

31 October 2025



MUSSORGSKY'S

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

«SYDNEY»
«SYMPHONY»
«ORCHESTRA»

Principal Partner



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 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.

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, Zdeněk 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.

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Harry Bennetts

Associate Concertmaster

Alexandra Osborne

Associate Concertmaster

Fiona Ziegler

Assistant Concertmaster

Sophie Cole

Acting Assistant Concertmaster

Sun Yi

Associate Concertmaster

Emeritus

Jennifer Booth

Sercan Danis

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alex Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Leone Ziegler

Tamara Elias*

Jasmine Tan*

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Kirsty Hilton

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Marina Marsden

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Rebecca Gill

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Shuti Huang

Wendy Kong

Benjamin Li

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Maja Verunica

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Associate Principal

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Rachel Silver

Emily Newham°

Julia Brooke*

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David Elton

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Brent Grapes

Associate Principal

Cécile Glémot

Anthony Heinrichs

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Nick Byrne

Jeremy Mazurek†

Cooper Rands*

Christopher Harris

Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Steven Rossé

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Kendal Cuneo*

Colin Grisdale*

Matthew Hyam*

David Imlay*

Toby Rands*

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Toby Rands*

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Antoine Siguré

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EXTRAS

Alice Morgan*

Guest Principal Saxophone

Bold Principal

* Guest Musician

° Contract Musician

† Sydney Symphony

Fellow

2025 CONCERT SEASON

TEA AND SYMPHONY
Friday 31 October, 11am

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

MUSSORGSKY'S PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

CONDUCTED BY SIMONE YOUNG

SIMONE YOUNG conductor

LEOŠ JANÁČEK (1854–1928)

Sinfonietta (1926)

- i. Allegretto
- ii. Andante
- iii. Moderato
- iv. Allegretto
- v. Andante con moto

MODEST MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881)

orch. MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874, orch. 1922)

- i. Promenade
- ii. *Gnome*
- iii. Promenade
- iv. *The Old Castle*
- v. Promenade
- vi. *Tuileries*
- vii. *Bydlo*
- viii. Promenade
- ix. *Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens*
- x. *'Samuel' Goldenburg and 'Schmuyle'*
- xi. *Limoges Market*
- xii. *Catacombs (Roman Sepulchres)* –
- xiii. *Cum mortuis in lingua morta* (With the Dead in a Dead Language)
- xiv. *The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba-Yaga)*
- xv. *The Great Gate of Kiev*

Estimated durations

Janáček – 25 minutes

Mussorgsky – 35 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately one hour

Cover image

By Rebecca Shaw

Principal Partner





Photo by Peter Brew-Bevan

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIMONE YOUNG AM conductor

Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor, 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. Her appointment as Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has recently been extended through until the end of 2029.

An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festival, Vienna Staatsoper, Berlin Staatsoper, Hamburg Staatsoper and, in 2026, La Scala Milan.

Simone Young has an extensive and celebrated recording catalogue. Her first performance as Chief Conductor in Sydney, featuring Mahler's Symphony No.2 *Resurrection* and the world premiere of William Barton's *Of the Earth* was released worldwide on Deutsche Grammophon, and performances of Elgar & Vaughan Williams, *Das Rheingold* and *Gurrelieder* have been filmed for Sydney Symphony On Demand. 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 Folk songs and songs of Richard Strauss with Steve Davislim, and songs by Wagner and Strauss with Lisa Gasteen.

Simone Young's return invitations to the great orchestras of the world next year will include the Suisse Romande, the Orchestre nationale de Lyon, West German Radio Orchestra Cologne, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France Paris, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco and Montreal Symphony Orchestras, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra,

Philharmonia Orchestra, London and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester. She also returns to ANAM, Melbourne to lead their orchestra in a 30th birthday celebration Gala performance.

