

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH ALEXANDER MORRIS

16–18 JULY 2026

Utzon Room,
Sydney Opera House



Presenting Partner

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WELCOME

Welcome to **Cocktail Hour with Alexander Morris**, the fourth 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.

Principal Bass Clarinet Alexander Morris has curated this performance that celebrates his instrument. Did you know that the clarinet as we know it today was invented around 1700? It quickly became a favourite of composers due to its wide range and expressive qualities, with Mozart and Beethoven doing much to embed it into the standard orchestra setup.

Important to the instrument's popularity was the relationship between composer Carl Maria von Weber and Heinrich Baermann, perhaps the leading clarinet virtuoso of his era. The pair worked together to explore the musical and technical possibilities of this young instrument, giving rise to works such as this superb Quintet.

Nearly 150 years later, Bernard Herrmann's *Souvenirs de voyage* was the last concert piece he ever wrote. Though famous as a composer of Hollywood film scores, Herrmann spent his final years in England, which directly influenced this quintet. The 'voyage' of the title takes us to the rolling fields of England and the dramatic coast of Ireland before we finish in Venice, with the songs of the gondoliers floating by.

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
ALEXANDER MORRIS

HERRMANN & WEBER

Genevieve Lang presenter

Sercan Danis violin

Emma Jezek violin

Stuart Johnson viola

Timothy Nankervis cello

Alexander Morris clarinet

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786–1826)
Clarinet Quintet in B flat major, Op.34 (1811–1815)

- I. Allegro
- II. Fantasia: Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Menuetto: Capriccio presto
- IV. Rondo: Allegro giocoso

BERNARD HERRMANN (1911–1975)
Souvenirs de Voyage (1967)

- I. Lento: Molto tranquillo
- II. Berceuse: Andante
- III. Andantino: Canto amoroso

Thursday 16 July, 6pm
Vanguard

Friday 17 July, 6pm
Saturday 18 July, 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 Georgia Griffiths

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 this concert!

I'm delighted to be able to share with you two fabulously dramatic works for clarinet and string quartet, one of my favourite instrumental combinations. For a clarinettist, the warm, vibrant and sumptuous sound of the strings is a pleasure to blend with.

Ever since I was in high school, I have loved the music of Carl Maria von Weber. For some, Weber is one of the lesser-known composers from the late Classical and early Romantic period, but for clarinettists, his works make up a very important portion of our solo repertoire. As a young clarinettist, I was awestruck with the technical and musical demands of his clarinet works and the way he weaves virtuosity and dramatic elements together into works of rich character.

Weber clearly had a taste for the dramatic; he is now best known as a composer of opera and his clarinet works are overtly operatic in style. The Quintet, Op.34, sends the clarinettist leaping all over the range of the instrument, alternating passages of fiendish technical difficulty with operatic arias (albeit without all the words) and characterful dialogue amongst the musicians.

When thinking of a good companion piece for the Weber Quintet, I revisited a work that I had heard of but never really gotten to know, the gorgeous *Souvenirs de Voyage* by Bernard Herrmann. From the first phrase that played as I listened to a recording I was struck with a feeling of 'I *have* to play this!'

The piece is incredibly lush and soaring melodies pass around between the musicians seamlessly. The work embraces a rich romanticism, and I think Herrmann uses the clarinet as a beautiful addition to the swooning string sound.

I feel a little like this program is a guilty pleasure for me, but I hope you will enjoy all the characters of these two fabulous works and the sonorous combination of clarinet and strings.

Alex Morris

Clarinet

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT CARL MARIA VON WEBER

Weber was born into a showbiz family: his uncle Franz Fridolin Weber was a musician, three of whose daughters were singers for whom Mozart wrote (and one of whom, Constanze, he married). Carl Maria's father, Franz Anton, was a violinist and sometime music director, who – with his family – led a peripatetic life with, among other things, a *Schauspielergesellschaft*, or travelling theatre company that included himself, his wife and five-year Carl. Anton had hopes of turning Carl into a child prodigy à la Mozart. Fortunately the family's wandering meant that Carl came into contact with important teachers and musicians such as Michael Haydn.

