



Melbourne Town Hall Series Friday 11 September at 7.30pm Melbourne Town Hall



What's On

September — November



MOZART'S SYMPHONY No.40 Thursday 17 September Friday 18 September Saturday 19 September Monday 21 September

Featuring MSO Concertmaster Eoin Andersen, works by Stravinsky are balanced by Mozart's final Violin Concerto and the unmistakeable melancholic strains of Symphony No.40.



SCHEHERAZADE Thursday 1 October Friday 2 October Monday 5 October

Under the baton of Jakub Hrůša, the overture to Smetana's comic opera *The Bartered Bride* opens a dazzling night of music. Dvořák's Violin Concerto is followed by Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, a vivid orchestral work inspired by the tales of the *Arabian Niahts*.



AN AMERICAN IN PARIS Friday 30 October

Gershwin's An American in Paris evokes a journey through the bustling streets of the French capital, punctuated by taxi horns and a bluesy trumpet solo. Also featured in this program is Ravel's Piano Concerto in G and Saint-Saëns' Symphony No.3 Organ.



TCHAIKOVSKY & GRIEG Friday 13 November Saturday 14 November

Asher Fisch conducts three masterworks that defined the Romantic era. Tchaikovsky's stirring *Romeo and Juliet* is followed by Grieg's poignant Piano Concerto, with the high-voltage intensity of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony.



SIBELIUS' FINLANDIA Thursday 19 November Friday 20 November

Yan Pascal Tortelier celebrates the 150th anniversary of two Nordic masters. Sibelius' majestic *Finlandia* is balanced against Nielsen's spirited Violin Concerto. Also featured in this program is Sibelius' Symphony No.5 and tone poem *The Swan of Tuonela*.



BRAHMS & TCHAIKOVSKY Thursday 26 November Friday 27 November Saturday 28 November

Divertimento, Bartók's dark take on the Baroque, kick-starts this night of European festivities. Brahms' Violin Concerto delivers a fiery, gypsyinspired rondo and Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings pays homage to Mozart.



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Welcome to **Pictures At An Exhibition**

MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Welcome to the Melbourne Town Hall and this concert conducted by MSO Associate Conductor Benjamin Northey.

In fact, you might call tonight's program picturesque. Two of the items were inspired by works of art: Four Tone Poems after Arnold Böcklin, by the German composer Max Reger, is a romantic interpretation of four celebrated works by the Swiss artist; and Mussorgsky's famous musical blockbuster, Pictures at an Exhibition, is an entire art gallery in sound — especially in Ravel's orchestration.

In between comes Liszt's Piano Concerto No.1 — a work that is itself as vivid and challenging as an expressionist painting with young Melbourne virtuoso Hoang Pham as soloist.

I hope you enjoy tonight's concert.

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 Richard Strauss, Charles Ives, 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

Benjamin Northey conductor

Hoang Pham piano

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REGER

Four Tone Poems after Arnold Böcklin

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LISZT

Piano Concerto No.1

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Interval 20 minutes

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MUSSORGSKY (orch. RAVEL) Pictures at an Exhibition

This concert has a duration of approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes including one 20 minute interval.

Pre-Concert Recital

6.30pm Friday 11 September Melbourne Town Hall

Ticket-holders are invited to attend a free pre-concert recital by Dr Calvin Bowman, on the Melbourne Town Hall grand organ.

Benjamin Northey conductor

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

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

In Australia, Benjamin has made many critically-acclaimed appearances as a guest conductor with all 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.* This year he returns to all the major Australian orchestras, the HKPO, the NZSO and conducts *Turandot* for Opera Australia.

Hoang Pham piano

Born in Vietnam, Australian pianist Hoang Pham studied at the Australian National Academy of Music and at the Manhattan School of Music, and has graduated with both a Bachelor and Master of Music.

He was winner of the 2013 ABC Symphony Australia Young Performers Award, a prize winner of the Bösendorfer Piano Competition and the Cleveland International Piano Competition, winner of the 2005 Lev Vlassenko Piano Competition in Brisbane, awarded Best Australian at the 2008 Sydney International Piano Competition and winner of Melbourne Recital Centre's inaugural Great Romantics Competition in 2010.

Hoang has performed as concerto soloist with the Melbourne, Queensland and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and the New London Orchestra in the UK.

He has also appeared at the Huntington Estate Music Festival, and as soloist performing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.2 for the Australian Ballet's national season of *Imperial Suite*. Hoang makes regular recital appearances in England, USA and France.





Max Reger (1873-1916)

Four Tone Poems after Arnold Böcklin, Op. 128

The Hermit Playing a Violin The Play of the Waves The Isle of the Dead **Bacchanal**

Reger's tone-poems after paintings by Arnold Böcklin are not typical of this prolific composer. A direct contemporary of Schoenberg, the Bavarian-born Reger gained a considerable reputation during his life for cultivating 'traditional' techniques like Bachian counterpoint and classical forms often in richly chromatic tonal harmony. His works by and large avoided the programmatic or pictorial element of, for instance, Richard Strauss' tone poems. In the Böcklin suite, however, Reger often adopts a style of great simplicity, precisely to depict musically the imagery of Böcklin's paintings. The work was composed in 1913, quite late in Reger's sadly short career.