Firmly established as one of the world's leading opera conductors, 2026 will see Simone Young return to the Berlin Staatsoper (*Lohengrin* and *Nabucco*), La Scala Milan (the *Ring* cycle and a new work by Luca Francesconi) and *Götterdämmerung*, completing Sydney Symphony's *Ring Cycle*.

The presentation of Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Ring Cycle* in concert, commencing in 2023, has played to sold out audiences, standing ovations and 5-star reviews. A second, feature-length documentary film, *Knowing the Score*, showcasing Simone Young and her career was also internationally released in 2023.

In 2025 Simone Young was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Sydney. Her many accolades also 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, the 2013 Helpmann Award for Best Individual Classical Music Performance and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT LEOŠ JANÁČEK

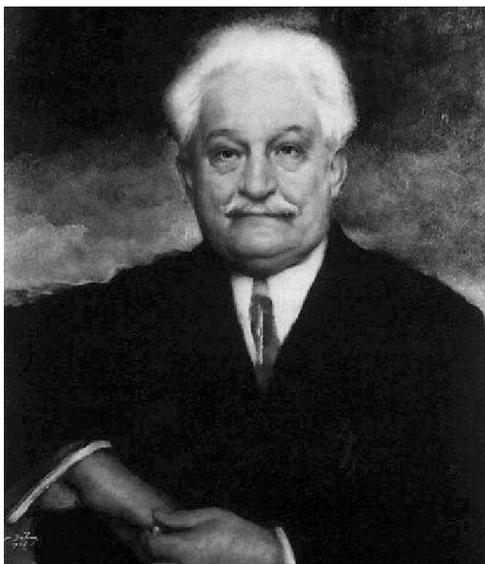
Janáček is proof that life – or at least a richly creative life – starts at 50. His father was an impoverished schoolmaster in a tiny village in Moravia, but Leoš received excellent training in music from his father and then, having shown great promise, in the regional capital of Brno.

He studied further at conservatories in Prague, Leipzig and Vienna before returning to settle in Brno. There he taught, founding the Brno Organ School (which later became the Brno Conservatorium) and composed; he also edited a journal of music criticism, and collected folk music. In around 1896 he became ardently pro-Russian, seeing Russia's as a model for authentically Slavic culture.

Janáček didn't merely arrange folk music, but listened carefully to its distinctive irregularities of metre and rhythm, and married this with a melodic manner derived in part from the sound of Czech speech, most obviously in his operas. Even Theodor W Adorno, philosopher of modern[ist] music, wrote admiringly of 'the magnificent art of Janáček [that] has a power of alienation which places it in the company of the avant-garde.'

Janáček's first opera was shelved, but his second, *Počátek románu* (The Beginning of a Romance) was a folkloric affair based on a work by playwright Gabriela Preissová that was performed in 1891. Preissová had also written the play *Její pastorkyňa* (Her Stepdaughter), which would become the opera *Jenůfa* which premiered in Brno in 1904 (and Prague 12 years later).

In the quarter-century that followed, Janáček composed six more operas, including *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Kat'a Kabanova* and *The Makropoulos Affair*. This 'late' period also saw orchestral masterpieces like *Taras Bulba* and the Sinfonietta, enduring piano works like *On an Overgrown Path* and the Piano Sonata, a great deal of choral music including *The Diary of One who Disappeared* and the monumental *Glagolitic Mass*.



Janáček in 1926

In 1917 Janacek met Kamila Stösslová, the 20-something wife of a dealer in antiques. Opinions differ as to the extent, if any, to which she reciprocated the 60-something composer's feelings (Janáček's estranged wife Zdenka wrote that Kamila 'was completely unimpressed by my husband's fame, and also by his person'), but much of Janáček's late work, such as the two great string quartets reflect powerful erotic motivations.

ABOUT THE SINFONIETTA

Anthony Cane writes:

Janáček's last and greatest instrumental work grew from unpromising origins – a military band concert in a park and a gymnastic festival.

