

LUCAS & ARTHUR JUSSEN PERFORM POULENC

3 SEPTEMBER 2026

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



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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.

2026 CONCERT SEASON

LUCAS & ARTHUR JUSSEN PERFORM POULENC

WITH STÉPHANE DENÈVE

STÉPHANE DENÈVE conductor

FRANCIS POULENC (1899–1963)
Concerto for 2 pianos in D minor (1932)

- i. Allegro ma non troppo
- ii. Larghetto
- iii. Finale: Allegro molto

LUCAS & ARTHUR JUSSEN pianos

OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879–1936)

Pines of Rome (1924)

- i. *The pines of the Villa Borghese*
- ii. *Pines near a catacomb*
- iii. *The pines of the Janiculum*
- iv. *The pines of the Appian Way*

Thursday 3 September, 7pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

Pre-concert talk

By Douglas Emery in the
Northern Foyer at 6.15pm

Estimated durations

Poulenc – 20 minutes
Respighi – 25 minutes

Cover image

Photo by Marco Borggreve

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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IN MEMORIAM



VALE MARTIN FOSTER

The Sydney Symphony pays tribute to former Principal Contrabassoon Martin Foster (1942-2026).

The musicians and staff of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Martin Foster on Monday 10 August 2026.

Martin served as Principal Contrabassoon of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for 35 years, from 1967 until 2002. But it is his work as the founder and President of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Association (SSOMA) that has had a lasting impact, affecting not only generations of musicians of the Sydney Symphony but also the livelihoods of musicians in the other state symphony orchestras around Australia.

Martin began performing with the Orchestra in the early 1960s on a contract basis, and following a successful audition he was appointed to the permanent role of Principal Contrabassoon. Almost immediately he advocated for improved employment conditions and salaries for his Orchestral colleagues.

In the 1960s the state symphony orchestras were all operated by the ABC, with salaries and conditions controlled by a centralised industrial relations system. Martin attended commission hearings to argue for improved travel allowances, increased minimum rates of pay and working hours that minimised muscular skeletal and noise related injuries to orchestral musicians.

Martin joined the musicians' union and quickly became a leader, representing his peers on the National Review Committee, the Joint Steering Committee and the Structural Efficiency Principal (SEP) Negotiation Committee.

With the introduction of enterprise bargaining, Martin Foster led negotiations for the ABC orchestra musicians in creating the first national agreement with the ABC, covering the terms and conditions of orchestral musicians.

Martin also championed concerns about noise related injuries amongst musicians. In the 1980s he located early international research in this field and encouraged the ABC to review the working structure for musicians to minimise injury from hearing loss.

In the 1990s, together with Associate Concertmaster Goetz Richter, Martin represented orchestral musicians from each of the ABC orchestras through the process of divestment from the ABC and the establishment of each orchestra as its own corporation.

During this period Martin spearheaded the reform of the orchestral musicians' professional and industrial association, which led to the establishment of the Symphony Orchestra Musicians Association (SOMA), a national

IN MEMORIAM

body representing orchestral musicians in Australia. At the same time Martin founded the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Musicians Association paving the way for more transparent and effective communication between our management and musicians.

In 1996 Martin lead the negotiations for the first collective agreement for musicians working with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as a new corporation. A masterful negotiator, Martin worked tirelessly to create a strong modern collective agreement for the musicians of the Sydney Symphony, establishing a more efficient orchestra able to work creatively and effectively in modern settings. The agreement brokered by Martin became the benchmark in modern collective agreements for many other Australian symphony orchestras around the country.

In 2000 Martin Foster was invited by Mary Vallentine, then General Manager of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, to undertake a research project. The project was a benchmarking exercise of international and national orchestras comparing industrial agreements, internal management practices, employee relations and working practices. This work was groundbreaking and provided a firm basis for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to establish best practice employment terms and conditions for orchestral musicians. These conditions have led to the creation of a superior work, health and safety environment ensuring not only career longevity for musicians but also significantly improving artistic standards.

