

ANNA LAPWOOD PERFORMS MAX RICHTER

25–28 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

ANNA LAPWOOD PERFORMS MAX RICHTER

A UNIVERSE OF SOUND

André de Ridder conductor
Anna Lapwood organ
Sydney Philharmonia Choirs
Elizabeth Scott chorus master

KRISTINA ARAKELYAN (born 1994)
Toccata for solo organ and orchestra (2025)

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

MAX RICHTER (born 1966)
Cosmology for organ, orchestra and choir (2025)

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

- i. *Voyagers*
- ii. *Orion Nebula*
- iii. *The Pleiades*
- iv. *Earthrise*

Cosmology was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra thanks to the generous support of Paolo Hooke and Fan Guo, together with the Royal Albert Hall, Philharmonia Orchestra, Hallé Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal.

INTERVAL

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)
Concerto for Orchestra (1943)

- i. *Introduction* (Andante non troppo – Allegro vivace)
- ii. *Game of Pairs* (Allegro scherzando)
- iii. *Elegy* (Andante non troppo)
- iv. *Interrupted Intermezzo* (Allegretto)
- v. *Finale* (Pesante – Presto)

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.

Wednesday 25 March, 8pm
Friday 27 March, 8pm
Saturday 28 March, 8pm
Emirates Masters Series

Thursday 26 March, 1.30pm
Emirates Thursday Afternoon

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

Pre-concert talk

By Rosie Gallagher in the Northern Foyer at 7.15pm (12.45pm on Thursday)

Estimated durations

Arakelyan – 10 minutes
Richter – 28 minutes
Interval – 20 minutes
Bartók – 38 minutes

The concert will run for approx. 1 hour and 40 minutes

Cover image

By Martin Stevens

ABC Classic

Friday's performance will be broadcast live by ABC Classic.

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

WELCOME

Welcome to **Anna Lapwood performs Max Richter**, the second concert in the Emirates Masters Series for 2026.

Together with Emirates, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has created one of the most significant and enduring relationships in Australia's performing arts, one we continue to be immensely proud of. We have recently renewed our longstanding partnership, Emirates' longest-running collaboration with a non-sporting organisation. This partnership reflects our shared belief in the power of connection: bringing world-class artistry to the global stage and enabling music to transcend borders, cultures, and audiences. Together, we are proud to support artists who inspire, unite, and connect with audiences around the world.

English organist Anna Lapwood is the sort of artist that only comes along once in a generation. There is something about her that is irresistible and immediately engaging, whether she is teaching a masterclass, conducting a choir, presenting on the BBC or performing with the world's great orchestras.

She is a tireless advocate for her instrument, for the breaking down of genre boundaries and for the power of music to inspire and excite students of all ages. In today's concert we are privileged to hear two Australian premieres of works written specifically for her, by fast-rising young composer Kristina Arakelyan and by Max Richter, one of the biggest names in the musical world who, by the time you read this, may very well have added an Academy Award to his long list of accolades.

Then after interval, revel in the kaleidoscope of sound that your Sydney Symphony can produce as the musicians flex their artistry in Béla Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, a thrilling showcase of orchestral colour and energy.

As Presenter of the Emirates Masters Series, Emirates proudly champions exceptional local and international talent, including the Sydney Symphony's celebrated Chief Conductor, Simone Young AM.

Our partnership has long been underpinned by a shared vision: to create unforgettable journeys and remarkable experiences, and this concert perfectly illustrates our mutual commitment to excellence at the very highest level.

We are delighted by the continuing success of this long-term partnership and trust you will enjoy this concert.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whitehead', written in a cursive style.

Craig Whitehead
Chief Executive Officer
Sydney Symphony Orchestra

YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

KRISTINA ARAKELYAN (born 1994)

Toccata for solo organ and orchestra (2025)

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

Toccata is an eight-minute tour-de-force for both organist and orchestra. A single movement, it offers sections in contrasting speed and mood but never loses sight of its energetic trajectory.

It dates from 2025.



MAX RICHTER (born 1966)

Cosmology for organ, orchestra and choir (2025)

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

Cosmology is a four-movement concerto for organ and orchestra. Each movement responds to an idea or image of space travel: voyaging, the spectacular structures of the Orion Nebula and Pleiades constellation, and the breathtaking 1968 image of the Earth seen from space.

It, too, dates from 2025.



Photo by William Waterworth

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

Concerto for Orchestra (1943)

Bartók's late orchestral masterpiece is a five-movement work in which the composer demonstrates an inexhaustible palette of tonal colour, an amazing sophistication of rhythm and metre, and an ability to create unforgettable melodies which can be achingly Romantic or based in the idioms of the folk music he loved and preserved.

It was premiered in 1944, the year that saw the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day, Florence Foster Jenkins' Carnegie Hall concert and the publication of poems by Ern Malley.

Contemporary music included Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* and Dmitri Shostakovich's Piano Trio No.2.



Photo of Béla Bartók taken on 9 September 1943.