The band concert took place in a park in the 13th-century town of Pisek in 1925. The invitation in the following year to compose music for a gymnastic festival of the patriotic Sokol movement offered Janáček the opportunity to create his own fanfares and, by extension, to express joy at the promise of the newly independent state of Czechoslovakia, born out of the Peace of Versailles. The festival fanfares provided the frame within which Janáček's ideas expanded to form a five-movement work.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

In a gesture of homage and gratitude Janáček dedicated his Sinfonietta 'to the Czechoslovak Armed Forces'. Brno, the capital of Moravia, inspired his original enigmatic movement headings: 1. Fanfares, 2. The Castle, 3. The Queen's Monastery, 4. The Street, 5. The Town Hall. As Janáček explained the following year in an article published under the title *My Town*:

I saw the town change miraculously. I lost my dislike of the forbidding town hall, my hatred of the hill whose bowels screamed with pain, my loathing of the street and everything crawling in it. By some miracle the resurrection of 28 October 1918 spread a radiant light of freedom over the town. I saw myself there. I belonged. And the brazen, victorious trumpets, the holy peace of the Queen's Monastery, shadows at night, life restored to the green hill, and a vision of the town's future greatness – all these gave birth to my Sinfonietta.

It is thus suddenly clear that the 'castle' of the second movement is not the splendid Prague Castle, as its first hearers must have imagined, but the notorious Spilberk, with its underground dungeons. But this and all that Janáček had hated in Brno – above all, its Germanness – were transformed by its becoming Czech. The streets are alive with people going freely about their business, and the town hall is a symbol not of oppression but of self-determination. Although these ideas can be observed in the Sinfonietta in a general way, the music is as absolute as anything Janáček ever wrote.

Despite the huge forces called for, each movement is scored with characteristic individuality and the ultimate effect is one of considerable lightness, even delicacy, offset against the moments of great power.

The fanfares of the opening movement are, as Jaroslav Vogel points out, essentially an intrada to the four main movements which follow. The burden of this solemn festivity is borne by the nine extra trumpets, plus bass trumpets and tenor tubas, all of which will henceforth remain silent until the fanfares return at the end of the last movement.

The *Andante* is built on two themes, the first described by Vogel as a 'burlesque dance motif' and the second a more lyrical variant of the first. There is a hint of melancholy, even tragedy, about the nocturnal serenity of the third movement. However, the mood is disrupted by an extraordinary central section after which a return to the preceding serenity can only seem somewhat ambivalent.

With bright-eyed innocence the fourth movement presents a welcome contrast. The movement is based on the single opening theme, and its fourteen repetitions are in the nature of tiny variations, in which one or two small musical jokes are masked by a disarmingly straight face. The theme with which flutes launch the finale is, as Vogel indicates, a nostalgic minor variant of the theme of the preceding movement: when clarinets take over it becomes slightly grotesque; as the movement progresses it becomes increasingly macabre until, following a squeal almost of anguish from the E-flat clarinet, the additional brass re-emerge and all twelve trumpets play together for the first time in the exultant fanfares of the opening movement. The fanfares now are heard with the support of the full orchestra, embellished by penetrating trills in the strings and wind as they move irrepressibly forward to a short, impelling coda.

Janáček's Sinfonietta is scored for 4 flutes (4th doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 4 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, harp and strings, as well as an offstage brass ensemble of 9 trumpets, 2 bass trumpets and 2 tenor trombones.

It was first performed on 29 June 1926 in Prague, with Václav Talich conducting the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in July 1958, conducted by Kurt Wöss.

Other notable performances include those led by Charles Mackerras (1963, 1983 and 2007, the latter released on CD), Willem van Otterloo (1972, 1978), Stuart Challender (1989), Jorge Mester (1991), Carlo Rizzi (2000, including as part of the Paralympics Arts Festival), Emmanuel Villaume (2002), Marc Taddei (2010) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (at Usher Hall in Edinburgh on our 2010 International Tour).

