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WELCOME

Welcome to Schoenberg & Williams, a deeply compelling experience in the Utzon Room of the Sydney Opera House.

Handpicked Wines is delighted to be the Presenting Partner of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Cocktail Hour with Handpicked Wines Series, now in its second year.

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 superb artists of the Orchestra invite us to open our hearts and minds to new perspectives on the human condition.

Like the many brilliant people involved in winemaking, the world of chamber music is also a wonderful combination of individual excellence and seamless collaboration.

Assistant Principal Viola Justin Williams is fast establishing an excellent reputation as a composer, and in this concert, he premieres his new Movement for Woodwind Quintet.

Also on the program is Schoenberg's Transfigured Night, an intensely moving and personal work, perfectly suited to the intimacy of the Utzon Room.

The carefully chosen wines, the 'up close' experience with the musicians of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and this invigorating and thoughtprovoking music are the perfect combination for a memorable evening.

Handpicked Wines and the Orchestra share values of creativity and technical excellence, the hallmark of everything we do. It has been a great pleasure to see our partnership unfold.

Please enjoy Schoenberg & Williams, along with the wines selected to accompany this unique performance.

William Dong **Managing Director**

Handpicked Wines



2025 CONCERT SEASON

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH HANDPICKED WINES

Friday 29 August, 6pm Saturday 30 August, 6pm Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House

SCHOENBERG & WILLIAMS

RADIANCE AND INVENTION

GENEVIEVE LANG presenter

JUSTIN WILLIAMS (born 1980)

Movement for Woodwind Quintet (2025)

WORLD PREMIERE

CAROLYN HARRIS flute SHEFALI PRYOR oboe OLLI LEPPÄNIEMI clarinet MATTHEW WILKIE bassoon EUAN HARVEY horn

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG (1874–1951) *Transfigured Night*, **Op.4** (1899)

HARRY BENNETTS violin
FIONA ZIEGLER violin
ROSEMARY CURTIN viola
JUSTIN WILLIAMS viola
TIMOTHY NANKERVIS cello
ELIZABETH NEVILLE cello

Estimated durations

Williams – 12 minutes Schoenberg – 32 minutes The concert will run for approximately one hour

Cover image

Assistant Principal Second Violin Emma Jezek and Assistant Principal Viola Justin Williams

Presenting Partner



Principal Partner



JUSTIN WILLIAMS (born 1980) Movement for Woodwind Quintet (2025) WORLD PREMIERE

Composer Justin Williams (who is also the orchestra's Assistant Principal Viola), released his *Movement for String Quartet* in 2020, which has since been performed throughout Australia and in Europe by the Australian String Quartet. His work has been presented by the Sydney International Piano Competition, Blackheath Chamber Music Festival and the Australian National Academy of Music. His First Symphony was jointly commissioned by Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra and premiered under the direction of Maestro Umberto Clerici.

The composer writes:

I wrote for a woodwind quintet primarily to learn more about the instruments and to contribute to the body of works for this ensemble. I am delighted that this talented group of musicians from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, each of whom I am inspired by and greatly respect, will premiere this challenging work.

Movement for Woodwind Quintet is written in G sharp minor and is arranged into four sections that are tied together by a central, very simple and short, rhythmic motif. I gave the rhythmic motif an intervallic structure which is rather loosely followed; in fact I break the rules in bar one, as I wasn't happy with the harmonic colour it was producing, but in any case the structure is as follows: from the first note of the motif; down a semitone - down a minor third - up a major seventh (although I leap to a major ninth in the first bar) - down a major third - up a major seventh.

The first section, Allegro, is robust and dark, and features the horn soaring in the lead role against surging semiquavers. Here, the melody is taken from the first part of the motif and expanded in chromatic form followed by successive leaps of a minor sixth, first in the horn and then in the clarinet. The theme's intervallic structure changes slightly as it modulates upwards via the oboe to B flat minor, the melody passing over to the bassoon



Justin Williams

against a suspended major seventh played by the oboe. The melody eventually returns to the horn and bassoon played an octave apart, this time in a mysterious setting; the accompanying parts here are rhythmically unsettled and are harmonically searching, providing material which is used in support of a fugal subject later in the piece.

