

# SAINT-SAËNS' ORGAN SYMPHONY

19–21 MARCH 2026

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House



“SYDNEY”  
“SYMPHONY”  
“ORCHESTRA”

Emirates  
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.

## WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS CONCERT

Expect to enjoy yourself! Maybe your heart will beat a little faster. Maybe your hair will stand on end. It's hard to predict or describe how the vast sound of a symphony orchestra will affect each of us. Just bring an open mind and engage with the music – close your eyes, watch the conductor and the musicians, or just sit back and let the music take you away.



### When do I clap?

Good question. Most pieces of music are broken up into different movements – usually, people only clap at the end of a piece, so there will be silent pauses between movements. On the next page you will see how many movements the pieces in this concert have, and the duration of each piece. But the simplest thing is to wait until the conductor turns around – or when everyone else starts applauding.

The conductor may leave the stage and come back on a few times, and acknowledge the different sections of the orchestra. You can keep clapping as long as you want to – and feel free to cheer and stomp your feet if you really enjoyed the concert!



### Can I take photos or videos?

You can take photos and videos on your phone during the applause at the end of a piece of music. **Please switch your phone to silent, make sure the flash is off and dim the brightness of your screen so you don't distract other audience members.** And if you share it to your socials, tag us in your posts! We love seeing what people have captured.

Please leave professional and semi-professional camera gear at home and limit yourself to a phone camera inside the venue.



### What happens at interval?

The interval will begin when the conductor leaves the stage and the lights go to their full brightness. You can choose to stay in your seat and wait, go to the bathroom, walk around or purchase food or drink from one of the foyer bars.

An announcement will play through the speaker system 10 minutes, 5 minutes and 1 minute before the concert resumes.

## 2026 CONCERT SEASON

# SAINT-SAËNS' ORGAN SYMPHONY

WITH BRUCH'S FIRST VIOLIN CONCERTO

**Alexander Soddy** conductor

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### Thursday

**MAX BRUCH** (1838–1920)

**Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, Op.26** (1866)

- i. Vorspiel: Allegro moderato
- ii. Adagio
- iii. Finale: Allegro energico

**María Dueñas** violin

**CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS** (1835–1921)

**Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op.78, Organ** (1886)

- i. Adagio – Allegro moderato – Poco adagio
- ii. Allegro moderato – Presto – Maestoso – Allegro

**Anna Lapwood** organ

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### Friday & Saturday

**OLIVIER MESSIAEN** (1908–1992)

**Les Offrandes Oubliées** (*The Forgotten Offerings*) (1930)

**MAX BRUCH** (1838–1920)

**Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, Op.26** (1866)

- i. Vorspiel: Allegro moderato
- ii. Adagio
- iii. Finale: Allegro energico

**María Dueñas** violin

INTERVAL

**CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS** (1835–1921)

**Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op.78, Organ** (1886)

- i. Adagio – Allegro moderato – Poco adagio
- ii. Allegro moderato – Presto – Maestoso – Allegro

**Anna Lapwood** organ

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land and water on which we work and perform. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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### ABC Classic

Saturday's performance will be recorded by ABC Classic for delayed broadcast on 11 April March at 1pm, and streaming online.

**Thursday 19 March, 7pm**

Symphony Hour

**Friday 20 March, 7pm**

Symphonic Fridays

**Saturday 21 March, 2pm**

Great Classics

Concert Hall,

Sydney Opera House

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### Pre-concert talk

By Yvonne Frindle in the Northern Foyer at 6.15pm (Thursday & Friday), and on the Lounge Level at 1.15pm (Saturday).

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### Estimated durations

#### Thursday

Bruch – 25 minutes

Saint-Saëns – 36 minutes

This concert will run for approx. 1 hour

#### Friday & Saturday

Messiaen – 13 minutes

Bruch – 25 minutes

Interval – 20 minutes

Saint-Saëns – 36 minutes

The concert will run for

approx. 1 hour and 45 minutes

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### Cover image

María Dueñas.

Photo by Felix Broede.

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*Anna Lapwood's performances with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have been made possible with generous support from Associate Professor Keith Ong and Dr Eileen Ong.*

## Emirates

Principal Partner

# YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

**OLIVIER MESSIAEN** (1908–1992)

***Les Offrandes Oubliées* (The Forgotten Offerings) (1930)**

This work, from early in Messiaen's career, established his interest in reflecting 'the truths of the Catholic faith' in music whose sound was intimately bound up with his experience of physical colour. The three movements reflect Sin, Christ's atoning death on the Cross and the sacrament of the Eucharist, by which the Christian soul is freed.

It dates from 1931, the year that saw the proclamation of the Chinese Soviet Republic by Mao Zedong, the dedication of the George Washington Bridge in New York and the swearing in of Sir Isaac Isaacs as this country's first Australian-born Governor-General.