Our most recent performances were under David Robertson in 2014.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT MUSSORGSKY

When Mussorgsky died, aged 42, he might not have seemed a candidate for the kind of posthumous fame he has achieved thanks to standards like *Night on Bald Mountain* or *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Mussorgsky was born into a landowning family that could trace its origins to various nobles in Russia's relatively distant past, with various versions of the family name (the composer was always well aware of, and joked about, the similar-sounding Russian word for 'trash' or 'sweepings'). His mother was a pianist, who taught Modest from the age of six, but the dapper and somewhat naïve young man was sent to St Petersburg to study at the Cadet School of the Guards, and then to join the Imperial Guard on graduation, during which time he became well-known as a fine pianist and heavy drinker.

In the mid-1850s he befriended Alexander Borodin and was taken up by the eminent composer Alexander Dargomyzhsky, and by 1858 had resigned his commission in favour of a career in music. Through Dargomyzhsky he was getting first-hand experience of the opera theatre, and was soon enmeshed in the group of composers that we in English refer to as the 'Five', or 'Mighty Handful'. Mussorgsky would study with the group's leader Mili Balakirev, though neither was skilled in the techniques of Western music, which they both rejected in favour of a 'pure' Russian sound derived from Russian speech, song and dance. As Richard Taruskin has noted

There was no Russian conservatory where Mu[s]sorgsky might have studied until 1862, when he was already overage; and the Russian musical stage was dominated during his formative years by a state-supported Italian opera troupe from which the work of native composers was barred by official policy. Russian composers of Mu[s]sorgsky's generation were effectively frozen out of the country's musical establishment.



Mussorgsky in 1874

Other members of the Five, notably Borodin but especially Rimsky-Korsakov, would soon enough defect from the hard-line nationalist viewpoint, something that, paradoxically, contributed greatly to the ongoing like of Mussorgsky's music.

The Mussorgsky family finances were rapidly depleted with the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, so Mussorgsky was obliged to earn a living as a minor bureaucrat to support his composition. This may have contributed to the large number of un- (or barely) finished works that constitute his oeuvre. An early opera based on Flaubert's *Salammbô* was never completed and of the three that were left in something like a performable state – *Boris Godunov*, *Khovanshchina* and *Sorochintsi Fair* – only Boris has an orchestral score by the composer. And even that was well-meaningly edited by Rimsky-Korsakov, who also completed the orchestration of *Khovanshchina* and amended that of *Night on Bald Mountain*.

Mussorgsky was first and foremost a pianist, and though composers like Tchaikovsky, and more surprisingly Rimsky-Korsakov and Balakirev, scorned his apparent roughness and simplicity, he had a particularly warm admirer in Debussy, who responded to the lack of theoretical or technical sophistication and thought of Mussorgsky as 'something of a god in music.'

He never married.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Early 1874 provided the only high point of Mussorgsky's career as a composer. His opera *Boris Godunov* had received its premiere and was an immediate popular success. The critics, however, were uniformly unkind, and the negative response from one in particular upset the composer deeply.

Perhaps as a way to harness Mussorgsky's emotions at this time, VI Stasov (a critic who had coined the 'Five' epithet) suggested that the composer write a tribute piece to the artist Viktor Hartmann. Mussorgsky had been distraught when Hartmann had died the previous year and was happy to contribute such a piece when Stasov proposed a memorial exhibition of Hartmann's work. The result, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, is one of the more extraordinary pieces for solo piano from the 19th century – so much so that it was not immediately understood and was only published after the composer's early death. It experiments freely with unusual metres (much of the opening alternates 5/4 and 6/4), dissonant harmony (as in the *Gnome* movement), and sheer brute force (as in *Bydlo*).