Martin was a pathbreaking, visionary advocate for musicians' working lives and conditions in Australian symphony orchestras for decades.



Martin Foster with his contrabassoon. Photo courtesy Matthew Wilkie and Noriko Shimada.



His determination, commitment and passionate work for orchestral musicians in Australia and particularly at the Sydney Symphony Orchestra resulted in an Orchestra defined by its artistic excellence. Martin made a contribution over and above what could have been expected as a musician. His significant volunteer advocacy work was to the benefit of not only his peers but future Australian orchestra musicians.

In 2001, Liddy Clark, then-Member for Clayfield, acknowledged Martin's contributions in a speech in the in the Queensland Parliament, highlighting that SOMA had achieved 98 per cent union membership across the state symphony orchestras, in large part due to Martin's leadership and advocacy.

Martin received honorary life membership from the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) in acknowledgement of his contributions over many decades.

In addition to his orchestral career and union advocacy, Martin was also a renowned bassoon technician and repairer, watchmaker and journalist. He was described by *Jeweller* magazine as their 'resident watch guru,' and would travel the world reporting from the frontlines of horology.

He remained a close friend of many musicians in the Sydney Symphony. At the commencement of the rehearsal on Monday morning, musicians and staff took a moment to reflect and observe a minute's silence in Martin's memory.

Our thoughts are with Martin's wife Eileen, their daughter Adrienne and her husband Patrick, and their children.



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YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

FRANCIS POULENC (1899–1963) **Concerto for 2 pianos in D minor (1932)**

Poulenc's concerto is a work in three movements that reflect his early ironic neoclassicism, with its mixture of pastiche popular music and Mozart, gamelan and band music and much more besides.

It dates from 1932, the year that saw the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the creation of the Australian Broadcasting Commission and of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Contemporary music included Ravel's G major Piano Concerto, Peggy Glanville-Hicks's Fantasy for solo violin and Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.



Photo of Poulenc in 1922 by Joseph Rosmand.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879-1936) ***Pines of Rome* (1924)**

One of the great orchestrators of the 20th century, Respighi provided three major cycles of work that extolled the beauty of his adopted city, Rome. Each of the four movements of *The Pines of Rome* vividly depicts a location in the Eternal City, ranging from children's games in the gardens of the Villa Borghese, the solemn quiet of the catacombs, night-time on the Gianicolo, and the tramp of marching feet on the Appian Way.

It dates from 1924, the year that saw the proclamation of the Mongolian People's Republic, the foundation of the International Chess Federation and compulsory voting introduced in Australia.

Contemporary music included Jean Sibelius's Seventh Symphony, Erik Satie's *Relâche* and Leoš Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*.



1927 photo of Respighi by Marie Boehm (1863–1953).
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

STÉPHANE DENÈVE conductor

Stéphane Denève is Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Director of the New World Symphony and Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic. He previously served as Principal Guest Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra, Music Director of the Brussels Philharmonic, Chief Conductor of the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (SWR) and Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

A graduate and prize-winner of the Paris Conservatoire, Denève worked closely in his early career with Sir Georg Solti, Georges Prêtre and Seiji Ozawa. Passionate about the future of the artform and a gifted communicator, he is committed to inspiring the next generation of performers and listeners through commissioning, digital and new media initiatives and innovative approaches to concert presentation.

Stéphane Denève frequently collaborates with many of the world's leading orchestra, opera houses and solo artists. He also treasures the memory of Nicholas Angelich and Lars Vogt, two exceptional artists with whom he enjoyed a close musical friendship over many years.

In the field of opera, Stéphane Denève has led productions at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Opéra National de Paris, Glyndebourne Festival, Teatro alla Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Netherlands Opera (including a new production of *Pelléas et Mélisande* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra for the Holland Festival), Saito Kinen Festival, Gran Teatre del Liceu, La Monnaie and Deutsche Oper am Rhein.

