

SYMPHONIC CINEMA: THE PLANETS

1-3 MAY 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

SYMPHONIC CINEMA: THE PLANETS

REBECCA LAGOS PERFORMS WESTLAKE

Benjamin Northey conductor

CHARLES IVES (1874–1954)

The Unanswered Question (1908, rev. 1930–35)

NIGEL WESTLAKE (born 1958)

When the Clock Strikes Me (2006, rev. 2025)

WORLD PREMIERE

Rebecca Lagos percussion

Commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra with the generous support of Geoff Stearn, written for and dedicated to Rebecca Lagos.

INTERVAL

LUCAS VAN WOERKUM (born 1982)

LOSS (2025)

Based on *The Planets* by **Gustav Holst** (1874–1934)

Lucas van Woerkum director

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Elizabeth Scott and **Naomi Hnat** chorus masters

Emma Thompson and **Greg Wise** actors in film

Arts Umbrella Vancouver dancers on film

Co-commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra thanks to the generous support of Dr Rebecca Chin and Kathy White.

Friday 1 May, 7pm

Symphonic Fridays

Saturday 2 May, 7pm

Symphonic Saturdays

Sunday 3 May, 2pm

Sunday Afternoon Symphony

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

Pre-concert talk

By Simon Bruckard in the Northern Foyer at 6.15pm (1.15pm on Sunday)

Estimated durations

Ives – 6 minutes

Westlake – 21 minutes

Interval – 20 minutes

Holst – 51 minutes

The concert will run for approx. 1 hour and 45 minutes

Cover image

Emma Thompson in *LOSS*

ABC Classic

Sunday's performance will be recorded for delayed broadcast.

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.

Emirates

Principal Partner

YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

CHARLES IVES (1874–1954)

The Unanswered Question (1908, rev. 1930–35)

Ives' short work – it last about six minutes – is for string ensemble, solo trumpet and wind quartet, their spatial disposition and, ultimately, musical incompatibility creating the work's intriguing sound and form.

Though revised in the 1930s, the work was first composed in 1908, the year that saw the first edition of Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys*, the Tunguska Event in Siberia and women's suffrage in Victoria.

Contemporary music included Saint-Saëns' film score *La Mort du duc de Guise*, Schoenberg's Second String Quartet and Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*.



Ives's graduation portrait from Yale University, 1898

NIGEL WESTLAKE (born 1958)

When the Clock Strikes Me (2006, rev. 2025)

WORLD PREMIERE

Westlake's Percussion Concerto, for Rebecca Lagos and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, is a reworking of a piece of the same name that premiered in 2006. In a single movement lasting about 28 minutes, its deft manipulation of time and metre creates a 'heavily accented big-dipper of undulating contours and flamboyant rhythmic pattern exchanges.'

This version dates from 2025.



Photo by Steve Forrest

GUSTAV HOLST (1874–1934)

The Planets, Op.32 (1914–1917)

Alongside music, Holst's interests included Vedic mysticism and astrology, and it is the latter celebrated in the 50-minute, seven-movement suite which depicts the nature of each planet's astrological character, linking them to their effects on humanity.

It was completed in 1917, the year that saw the Russian Revolution, the United States declare war on Germany and the 'egg-throwing incident' that led to the creation of the Australian Federal Police.

Contemporary music included Lili Boulanger's Psalm 130, Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* and Richard Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.



1921 photo of Holst by Herbert Lambert
© National Portrait Gallery, London

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

BENJAMIN NORTHEY conductor

Australian conductor Benjamin Northey is the Chief Conductor of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, Conductor in Residence of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Principal Guest Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. In 2025 he was appointed Professor of Conducting at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Director of the Australian Conducting Academy. He has previously held the posts of Associate Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (2010-2019), Resident Guest Conductor of the Australia Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra (2002-2006) and Principal Guest Conductor of the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra (2007-2010).

Northey studied conducting at Finland's Sibelius Academy with Professors Leif Segerstam and Atso Almila after being accepted as the highest placed applicant in 2002. He completed his studies at the Stockholm Royal College of Music with Jorma Panula in 2006.

He previously studied conducting with John Hopkins OBE at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (2000-2002).

Northey appears regularly as a guest conductor with all major Australian symphony orchestras, Opera Australia (*La bohème*, *Turandot*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *Carmen*), New Zealand Opera (*Sweeney Todd*), Victorian Opera (*Candide*, *Into the Woods*) and the State Opera South Australia (*La sonnambula*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*).

His international appearances include concerts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, Hong Kong Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia, Malaysian Philharmonic and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Northey has collaborated with a broad range of leading artists including Lang Lang, Pinchas Zukerman, Wynton Marsalis, Maxim Vengerov, Anne-Sofie von Otter, Julian Rachlin, Karen Gomyo, Piers Lane, Alban Gerhardt, Johannes Moser, William Barton, Lu Siquing, Amy Dickson, Slava Grigoryan,

Marc-André Hamelin, James Morrison, Kurt Elling, Archie Roach, Ben Folds, Nick Cave & Warren Ellis, Paul Grabowsky, Tim Minchin, kd Lang, Patti Austin, Kate Miller-Heidke, Megan Washington, Barry Humphries, Meow Meow and Tori Amos.

Northey is highly active in the performance and recording of new Australian orchestral music, having premiered dozens of major new works by Australian composers. He has previously been a board member of the Australian Music Centre.

An ARIA Awards winner, he was voted *Limelight Magazine's* Australian Artist of the Year in 2018. Northey's many recordings can be found on ABC Classics. In 2026, he conducts the Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, West Australian, Tasmanian and Christchurch Symphony Orchestras, and will be working again with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and Wynton Marsalis in his *All Rise* program, this time with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.



Photo by Laura Manariti

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT CHARLES IVES

Nineteenth-century New England was the world of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Alcotts, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry David Thoreau, where the puritanism of the Congregational churches had given way to more liberal Unitarianism and the philosophy of Transcendentalism, and writers yearned to recapture what Emerson called ‘an original relation to the universe’. The popular image of Charles Ives – fostered to some extent by the composer himself – is of a musical transcendentalist, a radical experimenter who discovered the principles of atonality, indeterminacy, metrical irregularity and microtonal harmony before any exposure to the music of the Western European avantgarde. Given the state of the manuscript material, and Ives’ habits of constantly rewriting, it is difficult to prove one way or another, but is certainly true up to a point.