Composers as unlike as Mussorgsky and Ravel are difficult to imagine. Where one prided himself on his untutored roughness, the other sought technical perfection. And yet in 1922 Ravel made his celebrated orchestration – not by any means the only orchestration of this work, but for good reason the one most often played. Ravel and Stravinsky – a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov's, after all – had collaborated on Mussorgsky's unfinished opera *Khovanshchina* a few years before, so Ravel was familiar with Mussorgsky's style and the characteristic sounds of the Russian orchestra. His version of *Pictures* was performed by Serge Koussevitzky in Paris later that year.

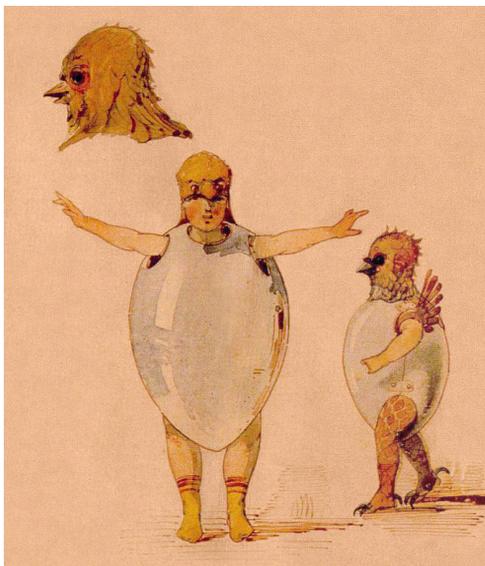
The work begins with a *Promenade* where a solo melody (given by Ravel to the trumpet) is answered by a series of chords for full ensemble. This music recurs at various times and in different timbral and metrical guises to represent the composer strolling through the exhibition. It is interrupted by the *Gnome*, a short, cantankerous movement inspired by Hartmann's design for a nutcracker shaped like a gnome.

A new statement of the *Promenade* takes us to *The Old Castle*, a watercolour of a troubadour singing in front of a medieval pile. In one of many orchestral masterstrokes, Ravel gives the troubadour's melody, in a lilting compound metre, to the alto saxophone.

The *Promenade* returns in a sombre form, but this time leading into a delicate sketch of the gardens of Tuileries. In response to Hartmann's watercolour, Ravel uses a texture of fluttering winds to depict the subtitle, 'Children quarrelling at play'.

Bydlo was said to depict an ox-cart, which in Ravel's imagination of it, we hear approaching slowly and deliberately from a long way away, coming close as the music reaches its loudest point, and retreating, unhurriedly into the distance. It is an example of Ravel as *composer* stepping in, as Mussorgsky's manuscript has the music starting very loudly.

The *Promenade* now leads to *Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens*, Mussorgsky's response to a design for a ballet on the fairy-story *Trilby*. Ravel's orchestration wonderfully captures the image of chickens, inside their eggs apart from their legs, racing about on stage.



Viktor Hartmann (1834–1873), *Ballad of the Unhatched Chickens* (1871). Source: Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House), St. Petersburg/Wikimedia.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

'*Samuel*' Goldenburg and '*Schmüjle*' (often sanitised as 'Two Jews, one rich, one poor') raises the unfortunate issue of Mussorgsky's anti-Semitism. As musicologist Richard Taruskin has pointed, the composer frequently referred disparagingly to Jews in his letters. There is, moreover, no known picture of two Jews in Hartmann's catalogue. Mussorgsky may have been conflating two images, but with a distasteful message: the two men's names are the same, but in different forms; however Europeanised '*Samuel*' may seem, he will always be the wheedling '*Schmüjle*'.

Omitting a Promenade, Ravel moves straight to the glittering world of the *Limoges Market*, which provides a huge contrast with the baleful austerity of the *Catacombs (Roman Sepulchres)*. This in turn passes into *With the Dead in a Dead Language*, of which Mussorgsky wrote 'Hartmann's creative spirit leads me to the place of skulls and calls to them – the skulls begin to glow faintly from within'. Here the music is based on that of the promenade.