RIA Novosti archive, image #3453 / RIA Novosti / CC-BY-SA 3.0.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ANDRÉ DE RIDDER conductor

André de Ridder is the Generalmusikdirektor (GMD) of Theater Freiburg and designated Music Director of both English National Opera and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, titles he will assume from September 2027. He is in demand internationally for his impressive stylistic versatility, from baroque to contemporary music. His projects and collaborations take him to orchestras such as New York Philharmonic, Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Tonhalle Zurich, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris and Concertgebouworkest.

Over the course of the 2025/26 season, de Ridder will conduct titles such as *Doctor Atomic*, *Iphigénie en Tauride* and *The Loser* at the Theater Freiburg, and *Mahagonny* at the English National Opera.

De Ridder will also make guest appearances with Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, Belgian National Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra Dublin, The Hallé, Sydney Symphony Orchestra and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. He curates and performs at Oulu Festival and continues his curatorship of *Unclassified Live* at London's Southbank Centre, a series of genre-defying performances featuring the BBC Concert Orchestra.

The 'livewire conductor' (*The Times*) has formed close relationships with some of the most prominent opera composers of our generation, including Michel van der Aa, Daniël Bjarason, Nico Muhly and Kaija Saariaho. De Ridder also recently performed repertoire works such as *Bluebeard's Castle* (Philharmonia Orchestra) and *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* by Schumann (Staatstheater Stuttgart), collaborating with directors such as Kasper Holten, Barrie Kosky and Enda Walsh. He made his debut at Oper Köln in performances of *Der Meister und Margarita* by York Höller.

De Ridder is an Artistic Director and co-founder of *st a r g a z e*, performing projects ranging from Bach to avant-garde electronics, and contemporary classical music. The group has gained a significant following and is regularly invited by leading concert halls,

including the Barbican Centre London, the Kölner Philharmonie, Philharmonie de Paris and Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.

De Ridder's discography includes an album of orchestral music by Bryce Dessner and Jonny Greenwood and the hugely successful *Four Seasons Recomposed* by Max Richter, both for Deutsche Grammophon. The Max Richter recording was awarded an ECHO Klassik *Classic Without Borders* award and has topped the classical charts in over twenty countries. For Transgressive Records, De Ridder also acted as producer on the release of *Africa Express Presents: In C Mali*. This followed a trip to Bamako, Mali, with Damon Albarn and his Africa Express project. In Mali, de Ridder initiated and led a recording of Riley's *In C* with local musicians, joined by travelling Western artists, including Brian Eno and Damon Albarn.

De Ridder was Artistic Director of Musica Nova Helsinki 2017–2021, and in 2018 was the recipient of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for his innovative work as Artistic Curator of London's Spitalfields Festival.



Photo by Marco Borggreve

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



Photo by Nick Rutter

ANNA LAPWOOD: A BRIGHT NEW STAR IN THE CLASSICAL SKY

*The brilliant English organist discusses genre boundaries, *The Lord of the Rings* and her growing confidence in her own programming ahead of her eagerly-awaited Sydney debut.*

By Hugh Robertson

Every now and again a new personality crashes through the classical music atmosphere like a comet, blazing across the sky and immediately catching everyone's attention. Nobody ever knows who it will be, but some strange alchemy of talent, charisma and timing combusts to create a brilliant new star.

Anna Lapwood is the newest phenomenon in classical music. The English organist, conductor, educator and composer has become a global superstar, with sold out concerts around the world, major commissions written for her by today's leading composers, a record deal with

Sony, hosting gigs on TV and radio and the TikTok account that started it all recently ticking over 1.5 million followers.

This month Lapwood makes her first trip to Australia for a two-week residency with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra – performing two solo recitals and two mainstage programs with the full Orchestra (one with Saint-Saëns' Organ Symphony, the other with two Australian premieres of works commissioned for her), as well as a masterclass, a workshop and a schools concert – an extraordinarily busy and broad schedule of events that reflects her boundless energy and desire to connect with audiences across the demographic spectrum.

FEATURE ARTICLE

‘It’s going to be fun,’ she enthuses from a hotel room in Dresden. ‘I have been excited about this residency for months now. It’s all music that I adore playing. It all sort satisfies a different bit of my musical brain, I guess.’

‘The Max Richter is incredibly moving. I premiered it last year and I was crying by the end. I think what Max does so well is write tricky emotions into music – we’ve seen that with all the awards his score for *Hamnet* has picked up in the last month. And he’s done that in this piece as well in a really poignant way. The Arakelyan is like the total opposite – it’s this extrovert party, an explosion of joy and colour.

‘And for the solo recital I’m going to be doing some of my new *Lord of the Rings Organ Symphony*, which I am so excited about getting to play. So basically all of it is pieces I adore playing and getting to play at the Sydney Opera House on that organ. You can’t really complain, can you?’

Of course as is so often the case, Lapwood toiled for years before becoming an overnight sensation. She was a voracious and obviously gifted musician as a child, beginning with piano at four, picking up all of her older siblings’ instruments out of curiosity before narrowing her focus to the harp to the point that she was principal harpist for the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and the Junior Royal Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra.