Ives’ father George was a bandsman in Danbury, Connecticut, who famously, encouraged Charles’ musical potential, however eccentric it might have seemed. Charles was allowed to experiment with cluster harmony – that is, to play piano with his fists – and George would ‘stretch the ears’ of his son by playing a song in one key and having Charles sing it in another. He also exposed Charles to a huge range of music, including band-music, traditional church music, gospel hymns and Stephen Foster songs, and, as Jan Swafford notes, gave Charles a wonderful piece of advice when they heard a stonemason singing out of tune: ‘Look into his face and hear the music of the ages. Don’t pay too much attention to the sounds – for if you do, you may miss the music. You won’t get a wild, heroic ride to heaven on pretty little sounds.’

Ives also enjoyed a thorough and formal musical education, including studies at Yale in the 1890s, where he produced what Alex Ross describes as an ‘expert, Dvořákián four-movement symphony’. He nevertheless took employment in the insurance business, while for a time serving as organist and music director of New York’s Central Presbyterian Church, but despite the success of his cantata *The Celestial Country* in 1902 seemed to turn his back on music for good.



Ives’s graduation portrait from Yale University, 1898

Settling into his insurance career, and married to the splendidly-named Harmony Twichell, Ives continued composing, as it were, in secret, fusing those diverse musical elements he had heard as a child, using or discarding classical and popular manners as he saw fit, creating out of this what he hoped would be a distinctly American music that expressed Transcendentalist ideas, or described events or places in the life of the Republic such as the fate of Black soldiers in the Civil War, or the loss of civilian life on the torpedoed *Lusitania*. Masterpieces include the *Concord Sonata*, celebrating those New England families and people who fostered the region’s distinctive values, four symphonies and several riotous orchestral ‘sets’ whose exuberant overlaying of materials, styles and sounds are unique and uniquely exciting.

Despite springing from a family whose values were liberal and inclusive, Ives’ rhetoric can sound unreconstructed: people who don’t like modern music are ‘cissies’ who should ‘stand up and use your ears like a man’, and he seems on the surface dismissive of the music of Black and Native Americans. But he regarded all human souls as ‘identical’ and equal, and his music reflects what he called ‘the drum-beat of the common-heart.’

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT *THE UNANSWERED QUESTION*

Katherine Kemp writes:

Although it was purely his own choice to be a 'weekend' composer, we know from his writings that Charles Ives sometimes worried about his choice of career and its place in the grand scheme of things. *The Unanswered Question* (1908) is a musical response to and depiction of this type of anxiety.

The work is for three entities. The first is a string ensemble, which represents 'The Silences of the Druids – Who Know, See and Hear Nothing'. The strings play extremely softly throughout, dropping away to the limit of audibility on the final chord. Their beautiful, slow-moving harmonies form the fixed backdrop to the piece; they are unhurried and untouched by whatever happens around them.

The second entity (in order of appearance) is a trumpet, played offstage, which intones 'The Perennial Question of Existence', an angular phrase restated throughout the work and maintaining the same 'tone of voice' each time. The 'Perennial Question' is not only unanswered – it remains unaltered in any way.

The third and most attention-seeking entity is a wind quartet, designated 'The Fighting Answerers', which becomes increasingly desperate and quarrelsome. This is the aspect of the work which listeners – of the kind Ives scathingly described as preferring to 'let their ears rest in an easy chair' – often wish would disappear. The floating strings are undeniably lovely; even the Question adds a certain poignancy; but the winds' crunching chords and shifting cross-rhythms brutally and deliberately disrupt any sense of serenity.

Ives described this work in more everyday terms:

The quiet strings...represent the conventional life. We get up, and go to the office, and come home again, have dinner with the family, sit around in the evening... But sometimes there comes a Question: Is this all my life is good for? Shouldn't I be doing something courageous for the good of humanity? This question crosses the conventional life, doesn't fit with it. The flutes and other people try to answer, more and more intensely, but can't seem to get through. Meanwhile the conventional life goes on, and when the Question is asked for the last time, it is still not answered.

Seventy-two years after his death, Ives' contribution to humanity seems obvious. His fame and popularity have grown exponentially in a way he could not have predicted (at least not until late in his life, when his works began to be performed and admired by a wider audience). He is remembered as an innovator who opened the doors of imagination for many other composers.

In the score for *The Unanswered Question*, Charles Ives gave numerous options for scoring but preferred the options of "a woodwind quartet", "a solo instrument, preferably a trumpet" and "a string quartet or string orchestra". Today you will hear 4 flutes, a trumpet and the full strength of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra string section.

A version of the work for chamber orchestra was premiered in 1946 at Columbia University in New York City; the full version of the work was not premiered until 17 March 1984, when Dennis Russell Davies and the American Composers Orchestra performed it at Symphony Space in New York City.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in February 1968, at a Proms concert conducted by John Hopkins.

Other notable performances include those led by Patrick Thomas (1973 in Sydney and on tour in Shepparton, Wangaratta, Albury, Wagga Wagga and Newcastle); John Hopkins again (1976, 1988) and Bruno Weil (2001).

Our most recent performances were in 2011, conducted by Richard Gill.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT NIGEL WESTLAKE

Nigel Westlake's career, spanning almost five decades, began as a clarinetist touring Australia and the world with many orchestras, ensembles and bands.

He began composing in 1980, receiving offers to write for radio, theatre, circus, TV and film and was appointed composer-in-residence for ABC Radio in 1984.

From 1987–1992 he was a core member of the Australia Ensemble (resident at UNSW) and in 1992 was invited by guitarist John Williams to join his septet *Attacca* as performer and composer.

His film credits include *Blueback*, *Babe*, *Ali's Wedding*, *Paper Planes*, *Miss Potter*, *Babe-Pig in the City*, *Children of the Revolution*, *The Nugget*, *A Little Bit of Soul* and the IMAX films *Antarctica*, *Solarmax*, *The Edge* and *Imagine*. His television credits include numerous documentaries, telemovies, news themes and station ident.

He writes extensively for the concert hall, receiving commissions to write for orchestras, ensembles and soloists and has received many awards, including two ARIA Awards, 15 APRA awards across both Classical and Screen categories, the 2022 APRA Distinguished Services to the Australian Screen Award and the Gold Medal for Best Original Music at the New York International Radio Festival.

He is a two-time winner of the prestigious Paul Lowin Orchestral prize, in 2013 for *Missa Solis – Requiem for Eli* and in 2019 for *Spirit of the Wild – Concerto for oboe and orchestra*.



Photo by Steve Forrest

In 2020 he was awarded the Albert H Maggs Composition Award by the University of Melbourne for his 3rd String quartet *Sacred Sky*.

He has conducted all the major symphony orchestras in Australia in performances and recordings of his own works. In 2016 he made his US conducting debut at the Lincoln Centre with the New York Philharmonic, and his European debut with the RTÉ Symphony at the National Concert Hall in Dublin in 2018.