The aristocratic 'von' in Weber's name was fake (and indeed his middle name, Maria, was not one with which he was baptised). Further suggestion of Anton's dodginess is a financial irregularity that saw him and Carl imprisoned in 1810 in Stuttgart and subsequently banished from the kingdom of Württemberg.

In his late teens, Carl Maria began an illustrious career as a conductor and composer. Composed when he was 15, his third opera, *Peter Schmoll und sein Nachbarn* was a great success in 1803, and from 1804 he held conducting positions in Breslau/Wrocław, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, Darmstadt, Prague and Dresden.

Weber wrote concert music on accepted classical models, including solo sonatas, concertos and chamber music, but also experimented with program music in such works as *The Invitation to the Dance*. His 'straight' concert music includes symphonies, two concertos and a concertino for clarinet, a horn concertino, two piano concertos, and chamber music, songs and secular cantatas.

Passionately committed to the idea of opera in German, Weber, like Mozart, came up against entrenched Italian-opera interests, but when on 18 June 1821, he conducted the first performance of his latest opera, *Der Freischütz* at the new Schauspielhaus in Berlin all that changed. It inspired the young Mendelssohn and, later, the young Wagner with its supernatural plot and dark woodland setting; *Der Freischütz* is the foundation stone of Romantic opera in German, and Wagner said that had he not experienced it 'I believe I

should never have become a musician.' It was so successful that it became something of a curse to Weber himself. Commissioned for the Kärntnerthor Theatre in Vienna, and set in 12th-century France, *Euryanthe*, which followed, was a fully through-composed work of the sort that Wagner would cultivate, but it failed with audiences.

Weber's prestige remained high, however, and his operas did influence composers far beyond Wagner and Mendelssohn, and in 1826 he travelled to London for the premiere of *Oberon*, commissioned by Charles Kemble for the Covent Garden Theatre. The premiere was a huge success with numerous encores and curtain calls. Never in robust health, Weber knew the end was nigh even as he accepted the adulation. He died shortly after in London from tuberculosis at the age of 39.



Portrait of the composer Carl Maria von Weber (1821) by German painter Caroline Bardua (1781–1864). Source: Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin/Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT WEBER'S CLARINET QUINTET

In 1811 the 25-year-old Weber made an extensive tour, giving concerts and networking. By March he was in Munich where he wrote a Concertino for the court clarinetist Heinrich Baermann. He was immediately commissioned to compose two concertos for clarinet, and, in one of his relatively rare forays into chamber music, he began work on this Clarinet Quintet at around the same time. He only completed the Quintet in 1815 on a return visit to Munich while on leave from his conducting position at the opera in Prague.

The Quintet begins with an *Allegro* that explores strikingly contrasting material. The opening is deliberately ambiguous in mood, before the soloist takes things in hand with a sudden gesture. The movement is full of virtuosic feats, with the rapid arpeggios and wide leaps characteristic of Weber and so idiomatic to the instrument. The *Fantasia* slow movement reminds us of Weber's skill as an opera composer, with long cantabile lines and sudden shifts in register (not unlike some of Mozart's writing for the soprano voice) that end in a passionate, though somehow unresolved manner.

The third movement's marking, *Capriccio presto*, makes it immediately clear that this is no stately menuetto, but a pyrotechnic display of that liquid agility of which the clarinet is uniquely capable – with a suitably contrasting Trio section at the centre. Again, following the classical models, Weber concludes with a *Rondo* movement in which the clarinet is called upon to demonstrate a full range of technical prowess; reflecting again his operatic bent, Weber effectively treats this movement, as Roger Covell has noted, as a kind of *cabaletta*, a two-part musical form used frequently in 19th century Italian *bel canto* opera.



Portrait of Heinrich Joseph Baermann (1829) by an unknown artist. Source: Münchner Stadtmuseum/Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT BERNARD HERRMANN

In any other era, Bernard Herrmann would have been a leading composer of opera, and in fact his 'breakthrough' work was a dramatic cantata, *Moby-Dick*, that vividly embodies Melville's story of obsessive hatred. It was premiered by the New York Philharmonic under John Barbirolli in 1940.