As a recording artist, Denève has won critical acclaim for his discography – in particular the works of Poulenc, Debussy, Ravel, Roussel, Franck and Connesson. He is a triple winner of the *Diapason d'Or de l'Année*, has been shortlisted for *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year Award, and has won the prize for symphonic music at the International Classical Music Awards. His latest release – *Concerto for Orchestra, Silent Night Elegy & Virelai* – was recorded with the St. Louis Symphony and Pulitzer Prize-winning

composer Kevin Puts. Other recent recording projects have included Bernstein's *Serenade after Plato's Symposium* and John Williams' Violin Concerto No.1 with James Ehnes and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; a live recording of Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; an album of John Williams's film music recorded for Deutsche Grammophon; and two discs of the works of Guillaume Connesson with the Brussels Philharmonic (the first of which was awarded the *Diapason d'Or de l'Année*, *Caecilia Award*, and *Classica Magazine's* CHOC of the Year). A boxset of his complete Ravel recordings with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra was released in 2022 by Hänssler Classic.



Photo by Genevieve Caron

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LUCAS & ARTHUR JUSSEN piano

Lucas & Arthur Jussen are among the most sought-after piano duos of our time. Given their brilliant international career, it is fair to say that the Jussen brothers (born in 1993 and 1996) are Holland's best-known ambassadors for classical music. With their energetic, almost symbiotic playing, their great tonal sophistication and their gripping interpretations, they are enthusiastically acclaimed by press and audience alike. 'It's like driving two BMWs at the same time,' said conductor Michael Schönwandt about the two pianists after a joint concert.

Engagements have taken them to leading orchestras such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. They have worked with many renowned conductors, including Christoph Eschenbach, Iván Fischer, Sir Neville Marriner, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Jaap van Zweden.

Lucas & Arthur Jussen are Artists in Residence with the Frankfurt hr Symphony Orchestra for the 2025/2026 season. They will be featured in several programs as part of this residency. A particular highlight of the season is their eagerly awaited debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in February 2026. Further invitations will take them to the Danish National Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Gewandhaus Orchestra, Philharmonia Zurich, Lahti Symphony and Orchestre National de France, among others.

Lucas & Arthur Jussen have been signed to Deutsche Grammophon since 2010. Their debut recording of works by Beethoven went platinum and won the Edison Klassiek Audience Award. This was followed by a Schubert CD and the album *Jeux* featuring French piano music. In 2015, a recording of Mozart's Concertos K242 and K365 with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields under Sir Neville Marriner was released, achieving gold status. Further releases include Poulenc's Double Concerto and Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals*

with the Concertgebouworkest under Stéphane Denève, as well as a Bach album with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta. On *The Russian Album* (2021), they interpret works for two pianos by Rachmaninov, Stravinsky and Arensky. In their latest recording, *Dutch Masters* (April 2022), supported by the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, among others, they devote themselves to works by Dutch composers. This recording was awarded an Edison Klassiek and the audience prize.

Lucas & Arthur Jussen received their first piano lessons in their hometown of Hilversum. Even as children, they performed before Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, and their first awards in competitions followed. In 2005, the two met Portuguese pianist Maria João Pires, who mentored them for years. Lucas later studied with Menahem Pressler in the United States and Dmitri Bashkirov in Madrid, while Arthur completed his studies with Jan Wijn at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam.



Lucas (left) and Arthur Jussen (right). Photo by Jesaja Hizkia.



Arthur (left) and Lucas Jussen. Photo by Marco Borggreve.

OH BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?

Being stuck in the same room as your sibling day-in, day-out would be torture for some, but Dutch brothers Lucas and Arthur Jussen are the very picture of brotherly harmony...

There is a perception, certainly in Australia, that the arts and sport are incongruous with one another: that there is no poetry in a cover drive, no ballet in a scrum, no music in the roar of the crowd. Yet for Dutch pianists and brothers Lucas and Arthur Jussen, it was sport that ignited a love for music that has seen them ascend the very peak of the classical music world.

It all started with the 1998 soccer world cup, in which the Netherlands side would finish fourth. 'I would watch all the games with the family, and before every game they played the national anthem,' remembers Lucas, the elder by three and a half years. 'My mother had a piano book for children which included the Dutch anthem, which she taught me to play, and afterwards they asked me if

I would like to have serious piano lessons. That's basically how it started – so without football, no piano for Lucas!'