Böcklin (1827-1901) was of Swiss birth but spent considerable time in Italy and was, for most of his career, a Romantic painter par excellence. His 'Hermit' painting shows an old man clad in the robes of a monk, playing the violin, with head bowed in front of an outdoor niche that contains a small shrine to the Madonna. Above, but unseen by the hermit, two cherubs listen from a patch of light, while another angel stands behind, rapt by the music. Reger's response is a simple hymnal harmony (which, coupled with his colourful orchestration, nonetheless rises to a high level of intensity) that supports a seemingly improvised, ecstatic song from the solo violin.



The following sea-picture is restless and liquid, providing strong contrast with the 'Hermit'. Reger's music is somewhat more inviting than Böcklin's picture, though: there the sea is a cold, dark-green under a cloudy sky that only shows a little blue on the horizon, and the mermaid in the foreground looks less than happy to be pawed by the swarthy satyr beside her. Böcklin's most famous image, The Isle of the Dead, was of course also the inspiration for Rachmaninov's tone poem of the same name. (Incidentally, there is a rather less well-known *Isle of the* Living, where nymphs and centaurs cavort on the beach and in the water.) There are several versions of Isle of the Dead, but each shows the mythological Charon, a gaunt, spectral figure in white, who carries the souls of the dead on his ferryboat towards an island ringed with rock walls that has a grove of cypress trees at its centre. The music consists of wan passages, lightly scored and often featuring wind solos, that are periodically interrupted by impassioned, usually minor-key, episodes from the full orchestra.

The title of the final tone poem suggests another mythological moment, namely the festival of the god Bacchus (Dionysus), the patron of wine whose rites were celebrated with appropriate abandon. But by now Reger is less interested in depicting a particular image, so much as creating an atmosphere. There is no painting of Böcklin's specifically called 'Bacchanal', but there are any number that feature people and/or mythological creatures enjoying relaxed festivities: Böcklin's Roman May Festival, where a group dances below a rotundashaped temple, may have been part of Reger's inspiration. In any case, the music hardly requires a pictorial hook; it swirls and dances and occasionally staggers as we might expect.

Gordon Kerry © 2015

This is the first performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Piano Concerto No.1 in E flat Allegro maestoso -Quasi adagio -Allegro vivace - Allegro animato -Allegro marziale animato

Hoang Pham piano

Liszt was a larger-than-life character, both biographically and musically. A gifted child prodigy, he was publicly kissed on the brow by Beethoven, and later gained a formidable reputation as a womaniser, toured extensively as the greatest pianist of his era, lived with a princess and even took a form of Holy Orders. Yet behind this colourful and romantic image lay an immensely gifted musician, deeply committed to the future of music and the creative endeavours of his contemporaries.

Liszt's two piano concertos rank among his most important works and, while quite different in character, have a similar history. Early sketches for both works date from 1838-1840, but Liszt's constant touring prevented the completion of the first until 1849, the year after his appointment as court conductor in Weimar. But even then there was a delay and the Concerto No.1 was not to be premiered in Weimar until 17 February 1855, with Liszt himself as soloist and Berlioz conducting.

Dedicated to Henri Litolff, the concerto is a work of extraordinary unity in four movements played without a break. The main theme dominates both the first and the last movements and all other important themes recur several times during the course of the work. Variations of these themes occur through metamorphosis and transformation rather than through formal development.

The forceful principal theme is stated immediately in the strings over wind chords. It is said that Liszt sang the words 'Das versteht ihr alle nicht' ('None of you understands this') to this melody. After four bars the piano enters and we hear a cadenza and some elaboration of the opening theme. The movement ends with intricate arpeggios and runs in the piano while the orchestra restates the main theme.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

In the Adagio the dreamlike melody for the piano gives way to a magical moment where the flute and then clarinet enter while the pianist's trills die away to nothing.

The scherzo contains an unusually prominent part for that most humble of orchestral instruments the triangle! It is employed at the beginning as a sparkling companion to the descending cascades of the piano. The critic Eduard Hanslick bitterly attacked the prominence given to the triangle in this movement, but Liszt retorted that it offered 'the effect of contrast'. Such extraordinary aesthetic debates hindered the general acceptance of the concerto early in its life (it was not performed again until 1869), although they could not distract popular attention from it forever. A third important theme is introduced in this scherzo and the end of the movement is signalled by a cadenza in which the opening theme of the movement is again suggested.

A development section then leads to the final movement in which we find all the themes of the concerto transformed and unified: first the delicate *Adagio* melody is treated in a march-like fashion, then the theme of the scherzo ushers in a brilliant *stretto* (overlapping entries in close succession), and finally the main theme returns in triumph.

The strength – and the paradox – of this concerto lie in its tight structure that nevertheless appears to be almost 'improvisatory'. As the legendary pianist Alfred Cortot remarked, 'The listener ... must not be given the impression that he is subjected to a kind of nonsensical chitchat. The steadiness of the work's foundations must be felt.'