Contemporary music included Grażyna Bacewicz's Suite for string orchestra, Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation* and Percy Grainger's *Tribute to Foster*.

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Olivier Messiaen c. 1938. Photo by French photography studio, Studio Harcourt.

**MAX BRUCH** (1838–1920)

***Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, Op.26* (1866)**

Bruch's music manages to balance the demands of classical form and tradition and the emotional explorations of late Romanticism. His First Violin Concerto is a substantial work in three movements – the outer ones fast (*allegro*) and the second slow (*adagio*).

There is no shortage of pyrotechnics, especially in the third movement, but Bruch also lavishes lyrical and moving melodies on the solo instrument, believing that melody is the soul of music.

The piece appeared in its final form in 1868, the year that saw the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the impeachment of US President Andrew Jackson and the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh at Clontarf, NSW.

Contemporary music included the first iteration of Brahms' *A German Requiem*, Tchaikovsky's *Fatum* and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

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Photo of Max Bruch published in *What We Hear in Music* by Anne S Faulkner, 1913.

**CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS** (1835–1921)

***Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op.78, Organ* (1886)**

Like Messiaen, Saint-Saëns was an organist whose education was steeped in music for the Catholic liturgy. His 'Organ' Symphony – a work, of course, 'with' rather 'for' the organ – contains a multitude of emotional states, from profoundly introspective to extravagantly joyful. Each of its two large movements is further divided into two contrasting sections.

It was first performed in London 1886, the year that saw the signing of the Berne Convention to protect artistic copyright, the mysterious death of King Ludwig II of Bavaria and the foundation of the Australian Shearers' Union.

Contemporary music included Richard Strauss' *Aus Italien*, César Franck's Violin Sonata and Modest Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*.



Camille Saint-Saëns c.1880, photographed by Charles Reutlinger. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Musique.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### ALEXANDER SODDY conductor

British conductor Alexander Soddy ranks among the most sought-after conductors of his generation and is regularly engaged by the world's leading orchestras and opera houses.

In the 2025/26 season, Soddy will return to several of Europe's foremost stages to lead major new productions. He continues his close collaboration with Teatro alla Scala, conducting *Così fan tutte* and concluding the house's acclaimed new *Ring Cycle* with *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung* and the full cycle. He returns to the Vienna State Opera for performances of *Elektra*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and Raskatov's *Animal Farm*, and makes further return appearances at both the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the Staatsoper Unter den Linden with *Samson et Dalila* and at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino with *Macbeth*.

In concert this season, Soddy makes his debut with the NHK Symphony Orchestra at the Tokyo Spring Festival, conducting *Der fliegende Holländer* in concert. He also returns to the Vienna Symphony Orchestra for performances at the Musikverein and an international tour, and makes debuts with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and returns to the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome. In summer 2025, he made his debut at the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival, conducting the Saito Kinen Orchestra.

Recent seasons have included important milestones, such as conducting the world premiere of Kirill Serebrennikov's production of *Lohengrin* at the Opéra national de Paris, conducting *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* to begin the Teatro alla Scala's new *Ring Cycle*, his debut conducting at the Concertgebouw with the Netherlands Philharmonic in Mahler's Fifth Symphony, and a return to the Philharmonia Orchestra to conduct *Capriccio* at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Soddy is a regular guest at the leading German-speaking opera houses. At the Vienna State Opera, his repertoire has included the Vienna premiere of Raskatov's *Animal Farm* as well as *Otello*, *Elektra*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Carmen*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Salome*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Parsifal*. At the Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Berlin State Opera), he has conducted *Lohengrin*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Fidelio*, *Der Freischütz*, *La bohème* and *Die Zauberflöte*.

Elsewhere, Soddy's notable opera appearances include engagements at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bayerische Staatsoper, Tokyo Nikikai Opera Theatre, Semperoper Dresden, the Royal Swedish Opera and Oper Frankfurt.

Equally in demand as a symphonic conductor, Soddy has led recent concerts with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Berner Symphonieorchester, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Munich Radio Orchestra, Royal Swedish Orchestra, Norwegian National Opera Orchestra, Orquestra de València, Oregon Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

From 2016 to 2022, Soddy served as General Music Director of the Nationaltheater Mannheim, where he focused on the core German and Italian operatic repertoire. He was also Artistic Director of the house's Akademiekonzerte series, where his programming centred on the symphonic works of Bruckner and other Romantic composers. Previous positions include Chief Conductor at the Stadttheater Klagenfurt (2013–2016) and Kapellmeister at the Hamburg State Opera (2010–2012).

Born in Oxford, Soddy studied at the Royal Academy of Music, the University of Cambridge, and the National Opera Studio in London.