In the way of siblings Arthur was either going to be drawn to the piano or reject it out of hand, but by the time he was five they were making music together at the same keyboard.

As they got older they practiced and performed individually, pursuing their own goals and certainly never planning a career as a piano duo.

'We just took it step by step,' says Arthur, 'and the duo career just came very naturally. And maybe the beauty of not having any expectations is that it has been able to become what it is today.'

FEATURE ARTICLE

Those of us with siblings might wonder how they have been able to be joined at the hip for more than 20 years without coming to blows, but interviewing them together there is a natural ease and back-and-forth that clearly follows them on stage. But they have certainly put some structure into their work to keep things on an equilibrium, in particular around roles at the piano.

‘We very consciously always switch, though not within the same piece,’ explains Lucas. ‘Once I’ve learned a particular part I will always play that particular part – we’re too lazy to learn both parts!’

‘That’s a decision that we took quite early on...otherwise people start to say, “he’s really the bass player,” and “he’s really the melodist”, and whether or not that’s true actually doesn’t matter. But if people always see you in that particular role, they will always picture you in that role. And we think we’re capable of doing both very well, and we wanted to convey that to the audience. Never give them a chance to put us put a sticker on one of us and saying he is that and he is that. We’re both everything and we wanted to keep it that way.’

‘I think that it is also nice for the audience that there is confusion about who is actually playing what and where and when. We love that, because in the end that shouldn’t be important. What is important is that the experience as a whole is pleasurable and memorable, and the personal thing of who’s playing what is actually not important. So we’re very happy to create a little bit of confusion on the stage.’

That sense of fun and playfulness finds a perfect match in the music they are playing today, the Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra by French composer Francis Poulenc. It’s full of interesting musical Easter eggs.

‘It’s a really fun piece to play,’ says Arthur with a smile. ‘It’s a mix of so many different styles.’

‘Poulenc was very good at – well, “stealing” is a big word – but taking things from other composers. And he was the genius who put everything together and put his own Poulenc sauce over it.’

‘It starts off very *virtuoso* but it also has very beautiful parts. The second movement is just like a Mozart concerto. You cannot be bored while playing it but also while listening to it – and we love that piece from the bottom of our hearts.’

Lucas picks up where his brother leaves off:

‘the music sometimes feels crazy...[there’s] so many notes going through each other. You don’t really know what’s happening, but playing-wise it feels incredibly comfortable. And that’s where the power lies of great composers, that he was able to do that.’

‘Apart from that, yeah, it’s a lot of fun to play – and always fun to play it with a new orchestra, because we know what’s coming, but to see in the eyes of the musicians, like, “Wow, that’s didn’t expect that!” – and then also in the eyes of the of the audience who’s going listen to it, that’s really nice.’

‘And I think also that’s a big advantage that we as a duo have: if an audience goes to Beethoven’s Fifth or Mahler Two or Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, they have a very clear picture of what’s coming – but with piano duo repertoire we still have the possibility to surprise people with what we’re playing. And if the hall is full and a lot of people are there, it’s wonderful to be able to give that surprise to people of this Francis Poulenc concerto.’

Hugh Robertson © 2026

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT POULENC

In 1920 the critic Henri Collet referred to a group of young Paris-based composers as 'Les Six'. The common thread binding the group – for whom the eccentric Erik Satie was a kind of patron saint – was a desire to write music which was frequently acerbically witty, always clearly expressed and often neo-classical in form. Francis Poulenc was one of the leading lights in this group which also included Darius Milhaud and Arthur Honegger. As he later argued, French composers after the death of Debussy had 'betrayed Debussy' by indulging in mere sensuality of sound at the expense of clarity of form. Les Six aimed to strip away some of that excessive upholstery in their music. The group did not last long, and as Paul Griffiths has noted once 'only Poulenc kept faith with the group's flippancy.'