The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba-Yaga) evokes a Russian fairy-tale of Baba-Yaga, a witch who flies through the night in an iron mortar (of the kitchen, not military) variety propelling herself with a pestle. Mussorgsky's music depicts the witch in full flight, although Hartmann's image was of a clock-face which showed Baba-Yaga's house with its distinctive feature of a pair of hen's legs.

The wild excitement of this movement builds inexorably into the final section, *The Great Gate of Kiev*. Hartmann's design for such a gate was never built, and was possibly not as grandiose as Mussorgsky's music suggests. Ravel further ups the ante, marshalling the entire force of the orchestra with bells on. Ravel's creates an overwhelming finale which can't help but remind us of the end of Tchaikovsky's '1812' Overture, and, more appropriately, the Coronation Scene from *Boris Godunov*.

Notes by Anthony Cane © 1995 (Janáček), Gordon Kerry © 2007 (Mussorgsky).

Mussorgsky composed his original piano score in June 1874. Ravel's orchestration was commissioned by conductor Serge Koussevitzky in 1922; Koussevitzky conducted its world premiere in Paris on 19 October that same year.

Ravel's orchestration is for 3 flutes (2nd and 3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon; 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, 2 harps, celeste and strings.

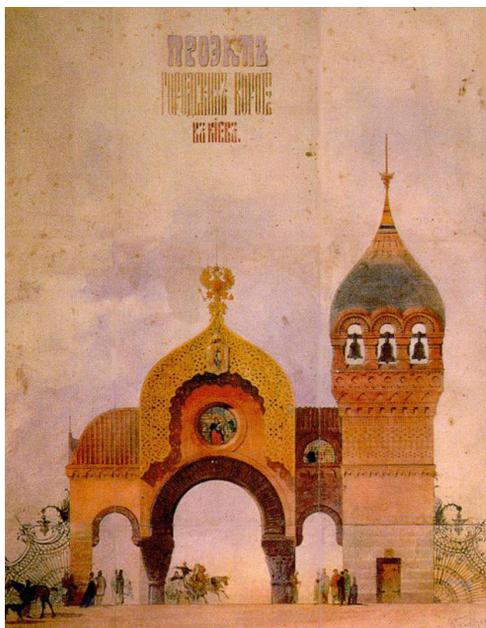
The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed Ravel's version in June 1941, conducted by Percy Code.

It has been a frequent feature of our seasons, with notable performances including those led by Eugene Goossens (1946, 51, 52), Jean Martinon (1956), Nicolai Malko (1957, 58), Igor Markevitch (1960), Moshe Atzmon (1971), Patrick Thomas (Manila, 1974), Hiroyuki Iwaki (Hong Kong, 1974), Willem van Otterloo (1977), Louis Frémaux (1979), Stuart Challender (1989), Vassili Sinaisky (1992), Tadaaki Otaka (1997), János Fürst (1998), David Zinman (2002), Kirill Karabits (2005), Jonathan Stockhammer (Symphony in the Domain, 2008), Pinchas Steinberg (2011) and Giancarlo Guerrero (2018).

It has also featured in Youth, Schools and Regional concerts over the years, with dozens of performances conducted by significant names including Joseph Post, Patrick Thomas, John Hopkins, Brian Buggy, Richard Gill and Benjamin Northey.

Our most recent performances were under Mihhail Gerts in 2023.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson



Viktor Hartmann (1834–1873), *Plan for a City Gate in Kiev* (1869).