‘Harp was my principal instrument for many years, and I was basically set on being a professional harpist,’ recalls Lapwood. ‘And then my mum said to me one day, “have you ever thought of taking up the organ?” And I was like, “don’t be ridiculous, it’s a silly instrument. No one likes the organ. I hate the organ.”

‘And then she told me that organ scholars at Oxford and Cambridge get a grand piano in their room at university. And I was like, “Okay, I’ve changed my mind. Organ is a great instrument.” And that was how I started.

‘It’s funny, I really didn’t warm to it at first. I found it so hard. I mean, I had taken up so many instruments by that point and like got to a high standard on five, six instruments, and this was by far the hardest I’d ever encountered. I felt kind of quite stuck with it at first. But then I think there was something about that that made me really determined to figure out how to overcome that sticking point and figure out how to do it.’

What a career it has been since. Lapwood did indeed win entry to Oxford, to Magdalen College, the first woman in the college’s 560-year history to be awarded an organ scholarship. In 2016, at just 21, she was appointed Director of Music of Pembroke College, Cambridge, the youngest person to hold an equivalent position of an Oxford or Cambridge university college. In 2022 she was appointed an associate artist at London’s Royal Albert Hall, then in 2025 was named the Hall’s first-ever official organist in its 150-year history.

Those are the headline appointments, but at the same time Lapwood has been growing an enormous following on social media, confounding traditional ideas about who the audience is for classical music and the organ. Clips of her playing with non-classical artists like Bonobo and Raye, or for a Ministry of Sound electronica concert, went viral, exposing millions to the unique power and impact of a grand pipe organ like that of the Royal Albert Hall. And that broad and diverse audience has given Lapwood a freedom she never imagined she would have as an organist and chorister.

FEATURE ARTICLE

‘I increasingly am very suspicious of genre boundaries. And this generation, the young generation at the moment don’t really listen to genre boundaries. They might use them as a slightly helpful label occasionally, but they don’t care about them. They will listen to the music that they find interesting and exciting, no matter the genre.’

‘I think it’s a really exciting time for us in the classical camp – though we really should be thinking of it as the “this bit of music” camp. The audience is ready and waiting and wanting to discover what it is that we love about the music that we perform – we just have to find a way to make that initial connection.’

The pieces in tonight’s concert reflect that genre fluidity that Lapwood is so animated by. Max Richter is perhaps the leading cross-genre composer working today, writing music for stage, opera, ballet and screen, collaborated with visual artists, fashion brands and champagne houses. Most recently he was nominated for an Academy Award for his soundtrack to *Hamnet*.

‘I have loved Max’s music for so many years,’ says Lapwood. ‘It’s so moving, but you don’t go in expecting necessarily to have an emotional experience – certainly not such an intense one. You can be feeling absolutely fine, and then something about his music just knocks you out and into whatever emotional place it takes you.’

‘This new piece, *Cosmology*, is a journey away from the earth to space and then back again. And my two favourite movements are the third movement and the fourth movement: the third movement is *The Pleiades* and every bar is a different time signature. The harmonic patterns are really, really wacky and rogue. And it’s this huge crescendo over the course of kind of six minutes that culminates in these massive organ chords.’

‘One of the reasons it’s so powerful is because what’s come before has been so restrained and very slow moving, very introverted. And so to suddenly get this extrovert movement where you really hear the full might of the organ at the end, it is like the biggest thrill to play that.’



Photo by Charlotte Levy

FEATURE ARTICLE

‘But then I also love the fact that that is not the end. It has this huge climax at the end of the third movement, which feels like the end of the piece – but then out of nowhere, the fourth movement starts and it’s a Bach chorale.

‘There’s a lovely quote about the idea that however far we journey, however far we travel, home is sort of still there. And when we get back, it can feel like nothing has changed and everything has changed at the same time. And so Bach represents coming home in that piece.

‘Gradually the chorale expands out until it’s the full orchestra. And then it just gradually falls back again to this really, really quiet ending. It’s so profound and so moving. And I really hope that the audience feels that as much as we do when we get to do it.

By contrast, Kristina Arakelyna’s *Toccata* is a firecracker.

‘That actually started its life over tapas in London about five years ago,’ Lapwood says with a smile. ‘I was talking to Christina, who

I have known for many years now and is a good friend, and I was saying that there needs to be more music for organ and orchestra. So we were dreaming up what a new piece from her might look like. And she’s an amazing pianist – she had written me an organ piece already by this point, a really good organ piece – and she came up with exact piece that we had been talking about. And she said to me when it was finished, “It’s a bit like your personality – it’s just crazy.” Which I take as a complete compliment!

‘But it is! It goes through all of these different completely bonkers moods, and there are these moments where the organ and the orchestra are playing cat and mouse with each other but they can never quite catch each other.

‘But to me, it’s a piece that is full of joy and full of celebration of music making with other people. And I am just so excited to share this music with people, and I think that means that people are much more likely to then fall in love with the music because they can feel it from you.’

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT KRISTINA ARAKELYAN

Kristina Arakelyan's works are hallmarked by their striking beauty and compelling emotional honesty and have been performed at some of the world's leading venues including London's Wigmore Hall, Royal Albert Hall and Southbank Centre, London; Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and Carnegie Hall in New York; Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

2025 saw the premieres of *Toccata* performed by Anna Lapwood and the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall, a Piano Concerto with the Armenian State Symphony in February with the composer at the piano, and a new work for the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and solo piano, played by Kristina, was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in July 2025.