The second section has a lilting melody built on a 3/8 - 4/8 - 7/8 bar structure. The directive here is to 'sing with love'. The mood conveys a sense of yearning, partly communicated in the score by a tenuto marking at the beginning of each slur requiring the accompanying parts to lean and linger on the first note and then move quite freely through the slur. When writing this section, I was conscious of the current state of the world and the need for love: 'love your neighbour as yourself'. We see through bitter conflict throughout the world; both past and present, the enormity of human suffering sustained. And for what purpose? Through pride and greed, envy, jealousy and vanity; evil thrives. Through love flows compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, empathy, kindness and respect. In essence, love is simple – yet in reality for the human race, it is complicated and difficult. I hope the simplicity of this section in some way captures this sense of yearning for a restoration of peace and a collective love for one's neighbour.

The third section is busy and cheeky and requires great agility from the instrumentalists. This section features the rhythm from the second beat of the motif and places it at the front of the phrase and uses the majorseventh leap found at the end of the motif to humorous effect. It features solos played by the clarinet, oboe and flute; all derived from the central motif. From a yearning for love, this section touches on the reality of temptation and its consequence on our lives, presented here in a humorous scene of frivolity and indulgence, depicting life's 'playground' where we adults really can make a mess of things.

This scene dissipates and arriving on a lone 'C' at the bottom of the bassoon's range, it is time for reflection and the beginning of the final section. Repeated middle 'C's' at the bottom of the flute's range call for a broad, chesty tone that is close to the heart; a sound that is old, depicting the age of time and all that has transpired. Within this context, there is endless hope: hope for joy, for love, for peace. It is in this spirit that we arrive at a final, fugal section in C major.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG (1874–1951) *Transfigured Night*, **Op.4** (1899)

Transfigured Night (Verklärte Nacht), originally composed for string sextet (two each of violins, violas and cellos), was first performed in Vienna in 1902 by the augmented Rosé Quartet. The first audience was baffled, but the work soon became Schoenberg's most frequently performed music, and remains his most popular.

To an early critic, this music sounded 'as if someone had smeared the score of Tristan und Isolde while it was still wet.' Transfigured Night is neo-Wagnerian and late Romantic, but in retrospect we can see that there is continuity between the Schoenberg's modernist music with his seemingly cerebral 12-note technique, and the style of Transfigured Night – both in expressive content and musical technique. The sextet's tension between chromatic (that is, with extra notes foreign to the prevailing key) and diatonic (simpler major or minor chords) harmonies in a complex web of individual lines illustrates the problems which Schoenberg was to face as he pushed further along the same line of stylistic development.



Arnold Schoenberg

By 1917 'amplified' performances of Transfigured Night for medium-sized string orchestra were being given with Schoenberg's approval, and in that year he issued a string orchestra version of the work, adding a double bass part and making other adjustments. In 1943 he again reworked the score for orchestral strings, with second thoughts on tempo, dynamics and tone colouring. Whether in this form or as a string sextet, Transfigured Night loads great expression into each line in the texture. Composer Egon Wellesz felt that this intensity was better conveyed with more than one player to each part, and Schoenberg's arrangements suggest that he agreed. Each strand is essential, and needs tensile strength to bear the weight of musical development and emotional expression. Transfigured Night when played by larger forces seems even closer to being. as has been suggested, a tone-poem or a music drama without words.

Transfigured Night was composed in three weeks in 1899 during a holiday spent with the composer Alexander Zemlinsky, whose sister Schoenberg was soon to marry. It was inspired by a poem of Richard Dehmel's, and possibly by Schoenberg's own love. The poem comes from a collection titled Weib und Welt (Woman and World, 1896). It is a conversation in a moonlit forest between two lovers, in which the woman tells the man she has conceived a child by another. The man, inspired by the radiance of the natural world, tells her that the warmth now uniting them will transfigure the child and make it theirs. They embrace, and walk on through the 'bright, lofty night'.

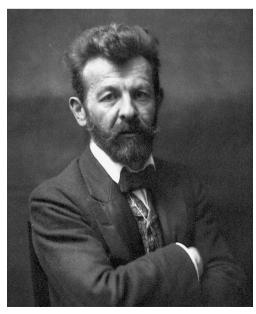
Schoenberg's own notes on Verklärte Nacht, written almost 50 years after he composed it, describe the work as 'program music, illustrating and expressing the poem by Richard Dehmel'. Yet Schoenberg's account is a rather free gloss of the poem, illuminating for what he read into it, and what he thought his music meant. Some excerpts will illustrate this:

the woman confesses a tragedy to the man in a dramatic outburst. She has married a man she did not love. She was unhappy and lonely in this marriage, but forced herself to remain faithful, and, finally obeying the maternal instinct, she is now with child from a man she does not love...In desperation she now walks beside the man with whom she has fallen in love, fearing his verdict will destroy her. But the voice of a man speaks, a man whose generosity is as sublime as his love.'