He holds an honorary doctorate in music awarded in 2013 by the University of NSW and was the recipient of the HC Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University in 2004.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT *WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES ME*

Nigel Westlake writes:

*When the clock strikes me
the big hand will realize the grandeur
of its illusion
and will begin to shrink
in its own eyes
while the little hand
marvels at the ball of energy
spinning from its palm*

So begins the poem by contemporary American writer Saul Williams, an edgy, declamatory work that explores a sequence of disarming and life affirming revelations, the central theme being that some moments are so profound they transcend time and space, creating a lasting, collective impact.

The recurring clock reference that begins each verse is adapted for musical purpose, a returning leitmotif, twisted and transformed with each reprise.

Our soloist begins by utilising a curious kit of junk metal, tuned cowbells and wooden temple blocks to create a parody of an animated ticking clock.

The pulse is halted, distorted, backfires, accelerates and decelerates eventually dragging the full orchestra into a heavily accented big-dipper of undulating contours and flamboyant rhythmic pattern exchanges.

In a single movement, the concerto is a re-working of a piece of the same name originally commissioned by the Sydney Symphony in 2006.

Suspecting that some of the ideas in the original version might benefit from further development, I have cherry picked a few of my favourite moments for the purpose of creating something new and more concise.

I am indebted to percussionist Rebecca Lagos for her advice on the ergonomic layout of the percussion set-up, and also her stunning virtuosity and enthusiasm.

When the Clock Strikes Me (Percussion concerto – revised 2025) was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, with the generous support of Geoff Stearn and is written for and dedicated to Rebecca Lagos.

Permission to use the title and excerpt of *When the Clock Strikes Me* has been generously granted by Saul Williams – writer, musician, poet, director and actor.

Nigel Westlake's 2025 revision of *When the Clock Strikes Me* is scored for piccolo, flute, 2 oboes (the 2nd doubling cor anglais), clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon and contrabassoon; 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, harp, keyboard, strings and percussion soloist.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra gave the world premiere of the original version of the work on 14 June 2006, with Rebecca Lagos the soloist conducted by Richard Gill.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

REBECCA LAGOS

Principal Percussion
I Kallinikos Chair

Rebecca Lagos began her musical studies on the piano and later studied percussion with Richard Miller. She gained her Bachelor's degree from Indiana University, Bloomington, under the tutelage of George Gaber, and on her return to Australia she worked with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra as Acting Principal Timpani, before taking up the position of Principal Timpani with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

In 1987 she was appointed to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as a member of the percussion section. That same year, she joined Sydney-based percussion ensemble Synergy. Over the next decade she worked with musicians including Trilok Gurtu, Evelyn Glennie, Dave Samuels, David Jones, Mike Nock, and Kazue Sawai. Synergy has premiered and recorded works by numerous Australian composers, and has toured Australia, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region (including performances at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, where they gave a private performance for Toru Takemitsu of his percussion trio, *Rain Tree*). She has toured Australia and the Asia-Pacific region with Synergy and the Sydney Dance Company for their *Synergy With Synergy* collaboration. The group has also recorded concertos for percussion ensemble by Carl Vine and Toru Takemitsu with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Rebecca Lagos has performed with the Seymour Group, Sydney Alpha Ensemble, Australia Ensemble, Taikoz and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, (including a performance of Messiaen's *From the Canyons to the Stars*, in the presence of the composer).

In 2006, she performed with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in the world premiere of Nigel Westlake's percussion concerto, *When the Clock Strikes Me*, and was subsequently awarded the prize for Best Performance of an Australian Composition at the APRA 2007 Classical Music Awards. She is also the resident cimbalom player for the SSO.

Rebecca Lagos was appointed to the position of Principal Percussion with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2006.



Photo by Jez Smith



Photo by Daniel Boud

HITTING THE RIGHT NOTES: NIGEL WESTLAKE AND REBECCA LAGOS ON A STRIKING NEW CONCERTO

Composer Nigel Westlake and Principal Percussion Rebecca Lagos share an enduring friendship and lifelong fascination with percussion, all of which comes together in Westlake's percussion concerto written for Lagos, which receives its "re-premiere" in May.

By Hugh Robertson

It's not often you get a second chance to make a first impression. But that's precisely the case for Australian composer Nigel Westlake and his "new" percussion concerto, *When the Clock Strikes Me...* Originally written for Sydney Symphony Orchestra Principal Percussion Rebecca Lagos in 2006, Westlake has "cherry-picked the best bits" for a complete rewrite which will be re-premiered at the Sydney Opera House in May, again with Lagos as soloist.

It's not as if the 2006 version wasn't a huge success: it was met with glowing reviews and was awarded Best Performance of an Australian Composition at the 2007 Classical Music Awards (now known as the Art Music Awards). But Westlake wasn't satisfied.

'Twenty years ago I was overwhelmed at the incredible way Rebecca played it and the way the Sydney Symphony really got into it, but I never felt that the idea was fully realized,' he explains. 'It didn't have enough sense of tension and release. It felt a bit flabby, it was too long. So this is shorter – the original one was almost 30 minutes long, but this version is twenty minutes. So it's more concise and it gets to the point much quicker, and maintains that sense of drive and direction with much more efficacy than the original version.'

Drive and direction it has in abundance. This is a propulsive, compelling work that surges with energy from its very first notes – unsurprisingly, given the form and content of the inspiration for the work.

FEATURE ARTICLE

‘The work came about when my son introduced me to a poem by the American beat poet Saul Williams,’ explains Westlake. ‘Even though I’m not into rap and beat that much I was attracted to certain aspects of this poem. It’s a very edgy and declamatory work... and describes a sequence of disarming and life-affirming revelations, the central theme being that some moments are so profound that they transcend time and space.’

‘I love the idea of the constant ticking clock in the background. Everyone goes through their moments of revelation and enlightenment or awakenings – and these moments distort our sense of time and reality – and yet we always come back to the ticking clock.’

‘This is of what the music does,’ he continues. ‘It starts off with a very disarming, very simplistic approach: a ticking clock, realised by Rebecca with a weird collection of little wood blocks and metal gadgets. Then the music speeds up, it slows down, it becomes distorted and backfires on itself, then it drags the orchestra into this sort of whirlwind of activity which peaks and then we come back all of a sudden to the ticking clock again.’



Rebecca Lagos in her home studio in 2006, in the lead up to the (first) premiere of *When the Clock Strikes Me...*
Photo credit Val Anasco.

We are having this conversation in Rebecca Lagos’s rehearsal room at her house in Sydney’s inner west, completely surrounded by more percussion than you can shake a stick at.

