

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH EUAN HARVEY

8 & 9 MAY 2026

Utzon Room,
Sydney Opera House



Presenting Partner

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WELCOME

Welcome to **Cocktail Hour with Euan Harvey**, the third concert in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Cocktail Hour with Handpicked Wines* series for 2026.

Handpicked Wines is delighted to be presenting this Series, now in its third year, which brings together beautiful music and the exquisite venue that is the Utzon Room at the Sydney Opera House.

At Handpicked, we understand the power of passion and artistry. We draw on both technical skill and creative inspiration to craft wines that elevate and enhance experiences, just as the musicians of the Orchestra draw on their expertise and artistry to enrich lives.

We have all sat in the Concert Hall, pinned to the backs of our chairs by the brass instruments in the most dramatic moments of the biggest symphonies. But for tonight's program, horn player Euan Harvey has selected three works that showcase the subtlety and delicacy of these instruments, and how beautifully they can work in a chamber ensemble.

Composed as a birthday present to his wife and based on a German lullaby, Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* captures the composer in an intimate domestic setting a world away from the bombast of his famous operas. In Richard Strauss' opera *Capriccio*, characters debate whether art, poetry or music is more important: the exquisite Sextet that opens the first scene makes a persuasive argument. Written when he was just 18 but already demonstrating a clear and unique style, Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonietta* announced him as a major composer.

The carefully chosen wines, the intimate experience of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra musicians and this riveting music create the perfect combination for a memorable evening.

Handpicked and the Orchestra share values of creativity and technical excellence, which are the hallmark of everything we do. It has been a great pleasure to see our partnership flourish so successfully.

We hope you enjoy the concert and the wines we have selected to accompany this performance.



William Dong
Managing Director
Handpicked Wines

2026 CONCERT SEASON

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH EUAN HARVEY

WAGNER, STRAUSS & BRITTEN

Genevieve Lang presenter

Alexandra Osborne violin

Emily Long violin

Justin Williams viola

Amanda Verner viola

Timothy Nankervis cello

Elizabeth Neville cello

Jaan Pallandi double bass

Emma Sholl flute

Shefali Prior oboe

Alexander Morris clarinet

Clare Fox* clarinet

Todd Gibson-Cornish bassoon

Euan Harvey horn

Samuel Jacobs horn

RICHARD WAGNER (1813-1883)

Siegfried Idyll (1868)

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Capriccio, Op.85 (1941)

Sextet

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Sinfonietta, Op.1 (1932)

i. Poco presto ed agitato

ii. Variations

iii. Tarantella

Friday 8 May, 6pm

Saturday 9 May, 6pm

Cocktail Hour with

Handpicked Wines

Utzon Room,

Sydney Opera House

Estimated durations

The concert will run for

approx. 1 hour, with no interval.

Cover image

By Ken Leanfore

* Guest musician

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

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WELCOME

Welcome to tonight's Cocktail Hour concert – and thank you for trusting the programming of a Brass player!

I was brought up in a musical family and my parents instilled in me a great love of classical music. So when our Artistic department put the call out for expressions of interest to curate a concert, I thought to myself, what would my top three pieces be? I came up with Wagner's *Tristan & Isolde*, Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* and the Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings by Benjamin Britten. Along with soaring vocal lines, all three of these works include fabulous writing for the French Horn.

Unfortunately my choices were somewhat ambitious for a short concert in the Utzon room. So how to include three of my favourite composers in an intimate chamber music venue without straining my friendship with our Director of Finance?

Wagner's *Seigfried Idyll* is an exquisite work written as a birthday present for his wife. It includes familiar references from his opera *Seigfried* which we played at the end of last year with Simone Young. I have played the *Idyll* several times and always enjoy the interplay between strings and winds and the warm and lush musical colour that Wagner creates.

Whilst less romantic and emotionally direct than his *Four Last Songs*, Strauss's last opera *Capriccio* still includes some serene and reflective passages that I love so much about his late works. Ideally, I would have included an arrangement of the *Moonlight* music from the opera, including its glorious French horn solo. However, conscious of the aforementioned constraints and that one can have too much of a good thing, the string sextet which opens the opera seemed like a nice compromise.

I came across Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonietta* when I helped out with our Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellowship program's final concert in 2024. Written when he was only 18 it nevertheless demonstrates his extraordinary imagination and inventive use of instrumental colour evident in his subsequent works.

Thank you to all my fabulous colleagues who agreed to join me in this program, it is always an inspiration to work with you.

Euan Harvey

Horn

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT WAGNER'S SIEGFRIED IDYLL

Shortly after Wagner's birth in Leipzig, his father died and the family moved with his new stepfather Ludwig Geyer, an actor and playwright, from Leipzig to Dresden. The young Wagner wrote a tragedy 'like *Hamlet* and *King Lear* rolled into one,' with 47 deaths on stage before interval. Only when he heard Beethoven's music for Goethe's *Egmont* did Wagner understand that his vision could only be realised in music as powerful as Beethoven's – and that only he could compose it.