Born in Budapest in 1994 to a non-musical Armenian family, Kristina fell in love with the human voice when she was taken to the opera as a young child. She moved to Armenia at the age of four and, despite not having a piano at home, began taking lessons after school. Her rapid progress on the instrument was enhanced after she came to England in 2006 to study at the Purcell School. She caught the public's attention as the 15-year-old winner of the BBC Young Composers' Competition when her piece for the BBC Singers was broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Her training continued with studies in composition and piano at London's Royal Academy of Music and a postgraduate year at the University of Oxford. During her twenties Kristina has cultivated her lyrical voice with works such as *To the Stars* (2015); *Dreamland* (2020-21); *Seascapes* (2021), a sequence of choral companions to the Four Sea Interludes from Britten's *Peter Grimes*, written for the BBC Singers; *Star Fantasy* for organ (2021); and the song cycle *Penelope: Seven Ways to Wait* (2022).

Kristina's commitment to music education is reflected in a growing output of pieces for young musicians or beginners.

ABOUT TOCCATA

The toccata (from the Italian 'to touch') has been a vehicle for virtuosic display since the Baroque period, and Arakelyan's concertante work for organ and orchestra is a work of high rhythmic energy, technical brilliance and imaginative colour.

Composed for Anna Lapwood, who premiered it at the Royal Albert Hall, with the Philharmonia Orchestra under André de Ridder in 2025, *Toccata* is an eight-minute work in one movement that maintains an almost unbroken headlong arc from minor to major tonality driven by an emphatic rhythmic pulse. At the opening, for instance, the orchestra provides insistent rhythms through terse chords that propel ribbons of semiquaver writing from the organ. As in much post-minimal music, the material is presented, and repeated, in regular blocks, adding a scalic melody in longer notes in the violins that is answered by a sequence of suspended dissonances – one of the hallmarks of music by such composers as Corelli, Vivaldi and Bach. The relationship of organ and orchestra is then inverted with the organ providing the rhythmic pulse while higher winds and string decorate the harmony, and brass instruments such as trombone and horn introduce longer melodies. Arakelyan is careful to avoid rhythmic monotony at this point by judiciously throwing the metre 'off' with interpolated bars in 3/4 time. The opening material is then developed in A flat major.

A new section, somewhat slower, introduces more chromatically dissonant harmony: a C minor/major chord kicks off an angular melody on organ and trumpet, and this angularity pervades the texture before a return to the fast tempo. Now the key is C major, and the figurations of the solo part are dominated by upward moving, almost blues-inflected scales.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

A slightly slower episode is more lightly scored, with ornamental melodies shared by organ and solo woodwinds, offset soon by more bass-heavy and powerfully rhythmic material. A striking effect here is achieved by having the organ build, by accretion, ever more massive chords that stop suddenly, leaving the orchestra playing the same chord as if echoing from an immense distance.

A short Adagio section effectively for organ alone, and more scherzo-like episode full of dancing triplets lead into the build-up to a return to the opening material. The work then revisits, in modified form, much of the material exposed earlier, and after a final battle between C major and E flat major, the work ends decisively.

Gordon Kerry © 2026

Kristina Arakelyan's *Toccata* is scored for piccolo, 1 flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, strings and organ soloist.

It was premiered on 15 May 2025 at London's Royal Albert Hall, with soloist Anna Lapwood and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by André de Ridder.

This is the work's Australian premiere.



ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT MAX RICHTER

Max Richter is one of the most influential composers of his generation. His fusion of classical technique and electronic technology, heard across genre-defining solo albums and countless scores for film, dance, art and fashion, has won him legions of fans around the world and blazed a trail for a generation of musicians.

Over the last two decades, Richter has brought his distinctly humane and emotive sensibility to a series of ambitious projects – among them, a reimagining of Vivaldi’s violin concertos, the landmark nine-hour album *Sleep* and his score for Wayne McGregor’s ballet *Wolf Works* – along with acclaimed solo records tackling human rights, migration and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Max’s music has shaped the emotional landscape of acclaimed films and television series including *The Leftovers*, *The Last of Us*, *Shutter Island* and *Spaceman*.

He is also the co-founder of Studio Richter Mahr, a creative space he shares with his partner, artist Yulia Mahr. His groundbreaking eight-hour composition *SLEEP* is the most streamed classical album of all time and marked its 10th anniversary in 2025.

After spending many years grappling with big ideas and thorny social and political questions, the making of his ninth solo studio album, *In A Landscape*, has opened up another, greener world for Richter. Making music remains, above all, ‘a way to make a kind of alternate reality,’ a constructed world ‘where everything is in its place.’



ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT COSMOLOGY

The composer writes:

Cosmology (from Ancient Greek κόσμος (cosmos) ‘the universe, the world’ and λογία (logia) ‘study of’) is a branch of physics and metaphysics dealing with the nature of the universe, the cosmos.