Lagos is naturally thrilled to have the chance to revisit this major work, a rare opportunity for percussionists to step to the front of the stage. But more than that, it’s a chance for her to spend more time in Westlake’s musical world.

‘I have always loved Nigel’s music, but especially the way he writes for percussion,’ she says. ‘I’ve always thought he was a bit of a closet percussionist because he seems to understand it so well and writes for the instruments really well. He uses the colour but also the rhythm in such a great way.’

As it turns out, Lagos isn’t far off the mark.

‘I’ve always had a great fondness and passion for percussion,’ reveals Westlake. ‘When I was 11 years old my grandmother took me to the Sydney Town Hall to hear the great sarod player Ali Akbar Khan – and his tabla player was the genius Zakir Hussain, who was just a few years older than me, just a young kid playing this unbelievable stuff.’

‘I harboured a fantasy of going to India to study tabla. But I thought my dad [Donald, Sydney Symphony Principal Clarinet from 1961–1979], was probably not going to go for that idea. So I put it away and didn’t really think about it much – but I’ve always held a special place in my heart for percussion.’



(L-R) Nigel, Don and Kate Westlake engaging in some score analysis, sometime in the mid-late Sixties.

‘I’ve got a wonderful relationship with the SSO section for starters, especially Rebecca – we back a very long way and we’ve done all sorts of projects together, recordings, film scores, various pieces with the Sydney Symphony and chamber music. She’s got a great sense of what I’m after and is always sourcing the right sounds for me to write for.’

FEATURE ARTICLE

‘That’s very much the case with this concerto – Becky has spent a long time selecting beautifully tuned pieces of metal junk, gongs from all sorts of places and strange and weird and wonderful things.’

Even if the music weren’t brilliant, it would be worth the price of admission just to witness the small city of instruments Lagos will wield in this concert.

As she takes us on a tour – gongs over here, marimba here, cast iron frying pans she bought from a kitchen supply store here – she makes the point that, unlike traditional concertos written for one single instrument, percussion concertos are written for the entire family of instruments at once. Because of this, much of Lagos and Westlake’s collaboration on this project has been working out what is physically possible to play.

‘It took at least a week of figuring out how to set the piece up,’ says Lagos with a wry laugh. ‘A week of setups, fiddling around, moving things around, trying things out, seeing if I could reach everything.’

‘Writing for percussion is like writing for a new instrument,’ she explains. ‘The soloist essentially has to learn a new instrument, which is made up of a lot of different instruments, if that makes sense.’

‘Nigel came up with the original instruments that he wanted to use – and I’ve actually always wondered how he comes up with those instruments – and then he would bring it to me and we would discuss it and talk about whether it was possible and whether I would actually physically be able to reach all the instruments.’



Nigel Westlake watching on during rehearsals in the Sydney Opera House. Photo © Daniela Testa.

Despite the sheer number of individual percussion instruments on stage, *When the Clock Strikes Me...* never once feels like an assault on the ears. There is tremendous variety written into the soloist’s score, from the warm wooden tones of the marimba to Chinese opera gongs that bend the note and the shattering *thwack* of the thundersheet, Lagos takes pains to explain this is a work of fascinating textures and aural experiences.

‘It’s different to the way a lot of percussion concertos work,’ she begins. ‘Nigel uses the instruments with other instruments all the time, rather than just concentrating on one set of instruments then moving to another set then moving to another set – and a lot of percussion concertos can be like that. It’s all integrated. It’s really interesting. I love the way he writes for percussion,’ she reiterates with a big smile.

You can tell Westlake is pleased to hear such positive feedback from his dedicatee. ‘That, to me, is my way of embracing the percussion. I think when people come to hear a percussion concerto I think they want to be surprised, they want to be delighted, they want to be thrilled and excited by the energy. The first version of this work didn’t really do that for me, but I’m hoping that this one does.’

‘The other thing about percussion is that I just love the way it works. It’s very theatrical. You see all these instruments on stage, you see someone about to hit something, and it inspires questions that other concertos don’t. “Now what? What’s going to happen? What’s she playing now? What’s that going to sound like? Is it going to be loud, soft, fast, slow?”

‘That in itself is a sense of theatre, and all that anticipation is a beautiful thing. So I hope it will be very entertaining, musically enriching and quite thrilling – especially in terms of the virtuosity of the players involved, particularly Rebecca.’

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT GUSTAV HOLST

Like Samuel Barber, Gustav Holst is one of those composers whose posterity has been cursed by the success of one work.

The foundation of the Royal College of Music in 1883 was part of the redevelopment of London's South Kensington, a direct result of Prince Albert's efforts to improve the nation's moral health through art and science. With Charles Villiers Stanford as its professor of composition, the RCM attracted new generations of aspiring musicians, among them Ralph Vaughan Williams, Eugene Goossens, Herbert Howells, John Ireland and Gustav Holst.

Vaughan Williams was a prime mover in the collection of folk-song, as in the revival of music from the Tudor period, and his lifelong friendship with Gustav Holst was of incalculable value to both composers.

Odd as it may seem, the composer of *The Planets* was initially heavily influenced by the kind of Mendelssohnian Romanticism cultivated by Sir Arthur Sullivan (with or without Gilbert...), but by the time the young Holst entered the RCM in 1893 he was a Wagnerian through and through, and his early works, such as the symphonic poem *Indra* (1903) show this influence in their opulence and richly chromatic harmony. The Wagnerian palette was also perfect for settings of the poetry of Walt Whitman, notably *The Mystic Trumpeter* of 1904, and for his homage to North African music, *Beni Mora*.

After some years as a professional trombonist, Holst decided in 1903 to devote himself to composition – though in practice this meant beginning his career as an outstanding teacher at St Paul's Girls School, Morley College, and later the RCM. It was at around this time that, with Vaughan Williams' encouragement, Holst began his own exploration of folk music, which bore fruit throughout his life in works such as the *Somerset Rhapsody*, the St Paul's Suite for strings and the Shakespearean opera *At the Boar's Head*. Like Vaughan Williams, Holst sought to revive older English music, and gave the first performance of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* since the 17th century. (Holst was of Swedish, not German, ancestry, but dropped the 'von' from his name during World War I.)



1921 photo of Holst by Herbert Lambert © National Portrait Gallery, London

Holst's other major enthusiasm in his early period was for Sanskrit literature notably the epic *Mahābhārata* and the collection of hymns in the *Rig Veda*, which drove his early Wagnerian opera *Sita*, the more modest but more successful *Savitri*, and the *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*.

