

UMBERTO CLERICI CONDUCTS DVOŘÁK

18 SEPTEMBER 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.

2026 CONCERT SEASON

UMBERTO CLERICI CONDUCTS DVOŘÁK

MUSICAL MEMORIES OF HOME

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor

GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923–2006)
Concert Românesc (Romanian Concerto) (1951)

- I. Andantino
- II. Allegro vivace
- III. Adagio ma non troppo
- IV. Molto vivace

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)
Symphony No.8 in G major, Op.88 (1889)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegretto grazioso – Molto vivace
- IV. Allegro ma non troppo

Friday 18 September, 11am
Tea & Symphony

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

Estimated durations
Ligeti – 12 minutes
Dvořák – 35 minutes

Cover image
Photo by Craig Abercrombie

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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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor

After a career spanning more than 20 years as a gifted cello soloist and orchestral musician, Umberto Clerici has consolidated his diverse artist achievements to rapid acclaim as a conductor. Umberto is now the Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

Umberto began his career as a virtuoso cellist making his solo debut at the age of 17 performing Haydn's D Major Cello Concerto in Japan. After years of performing on the stages of the world's most prestigious concert halls, Umberto took up the position as Principal Cello of the Teatro Regio di Torino following which he was Principal Cello of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra from 2014 to 2021.

It was in Sydney in 2018 that Umberto made his conducting debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House. Following a swift trajectory of prestigious conducting engagements, Umberto is now in high demand across Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

In addition to his role Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Umberto's recent conducting engagements include Elgar's cello concerto with Steven Isserlis for the Volksoper Vienna, and debuts with Orchestra del Teatro Massimo in Palermo and Orchestra Regionale Toscana. Umberto has also curated a three-week series with the Sydney Symphony for 'Symphony Hour' and returned to the podiums of the Dunedin, Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras.

In November 2024, Queensland Symphony Orchestra announced the extension of Umberto's Chief Conductorship until the end of their Season 2027.

As a cellist, Umberto remains beloved by audiences worldwide, having performed internationally as a soloist at New York's Carnegie Hall, Vienna's Musicverein, the great Shostakovich Hall of St Petersburg, Auditorium Parco della Musica in Rome, the Salzburg Festival and is one of only two Italians to have ever won a prize for cello in the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition.

Umberto plays cellos by Matteo Goffriller (made in 1722, Venezia) and Carlo Antonio Testore (made in 1758, Milano).



