melodies. The movement ends quietly with a figure repeated to suggest the music's unwillingness to let go of the image of Otilka.

In the finale, strident music of timpani strokes, brass chords and anguished string figurations leads to a fast section frequently brought to heel by imperious blasts from the brass. The climax of the work is a brutal repetition of Death's motif. The 'slow and sad' coda features cor anglais and solo violin. High, serene soft chords suggest that love is strong as death.

Abridged from a note by Gordon Kerry
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The only previous performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra took place on 5-6 April 2002 under János Fürst.

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