The overall architecture of the piece is one of a circular journey departing from Earth, travelling through distant reaches of the universe, and returning to Earth.

i. *Voyagers*

This is a prelude that gathers pace towards a lift off. An accumulation of energy. Your journey starts here.

ii. *Orion Nebula*

Is a dusty ‘star nursery’ full of young and unformed stars and other bodies. It is very distant. If you could take an airplane there it would take 1,680,000,000 years to arrive.

iii. *The Pleiades*

This constellation, named after seven sisters of Greek mythology, and much beloved of sailors for their usefulness in navigation is a very fast moving and hot closely grouped set of stars.

iv. *Earthrise*

During the flight of Apollo 8 in 1968, the astronaut William Anders took the now famous photograph of the blue marble of the earth rising above the barren horizon of the moon.

The need to explore is a very human thing, but to me this image encapsulates the deep truth that, however far we may travel, we are actually already home.

TS Eliot’s lines from ‘Little Gidding’ express it so perfectly:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Waking up to this possibility is one of the challenges of being a human being, beset as we are with problems of our own making, and sometimes we need a reminder, kindly provided by Philipp Nicolai in the chorale – made famous by Bach – ‘Wachet auf ruft uns die Stimme’ (Wake up! a voice is calling to us) that I quote here.

Max Richter © 2026

Cosmology was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra thanks to the generous support of Paolo Hooke and Fan Guo, together with the Royal Albert Hall, Philharmonia Orchestra, Hallé Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal.

Cosmology is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes (2nd doubling cor anglais), 3 clarinets and 3 bassoons; 6 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, 2 harps, piano, celeste, strings, a choir of sopranos and altos and an organ soloist.

It was premiered on 15 May 2025 at London’s Royal Albert Hall, with soloist Anna Lapwood and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by André de Ridder.

This is the work’s Australian premiere.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT BÉLA BARTÓK

Bartók was born in 1888 in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary (now Sînnicolau Mare, Romania) and as a young child, who showed prodigious musical talent, lived in cities now in present-day Ukraine and Slovakia. In 1899 he was accepted into the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest, where he met fellow composer Zoltán Kodály. Their friendship would be highly consequential to both.

His first period as a composer was characterized by the assimilation of the late Romanticism of Richard Strauss, of Debussy and early Stravinsky, and, crucially, his ethnomusicological research. In 1903, he began collecting folk music in Hungary and neighbouring regions such as Slovakia, Transylvania and other parts of Romania; in 1912 and 1913 travelled as far afield as Norway, North Africa and France, and in the course of his life he would also study and collect music from Turkey and the Balkans. He and Kodály soon came to realise that they were preserving something on the verge of extinction.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 confined him to Hungary, but from what he had already gathered he was able to produce new works. After the war, Bartók successfully lobbied the short-lived liberal and left-wing governments to support musical education and research.

The ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* was a *cause célèbre* at its 1926 performance in Cologne and established Bartók as a modernist; he was in considerable demand as a pianist. He also consolidated his research into the music of various ethnic groups as well as writing about contemporary Hungarian composers, but from 1923 to 1926 practically ceased composing.

Scholar Malcolm Gillies has noted that around 1926 Bartók rediscovered an interest in the keyboard music of the Baroque, particularly its concern with the elaboration of strongly profiled motives in counterpoint which dominates his second period.

The second half of the 1930s were the most productive years of Bartók's career as a composer: orchestral works alone from this

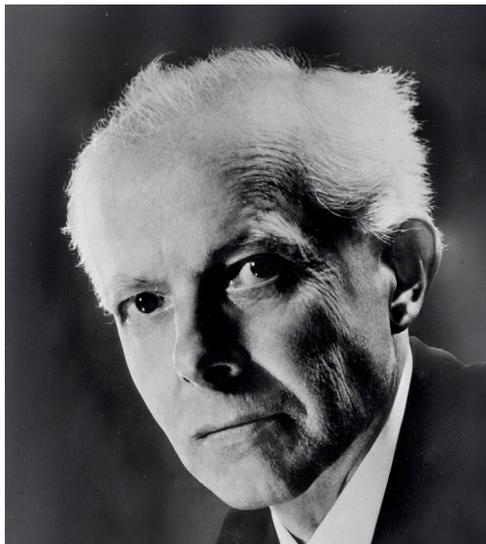


Photo of Béla Bartók taken on 9 September 1943.
RIA Novosti archive, image #3453 / RIA Novosti / CC-BY-SA 3.0.

time include the second Violin Concerto, the Divertimento and, arguably his masterpiece, the Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta of 1936, which rapidly established itself as a modern classic, receiving numerous performances within the next two years even in Germany, where Bartók was officially out of favour.

In the late 1930s, Bartók was aware of what he called the 'impending catastrophe', the inevitable outbreak of war. A passionate anti-Fascist, he considered emigrating, but refused to leave his mother. 'Shall I abandon her altogether in her last years? – No, I cannot do that!' His mother's death in 1939 was traumatic for him, but allowed him and his pianist wife Ditta Pásztory to leave Europe for the United States with a clear conscience in October 1940. There they made a precarious living from performances and teaching. Early in 1943, Bartók's health declined with a mysterious illness that proved to be the early signs of leukemia. By 1944 he was gravely ill and struggling financially – friends such as Yehudi Menuhin and Serge Koussevitzky knew that the proud composer would not accept charity, so commissioned new works that have proven to be durable masterpieces.