Photo by David Kelly

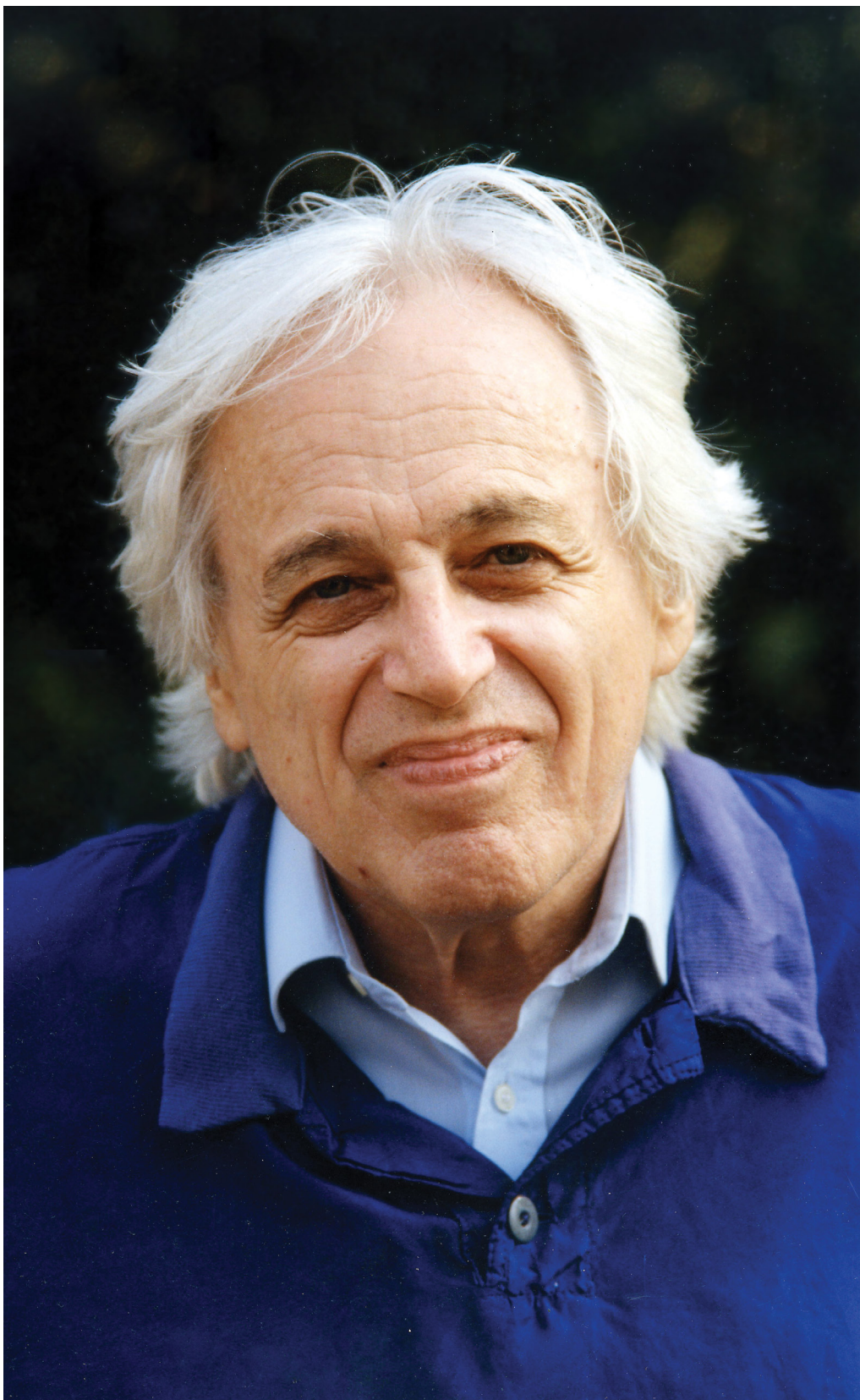


Photo by Peter Andersen, courtesy Schott Music.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT GYÖRGY LIGETI

After escaping from communist Hungary in 1956, Ligeti went first to Vienna and then to Cologne. In Hungary, Ligeti's exposure to modernist Western music had been severely limited by official disapproval. Vienna, by contrast, had latterly been the city of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, while music in Cologne was dominated by the precociously brilliant Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Cologne was also home to a vital electronic music scene where Ligeti quickly mastered new technologies that enabled him to create sounds unimagined by him a few years before. Colleagues like Boulez and Stockhausen explored abstract and often highly complex models to determine the structure of their works, while Ligeti, perhaps in relieved revolt against the formal constraints of socialist realism, wanted to write 'music without beginning or end'. The possibilities offered by the electronic studio allowed him to experiment with pure texture, which he transferred to the orchestral palette with his characteristically precise ear for sound.

Ligeti was born in Dicsőszentmárton, a Hungarian speaking enclave in the Romanian district of Transylvania, and it was only when he was in his teens that the composer learned to speak Romanian. He had, however, come into contact with Romanian folk music as a young child. He described hearing the alpenhorn played in the Carpathian Mountains and being entranced by the fact that the natural harmonic series used by the instrument made it sound weirdly and beautifully 'out of tune' – out of tune, that is according to the system of equal temperament used in Western music since the 18th century. The expressive possibility of unequal temperament remained a feature of Ligeti's music until his death: in his Violin Concerto, for instance, a group of ocarinas – impossible to play conventionally in tune – add an unspeakable pathos at a critical moment in the work. Ligeti also remembered an occasion when one New Year's Eve, some musicians playing violin and bagpipe, dressed in shamanistic goat-costumes, forced their way into his family's courtyard.

ABOUT THE ROMANIAN CONCERTO

In 1949, Ligeti was set to work transcribing folksongs from wax cylinder recordings in Bucharest, and some of those melodies, as well as tunes he recalled from childhood, came together in his *Romanian Concerto* composed in 1951. The piece's four short movements contain at least one or two tunes which will be familiar to Bartók lovers. In addition, as Ligeti noted, 'I also invented elements in the spirit of the village bands'. This, however, got him into trouble with the authorities in Budapest, where the piece had a single closed rehearsal before being banned. As the composer once explained:

The way in which village bands harmonised their music, often full of dissonances and 'against the grain' was regarded as incorrect. In the fourth movement of my *Romanian Concerto* there is a passage in which an F sharp is heard in the context of F major. This was reason enough for the apparatchiks responsible for the arts to ban the piece.