His first mature opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, is inspired by a storm-tossed sea voyage off Norway: the heroine's self-sacrifice set a template for much of his work, in which themes of sacred and erotic, power and renunciation, tradition and innovation emerge in the operas of the 1840s and remain crucial to Wagner's output in librettos and treatises. The philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer led Wagner to approve Buddhism's teaching about the ultimately illusory nature of reality and Christianity's teaching on renunciation.

His magnum opus is the *Ring Cycle*, in which Norse and German myths are repurposed to create a fable of the ultimate hollowness of power. *Parsifal*, in which Wagner revisits the Arthurian world of *Lohengrin* and *Tristan* as a vehicle for his own take on Schopenhauer and the Christian notion of grace – which sadly did not prevent him being anti-Semitic – appeared in 1882.

His health was failing, and having settled for a time in Venice, he died there in 1883.

Christmas Day was also Cosima Wagner's birthday, and on that day in 1870 she was woken by the sound of a 13-piece ensemble ranged up and down the staircase outside her bedroom. The music played was, to give it its full title, the *Tribtschen Idyll, with Fidi's Birdsong and Orange Sunrise, as a Symphonic Birthday Greeting from Richard to Cosima*.



A photo of Wagner in Paris in 1867, taken by French photographer Pierre-Louis Pierson (1822–1913).

'Tribtschen' was the villa in Switzerland, near Lucerne, where Wagner had been living since the mid-1860s and to which Cosima had fled from her husband, Hans von Bülow, despite the severe disapproval of her father, Franz Liszt. Cosima had borne two daughters to Wagner while she was still married to von Bülow, but after her divorce and subsequent marriage to Wagner, had given birth to a son, named Siegfried for the ostensible hero of the 'Ring' Cycle. She regarded the piece as immortalizing the child's birth, her recovery and domestic details like 'Fidi's (that is, baby Siegfried's) bird'.

This 'aubade' is made up of several recognizable themes from the 'Ring', beginning with motifs associated with Brünnhilde's human love for Siegfried, and a memory of the 'magic sleep music' to which she was enchanted on her rock. There is a quotation of a German lullaby not found in the operas, and then music associated with Siegfried – from the love duet of his eponymous opera, his horn call, the song of the wood bird that leads him to the lair of the dragon Fafnir and, later, to Brünnhilde's rock.

The music gains passion through increased speed and chromaticism, but finally returns to the gentle lyricism of the opening. If, as Cosima thought, Richard had 'woven our whole life into it', then the *Siegfried Idyll* is a picture of contentment and joy, and the memory of obstacles overcome.

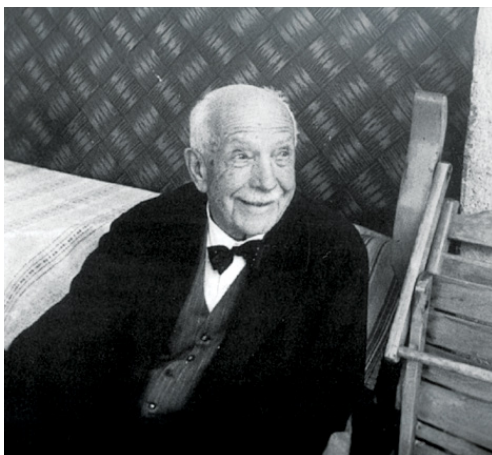
ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT STRAUSS'S *CAPRICCIO* AND THE SEXTET

In 1934, Austrian author Stefan Zweig came across Giovanni Battista Casti's libretto for Antonio Salieri's opera *Prima la musica e poi le parole* (First the music, then the words) while trawling through manuscripts in the British Museum; he knew immediately that the idea of such a show would appeal to his friend and collaborator, Richard Strauss. Zweig also knew that with the rise of Nazism he, being Jewish, might soon need to flee continental Europe – that same year Strauss had refused to take Zweig's name, as librettist, off the posters for *Die schweigsame Frau* causing Hitler to refuse to attend and planting the seeds of the Nazis' distrust of the composer. Zweig, therefore, suggested that his friend Joseph Gregor be invited to contribute to the libretto (and perhaps, to become Strauss's permanent artistic partner). Strauss had a number of musical irons in the fire at the time, so only addressed himself to the possibility of an opera based on Casti's idea in 1939. (By this time Zweig had indeed fled to safety, though, in despair at the state of Western civilization, he and his wife committed suicide in Brazil in 1942).