The Hymn of Jesus and *The Planets* were two works that earned Holst enormous fame and respect, but he was an artist of such integrity that he assiduously avoided capitalising on the works by repeating himself. And he was prolific, with over a dozen works for the stage, a number of major orchestral pieces, much choral and vocal music, works for wind and brass bands, and some chamber music.

Possibly to avoid simply replicating a winning formula, and possibly owing to a seemingly minor head injury, Holst's music became much more austere in the last decade of his life, producing works of great formal rigour which, sadly, failed to excite listeners (even Vaughan Williams could only manage 'cold admiration' for the Choral Symphony). Perhaps now they could come out from under the shadow of *The Planets*: a work such as *Egdon Heath* requires the kind of meditative listening we might apply to music by, say, Morton Feldman, but we must respect Holst's view that it was the best thing he ever wrote.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE PLANETS

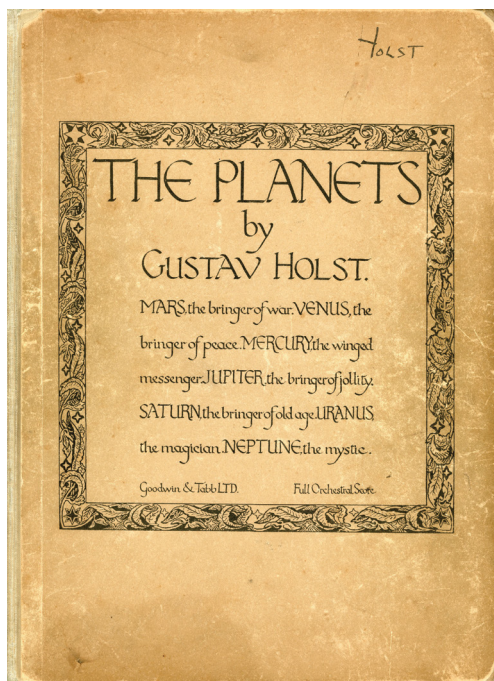
- i. *Mars, the Bringer of War*
- ii. *Venus, the Bringer of Peace*
- iii. *Mercury, the Winged Messenger*
- iv. *Jupiter the Bringer of Jollity*
- v. *Saturn the Bringer of Old Age*
- vi. *Uranus, the Magician*
- vii. *Neptune, the Mystic*

The Planets must be one of the most influential musical works of the twentieth century. Russell Crowe and his cohorts in *Gladiator* seemed that bit more craggily determined thanks to a score that reminded us of *Mars*. At the opening of *Uranus*, you could be forgiven for expecting Darth Vader to rip off his headgear to reveal a clown beneath. At the close of *Neptune*, Holst invents the fade-out. The iridescent opening of *Jupiter* foreshadows the work of John Adams, and for many years Anglicans have sung its big central tune as the patriotic hymn, *I vow to thee my country*, which was featured in the funeral service for Diana, Princess of Wales. An Australian newspaper columnist once suggested – and in all seriousness – that the same tune should be our new national anthem, as it kind of fits the words of Dorothea MacKellar's *My Country*.

As a repository of orchestral special effects and memorable tunes, the piece has certainly earned its pop status, but its very popularity and the imitations it has spawned have disadvantaged it and its composer. We need to make an effort to hear the work with fresh ears – forgetting about Russell and Darth and all that – and to remind ourselves that this was very radical music for its time. Moreover, we should note that it is atypical of its composer.

Planned in 1913 and composed between 1914 and 1917, the seven movements of *The Planets* are less about depicting large balls of gas and rock than about each planet's astrological significance. Given the outbreak of the First World War at the time, it is hard not to see *Mars* as grimly prophetic of the carnage of the first hi-tech war. Where a composer like Mahler uses military music for an ambiguously thrilling effect, Holst takes pains to make his music simply inhuman: the opening three note theme traces the

tritone, an unstable interval often called the devil in music. The relentlessly repeated rhythm, or *ostinato* is no simple march, having five beats to a bar. The harmony is bitonal – that is, it superimposes chords of two different keys to give it its sense of unrelieved dissonance, especially at the shattering climax.



Holst's conducting score of *The Planets*.

Venus, the Bringer of Peace of course offers a complete contrast: the orchestration is sweet and languorous and the harmony – while still frequently bitonal, uses chords which avoid direct clashes of adjacent notes, creating subtle voluptuousness. Framed by slow sections, the piece moves through a slightly faster section and a contrasting *animato*.

Mercury on the other hand, is rather like a symphonic scherzo: short, fast and orchestrated with the utmost delicacy. At the heart of the suite, *Jupiter* is an orchestral *tour de force*. The glittering fast music with which it opens is busy but crystal clear; its theme, like *Mars*'s, is based on a three-note motive, but here it is completely and solidly diatonic. *The Planets* was first planned during a holiday in Spain, so we

ABOUT THE MUSIC

shouldn't be surprised to hear certain Iberian sounds and rhythms in the dance music which follows. This is interrupted by a fanfare of repeated chords, which ushers in the quiet statement of the celebrated *maestoso* theme. The quintessentially British tune may seem out of place in a celebration of the Bringer of Jollity – it is hardly thigh-slappingly funny. Curiously, too, it doesn't reach a full close: what should be the second last chord sets off an echo the shimmering sounds of the opening. The tune does, however, stride through tumultuous last pages of the movement.

If *Jupiter's* big tune was a reminder that joy is fleeting, *Saturn* makes this very clear in its portentous, death-ward tread and ever more disturbing brass chords. Uranus, however, casts a spell (after ripping of the Darth Vader mask) in a music as innocent as *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Tasking his cue from Debussy's *Sirénes*, Holst imbues *Neptune* with the mystery of wordless, offstage female voices. With its translucent scoring and the hypnotic use of repeated chord patterns, the work ends as perhaps no other had before, fading imperceptibly into night and silence.

Notes by Katherine Kemp/ Symphony Australia © 1998 (*The Unanswered Question*), Nigel Westlake © 2005, Gordon Kerry © 2026 (*Ives and Holst biographies*) © 2003, (*The Planets*)

The Planets calls for a large orchestra, though not everyone is required in all movements. It is scored for 4 flutes (3rd and 4th doubling piccolo, and 4th doubling alto flute), 3 oboes (3rd doubling bass oboe), cor anglais, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon; 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tenor tuba and tuba; timpani, percussion, 2 harps, organ, celeste and strings. In addition, the 'Neptune' movement calls for offstage women's chorus.