In fact, in the years immediately after his relocation to the West and immersion in the world of the post war avant-garde, Ligeti himself disparaged the piece as 'embodying the height of my compositional misconceptions'. He withdrew the work until the 1990s when, after some revision, he allowed it to be performed again. The *Romanian Concerto* is a long way from the Ligeti of *Atmosphères* and *Lontano*, or the knockabout fun of the Piano Concerto, but contains hints of the orchestral sonority and rhythmic exuberance of later works. It also displays a genuine love for the material, as well as the embryonic technical brilliance of one of the greatest composers of the last century.

Ligeti's concerto is scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 3 horns and 2 trumpets; percussion and strings.

The piece was first played in a private orchestral rehearsal in Budapest in the 1950s, but it was not officially premiered until 21 August 1971, at the Peninsula Music Festival in Fish Creek, Wisconsin, with Thor Johnson conducting The Festival Orchestra.

The Sydney Symphony did not perform the work until 2017, when our then-Chief Conductor David Robertson led performances in Sydney, and in Shanghai and Beijing on our International Tour.



Dvořák in 1882. Source: Gallica Digital Library (digital ID btv1b8417521d)/Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT ANTONIN DVOŘÁK

As an impecunious 30-something composer, recently married and living on the modest salary of a church organist and freelance string playing, Dvořák benefited immensely from a growing sense among those in political power of responsibility to the arts. The local government, the Diet of Bohemia, had begun allocating part of its budget to arts funding through the newly founded Conservatory in Prague when Dvořák was young, and in the 1870s the Imperial Government in Vienna, through its Ministry of Public Education, made sums of money available in the form of fellowships or *stipendia* for young artists. With the backing of critic Eduard Hanslick and Johannes Brahms, Dvořák received financial support.

In 1877 Brahms wrote to his Berlin publisher, Simrock, saying:

I have been receiving a lot of pleasure for several years past from the work of Anton Dvořák of Prague...Dvořák has written all kinds of things, operas (Czech), symphonies, quartets, piano pieces. He is certainly a very talented fellow. And incidentally, poor! I beg you to consider that!

Simrock was duly impressed with the young composer's work and commissioned a set of Slavonic Dances for piano duo. These, as Simrock had expected, were an instant hit, and again in their orchestral version. Simrock made a huge profit, and Dvořák's reputation spread rapidly in Europe, such that by 1879 his 'Slavonic' String Quartet had been premiered by the ensemble led by the great Joseph Joachim, and Hans Richter had commissioned the work we now know as his Sixth Symphony for Berlin.

As Brahms's letter shows, Dvořák was already a prolific composer, and by the time he was 50, Dvořák was at the height of his creativity and fame. In the late 1880s he had travelled to Russia and England, where In 1884 he conducted his works at the Albert Hall, St James's Hall and the Crystal Palace in London, (on the back of this his Requiem was composed for the Birmingham Festival); he had been showered with Imperial honours and honorary doctorates, and was about to become the founding head of the new National Conservatory in New York. The works of this period in his life show his life-long love of a 'national' music, while making significant experiments in form and structure, particularly in chamber music. Always remaining, as he said, a 'humble Czech musician', Dvořák believed that:

nothing must be too low or insignificant for the musician. When he walks he should listen to every whistling boy, every street singer or blind organ grinder...it is a sign of barrenness which such characteristic bits of music exist and are not heeded by the learned musicians of the age.

In the USA, Dvořák argued passionately for a national music that included elements and Native American and Black cultures, saying 'undoubtedly the germs for the best in music lie hidden among all the races that are commingled in this great country.'

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT DVOŘÁK'S EIGHTH SYMPHONY

The success that Dvořák enjoyed, thanks to Brahms's advocacy in the late 1870s, made his name beyond Vienna and Prague, and in 1883 he made the first of eight visits to England where his music became – and remained – extremely popular. In 1890, now a regular visitor, Dvořák arrived with the score his Eighth Symphony (published originally as No.4), which he had recently premiered in Prague but which for some time was colloquially known as the 'English Symphony'.