Photo by Gerard Collett

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### MARÍA DUEÑAS violin

María Dueñas has emerged as a luminous talent in classical music, captivating audiences with her extraordinary range of tonal colours, impeccable technical prowess, and interpretations that blend artistic maturity with bold expressiveness. The *New York Times* praised her ability to breathe 'new life into well-known pieces' and described her as a '22-year-old violinist who has something to say, and the skill to say it brilliantly'.

Her meteoric rise led to an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, a significant milestone in her burgeoning career. Dueñas' debut album, *Beethoven and Beyond*, released in 2023, showcased her remarkable interpretation of Beethoven's Violin Concerto, featuring cadenzas composed by herself. This recording, made with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra under Manfred Honeck, earned her the prestigious *Opus Klassik* award as Young Artist of the Year in 2024, adding to an extraordinary array of grand and first prizes at international competitions, including the Senior Division of the Menuhin Competition, the Viktor Tretyakov and the Vladimir Spivakov International Violin Competitions or the Zhuhai International Mozart Competition. Her unique interpretative approach has also been recognized by the Rheingau Music Festival, BBC Radio 3 and the Princess of Girona Arts and Letters Award.

February 2025 marked the release of her second Deutsche Grammophon album, an ambitious project centred on Paganini's legendary 24 Caprices and works inspired by Paganini from composers spanning from Berlioz to contemporary artists. Establishing herself as a globally recognized soloist, she has already collaborated with the world's leading orchestras and conductors. Her strong artistic partnership with Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel has yielded several notable achievements, such as performances at the Hollywood Bowl's 100th Anniversary celebration, the world premiere of Gabriela Ortiz's Violin Concerto *Altar de Cuerda* with concerts at Walt Disney Concert Hall, on tour in Barcelona, Paris and London, and sold-out premieres at Carnegie Hall and in Boston. The recording of this work is part of the album *Revolución diamantina* which won three Grammy Awards in 2025.

A versatile artist with a remarkable passion for composition, Dueñas' creative endeavours include *Homage 1770*, a piece for solo violin inspired by her debut album and Beethoven's legacy, *Farewell*, a solo piano piece, and cadenzas for most of the violin concerto repertoire. In August 2024, she released Julian Lawrence Gargiulo's Sonata No.4, *From the Window*, for Deutsche Grammophon, showcasing her commitment to contemporary music. As a dedicated chamber musician, María Dueñas has forged meaningful artistic partnerships with some of the most respected names in the field, such as baritone Matthias Goerne, pianist Itamar Golan and violinist Renaud Capuçon.

Her remarkable fusion of classical tradition and contemporary innovation led her to play the reincarnation of Kathleen Parlow in the film *Measures for a Funeral* by Sofia Bohdanowicz, rediscovering Johan Halvorsen's long-lost Violin Concerto, Op.28. This masterpiece was brought to life in a stunning performance with the Orchestre Métropolitain under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, which premiered at the 2024 Toronto Film Festival.

María Dueñas performs on a Nicolò Gagliano violin from 1734, on loan from *Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben*, and has also been entrusted with the Stradivarius *Camposelice* from 1710 by the Nippon Music Foundation.



Photo by Christoph Köstlin

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### ANNA LAPWOOD organ

Anna Lapwood is one of the UK's most dynamic ambassadors for classical music. As the official organist of the Royal Albert Hall, she has broken down genre boundaries and introduced a huge new audience to the organ. She has reached millions via her devoted social media following and helped revitalise repertoire for the instrument through the dedicated commissioning and performing of new works. She is also an established conductor and broadcaster, and a fierce advocate for the advancement of female voices within her industry. The scope of her influence is demonstrated by her appointment as MBE in 2024's New Year's Honours list and her inclusion in the 2025 *Sunday Times* Young Power List, alongside the likes of Lando Norris, Bella Maclean and Molly-Mae Hague.

Anna is a graduate of Oxford University, where she was the first female Organ Scholar in Magdalen College's 560-year history. In 2016 she also became the Director of Music at Pembroke College, Cambridge – the youngest ever person to be appointed in that role at an Oxbridge college. She remained in the role until August 2025. Her time at Pembroke saw her found a much-lauded girls' choir, commission works from leading choral composers, and spearhead the release of five records, including 2020's *All Things Are Quite Silent*. Her tenure was rounded off with a performance at the BBC Proms, conducting the College Chapel Choir as part of an all-night concert that also featured cellist Anastasia Kobekina and pianist Hayato Sumino among other artists.

Among the works written for Anna are Max Richter's *Cosmology* for organ, chorus and orchestra, Kristina Arakelyan's Toccata for organ and orchestra and Olivia Belli's *Limina Luminis* for solo organ.

A composer and arranger in her own right, Anna is signed to Boosey & Hawkes and has published several choral compositions as well as numerous transcriptions of orchestral music for organ, many of which are top sellers on ArrangeMe. She has also curated and edited *Gregoriana*, an anthology of organ works based on Gregorian chant, all by contemporary women composers, which was Presto Music's 2022 Publication of the Year.