Later in his career, Herrmann would compose a striking opera on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. His concert music, of which *Souvenirs de Voyage* was his last work, dates mainly from the late 1920s through his student years in New York to the early 1940s, includes a Symphony, *Echoes* for string quartet, and a number of works for large ensembles.

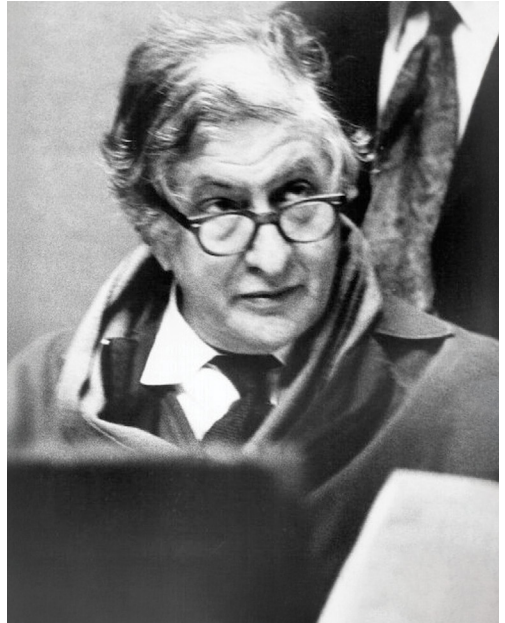
He conducted, notably two of the CBS orchestras. In that capacity he showed his broad interest in new music as well as unearthing works that he felt had fallen unfairly into desuetude. He is largely to thank for the survival of the work of Charles Ives, and made several important recordings of otherwise obscure works.

His film scores number about 50. This central aspect of his work grew out of a collaboration with Orson Welles at CBS's *Mercury Theater of the Air*. This in turn led to his composing his first film score for Welles's first film, *Citizen Kane*, in 1941, which they followed up with *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Jane Eyre*. Shortly after *Citizen Kane*, Herrmann won his first Oscar for his score for the Faustian *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. In 1948 he worked with Robert Wise on *The Day the Earth Stood Still* producing a score using mostly electronic instruments such as the theremin.

In the mid-1950s he began his most consequential collaboration with Alfred Hitchcock, which, until it ended in tears in 1966, produced some of the most influential scores for film: the 'ice water' of the strings-only music for *Psycho*; the otherworldly noise for *The Birds*; the Tristanesque *Vertigo* and many more.

His later film career spanned fantasy films featuring Ray Harryhausen's stop-start animation, thrillers by Brian de Palma, Francois Truffaut's *The Bride wore Black*, a number of television productions, and concluded with Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*.

Herrmann died in 1975, having spent much of the previous decade living in the United Kingdom.



Bernard Herrmann in 1970. Source: Arlington Heights Herald, Illinois/Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT HERRMANN'S *SOUVENIRS DE VOYAGE*

It was an act of some defiance to produce a work like *Souvenirs de Voyage* in 1967, a year that also saw works like György Ligeti's *Lontano*, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Hymnen* and Toru Takemitsu's *November Steps*, to say nothing of important releases in popular music.

But Bernard Herrmann was legendary for not caring with other people thought – and telling them so – though when 'other people' included Alfred Hitchcock, as they did the year before, things got tricky.

Herrmann had always been a fan of British and Irish culture: as early as 1933 he conducted The New Chamber Orchestra in New York in a program that included Purcell and Elgar as well as new British and American music. In 1946 he reported on the remarkably healthy state of music in post-war Britain, and visited composers including Vaughan Williams (to whom he offered to send manuscript paper as it was in short supply in Britain; the old man characteristically insisted that Herrmann send it to young composers who needed it more). In the late 1960s Herrmann spent much of his time in Britain and settled there in 1971, four years before his death.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Herrmann came to British music through contact with Percy Grainger – Australian-born British subject and, from 1918, US citizen – who had taken active part in the collection and creative use of British, Irish and European folksong alongside Vaughan Williams and Holst; Grainger was one of Herrmann's teachers at New York University in the 1930s.