His first works for the stage was *Les Biches* (the does, the female deer), known in English as *The House Party* which appeared in 1924: a similar Wodehousian setting provides the backdrop for Jean Anouilh's comedy of society manners, *L'invitation au château*, which appeared in 1947 and is better known in the Anglosphere as *Ring Round the Moon*, for which Poulenc wrote the incidental music.

Around then he wrote his satirical first opera, *Les mamelles de Tirésias* (*The breasts of Tirésias*), but Poulenc was no mere boulevardier in music; he was famously described by author Claude Rostand as 'something of the monk and something of the rascal'. Late in life Poulenc explained that French composers 'realise that sombreness and good humour are not mutually exclusive. Our composers, too, write profound music, but when they do, it is leavened with that lightness of spirit without which life would be unbearable'. Further to this, pianist Pascal Roge wrote that 'whatever the emotion which Poulenc wishes to share with us – cheerfulness, sadness, melancholy, irony – he always does it with elegance and discretion, never overdoing it, as he possesses the unique gift of being light without being superficial, profound without being boring.'



Francis Poulenc

The duality of the profound and the 'light' became more pronounced as Poulenc's life went on, where, despite his homosexuality, he felt drawn to the Catholic religion of his childhood. In 1936 the violent accidental death of friend and colleague Pierre-Octave Ferroud shocked Poulenc; at around this time he visited the famous pilgrimage site of Rocamadour. The resulting religious music includes many masterworks and its effect is heard in his secular music as well, notably his opera *Dialogues des Carmélites*.

Like those of Claude Debussy, Poulenc's last works are an unfinished set of sonatas that maintain something of the deceptively simple character of his earliest works, and retain the classical three movement design, but are at the same time deeply expressive. Poulenc is particularly good at writing music in a relatively fast tempo which still sounds melancholy. Journalist Norman Lebrecht considers that the much-loved Clarinet Sonata contains 'premonitions of [the composer's] own imminent death'.

This came in 1963; at his request, only music by Bach was played at his funeral in Saint-Sulpice.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE CONCERTO FOR TWO PIANOS

Hilary Shrubbs writes:

Poulenc was more of a drifter than his colleagues in Les Six, and was also remarkably self-effacing when it came to describing his way of working and his favoured inspirations:

I envy composers like Milhaud and Hindemith who can write wherever they may happen to be. I'm extremely susceptible visually, everything is an excuse for getting side-tracked, for frittering away my time...I need happy sights, because since I'm very prone to sadness I tend to create what I see out of my own feelings...I work a lot at the piano, like Debussy, Stravinsky and so many others. Contrary to what is generally believed, I don't work easily. My first drafts, written in a sort of strange musical shorthand, are full of crossings-out. When a melodic idea presents itself to me in a certain key, I write it down (for the first time of course) in that key. When I've told you that I've composed my least bad music between eleven o'clock and midday, I think I've told you everything.

Poulenc believed his Concerto for Two Pianos held a dominant place among his piano works, 'not so much on account of its musical value as because of its success so far as its orchestration is concerned'. Composed over two months at Le Tremblay in 1932, it was intended for performance with his friend, Jacques Février. It was the result of a commission from the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, who was not only well-connected through marriage, but also an heir to the fortune derived from her father's famous sewing machine business – her maiden name was Winnaretta Singer.

The Concerto for Two Pianos has been variously described as 'a typical cocktail of all that seemed entertaining to Poulenc at the time', and having 'a base of brash neo-classicism, a sprinkling of black-and-white movie romance, a dash of end-of-the-pier melodrama, the whole thing topped with frothy good humour'. The concerto also contains some exquisite moments of hypnotic

tranquillity, inspired by Poulenc's visit to the 1931 Colonial Exhibition at which he heard a Balinese gamelan for the first time.

The Concerto opens briskly, toccata-like, its common-time sharply accented by both orchestra and soloists. The exotic setting of gamelan sounds finishes this otherwise jaunty movement.