A keen collaborator, Anna is an Artist in Association with the BBC Singers and Featured Artist with the Hallé. Her relationship with Royal Albert Hall has resulted in some of her most memorable pop collaborations with artists including AURORA, Bonobo, Florence + the Machine and Raye, as well as actor Benedict Cumberbatch for *Letters Live*.

Her close relationship with the Hall has also led to the launch of a new annual Organ Scholar Programme. The scholarship is one of several initiatives demonstrating Anna's commitment to musical outreach and the fostering of young talent. She also leads regular workshops for young organists around the UK, has hosted BBC Young Musician for BBC Four, and established an annual Cambridge Organ Experience for girls aged 11 to 18. Her relentless encouragement of and support for female organists in particular has made her a role model within that community, neatly captured in the hashtag #playlikeagirl, which she first adopted after being told to 'play like a man' during an organ competition. Now with a three-million-strong social media following, she has helped bring the organ, and contemporary ideas of a what an organist can be, to a whole new audience.



Photo by Andy Paradise

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT OLIVIER MESSIAEN

Born in Avignon, Olivier Messiaen entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 11, later becoming a teacher there and Professor of Composition in 1966. He first became known only as a composer of organ music (he was organist at the church of Sainte-Trinité in Paris from 1931 until his death); but it is important to recognise that, as a pupil of Paul Dukas, he had already begun to compose orchestrally. He was a devout Roman Catholic, and his compositions are mainly in the nature of religious praise and commentary.

Many of Messiaen's most famous works date from the 1940s. In 1941, while in a German prison camp, he wrote the *Quartet for the End of Time*. A lengthy piece for two pianos, *Visions de l'Amen*, was completed in 1943. *Trois Petites liturgies de la présence divine* followed, building up a series of religious works, such as the 20 pieces making up the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* inscribed to his pupil and great interpreter of his works, the pianist Yvonne Loriod, who later became his wife.

Messiaen published explanations of the aims and techniques of his music, most notably in a preface to *La Nativité du Seigneur* (The Nativity of the Lord) in 1935, and, in 1942, in *Techniques of My Musical Language*.

He admitted to many influences. Messiaen's characteristic sound results from his distinctive blend of harmony and rhythm. Interestingly he referred to himself as 'compositeur et rythmicien', which underlines the place of rhythm in his music, utilising the elasticity of Gregorian chant and the complexity of Greek and Indian (*tala*) rhythms. His harmony derives from his own invented modes ('modes of limited transposition') which can allow the creation of the sorts of harmonies one finds in serialism along with more traditional material.

Colour is an important consideration in Messiaen's style. Able to perceive sounds as colours, Messiaen used this synaesthesia as a compositional tool. Among his characteristic devices, for example, are chords of 'contracted resonance': a note, chord or extended material sounding quietly against louder principal harmony to effect a special bloom or colour.



Olivier Messiaen c. 1938. Photo by French photography studio, Studio Harcourt.

There is an ardent, ecstatic quality to Messiaen's music deriving from his particular brand of devout Catholicism. This can be heard, for example, in the frequent emulation of birdsong in works such as *Oiseaux exotiques* and *Chronochromie*, and the 'Tristan-esque' yearning in parts of works such as the *Turangalila-symphonie*. Later pieces included *Des Canyons aux étoiles* (From the Canyons to the Stars), inspired by a visit to southern Utah and completed in 1974; and Messiaen's only opera, *St Francis of Assisi*, completed in 1983. *Des Canyons* received its Australian premiere by the Australian Chamber Orchestra during the composer's visit here in 1988. This visit also saw performances of his works by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and, of course, the opportunity for the composer to note down Australian birdsong for the first time in native surroundings. The songs of the Superb and Prince Albert's Lyrebirds, Mallee Ringneck, Eastern Whipbird and Kookaburra, among others, were incorporated in *Éclairs sur l'Au-Delà* (Illuminations of the Beyond), Messiaen's last completed work.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

Olivier Messiaen can reasonably be accounted one of the greatest composers of the 20th century. Certainly the most influential Frenchman after Debussy, his legacy may be traced in some of the most important composers of the post-War period who studied under him (including Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Iannis Xenakis). These younger composers followed the inspiring example of the individual language he forged from a wide variety of musical and artistic sources, and the communicable strength of his vision.

Even for non-Catholics who may not be able to share Messiaen's confidence in the promise of spiritual redemption, his music testifies to the survival of eternal beauties, even in a century which often saw unwelcome change.

**Gordon Kalton Williams, ABC/Symphony  
Australia © 1994**

## ABOUT *LES OFFRANDES OUBLIÉES*

*The composer writes:*

*Les Offrandes oubliées* was premiered on 19 February 1931, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, under the direction of Walter Straram. I had just turned 22. It was my first work played by an orchestra, and my first contact with the public at large.