In fact the piece has, even for Dvořák, an especially Bohemian accent; its immediate popularity with the British audience perhaps has more to do with its relaxed attitude to the formal rigours of Germanic symphonism, and an abundance of memorable, folk-inflected melody. For Brahms, normally a great supporter, this was a major flaw. He argued (offering, in passing, a seriously backhanded compliment to his rival Anton Bruckner) that:

too much that's fragmentary, incidental, loiters about in the piece. Everything fine, musically captivating and beautiful – but no main points! When one says of Dvořák that he fails to achieve anything great and comprehensive with his pure, individual ideas, this is correct. Not so with Bruckner, all the same he offers so little.

In fact, the formal freedom and melodic richness are precisely what makes this work special. According his early biographer, Otakar Šourek, Dvořák aimed 'to write something different from his other symphonies and shape the musical content of his ideas in a new manner'. He did so not by piling up beautiful incidents, as Brahms suggests, though; as he is said to have told his student, Josef Michl 'to have a beautiful idea is nothing special. The idea comes from itself and if it is beautiful and great, man can take no credit for that. But to develop the idea well and make something great from it, that is the most difficult, that is – art!'

While the Symphony is a work of absolute music, it was composed in close proximity to a series of concert overtures originally known as *Nature, Life and Love* – the more customary titles *In Nature's Realm, Carnival* and *Othello* came later. This triptych shows Dvořák's essential Romanticism in his adherence to the cult of Nature and his delight in celebrating his ethnic musical roots, and in similar musical language to that of the Eighth Symphony.

The first movement is in G major and marked *Allegro con brio*, but Dvořák disguised both speed and tonality by beginning with a slow-moving minor-mode melody in the cellos, richly doubled by horn, clarinet and bassoon. When the music makes it to the home key of G major it is with a chirping melody for the flute. In a breathtaking display of orchestration, that ranges from translucent shimmering to the richness of divided viola and cellos, Dvořák elaborates his themes through an audacious series of key changes; the conventional recapitulation is here a shining G-major chord with the flute melody now given to a more introspective cor anglais. The *Adagio* in C minor, is often brightened with rapid, falling major scales like pealing bells, and has an impassioned central section. The scherzo begins with a lyrical G minor dance contrasting with a more buoyant E-minor trio and fast coda. The finale is a set of variations on the bright fanfare announced by the trumpet as the movement opens.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

What Brahms, of all people, failed to hear in this music is how the varying episodes, across the movements, are unified by pervasive rhythmic cells. The long-short-short figure with which the work opens also dominates the slow movement's main theme. Groups of four repeated even notes – crotchets or quavers – appear at structural points; groups of triplets can appear as distant drum taps, or the opening gesture of an important melody (like the *Adagio*'s) and be transformed into the three note up-beat of the third movement; the dotted rhythm of the third movement's trio is transmuted in the rhythm of the fourth movement's fanfare, and when that theme is stated by the orchestra its rising arpeggio reveals it to be related to the flute theme from the first movement. This almost subliminal motific manipulation gives coherence to some of Dvořák's most expansive and poetic music.

**Notes by Gordon Kerry © 2005 (Ligeti),
© 2013 (Dvořák)**



Dvořák with his wife Anna in London, 1886

Dvořák's symphony is scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling cor anglais), 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani and strings.

It was premiered on 2 February 1890 in Prague, with Dvořák conducting the Orchestra of the National Theatre.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work on 19 August 1941, conducted by Montague Brearley.

Other notable performances include those conducted by Walter Susskind (1946 & 55), Eugene Goossens (1954), Walter Stiasny (1965 & 71), Michael Gielen (1966), Moshe Atzmon (1971), Louis Frémaux (1975), Hiroyuki Iwaki (1977 & 90), Franz-Paul Decker (1980), Günther Herbig (1987), Christopher Seaman (1997), Carlo Rizzi (2000), Emmanuel Villaume (2002), Arvo Volmer (2006), Antonello Manacorda (2013) and Bramwell Tovey (2017).

Our more recent performances were on our 2022 Regional Tour to Newcastle, Tamworth, Port Macquarie, Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Canberra, conducted by Roger Benedict.