As it stood, Casti's libretto was unsuitable; Strauss wanted to write a 'theoretical comedy' or, as he eventually called it, a 'conversation piece for music'. His initial plan was to compose it as a short curtain-raiser to his opera *Daphne*, though as the piece evolved it was clearly going to be a more substantial work. Gregor's libretto proved too 'poetic', so Strauss and the conductor Clemens Krauss fashioned a text which embodied the simplicity and dry wit that Strauss wanted.

In essence, we are in the imaginary Mozartian 18th century of *Der Rosenkavalier* to which Strauss returned at the very end of his life for works like this, the Oboe Concerto and second Horn Concerto: as the character La Roche, a theatre director, sings, 'The art of my fathers lies in my trust. I guard the old, patiently awaiting the fruitful new...' A Countess – how Mozartian? – is being wooed by two men, Olivier, a poet and Flamand, a composer, and the story turns on whose art is more important. But instead of segueing into a new work – *Daphne* – when the countess commands that an opera be performed, Strauss had



Richard Strauss in 1945

the brilliant idea of making it into a mirror image of the events and conversations of the afternoon we have just seen dramatised.

The sextet, played by the orchestral section leaders as a prelude to the opera. It is, as David Murray says, 'sweetly serene in F at start and finish – with a theatrical eruption of passion in the middle, soon mollified (it fixes perfectly the urbane, nothing-too-serious manner of the whole opera)'. In the opera it is the latest work of the composer Flamand who, as the curtain goes up, is eagerly awaiting the Countess' verdict. As a stand-alone piece it was first performed at the home of Baldur von Schirach, the Nazi Governor of Vienna. Schirach was slightly suspect in Nazi circles and an aesthete whose father had been an impresario and composer manqué. He effectively protected Strauss and his family (which included Strauss' Jewish daughter-in-law Alice), the composer having fallen from favour when his secret correspondence with Stefan Zweig had been discovered.

Strauss' relationship with Nazism was a complex one: they needed his prestige, he needed an income. He was completely exonerated from complicity with the regime after the war; certainly neither he nor his family knew about the extermination of Jews, and there is a heart-rending story of his driving to the gates of Theresienstadt, demanding to see Alice's grandmother who was interned there but being sent away in humiliation.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT BRITTEN'S SINFONIETTA

Just before leaving England for war-torn Spain in 1937, the poet WH Auden inscribed Britten's score of his *Sinfonietta* with the poem, 'It's farewell to the drawing-room's civilised cry'. Auden, of course, was talking about a time when 'matters are settled with gas and with bomb', (and Britten set the poem in his 1939 *Ballad of Heroes*). In some respects, though, it was apt to associate the poem's first line with purely musical aspects of Britten's piece.

Britten's precociously early maturity as a composer was often treated with suspicion. One of the examiners admitting him to the Royal College of Music is said to have asked, 'What's an English public-schoolboy doing writing music like this?' In 1932, his final year as a student, the nineteen-year-old produced his *Sinfonietta* for ten instruments, which was a challenge for its first performers and for at least some critics. After a rehearsal at the RCM, Britten wrote that he had 'never heard such an appalling row'. The critics were pretty evenly divided: the *Daily Telegraph* patronised Britten saying 'he can be as provocative as any of the foreign exponents of the catch-as-catch-can style of composition' while the *Times*, for from thundering, praised the composer's a power of invention [and] the efficiency with which he handles his material. He has already enough to say for himself to excuse his independence of tradition'. It was the independence of British tradition, the 'drawing room's civilised cry' which was the issue, though. Another reviewer sniped that 'This young spark is good company for as long as his persiflage remains fresh, which is not very long' accusing him of saying "See how knowing I am, how much wiser than my years". A BBC employee, however, expressed the view which ultimately prevailed: 'Britten is the most interesting new arrival since Walton, and I feel we should watch his work very carefully'.

It is difficult to imagine why this work should have seemed so 'modernist' to the British press, especially in the light of what Britten went on to do. As late as 1952 musicologist Erwin Stein believed that this 'is the only work of Britten's in which Schoenberg's influence is directly apparent'. Despite Britten's colourful use of what Stein called the 'sonority of the second' – that is, the clash of adjacent notes



Benjamin Britten. Photo © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS/Corbis.

– it is the Schoenberg of the 1906 Chamber Symphony No.1 (which Britten had heard in his early teens), not the inventor of the feared twelve-note technique.

Schoenberg's was, nonetheless, an epochal work, producing what one writer calls a 'symphonic statement...with insistent intimacy'. Britten's Opus 1 has some of the same qualities. Its three movements are linked by common thematic material treated with a prodigal musical imagination; in the final pages of the first movement Britten presents the two contrasting themes simultaneously and the principle of continuous variation (which Schoenberg learned from Brahms) is pivotal in the second movement's variations.