The work is in three parts:

The Cross: lamentation of the strings, whose sorrowful 'neumes' [a term from medieval notation which groups of notes are written as a single symbol] divide the melody into groups of uneven duration, cut by long mauve and grey wailings.

The Sin: presented here as a kind of 'race to the abyss' in an almost 'mechanised' speed. You will notice the strong flexional ending accents, whistling of the harmonics in glissando, the incisive calls of the trumpets.

The Eucharist: long and slow phrase of the violins, which rises over a blanket of pianissimo chords, with reds, gold, blues (like a faraway stained-glass window), in the light of muted solo chords.

The Sin is the forgetting of God. The Cross and the Eucharist are the Divine Offerings. 'This is my Body, given for you – this is my Blood, spilled for you.'

*Les Offrandes Oubliées* is scored for 3 flutes, 2 oboes, cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet and 3 bassoons; 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion and strings.

The work was premiered on 19 February 1931 in Paris, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, by the Straram Concert Orchestra under the direction of Walther Straram.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in August 1973, conducted by Willem van Otterloo. We have only performed it three times since: in 1976, in a Proms concert conducted by John Hopkins; in 2001, conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw; and in 2019, conducted by Donald Runnicles.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT MAX BRUCH

Born in Cologne in 1838, Max Bruch was a direct contemporary of Brahms, whom he outlived by 20 years. He came from a musical family – his mother, his first teacher, was a singer, and her father had been a founder of the Cologne Musical Society. In 1852, the young Bruch won a prize from the Frankfurt Mozart Foundation for a String Quartet, the first of many works for strings that display his mastery of the instruments. He studied in Cologne with Ferdinand Hiller and then in Leipzig with, among others, Mendelssohn's great friend Ferdinand David, returning to the Rhineland to study history, literature and fine arts at the University of Bonn.

His first post as a music director was at Koblenz, where he wrote his Violin Concerto No.1 for Brahms' great colleague, Joseph Joachim. Joachim would later premiere Bruch's Scottish Fantasy and his Violin Concerto No.3; Bruch's Violin Concerto No.2 was written for Pablo de Sarasate. The immediate success of the First Concerto was something of a curse – Bruch complained later in life about

the laziness, stupidity, and dullness of many German violinists. Every two weeks, someone comes along and wants to play the first concerto for me. I've already become rude and said to you: 'I can't listen to this concerto anymore—did I perhaps only write this one concerto? Go and finally play the other concertos, which are just as good, if not better!'

But the First Concerto's success also encouraged Bruch to try the life of a freelance composer, which he did in Berlin and Bonn, with mixed success for his first two operas, *Hermione* (after Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*) and *Odysseus*.



Photo of Max Bruch published in *What We Hear in Music* by Anne S Faulkner, 1913.

He held further music-directorial posts in Liverpool, England (his *Kol Nidrei* for cello and orchestra date from his English period) and Breslau (Wrocław in present day Poland). From the late 1890s he taught in Berlin, his students including Ottorino Respighi and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

In 1904 Bruch travelled to the Isle of Capri where he was overwhelmed at witnessing a Corpus Christi procession. Out of this he wrote a Suite for Organ and Orchestra (Op.88b) which owes something to the model of Saint-Saëns' 'Organ' Symphony, though the work only gained currency as a concerto for two pianos and orchestra (Op.88a).

Bruch trod a middle path between Brahms' resuscitation of classical forms and the 'music of the future' touted by Liszt and Wagner. His works tend to be Romantic in feeling, with rich harmony and orchestration and often built on a large scale. And he composed a great deal of vocal and choral music which has sadly slipped into obscurity. His love of the voice and strings had a common origin: stringed instruments, Bruch said, 'sing a melody better than a piano, and melody is the soul of music'.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### ABOUT BRUCH'S FIRST VIOLIN CONCERTO

*David Garrett writes:*

Max Bruch's First Violin Concerto is one of the greatest success stories in the history of music. The violinist Joseph Joachim, who gave the first performance of the definitive version in 1868, and had a strong advisory role in its creation, compared it with the other famous 19th century German violin concertos: those of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms. Bruch's, said Joachim, is 'the richest, the most seductive'. Soon Bruch was able to report that his concerto 'is beginning a fabulous career.' In addition to Joachim, the most famous violinists of the day took it into their repertoire: Auer, Ferdinand David, Sarasate.

With his first important large-scale orchestral work, the 30-year-old Bruch had a winner.

The success of this concerto was to be a mixed blessing for Bruch. Few composers so long-lived and prolific are so nearly forgotten except for a single work. (*Kol nidrei* for cello and orchestra is Bruch's only other frequently performed piece.) Bruch followed up this violin concerto with two more, and another six pieces for violin and orchestra. But he had to concede that none of them matched his first concerto. This must have been especially frustrating considering that Bruch had sold full rights in it to a publisher for the paltry sum of 250 thalers.