Of particular note are performances in 1979, led by the Uruguayan conductor José Serebrier, which were recorded and released on RCA. This performance is available on streaming.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



PERFORMING IN THIS CONCERT

FIRST VIOLINS

Andrew Haveron
Concertmaster
Harry Bennetts
Assistant Concertmaster
Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
Seroan Danis
Claire Herrick
Georges Lentz
Emily Long
Alex Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Liam Pilgrim
Benjamin Tjoo
Leone Ziegler
Brian Hong°
Marcus Michelsen*

SECOND VIOLINS

Lerida Delbridge
Principal
Kirsty Hilton
Principal
Marina Marsden
Principal Emeritus
Emma Jezek
Assistant Principal
Alice Bartsch
Shuti Huang
Monique Irik
Wendy Kong
Benjamin Li
Robert Smith
Caroline Hopson°
Emma Dodds*

VIOLAS

Tobias Breider
Principal
Richard Waters
Principal
Justin Williams
Acting Associate Principal
Anne-Louise Comerford
Associate Principal Emeritus
Sandro Costantino
Rosemary Curtin
Carl Lee
Leonid Volovelsky
Andrew Jezek°
Stephen Wright°

CELLOS

Jesper Svedberg
Principal
Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Kristy Conrau
Timothy Nankervis
Elizabeth Neville
Minah Choe°
Noah Lawrence†
Eliza Sdraulig*

DOUBLE BASS

Kees Boersma
Principal
Jaen Pallandi
Acting Principal
Dylan Holly
Steven Larson
Benjamin Ward
Harry Young°

FLUTES

Emma Sholl
Principal
Carolyn Harris
Kate Lawson°
Acting Principal Piccolo

OBOES

Shefali Pryor
Principal
Alexandre Oguey
Principal Cor Anglais

CLARINETS

Francesco Celata
Associate Principal
Alexander Morris
Principal Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS

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Principal Emeritus
Fiona McNamara

HORNS

Samuel Jacobs
Principal
Euan Harvey
Acting Principal 3rd Horn
Marnie Sebire
Emily Miers°
Sarah Bernard*

TRUMPETS

David Elton
Principal
Cécile Glémot

TROMBONES

Nick Byrne*
Acting Associate Principal
Jeremy Mazurek°
Christopher Harris
Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Steven Rossé
Principal

TIMPANI

Antoine Siguré
Principal

PERCUSSION

Mark Robinson
Associate Principal / Section Percussion
Joshua Hill°

Bold Principal
* Guest Musician
° Contract Musician
† Sydney Symphony Fellow

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Chief Conductor



Donald Runnicles
Principal Guest Conductor



Benjamin Northey
Conductor in Residence



Vladimir Ashkenazy
Conductor Laureate



Andrew Haveron
Concertmaster
Vicki Olsson Chair

FIRST VIOLINS



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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



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Mitchell**



**Alexander
Norton**



Liam Pilgrim



Benjamin Tjoa



Léone Ziegler

SECOND VIOLINS



Lerida Delbridge
Principal



Kirsty Hilton
Principal



Marina Marsden
Principal



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



Shutí Huang



Monique Irik



Wendy Kong



Benjamin Li



Nicole Masters
*Nora Goodridge OAM
Chair*



Robert Smith



Maja Verunica

VIOLAS



Tobias Breider
Principal
Roslyn Pakcer AO & Gretel Pakcer AM Chair



Richard Waters
Principal



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



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Assistant Principal



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Fenella Gill



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Principal

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Principal



Mathew Wilkie
Principal Emeritus



Fiona McNamara



Noriko Shimada
Principal

HORNS



Samuel Jacobs
Principal
Terrey Arcus AM Chair



Euan Harvey



Marnie Sebire
Her Honour Robyn Tupman Chair



Rachel Silver
Sue Milliken AD Chair

TRUMPETS



David Elton
Principal
Anne Arcus Chair



Brent Grapes
Associate Principal



Cécile Glémot



Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES



Scott Kinmont
Associate Principal
Audrey Blunden Chair



Nick Byne
Tim Robertson SC & Francesca Delano Davis Chair



Christopher Harris
Principal



Steve Rossé
Principal

TIMPANI



Antoine Sigure
Principal



Mark Robinson
Associate Principal/
Section Percussion



Rebecca Lagos
Principal
I Kallinikos Chair



Timothy Constable
Christine Bishop Chair

PERCUSSION

HARP



Louisc Dulbecco
Principal

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