Its world premiere was at Queen's Hall, London, on 29 September 1918, conducted by Adrian Boult.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in October 1942, conducted by William Richard Cade, the founding conductor of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Other notable performances include those conducted by Walter Susskind (1953 and 1974); Louis Frémaux (1980); David Measham (1984 Sydney Festival); Charles Mackerras (1984); John Hopkins (1988); David Shallon (1992); Vernon Handley (1997); Edo de Waart (1999); Takuo Yuasa (2002); John Storgårds (2006); Ludovic Morlot (2011); Simone Young (2014 Symphony in the Domain) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (2019).

Our most recent performance was in December 2022, conducted by James Judd.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LUCAS VAN WOERKUM

Chief Creative Director &
Executive Producer, Symphonic Cinema

Lucas van Woerkum (1982) is the founder of Symphonic Cinema, an innovative form that brings together film and live symphonic music in a unique concert experience. He studied French horn at the Fontys Conservatory in Tilburg before graduating in 2004 from the directing program at the Utrecht School of the Arts with his documentary *Mahler: Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*. The film premiered at the Holland Festival and was later presented at the Auditorium of the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Symphonic Cinema was introduced to international audiences in 2011, when Lucas was commissioned by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra to create *Scale, le tombeau de Mahler*, set to a composition by Willem Jeths. That same year, *The Isle of the Dead*, inspired by Sergei Rachmaninov's *Die Toteninsel*, was performed by the Residentie Orchestra The Hague under the baton of Jun Märkl, and subsequently featured in a special presentation at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.

In 2013, Lucas received commissions from seven international orchestras for *Firebird*, based on Stravinsky's *Leoiseau de Feu*, marking a significant step in the global expansion of Symphonic Cinema. This was followed in 2018 by a new production of Ravel's *Daphnis & Chloé*, which premiered at the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, and later in Manchester with the BBC Philharmonic.

Both *Firebird* and *Daphnis & Chloé* continue to tour internationally, with recent highlights including performances in Beijing, London, Brussels, Liège, Finland and Spain. *Firebird* also opened the 2024/2025 season of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

His film *The Echo of Being*, based on the life of Gustav Mahler and starring Greg Wise (*Sense and Sensibility*) and Amira Casar (*Call Me by Your Name*), premiered to great acclaim in February 2020 with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Antony Hermus, opening the Concertgebouw's Mahler Festival.

In 2026, Lucas launched the world tour of *Loss*, a new Symphonic Cinema production based on Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, starring Emma Thompson and Greg Wise. The production is being performed by leading orchestras worldwide, including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Bamberg Symphony.



Photo by Marco Borggreve

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.

Led by Artistic and Music Director Brett Weymark OAM and Associate Music Director Dr Elizabeth Scott, and with more than 2,000 singers across six ensembles, SPC brings the full power of the human voice to dynamic music making. From blockbuster choral classics like Verdi's *Requiem* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, to the soaring soundtracks of films such as *Gladiator*, heartwarming

musical theatre, and world premieres by leading Australian composers.

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.

SOPRANOS

Nicola Awad
Elizabeth Bragg
Ruby Bron
Kirsten Busby
Caiyi Chen
Joann Chiang
Ashley Cohn
Eleanor Donovan
Jessica Foreman
Georgia Hopkins
Christine Li
Samantha Macourt
Harriet McLean
Binh-An Nguyen
Honor Nicholson
Xin Yuan Quek
Lethe Sherrie-Mitsios

Joyce Tang

Lily Tindale

Liv Wishart

Dorothy Wu

ALTOS

Jasmin Borsovszky

Meaghan Brady

Amelia Bussing

Beatrice Chaston

Jennifer Chen

Awen Davidson

Alisa-Jean Fifita

Yvonne Harrison

Peyton Hawkins

Emma Holley

Kay Hughson

Geo Lee

Milly Martin

Teresa Mayo

Laura McKay

Maya Moral

Alleyn Moss

Audrey Ormella

Veronica Sebesfi

Verity Skala

Charlotte Snedden

Emma Snellgrove

Gabrielle Utian

Miranda Vaz

Sophie Waller

Lydia Weir

Rachael Whitford

Lotus Zhong

Emily Zhou

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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 Ešēvalds, as well as Australian composers such as Paul Stanhope, Joseph Twist, Brooke Shelley, Matthew Orlovich and Sally Whitwell.



Photo by Keith Saunders

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NAOMI HNAT chorus master

Moving to Sydney from New Zealand, Naomi has so far enjoyed a diverse music career spanning both choral and orchestral fields. She was the Director of the Christchurch Youth Orchestra in 2025, and spent two years as a New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Conducting Fellow. She had her debut conducting the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra in 2024, where she also recently served as Assistant Chorus Director for their performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*. Additionally, Naomi directed various secondary school choirs for seven years, achieving national recognition at The Big Sing Finale several times.

Naomi recently completed her Masters (First Class), specialising in symphonic choral repertoire, with Simon Halsey CBE at the University of Birmingham. During this time, she participated in several masterclasses, including at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and with the Crouch End Festival Chorus in London. Prior to her time in the UK, she undertook postgraduate conducting studies with Dr. Karen Grylls CNZM at the University of Auckland. Naomi has also previously been a conducting intern for Voices New Zealand and the New Zealand Youth Choir.

An accomplished instrumentalist, Naomi has been a cellist with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra since 2011, where she played for symphonic concerts, New Zealand Opera and Royal New Zealand Ballet collaborations, pop concerts, live films, and community engagement. She also enjoyed the opportunity to perform as Principal Cello for several months across 2025.

Naomi is one of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' 2026 Conducting Fellows.



Photo by Keith Saunders



MOVING PICTURES: LUCAS VAN WOERKUM ON SYMPHONIC CINEMA

Orchestras performing live-to-screen is nothing new: but what about a film edited live-to-orchestra? Meet Dutch director Lucas van Woerkum, whose Symphonic Cinema project seeks to reimagine the relationship between music and the movies.

By Hugh Robertson

Music and movies go hand in hand. Classical music is often described as “cinematic” – sweeping, dramatic, all-consuming – and music has been used to heighten on-screen drama since the earliest days of moving pictures. It has always been that music is cut to fit the images – but what if it was the other way around?

What if the film was being edited in real time, responding to the live performance with all its nuance, variation and unpredictability? What if a film served the music, rather than the soundtrack supporting the movie?

Sydney audiences will be able to experience exactly that in May, with the world premiere of *LOSS* by Dutch filmmaker Lucas van Woerkum, a silent film set to *The Planets* by Gustav Holst. Van Woerkum will sit on stage with the Orchestra and a digital touchpad, “playing” his film in time with the Orchestra’s performance conducted by Benjamin Northey.