In 1911 an American friend, Arthur Abell, asked Bruch why he, a pianist, had taken such an interest in the violin. He replied, 'Because the violin can sing a melody better than the piano can, and melody is the soul of music.' It was the composer's association with Johann Naret-Koning, concertmaster of the Mainz orchestra, which first set Bruch on the path of composing for the violin. He did not feel sure of himself, regarding it as 'very audacious' to write a violin concerto, and reported that between 1864 and 1868 'I rewrote my concerto at least half a dozen times, and conferred with x violinists.' The most important of these was Joachim. Many years later Bruch had reservations about the publication of his correspondence with Joachim, worrying that 'the public would virtually believe when it read all this that Joachim composed the concerto, and not I.'



Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim (1831–1907)

Like Mendelssohn in his E minor Violin Concerto, Bruch brings the solo violin in right from the start, after a drum roll and a motto-like figure for the winds. The alternation of solo and orchestral flourishes suggests to Michael Steinberg a dreamy variant of the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto.

With the main theme launched by the solo violin in sonorous double-stopping, and a contrasting descending second subject, a conventional opening movement in sonata form seems to be under way. The rhythmic figure heard in the plucked bass strings plays an important part. But at the point where the recapitulation would begin, Bruch, having brought back the opening chords and flourishes, uses them instead to prepare a soft subsiding into the slow movement, which begins without a pause. The songful character of the violin is to the fore in Bruch's *Adagio*.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

The Hungarian or Gypsy dance flavour of the last movement's lively first theme must be a tribute to the native land of Joachim, who had composed a 'Hungarian' Concerto for violin. Bruch's writing for the solo violin here scales new heights of virtuosity. Of the bold and grand second subject, Tovey observes that Max Bruch's work 'shows one of its noblest features just where some of its most formidable rivals become vulgar.' In this concerto for once Bruch was emotional enough to balance his admirable skill and tastefulness. The G minor Violin Concerto is just right, and its success shows no sign of wearing out.

**Adapted from a note by David Garrett © 2004**



A sculpture of Bruch on the restored Cologne City Hall by German sculptor Olaf Höhnen (1933–2009).

This concerto is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns and 2 trumpets; timpani, strings and violin soloist.

A version of the concerto was premiered on 24 April 1866 by soloist Otto von Königslow, with Bruch conducting. It was then revised significantly and the revised version premiered on 7 January 1868 in Bremen, with Joseph Joachim as soloist conducted by Karl Martin Rheinthal.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in 1940, at a Young People's Concert conducted by Bernard Heinze with Claire Simpson as soloist.

Other notable performances include Eugene Goossens conducting Willem Noske (1947); Bernard Heinze/Beryl Kimber (1951); James Robertson/Ricardo Odnosopoff (1957 Regional Tour); Efrem Kurtz/Ruggiero Ricci (1957); David Oistrakh (1958); Nicolai Malko/Kimber (1959); Alfredo Campoli (1960); Malko/Johanna Martzy (1961); Charles Dutoit/Kyung-Wha Chung (1977); Victor Yampolsky/Boris Belkin (1986); Vladimir Verbitsky/Elmar Oliveira (1991); Takuo Yuasa/Dong-Suk Kang (1996); Michael Christie/Asmira Woodward-Page (2000); Emmanuel Villaume/Anne Akiko Meyers (2002); Miguel Harth-Bedoya/Midori (2006); Oleg Caetani/Daniel Hope (2010); Brett Weymark/Emily Sun (2012); Vladimir Ashkenazy/Pinchas Zukerman (2013); Ashkenazy/Arabella Steinbacher (2018) and Roger Benedict/Andrew Haveron (2022 Regional Tour).

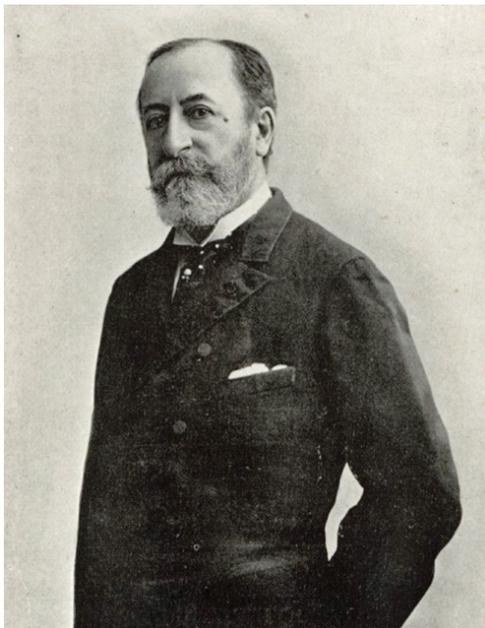
Our most recent performances were in 2023, with Mark Wigglesworth conducting Emily Sun.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### ABOUT CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