Bartók died in New York City in 1945, and ten people attended his funeral.

Gordon Kerry © 2026

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

Gordon Kalton Williams writes:

At the beginning of World War II, Bartók found refuge in the US. These, his final years, were a time of frustration, illness and poverty. His music was little known and he received negligible income from it. He received an honorary doctorate from Columbia University and was engaged to conduct folksong research, but this appointment came to an end in 1942. One bright spot came in 1943 while Bartók was in hospital. Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony, offered Bartók \$1,000 to write a work in memory of the conductor's wife, Natalie. The composer jumped at the chance.

Actually, the idea for a similar sort of piece had already been put in Bartók's head by his publisher Ralph Hawkes, who had suggested a series of concertos for various instruments or groups. It was the violinist Joseph Szigeti and the conductor Fritz Reiner – anxious to alleviate some of Bartók's difficulties – who put Koussevitzky up to the request. Their roles had to be kept secret, as the proud Bartók, had he suspected he was being helped, might otherwise have refused.

Bartók began work on the piece on 15 August 1943 at Lake Saranac in the Adirondacks in upstate New York. It was completed in less than two months (by 8 October) – testimony to the speed with which a masterpiece can be created once the ideas and themes are given a definite focus. The first performance took place on 1 December 1944.

The Concerto for Orchestra draws together many strands in Bartók's musical thinking. The results of some of the 20th century's most pathfinding research into folksong (Bartók's own) are combined with traditional Classical forms. Bartók achieves the synthesis of Eastern European folk-music and the great traditions and techniques of the West that he had sought and achieved in varying degrees for decades. At the same time, having derived many of his synthetic scales from the logical drawing-out of the implications of folk melody, Bartók was now able to synthesise his discoveries with the most abstract methods of recent music.

It has often been said that Bartók suffered from a sense of dislocation in these last American years. Bartók's art had been nourished by the music of his native land. In the US his only contact with the folk-music of his region came from his engagement by Columbia University to research Milman Parry's recordings of Yugoslav epic poetry (the living descendant of Homeric verse, according to some), and his own Romanian and Turkish materials. However, the Yugoslav research resulted in his discovery of a two-part chromatic scale which he was now able to meld into the utterly modern concerto.

The Classical influence is identifiable early on in the casting of the first movement in sonata form. A slow introduction evokes a feeling of mystery and establishes the interval of a fourth as an important technical feature of the piece. The violins passionately take up a melody ushered in quietly by trumpets. Then the speed increases and we are in the sonata form proper. There are three main themes – a striving melody with uneven metre (introduced by the violins), an ungainly trombone theme, and a mesmerising melody on the oboe. These are all subjected to ingenious contrapuntal development.

The second movement showcases the wind and brass instruments in pairs. It is known as 'Game of the pairs'. However Georg Solti, researching his 1981 Decca recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, discovered that Bartók's manuscript in the Library of Congress had it down as *Presentando le coppie* (Presentation of the pairs). Either way, the 'concerto for orchestra' aspect – instruments and sections of the orchestra itself as concerto 'soloists' – is possibly most obvious in this movement.

The third movement returns to the eeriness of the opening. It is one of Bartók's typical 'night musics', one of those impressionistic movements inspired by ephemeral sounds, such as are supposed to inhabit the night.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The fourth movement somewhat lightens the mood. Described as an ‘interrupted intermezzo’, it has two themes – the first a Slovak folk melody heard on oboe, the second, a Romantic-sounding melody, initiated by violas, based on Zsigmond Vincze’s folk-like song *Hungary, How Beautiful You Are*. A clarinet melody then introduces a tune similar to the march theme from Shostakovich’s *Leningrad* Symphony. There is some resemblance here also to a melody from Lehár’s *The Merry Widow*, but Shostakovich was the butt of the joke, as Bartók was still smarting over the wartime prominence given to Shostakovich’s piece, which he had heard over the radio often during his illness and found ludicrous.

Horns introduce the *perpetuum mobile* of the last movement, a movement, in which, as the composer remarked, the strings are called upon for virtuosity. In Bartók’s words: ‘[The *Concerto*’s] general mood represents, apart from the jesting second movement, a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death-song of the third to life assertion in the finale.’

Gordon Kalton Williams (Symphony Australia) © 1998

Bartók’s *Concerto for Orchestra* is scored for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling cor anglais), 3 clarinets (3rd doubling bass clarinet) and 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon); 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion, 2 harps and strings.

It was premiered on December 1, 1944, at Symphony Hall, Boston, by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitzky.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work on October 10, 1950, conducted by Bernard Heinze.