Van Woerkum is no barbarian at the gates of classical music, seeking to ransack the citadel. His love for orchestral music is deep-seated, sparked like so many by attending a performance of *Peter and the Wolf* as a child.

His path to Symphonic Cinema began when he was studying French horn at the conservatorium: Van Woerkum began studying film as well – partly to avoid spending ‘the rest of my life playing on a piece of copper.’ Gradually his interests merged and he shifted to trying to capture music on film. While he was still at school he made a film about Mahler’s Ninth Symphony set against the final days of Riccardo Chailly’s tenure as Chief Conductor of Amsterdam’s famous Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, which he followed with a series of documentaries on contemporary composers including Arvo Pärt, Tan Dun and Elliot Carter. But after making his first work of fiction,

FEATURE ARTICLE

he realised it was much more satisfying to create the story himself rather than documenting someone else's life.

'I thought, what if I could turn stories in classical music into drama films? It was not even an idea – it was more like, "how can I combine this passion for classical music and making drama films?"

'It started with small tests, small five-minute pieces that I turned into small drama films, and then in 2011 I created *The Isle of the Dead*, the first Symphonic Cinema film [based on Rachmaninov's work of the same title]. That was recently performed in Montreal, so it's funny to see that these films, like the music, are being played over and over.'

So how does it actually work? Essentially the film is just another instrument, with Van Woerkum sitting on stage with a digital touchpad responding directly to the conductor. 'Every single shot of the film is being triggered live by me,' he says. 'I have the ability to slow down and speed up the film to make it more directly synced to the music.'

'I am reacting to the emotions and the tempi and the dynamics of the orchestra,' he continues. 'You need to give the musicians the freedom.'

It sounds incredibly stressful. 'Well, yes – but you get used to it. And I was a French horn player,' he says with a laugh. 'That's even more stressful.'



Lucas van Woerkum on set with Emma Thompson

Over the past fifteen years Van Woerkum has made several more films along the same lines: *Firebird* (2013), based on Stravinsky's ballet; *Daphnis & Chloe* (2018), after Ravel; and *The Echo of Being* (2020), inspired by biographical elements from the lives of Gustav and Alma Mahler and their young daughter Maria and set to excerpts from his Second, Fourth and Ninth symphonies.

This latest film, *LOSS*, follows a husband and wife (played by real-life couple Emma Thompson and Greg Wise) and tracks their individual journeys after one of them dies. It's a touching and philosophical work about the afterlife, a subject Van Woerkum has explored in two of his previous films.

'*The Isle of the Dead* is about the fear of dying, and then *The Echo of Being* is about the process of going to the afterlife,' he explains. 'And then I thought, "If I really want to show my ideas I should try to interpret afterlife. What is afterlife in my opinion?"

'I read a lot of books about near-death experiences and about how different religions think about the afterlife, and then I realized *The Planets* would be a great piece to show what I hope for – that the afterlife is a celebration of your life. So it's not a dark film. There are some darker moments in the music, but I really wanted to make a of a soothing film about the theme of dying and of what will happen maybe after you die.'

It's a long way removed from the literal depiction of planets spinning that we have seen on countless concert programs and album covers, but Van Woerkum argues that we have been representing the music wrong this whole time.

'All the research I did for *The Planets* came together in the idea of Imogen, Holst's daughter, who said that *The Planets* are actually a progression of the human soul,' he reveals. 'You could interpret it as a journey of someone, because it's more about the astrological meanings of the planets than the astronomical importance.'

'*The Planets* was [originally] called "Seven Pieces for Orchestra", so Holst was not very focused on the meaning of the planets themselves,' he continues.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Van Woerkum's desire in making these films is to deepen people's connection to and understanding of the music, making clearer the emotional landscape of the composer's lives so that listeners can more clearly understand the musical landscape.

'I always thought of the concert hall as a sort of a church. Because for me, it's not entertainment, like going there with popcorn and a drink. It's more like a collective experience that you have together.

'Of course, if you have this 100 or sometimes 200-piece orchestra with choir on stage, that in itself is an experience on its own. If I, with my film, can lead the minds or the hearts of the audience a bit in a direction, so that it becomes easier for them to understand what the music is about – that is my ideology.'

'Let's try to change the way we experience music a bit.'

Sydney audiences are about to discover that Symphonic Cinemas projects are a compelling package – they certainly swept Emma Thompson away when she first encountered it. Thompson's husband, Greg Wise, starred in *The Echo of Being*; Thompson was at its world premiere with the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and immediately told Van Woerkum that she wanted to be in his next film.

Van Woerkum says the process of working with such a brilliant and experienced actor, screenwriter and producer was a major milestone for him.



Greg Wise and Emma Thompson star in *LOSS*.

'We started a dialogue, and then after about two years of work I sent a script to her that I was certain was the film I wanted to make – and then she said that it was also the film she wanted to make.

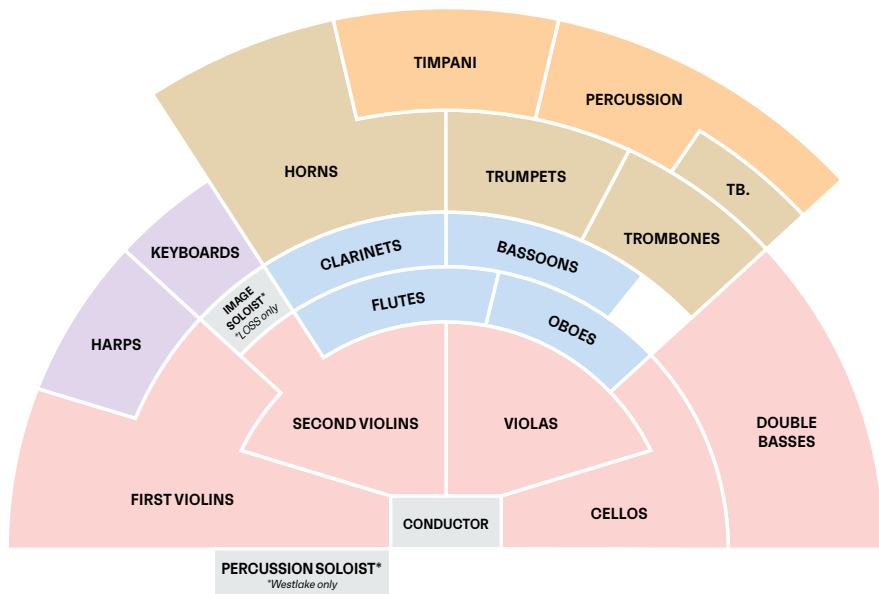
'That was life-changing. You know, when you graduate from film school you get a diploma, when you have your first film you can call yourself a film director – but this was a moment where I thought, "Okay I have reached a high level." And creatively, what she adds to the music is incredible –

the nuances in her face, the way she is always a bit ambiguous in what she plays. She's great!'