The Paris that we – those of us that don't actually live there, that is – all love in the springtime came into being in the 1860s. After a cycle of revolution and reaction, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was elected President of the French Republic on the abdication and flight of Louis-Philippe, King of the French, in 1848. In 1851 he staged a coup d'état, becoming President for Life; the following year he had himself crowned Emperor Napoléon III, a title he held until deposed during the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. From dictatorial beginnings, Napoléon III's regime became progressively more liberal in its politics from about 1860. The 'Second Empire' was, moreover, a time of huge renovation in Paris: Hausmann oversaw the demolition of medieval slums and the creation of those boulevards and avenues which give the city its spacious character; part of a fever of new construction, now-iconic buildings such as the Gare du Nord, L'Opéra and the Trinité church appeared. This fusion of modernism and classicism is evident in the visual arts – this is the period of the Realist painters like Corot, Manet and the young Degas – and perhaps, too, in music.

Born in Paris, Saint-Saëns began his studies at the city's Conservatoire in 1848, so by the late 1860s was in the period of his early maturity as an artist. From 1857 he had been organist at the Madeleine; in 1861 he took up a teaching position at the Ecole Niedermeyer, a school that trained musicians who were able to build on the long traditions of Catholic church music; Niedermeyer himself had written a treatise on how 'modern harmony is submitted to the form of the ancient modes', another case of the fusion of modern and classical ideas.



Camille Saint-Saëns c.1880, photographed by Charles Reutlinger. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Musique.

Saint-Saëns' classicism is evident in his concertos and symphonies, and in his elegantly-turned chamber music, where he seems to emulate what he admired in Bach and Mozart, saying that as high as their expression may soar, their musical form remains supreme and all-sufficient.' Debussy, who loathed Saint-Saëns, nevertheless paid him this tribute:

[his] scientific approach to music has meant that Saint-Saëns will never allow himself to overload his music with too many of his personal feelings. We are indebted to him for having recognized the tumultuous genius of Liszt, and we should remember that he professed admiration for old Bach at a time when such an act of faith was also an act of courage.

Balancing his classicism, of course, is Saint-Saëns' mastery of Romantic opera in *Samson et Dalila*, his distinction in being possibly the first composer to provide a through-composed score for film, the 1908 *The Assassination of the Duc du Guise*, and the sharply witty humour of his Grand Zoological Fantasy – *The Carnival of the Animals*.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

## ABOUT THE 'ORGAN' SYMPHONY

In 1887 Charles Gounod heard the Parisian premiere of Saint-Saëns' 'Symphony No.3 in C minor, with Organ and Two Pianos' and famously gushed, 'there goes the French Beethoven'. Hyperbole, of course, but the work has remained hugely popular ever since. The reasons for its continued currency are easy to find: Saint-Saëns believed that 'the time has come for the symphony to benefit by the progress of modern instrumentation' and his orchestration is masterly, with a dramatic range of sounds from the diaphanous to the massive. The 'Organ' Symphony is, moreover, replete with memorable tunes and intricate counterpoint, traversing an emotional landscape from deepest melancholy to sheer joy.

It was commissioned and first performed under the composer's baton by the London Philharmonic Society in 1886. During the composition Saint-Saëns' old friend Liszt visited him and admired the score; sadly, Liszt died weeks before the premiere, inspiring Saint-Saëns to dedicate the symphony to his memory. Liszt had been a great mentor ever since 1857 when, hearing Saint-Saëns improvising at the organ of the Madeleine church, he had declared the young Frenchman to be 'the finest organist in the world'. Saint-Saëns for his part fought for the due recognition of the older man as composer as well as pianist, leading Debussy grudgingly to admit, 'we are indebted to him for having recognized the tumultuous genius of Liszt'.

Perhaps, though, there is more than just hyperbole to the Beethoven comparison. Like many a symphony of Beethoven's, especially the Fifth, the 'Organ' Symphony begins in darkness and turbulence and only toward the end does it reach the bright affirmation of C major. And like Beethoven in the Fifth, Saint-Saëns is remarkably economical with his thematic material: it is possible to trace almost all those melodies back to the motifs heard in the work's introduction and the opening of the following *allegro moderato*. How the composer elaborates these into such a contrasting abundance of melodies is by the principle of thematic transformation developed by Liszt.

In his program note for the first performance, Saint-Saëns wrote that 'this symphony is divided into two parts. Nevertheless, it embraces in principle the four traditional movements, but the first is altered in its development to serve as the introduction to the *Poco adagio*, and the scherzo is connected by the same process to the finale.' In other words, the four movements are grouped in pairs, with the main dramatic weight carried by the second of each.