The final Tarantella has been rightly compared with the song 'Rats Away!' in Britten's *Our hunting fathers* – his and Auden's response to the rise of Fascism, and indeed, Christopher Palmer argues that there is a political dimension to this work:

[Britten's] orchestration is as naked, exposed and vulnerable as any of his child-heroes or sacrificial victims. In writing for the orchestra Britten was a democrat, a champion of the individual as opposed to the mass collective, an emancipator.

Britten himself looked back on the piece with affection, saying 'it is absolutely genuine at any rate'.

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NV Collection Sparkling Cuvée, Tasmania

A soft and supple wine, it has delicate red fruits from Pinot Noir and some sweet lemon and oyster shell notes from the Chardonnay.

All is balanced with fresh natural acidity and a clean finish. Good length and an abundant fine mousse.



2025 Trial Batch Sauvignon Blanc Semillon, Tasmania

Bright and expressive, this Sauvignon Blanc Semillon opens with vibrant citrus, white florals and a gentle herbaceous lift.

The palate is fresh and lively, with mouth-watering acidity balanced by notes of preserved lemon and honeysuckle.

Subtle texture adds depth, leading to a soft almond finish that lingers with elegance and finesse.



2023 Collection Chardonnay, Tasmania

Elegant and refined, this cool climate Chardonnay showcases vibrant citrus and white peach, lifted by bright natural acidity.

A gentle touch of oak adds texture and depth, balanced by a subtle mineral edge. Fresh yet beautifully poised, it finishes with clarity and finesse.



2022 Collection Grenache, Barossa Valley

Bright and expressive, with aromas of cherry, raspberry and delicate floral notes. The palate is silky and generous, showing ripe red fruits layered with gentle spice and fine, supple tannins.

A subtle savoury edge adds depth, finishing fresh, balanced and quietly elegant.



2021 Collection Shiraz, Heathcote

A beautifully poised Heathcote Shiraz, opening with blackberry and blackcurrant layered with a touch of white pepper. Subtle earthy notes add depth, while the palate is structured and balanced, with fine tannins supporting dark fruit and gentle spice. Lingered and composed, it finishes with length, finesse and quiet complexity.

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Concert Manager
Ilmar Leetberg
Artist Liaison Manager

Library

Alastair McKean
Head of Library
Victoria Grant, Mary-Ann Mead
Library

BUSINESS SERVICES

Sarah Falzarano
Director of Finance
Daniela Ramirez
Finance Manager
Laura Soutter
Payroll Manager
Jonathan Zaw
IT Manager
Alex Hong
Assistant Accountant
Anel Jansen van Vuuren
Accounts Payable Officer

DEVELOPMENT

Jennifer Drysdale
Director of Development
Rachel Shafran
Development Manager
Benjamin Moh
Head of Corporate Relations
Sabrina Jellic
Corporate Relations Officer
Fleur Griffiths
Head of Philanthropy
Patricia Laksmono
Events Manager
Gabriela Postma
Philanthropy Officer
Alison Eom
Philanthropy Coordinator

LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

John Nolan
Director of Learning & Engagement
Daniella Garner
Program Manager, Schools & Families
Giulian Favrin
*Program Manager, Artist Development
& Public Engagement*
Alice Jarman-Powis
Learning & Engagement Coordinator

MARKETING

Charles Buchanan
Director of Marketing
Alexandra Barlow
Head of Communications & Content
Craig Abercrombie
Content Producer
Hugh Robertson
Editorial Manager
Tina Ma
Publicity Coordinator
Andrea Reitano
Head of Growth Marketing
Nicola Solomou
Senior Marketing Manager
Ann He
Marketing Manager
Laura Dang
Marketing Coordinator
Amy Zhou
Graphic Designer
Chris Slavez
Digital Marketing Coordinator
Lynn McLaughlin
Head of Lifecycle Marketing
Douglas Emery
Senior Marketing Manager & Insights Analyst

Customer Relations

Pim den Dekker
Head of Customer Relations
Georgia Mulligan
Jennifer Calacoci
Meg Chaseling
Customer Relations Team Leads

OPERATIONS & PRODUCTION

Kerry-Anne Cook
Director of Operations & Production
Aeva O’Dea
Operations Manager
Tom Farmer
Production Manager
Elissa Seed
Production Manager
Jacinta Dockrill
Production Administrator
Shanell Bielawa
Production Coordinator
Jordan Blackwell, Jess Hughes,
Rory Knott, Matthew Landi,
Harvey Lynn, Ella Tomkins
Production Assistants
Georgia Holmes, Reede Palmer
Production Interns

ORCHESTRA MANAGEMENT

Aernout Kerbert
Director of Orchestra Management
Brighdie Chambers
Orchestra Manager
Emma Winestone
Deputy Orchestra Manager

PEOPLE & CULTURE

Daniel Bushe
Director of People & Culture
Rosie Marks-Smith
Head of Culture & Wellbeing
Keanna Mauch
People & Culture Advisor

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