Other notable performances include those conducted by Walter Susskind (1954), Nicolai Malko (1960), Dean Dixon (1964, filmed as part of an ABC documentary), Moshe Atzmon (1970), Charles Mackerras (1973 Youth concert), Louis Frémaux (1981 & 85), Vernon Handley (1986), Hiroyuki Iwaki (1988), Stuart Challender (1991), Lorin Maazel (2000), Simone Young (2004), Charles Dutoit (2006) and Benjamin Northey (2011).

Our most recent performances were in 2019, led by our then-Chief Conductor David Robertson.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

An Impression Of Orchestral Life derived from Béla Bartók's "Concerto for Orchestra" in five movements as performed by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conductor, Dean Dixon, in September 1964

1965 – AN IMPRESSION OF ORCHESTRAL LIFE

A 1964 performance of Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Chief Conductor Dean Dixon was the focal point of a documentary about life in an orchestra.

Titled *Concerto for Orchestra*, the film begins in Dixon's dressing room as he finishes getting dressed, then follows him to the podium for the beginning of the concert at Sydney Town Hall. Just as the concert begins it cuts from the performance to footage from rehearsal, scenes of musicians rehearsing and abstract footage of a car driving through a forest, a fisherman on the shoreline, waves crashing on rocks and more.

The documentary was commissioned by the ABC as part of a series called *Australia Today*, and first broadcast on ABC TV on 12 July 1965.

The film won the 1966 Australian Film Institute (AFI) Golden Reel Award for Best Documentary.

By Hugh Robertson



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SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRETT WEYMARK OAM

Brett Weymark OAM Artistic and Music Director
Dr Elizabeth Scott Associate Music Director
Tim Cunniffe Assistant Chorus Master and Principal Rehearsal Pianist
Benjamin Crowe and **Naomi Hnat** Conductor Fellows

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs is Australia's premier choral organisation. Since it was founded in 1920, SPC has brought people together through music, and for over five decades, it has been the heartbeat of choral performance at the Sydney Opera House.

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Each year, SPC performs approximately 50 performances across Sydney and beyond, collaborating with top-tier orchestras, soloists and conductors, performing regularly with many of Australia's most prominent arts companies and festivals. SPC has performed in the Sydney Opera House, Hamer Hall Melbourne, the Singapore National Football Stadium, Westminster Abbey, the Tokyo Dome and the Royal Albert Hall. Highlights over the years have included the opening of the Sydney Opera House, the Sydney and Nagano Olympic Games and being the first Australian choir to perform at the BBC Proms. SPC is also proud to have been the choir of choice for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra since 1936.

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs concerts celebrate diversity – of voices, of stories, and of sound – with programs that allow singers and audiences to connect with an exhilarating range of music in languages from English to Gadigal, keeping things fresh with premieres, commissions and new interpretations of beloved classics.



Photo by Keith Saunders

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SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ELIZABETH SCOTT chorus master
Associate Music Director
Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Dr Elizabeth Scott is a highly skilful choral conductor who has led Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' young adult choir VOX since 2008. Formerly SPC's Assistant Chorus Master (2006 – 2008) and Acting Music Director (2013), she was appointed Acting Music Director in 2022. She is a Lecturer in Conducting and Director of Choirs at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (University of Sydney) and was the Choral Director of the NSW Schools Spectacular since 2009 to 2023.

After graduating from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 1995, she completed postgraduate studies in choral conducting, vocal performance and aural training in Hungary and Germany. She holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting. Through Symphony Australia's Conductor Development Program she has worked with the Queensland, Adelaide and Melbourne symphony orchestras and Orchestra Victoria, among others, and was awarded the 2008 Sydney Choral Symposium Foundation Choral Conducting Scholarship.

Elizabeth is a regular chorus master for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and has prepared choirs for Simone Young, David Robertson, Masaaki Suzuki and Sir Simon Rattle. She also regularly works with Gondwana Choirs and Cantillation.

In 2017, Elizabeth became the first Australian woman to conduct SPC's *Messiah* concerts at the Sydney Opera House. Recent performance highlights include 2025's St Matthew Passion (Mendelssohn Version) and Bach's Christmas Oratorio, 2023's *The Little Match Girl Passion* and *Carols at the House, Mozart: Requiem & Revelations* and *Bach Mass in B Minor* (2022), *Berliner Messe* and *St John's Passion Reimagined* (2021) and *Considering Matthew Shepard* (2020) and *Music at the Movies* (2019).