The opening *Adagio* is deliberately vague in direction, containing almost inconsequential motifs that, as we have noted, become transformed in the course of the work. The static nature of the introduction enhances the release of energy in the *Allegro moderato* whose febrile theme begins with the same notes as the plainchant for the *Dies irae*. Saint-Saëns had, after all, been trained as a church musician and taught at the Ecole Niedermeyer, a school whose founder was an authority on how 'modern harmony is submitted to the form of the ancient modes.' This fast music, however, seems to peter out, subsiding into the beautifully sombre and emotionally searching *Poco adagio*. It is here that the organ makes an appearance, providing a velvet backdrop for the questing second theme of the movement.

Part II opens with a turbulent scherzo punctuated by timpani. It too builds in sound and fury but mysteriously winds down to a quiet, simple texture built on another chant-like motif. Only now does Saint-Saëns unleash the full power of the organ. A shattering C major chord opens onto a world of sparkling piano figurations, chorale melodies and an overpoweringly joyful final peroration.

**Gordon Kerry © 2009**

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

The symphony is scored for a large orchestra comprising 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon; 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, piano (two and four hands), organ and strings.

It was premiered at a testimonial concert put on by the Philharmonic Society, at St. James's Hall in London, on 19 May 1886. Saint-Saëns conducted.

The work holds a special place in Australian culture due to Nigel Westlake's reworking of the final movement's theme for the soundtrack to the movie *Babe* (1995), but it had a rich performance history in this country long before that.

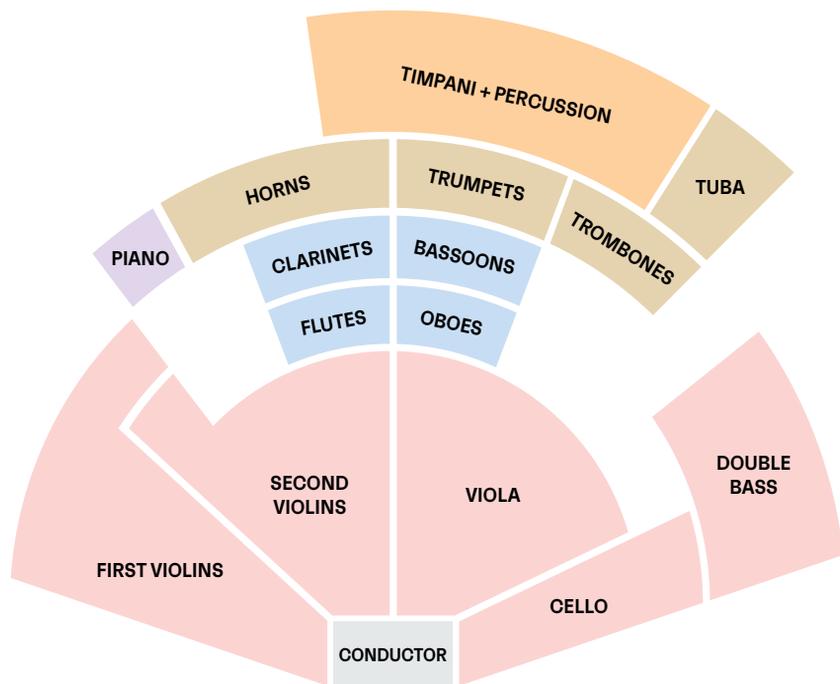
The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in June 1948, conducted by Eugene Goossens.

Other notable performances include those conducted by Sixten Ehrling (1972), Vančo Čavdarski (1975), Louis Frémaux (1980, 81), Antonio de Almeida (1986), Jean Fournet (1990), William Southgate (1994 *Symphony Under the Stars*), Edo de Waart (1994, 2003), Emmanuel Villaume (2000), Alexander Briger (2006), Yannick Nézet-Séguin (2009), Charles Dutoit (2013), David Robertson (2019) and Dane Lam (2021).

Our most recent performances were in 2024, with Stéphane Denève conducting and Olivier Latry as the soloist.

**Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson**

# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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*Associate Concertmaster*

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*Associate Concertmaster*

**Fiona Ziegler**  
*Assistant Concertmaster*

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Claire Herrick  
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Alex Mitchell  
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Liam Pilgrim  
Benjamin Tjoo  
Leone Ziegler  
Brian Hong<sup>°</sup>  
Tamara Elias<sup>†</sup>

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**Marina Marsden**  
*Principal*

Alice Bartsch  
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Rebecca Gill  
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*Principal*

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*Acting Associate Principal*

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## TIMPANI

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*Events Manager*

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Lynn McLaughlin

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Jennifer Calacoci

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Tom Farmer

*Production Manager*

Elissa Seed

*Production Manager*

Jacinta Dockrill

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Shanell Bielawa

*Production Coordinator*

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Harvey Lynn, Ella Tomkins

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Georgia Holmes, Reede Palmer

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Brighdie Chambers

*Orchestra Manager*

Emma Winestone

*Deputy Orchestra Manager*

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