At the start of the *Larghetto*, one could be forgiven for thinking that the pianist has in fact accidentally strayed into an early sonata of Mozart's! However, the second piano enters and the unmistakable seductive charm of Poulenc is restored. The movement, however, continues to tantalisingly teeter between Mozart and Poulenc.

The finale, *Allegro molto*, contains even more tunes than the previous two movements. The brittle Stravinskian tutti introduces a toccata for the soloists, which in turn leads to a brisk march. This is followed by a linked succession of melodies, heard, repeated and discarded until one of them, marked *Agité*, rises to the climax. After a brief flirtation with an 'oom-pah, oom-pah' theme, and a few moments of calm, a coda winds up the movement to a whirligig finish.

This concerto is scored for flute, piccolo, 2 oboes (2nd doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones and tuba; percussion, strings and two piano soloists.

It was premiered on 5 September 1932 in Venice, with Désiré Defauw conducting the La Scala Orchestra, with Poulenc and his childhood friend Jacques Février the soloists.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the concerto on 30 September 1939, with Malcolm Sargent conducting Frank Hutchens and Lindley Evans.

We have only performed it twice since: on 6 February 1965, again with Hutchens and Evans but this time conducted by John Hopkins. And our most recent performance was on 27 October 1990, with Stephen Kovacevich conducting Katia and Marielle Labèque.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Best known these days – especially outside Italy – for blockbusting showpieces like the *Pines of Rome* and *Fountains of Rome*, Respighi was actually a musical all-rounder. He wrote some 11 operas, a comparable number of ballets and, in addition to a huge catalogue of orchestral works, a substantial body of chamber music. He had studied piano and violin as a child, and his early professional life included stints as a violist, notably in Russia where he played in the orchestra of the Russian Imperial Theatre in St Petersburg, and had some lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov. He was by nature a conservative and sought to resurrect a golden age of Italian culture in his works, particularly such popular favourites as the various sets of *Ancient Airs and Dances* written from 1917 on, and his part in the revival of Italian baroque music. This coincided with the rise of Italian chauvinism under Mussolini in the following decade, and indeed Respighi has been, probably unfairly, accused of writing a music to which Italian fascism marched; in fact Mussolini – for a time much less interventionist than Hitler or Stalin in the arts – was supportive of those modernist trends in Italian music, spearheaded by Alfredo Casella, to which Respighi was temperamentally opposed.

That isn't to say that the fascist regime did not support Respighi's work, and as far as Respighi's views on politics go, Richard Taruskin has noted that 'we have far stronger evidence of Stravinsky's commitments in that regard than we do of Respighi's or Orff's.'

In 1931 Mussolini decided that Italy needed a new image abroad, ordering that

from now on, no favour be shown in any way to musical initiatives—operas, vocal recitals, concerts or musical soirées—and that they be treated icily. Exceptions will be made for symphony orchestras, whose performances give an idea of collective group discipline. All the rest must be ignored. It is high time that the world—that is, hundreds of millions of men—get to know a different type of Italian from that of yesterday—the eternal tenor and mandolinist for the entertainment of others. Caruso and the like were or are the old Italy.



1927 photo of Respighi by Marie Boehm (1863–1953).
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Respighi's genius as an orchestrator is universally acknowledged – even Rachmaninoff commissioned the Italian to orchestrate some of his piano music – and his love of the Italian tradition drove him to realise Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* for voice and modern orchestra in 1908, the first of his many creative reconstructions of early music: its Berlin premiere was a breakthrough for Respighi as a composer and fired his interest in reviving music of the Italian Baroque by the likes of Monteverdi and Cavalli, and later composers like Tartini and Porpora. He also expressed his love of the Italian tradition in such works as *La boutique fantasque* (the magic toyshop) premiered in London in 1919 by the Ballet Russes and based on music by Rossini, which in 1925 Respighi followed it up with his *Rossiniana Suite*; this was, perhaps, a subtle gesture on the composer's part to reclaim a 'real' Italian heritage in the face of fascism. (Naturally, Respighi's scoring of the Rossini pieces sounds little like Rossini – or at least the Rossini of, say, *The Barber of Seville*.)