'Also Greg Wise was playing on a very high level, I would say. Which is great, because their performances help the music also. In the end, it's my goal – as a French horn player – to communicate this very beautiful music, to reach a broader audience and maybe a more diverse audience thanks to the names of these actors on the poster.

'I hope I can win some hearts for classical music.'

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



PERFORMING IN THIS CONCERT

FIRST VIOLINS

Andrew Haveron
Concertmaster
Harry Bennetts
Associate Concertmaster
Alexandra Osborne
Associate Concertmaster
Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
Jennifer Booth
Sophie Cole
Sercan Danis
Claire Herrick
Emily Long
Alexander Norton
Leone Ziegler
Liam Pilgrim
Benjamin Tjoa
Brian Hong^o
Marcus Michelsen[^]
Hannah Kim[^]

SECOND VIOLINS

Lerida Delbridge
Principal
Marina Marsden
Principal
Emma Jezek
Assistant Principal
Alice Bartsch
Emma Hayes
Shuti Huang
Monique Irik
Wendy Kong
Benjamin Li
Nicole Masters
Robert Smith
Riikka Sintonen^o
Emily Qin[^]
Siobhan Makinson[^]

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider
Principal
Justin Williams
Acting Associate Principal
Anne-Louise Comerford
Associate Principal Emeritus
Sandro Costantino
Rosemary Curtin
Stuart Johnson
Felicity Tsai
Leonid Volovelsky
Andrew Jezek^o
Nathan Greentree^{*}
Dana Lee^{*}
Olivia Spyrou[^]

CELLOS

Simon Cobcroft
Associate Principal
Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Kristy Conrau
Fenella Gill
Timothy Nankervis
Christopher Pidcock
Adrian Wallis
Rowena Macneish^{*}
Eliza Sdraulig^{*}
James Monro[^]

DOUBLE BASSES

Kees Boersma
Principal
Benjamin Ward
Acting Principal
Dylan Holly
Richard Lynn
Jaan Pallandi
Benjamin Ward
Harry Young^o
Stephen Newton^{*}
Emma Meixner[^]

FLUTES

Emma Sholl
Principal
Carolyn Harris
Katlijn Sergeant
Principal Piccolo
Emilia Antcliff^{*}

OBOES

Shefali Pryor
Principal
Eve Osborn^{*}
Miriam Cooney^{*}
Alexandre Oguey
Principal Cor Anglais

CLARINETS

Alexander Morris
Principal
Christopher Tingay
Clare Fox^{*}
Alexei Dupressoir^{*}
Guest Principal Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS

Matthew Wilkie
Principal Emeritus
Fiona McNamara
Bailey Ireland^{*}
Melissa Woodroffe^{*}
Guest Principal Contrabassoon

HORNS

Samuel Jacobs
Principal
Euan Harvey
Acting Principal 3rd Horn
Marnie Sebire
Rachel Silver
Emily Miers^o
Sarah Bernard^{*}
Shadley Van Wyk^{*}

TRUMPETS

David Elton
Principal
Brent Grapes
Associate Principal
Cécile Glénot
Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Nick Byrne
Acting Associate Principal
Jeremy Mazurek^o
Christopher Harris
Principal Bass Trombone

TUBAS

Steven Rossé
Principal
Scott Kinmont
Principal Tenor Tuba

TIMPANI

Mark Robinson
Associate Principal
Joshua Hill^o

PERCUSSION

Timothy Constable
Acting Principal
Gabriel Fischer^{*}
Chiron Meller^{*}
Brian Nixon^{*}

HARPS

Louis Dulbecco
Principal
Kate Moloney^{*}

KEYBOARD

David Drury^{*}
Guest Principal Organ
Louisa Breen^{*}
Guest Principal Piano

Bold Principal

^{*} Guest Musician
^o Contract Musician
[†] Sydney Symphony Fellow
[^] Australian Youth Orchestra Musician

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP



Simone Young AM
Chief Conductor



Donald Runnicles
Principal Guest Conductor



Benjamin Northey
Conductor in Residence



Vladimir Ashkenazy
Conductor Laureate



Andrew Haveron
Concertmaster
Vicki Olsson Chair

FIRST VIOLINS



Harry Bennetts
Associate
Concertmaster
*Judy & Sam Weiss
Chair*



**Alexandra
Osborne**
Associate
Concertmaster
*Helen Lynch AM &
Helen Bauer Chair*



Fiona Ziegler
Assistant
Concertmaster
*Webb Family Chair,
in memory of Dr Bill
Webb & Helen Webb*



Sun Yi
Associate
Concertmaster
Emeritus



Jenny Booth



Sophie Cole



Sercan Danis



Claire Herrick
*Russell & Mary
McMurray Chair*



Georges Lentz



Emily Long



**Alexandra
Mitchell**



**Alexander
Norton**



Liam Pilgrim



Benjamin Tjoa



Léone Ziegler

SECOND VIOLINS



Lerida Delbridge
Principal



Kirsty Hilton
Principal



Marina Marsden
Principal Emeritus



Emma Jezek
Assistant Principal



Alice Bartsch



Victoria Bihun



Rebecca Gill
*Dr John Lam-Po-Tang
Chair, in memory
of Reg & Jeannette
Lam-Po-Tang*



Emma Hayes



Shuti Huang



Monique Irik



Wendy Kong



Benjamin Li



Nicole Masters
*Nora Goodridge OAM
Chair*



Robert Smith



Maja Verunica

VIOLAS



Tobias Breider
Principal
*Roslyn Packer AC
& Gretel Packer AM
Chair*



Richard Waters
Principal



Justin Williams
Assistant Principal
*Bob & Julie Clampett
Chair, in memory of
Carolyn Clampett*



**Anne-Louise
Comerford**
Associate Principal
Emeritus
White Family Chair



**Sandro
Costantino**



**Rosemary
Curtin**
*John & Jane
Morschel Chair*



Stuart Johnson



Justine Marsden



Felicity Tsai



Amanda Verner



Leonid Volovelsky

CELLOS



Catherine Hewgill
Principal
*Jacqui & John
Conde AO Chair*



Simon Cobcroft
Associate Principal



Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal



Kristy Conrau
*Deborah Anne
Jones Chair*



Fenella Gill



**Timothy
Nankervis**



Elizabeth Neville



**Christopher
Pidcock**



Adrian Wallis

DOUBLE BASSES



Kees Boersma
Principal
Brian Abel Chair



Alex Henery
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