In its deep pastoral Romanticism, *Souvenirs de Voyage* is, in part, a kind of love letter to a particular, long-gone moment in British music. The first movement begins and ends in tranquillity, with a more or less pentatonic theme from the clarinet supported by warm mid- to low-register chords from the strings, muted, until a violin takes up the tune. The body of the movement is taken up with two contrasting episodes, each of which is repeated and developed. The first of these is a restless *Allegro moderato* somewhat redolent of Debussy's String Quartet which features call and response between clarinet and cello. The second is a graceful section in 3/4 marked 'expressive and sad', driven by a simple long-short-short-short rhythmic motif.

The *Allegro moderato* returns and becomes even more unquiet with insistent fast-moving figures than leads to the climax: a high note from the clarinet, who descends slowly by step over rich string chords before a reprise of the 'sad' music, and a varied return to the opening before a slow rising arpeggio over the clarinet's full compass end the movement.

The stormy emotion is a reflection of Herrmann's love for the poem 'On Wenlock Edge', by British poet AE Housman, which describes a fierce gale that 'plies the saplings double,/It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone.'

Herrmann no doubt knew Vaughan Williams's setting of the poem in his song-cycle of the same title; he would also have known Vaughan Williams's setting of JM Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, the 1911 play that inspired the *Berceuse*, or lullaby, second movement. Synge's short play is set on the Aran Islands off the Atlantic coast of Ireland, where life is constantly threatened by the ocean; the central character, Maurya, has been widowed and five of her sons drowned before the action starts, and her youngest son, Bartley, will be knocked from his horse into the waves as the play unfolds. Herrmann's music begins with Brahmsian urgency – lots of strong-beat dissonance and an insistent, oceanic rhythm in 6/8. A quiet hymnal passage follows – perhaps suggesting Maurya's worry – and we soon hear a cantering rhythm that is swept away by a return to the opening. The music rises to great heights before a quiet, slow conclusion – this in turn might suggest Maurya's final, stoic acceptance and prayer for divine mercy on the living and the dead.

The sea follows us into the final movement, though now it is the tamer, warmer Adriatic as seen by artist JMW Turner on visits to the city in 1819, 1833 and 1840. Herrmann doesn't seek to replicate Turner's imagery, though the piece's cinematic sequence of different musical environments feels like moving through different parts of the city. The first is dominated by a super-sweet (gondolier?) song, doubled in thirds, in the violins over ripples from clarinet, viola and cello. The clarinet has more restrained tune in 3/4 that leads into the second main section, where shimmering strings accompany what might be distant trumpet calls from the clarinet. There is a brilliant, fast 3/8 section – a tarantella, maybe – where the clarinet plays in duple metre against the strings' triple, before a return to the gondolier's song and the trumpet call, before a short, 'sad' coda.

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 **HANDPICKED®**



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. Lingering and composed, it finishes with length, finesse and quiet complexity.

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Concerts and Programming*
Andrew Groch
Executive Producer
Vico Thai
Producer Artistic Planning
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Ilmar Leetberg
Artist Liaison Manager

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Victoria Grant, Mary-Ann Mead
Library

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Daniela Ramirez
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Laura Soutter
Payroll Manager
Jonathan Zaw
IT Manager
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Rachel Shafran
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Sabrina Jelicio
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Gabriela Postma
Philanthropy Officer
Alison Eom
Philanthropy Coordinator

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Marketing Coordinator
Amy Zhou
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Lynn McLaughlin
Head of Lifecycle Marketing
Douglas Emery
Senior Marketing Manager & Insights Analyst
Elinor Hillock
Database Specialist

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Interim Customer Relations Leader
Georgia Mulligan, Jennifer Calacoci,
Meg Chaseling
Customer Relations Team Leads

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Aeva O’Dea
Operations 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

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Aernout Kerbert
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Brighdie Chambers
Orchestra Manager
Emma Winestone
Deputy Orchestra Manager

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