But with the orchestra as an example of 'collective group discipline', Respighi's brilliantly-scored 'Roman' pieces would inevitably be coopted.

From the mid-1920s Respighi enjoyed international acclaim and toured widely in Europe and the Americas. He would however succumb to ill-health, dying in Rome in 1936 at the age of 56.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ABOUT THE PINES OF ROME

Vincent Ciccarello writes:

In early 1913 Respighi took up the position of professor of composition at the Santa Cecilia Conservatorium in Rome. The sheer scale of the Eternal City overwhelmed him and, although he had plenty of friends and activities to keep him occupied, Respighi struggled to settle in, enduring severe bouts of melancholy for several years.

According to Elsa Olivieri Sangiacomo, a student of Respighi's at the Conservatorium who became his wife and biographer, the symphonic poem *Fountains of Rome* (1916) proved cathartic. The success of that work put Respighi's career on the map in Italy and abroad. But it also marked a new chapter in the composer's life and a newfound happiness in his adopted hometown where he would live and work until his death.

Fountains also served as the template for *Pines of Rome* (1924) and *Roman Festivals* (1928), the subsequent instalments in the so-called Roman trilogy that reflect, in Elsa's words, 'how Respighi saw and felt the varied spirit of Rome'.

Claudio Guastalla, librettist of a number of Respighi's operas, wrote the 'captions' which appear at the front of the score of *Pines of Rome* – but only after the work was completed:

I. The pine trees of the Villa Borghese

Children are at play in the pine groves of Villa Borghese [the traditional children's song *Madama Doré*]; they dance round in circles, they play at soldiers, marching and fighting, they are wrought up by their own cries like swallows at evening, they come and go in swarms. Suddenly the scene changes, and

II. Pine trees near a catacomb

we see the shade of the pine trees fringing the entrance to a catacomb. From the depth there rises the sound of mournful psalm-singing, floating through the air like a solemn hymn [the Advent plainchant *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*], and gradually and mysteriously dispersing.

III. The pine trees of the Janiculum

A quiver runs through the air: the pine trees of the Janiculum stand distinctly outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale

is singing [this is the first instance of a pre-recorded sound forming part of a musical score].

IV. The pine trees of the Appian Way

Misty dawn on the Appian Way: solitary pine trees guarding the magic landscape; the muffled, ceaseless rhythm of unending footsteps. The poet had a fantastic vision of bygone glories: trumpets sound and, in the brilliance of the newly-risen sun, a consular army bursts forth towards the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.

Given Respighi's success – he is one of the best-loved, most-often recorded and widely performed of all composers of the 20th century – it now seems extraordinary that the BBC had banned his music during the Second World War for its supposedly proto-fascist connotations. The fourth movement of the *Pines*, together with the more overtly triumphal *Roman Festivals*, are often pointed to as evidence of Respighi's sympathy for the Fascist glorification of the Rome of Empire. However, any objective reading of the composer's letters, public statements or the accounts of those who knew him suggest such claims are fanciful.

**Notes by Gordon Kerry © 2026
(biographies, Hilary Shrubbs/Symphony Australia © 1999 (Poulenc Concerto, abridged by permission) and Vincent Ciccarello © 2012 (Pines of Rome).**

Pines of Rome calls for a large orchestra consisting of 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon; 4 horns, 3 trumpets and 4 trombones; timpani, percussion, organ, piano, celeste and strings, and an offstage band with an additional 2 trumpets, 2 bass trumpets and 2 trombones.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the full work on 10 August 1946, conducted by Eugene Goossens. He conducted it again in 1952.

Other notable performances include those led by Massimo Freccia (1963), Jorge de Almeida (1972), Maxim Shostakovich (1975), Dean Dixon (1975), Patrick Thomas (1975, 79, 80 & 82), Jorge Mester (1988), Carlo Felice Cillario (1991), John Fiore (1994), Marcello Viotti (1997), Arvo Volmer (2009), Richard Gill (2011 Discovery concert) and John Adams (2013).

Our most recent performances were in May 2023, led by John Wilson.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson

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