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Rebecca Gill
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Chair, in memory
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Benjamin Li



Nicole Masters
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Chair*



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& Gretel Packer AM
Chair*



Justin Williams
Assistant Principal
*Bob & Julie Clappett
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Stuart Johnson



Justine Marsden



Felicity Tsai



Amanda Verner



Leonid Volovelsky

CELLOS



Catherine Hewgill
Principal
*Jacqui & John
Conde ao Chair*



Simon Cobcroft
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Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal



Kristy Conrau
*Deborah Anne
Jones Chair*



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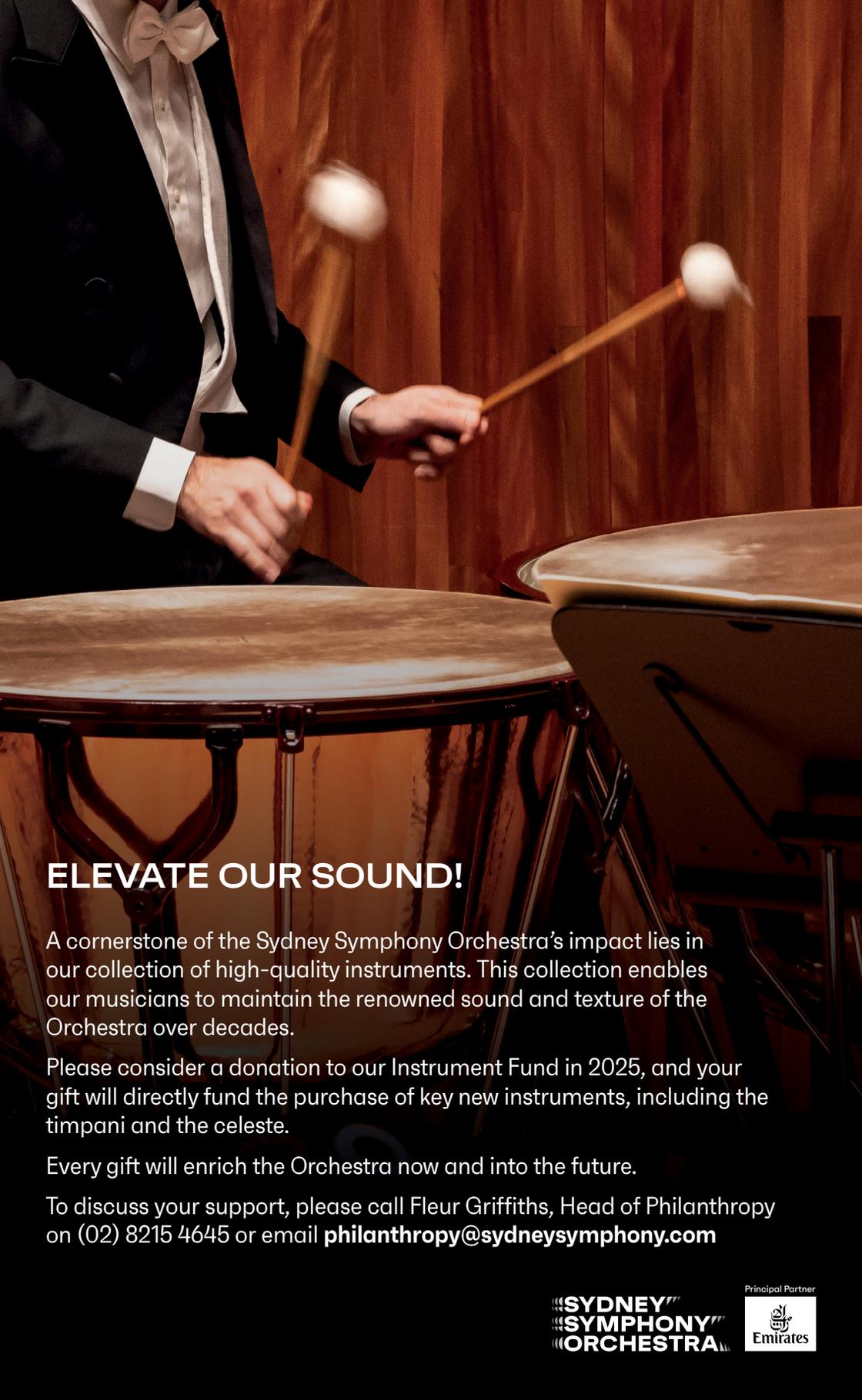
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