Martin Buzacott Symphony Australia © 1998

The Melbourne Symphony was the first of the Australian state orchestras to perform this concerto, in April 1940 with conductor Georg Schnéevoigt and pianist Eric Landerer. The MSO most recently performed it at a free concert at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl in February 2012, with Diego Matheuz and Ian Munro as soloist.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) (orch. Maurice Ravel)

Pictures at an Exhibition

Promenade

Gnome

Promenade

The Old Castle

Promenade

Tuileries - Children quarrelling at play Bydlo

Promenade

Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens 'Samuel' Goldenberg and 'Schmuÿle' Limoges Market

Catacombs - Roman sepulchres
Con mortuis in lingua mortua
(With the dead in a dead language)
The Hut on Hen's Legs - Baba-Yaga
The Great Gate of Kiev

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Mussorgsky wrote Pictures at an Exhibition as a memorial to his friend the artist Victor Hartmann who had died prematurely of a heart attack in 1873. In 1874 Vladimir Stasov, the influential critic, mounted an exhibition of Hartmann's works – paintings, drawings, designs and jewellery – and it was this which inspired Mussorgsky to produce what became the piano work Pictures at an Exhibition, a set of 'tone-portraits' based on a selection of Hartmann's works.

There have been various orchestrations of *Pictures* over the years, indicating the essentially orchestral nature of Mussorasky's pianism. The most famous, however, is that of Maurice Ravel, the result of a commission from Serge Koussevitzky. For Ravel, the act of orchestrating was an important occupation, and this may explain why he is one of the great orchestral colourists. Certainly, he also had an affinity with Mussorgsky's music and with Russian music in general; by the time he came to orchestrate Pictures in 1922, he and Stravinsky had already completed Mussorgsky's unfinished opera Khovanshchina for Sergei Diaghilev. Ravel pursued this type of engagement with the music of others with a strong inner conviction. As H.H. Stuckenschmidt commented: 'The score is an ideal example of artistic empathy, giving the impression that Ravel had completely identified himself with Mussorgsky's own creative thinking.'

Pictures at an Exhibition begins with the **Promenade**, an introduction in a varying 5/4 and 6/4 metre, meant to represent the composer himself wandering around looking at the paintings. What begins as a single line followed by chords in the piano original is presented as a solo trumpet followed by tutti brass and, later, massed strings and winds, providing altered perspectives.

Gnome is inspired by Hartmann's design for a small gnome-shaped nutcracker.

The Old Castle is based on a watercolour of a troubadour singing before a medieval castle. In an inspired piece of orchestration, Ravel gives the principal melody to alto saxophone.

The third *Promenade* has a fuller orchestration, in response to the thicker chords of Mussorgsky's original.

Ravel opts predominantly for winds in *Tuileries*, based on Hartmann's watercolour of one corner of the famous French garden.

Bydlo, Polish for 'cattle', refers to a drawing of two oxen pulling a heavy cart. Listening to the piano original with its heavy bass chords and opening fortissimo, one is reminded of the realist Mussorgsky's attempts at pantomimic accuracy. Ravel, however, aims for a different effect. His Bydlo begins as a distant forlorn tuba solo which builds with the addition of other instruments before returning to solo tuba – as if the cart has passed on its way.

Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens is based on Hartmann's costume designs for the ballet Trilby. The dancers' legs stick out from the shells. Ravel's clacking winds conjure the image of farmyard activity.

'Samuel' Goldenberg and 'Schmuÿle' is often presented with Stasov's sanitised title Two Jews – One Rich, the other Poor, but, according to Richard Taruskin, Mussorgsky's intention was definitely unflattering, which is backed up by the fact that no Hartmann picture by that name exists. The stuttering muted trumpet solo here is often used as an orchestral audition piece.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) (orch. Maurice Ravel)

Ravel removed a *Promenade* which originally occurred between 'Samuel' Goldenberg and 'Schmuÿle' and **Limoges Market**. Certainly, Mussorgsky wanted the listener to keep in mind the observer's changing perspective, but Ravel acknowledged that an audience isn't in need of such a literal account.

In *Catacombs* Hartmann painted himself, the architect Kenel and a guide with a lantern exploring the Paris catacombs. The orchestration is almost brutally simple with stark – though expertly voiced – brass chords.

Catacombs moves into Con mortuis in lingua mortua. We hear a variation of the Promenade theme, with oboes playing against sepulchralsounding high string tremolos. Mussorgsky wrote on the piano score: 'Hartmann's creative spirit leads me to the place of skulls and calls to them – the skulls begin to glow faintly from within.'

The Hut on Hen's Legs refers to a Hartmann design for a clock face in the form of Baba-Yaga, the witch in Russian folk tales who lives in a hut mounted on the legs of a giant fowl.

The Great Gate of Kiev,

Hartmann's architectural design for a commemorative structure, provides the inspiration for a massive blazing finale. G.K. Williams Symphony Australia © 1999/2001

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra first performed Pictures at an Exhibition in July 1938 with conductor Percy Code, and most recently in July 2012 with Jakub Hrůša.

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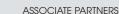
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