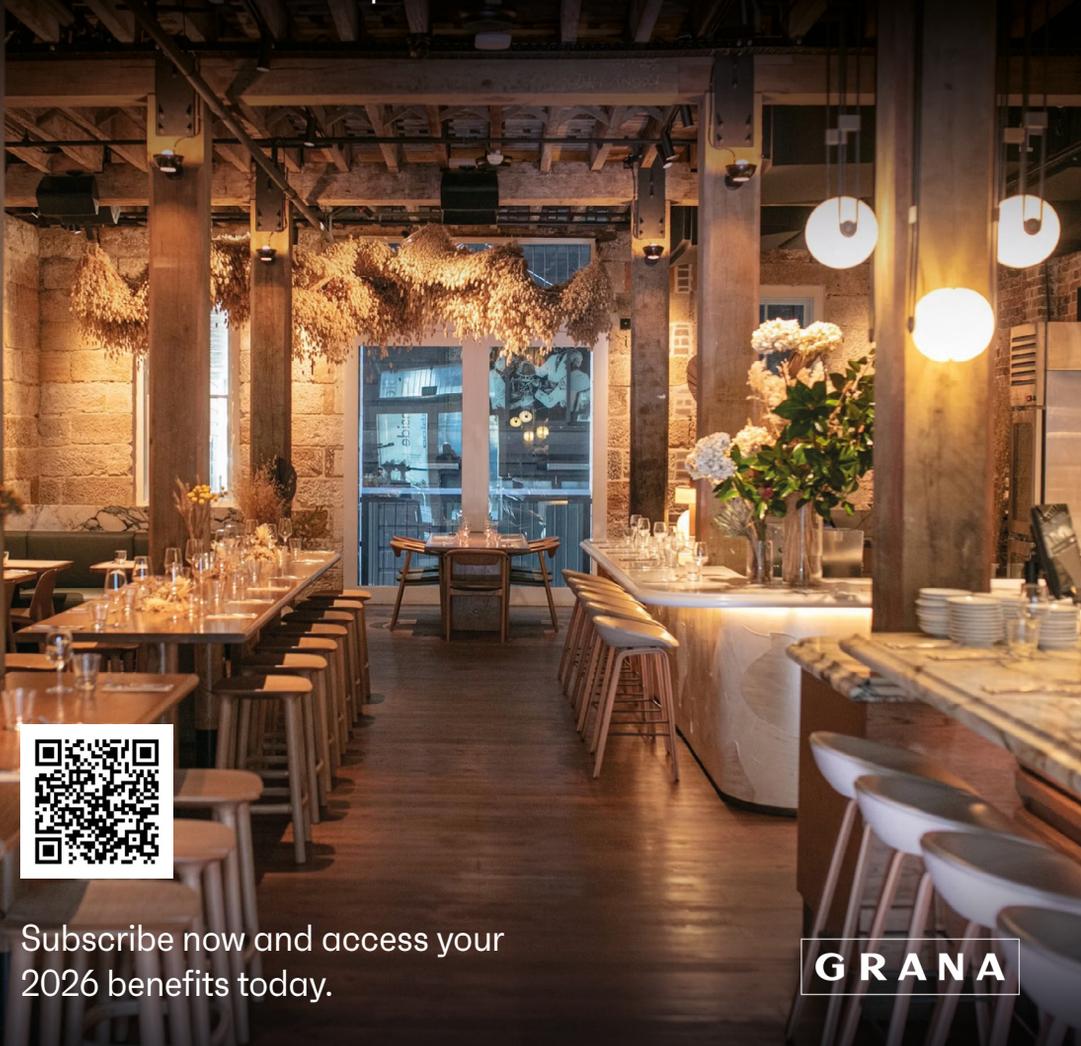
Elizabeth is a passionate champion of contemporary composers such as Arvo Pärt, Eric Whitacre, Ola Gjeilo and Ēriks Ešņvalds, as well as Australian composers such as Paul Stanhope, Joseph Twist, Brooke Shelley, Matthew Orlovich and Sally Whitwell.



Photo by Keith Saunders

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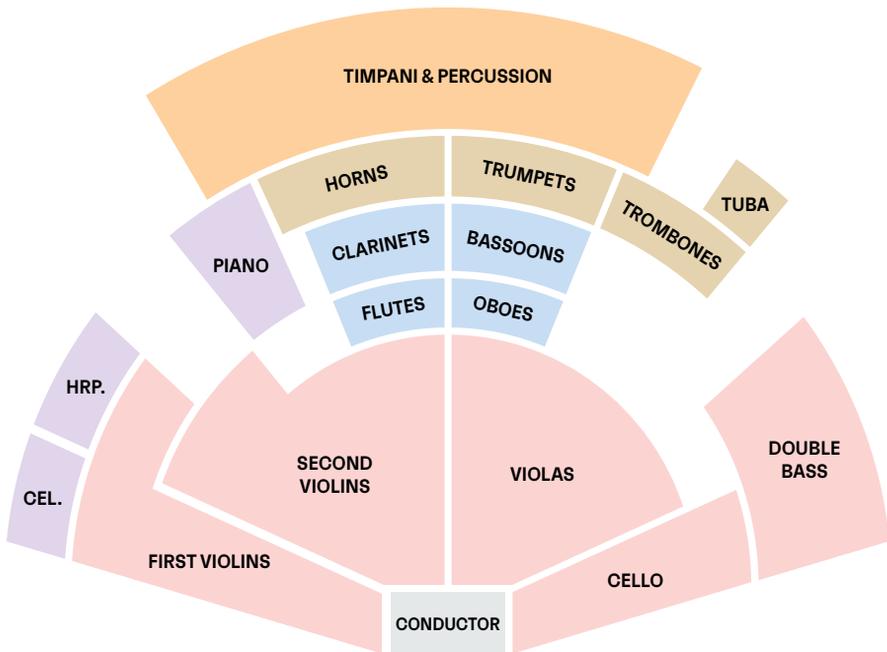


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