Schoenberg considered that his music 'can perhaps make you forget the poem,' which he thought many a reader in 1950 might call 'rather repulsive'. But he thought the poem should be appreciated 'because of its highly poetic presentation of the emotions provoked by the beauty of nature, and for the distinguished moral attitude in dealing with a staggeringly difficult problem.' (We reproduce the poem here.) But had Schoenberg forgotten the exact words of the poem, or did his own moralism read into them something different?

The structure of the 'symphonic' drama follows that of the poem itself: five sections. of which the first, third and fifth, describing the lovers' walking and the setting, frame two more extended statements, one by the woman, one by the man. The music can equally well be experienced as a largescale single movement, in which the basic thematic motifs heard at the beginning are transformed. Schoenberg learnt this method from Wagner, to whose music he had recently been introduced and 'converted' by Zemlinsky, having previously regarded himself as a Brahmsian. The most telling example of thematic transformation in Transfigured Night is in the closing pages, where the opening motif is delicately vet radiantly reworked: a Liebesleben (Love-Life) rather than a Wagnerian Liebestod (Love-Death). There are traces of Brahms' influence too, in the sextet form and the asymmetrical phrasing so characteristic of Schoenberg.

Notes by Justin Williams © 2025, David Garrett © 2001/2004 (Schoenberg).



Richard Dehmel photographed in 1918 by Franz Hanfstaengl. Source: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

RICHARD DEHMEL Verklärte Nacht (1896)

Zwei Menschen gehn durch kahlen, kalten Hain; der Mond läuft mit, sie schaun hinein. Der Mond läuft über hohe Eichen; kein Wölkchen trübt das Himmelslicht, in das die schwarzen Zacken reichen. Die Stimme eines Weibes spricht:

Ich trag ein Kind, und nit von Dir, ich geh in Sünde neben Dir.
Ich hab mich schwer an mir vergangen.
Ich glaubte nicht mehr an ein Glück und hatte doch ein schwer Verlangen nach Lebensinhalt, nach Mutterglück und Pflicht; da hab ich mich erfrecht, da ließ ich schaudernd mein Geschlecht von einem fremden Mann umfangen, und hab mich noch dafür gesegnet.
Nun hat das Leben sich gerächt: nun bin ich Dir, o Dir, begegnet.

Sie geht mit ungelenkem Schritt. Sie schaut empor; der Mond läuft mit. Ihr dunkler Blick ertrinkt in Licht. Die Stimme eines Mannes spricht:

'Das Kind, das Du empfangen hast, sei Deiner Seele keine Last, o sieh, wie klar das Weltall schimmert! Es ist ein Glanz um alles her; Du treibst mit mir auf kaltem Meer, doch eine eigne Wärme flimmert von Dir in mich, von mir in Dich. Die wird das fremde Kind verklären, Du wirst es mir, von mir gebären; Du hast den Glanz in mich gebracht, Du hast mich selbst zum Kind gemacht.'

Er faßt sie um die starken Hüften. Ihr Atem küßt sich in den Lüften. Zwei Menschen gehn durch hohe, helle Nacht.

Transfigured Night (1896)

'I carry a child but he's not yours,

Two figures walk through the bare, cold grove; the moon glides with them, they look into her face. The moon glides over high oak trees.

No wisp of cloud shadows the light from the sky which the black branches claw.

A woman's voice speaks:

I walk in sin beside you.
I went far astray.
I no longer believed in fortune
and the longing for meaning to my life,
the joys and duties of motherhood
lay heavy upon me. I grew shameless
as my shuddering body yielded to the embrace
of an unknown man,
and that union has been blessed.
Now life has taken its revenge,
Now I have come face to face with you, ah you!

She stumbles on.
She looks up, the moon glides with them.
Her dark face is suffused with light.
The voice of a man speaks:

'Let the child you have conceived be no burden on your soul; just see how the universe glistens! Everything around it gleams. You are drifting with me on a cold sea but there is a special warmth flickering from you to me, from me to you. It will transfigure that stranger's child, you will bear it to me, by me. You kindled that radiance in me, you have turned even me into a child.'

He caught her round her strong hips.
Their breaths kissed in the air.
Two figures walk through the bright, lofty night.

Translation Symphony Australia © 2002 from the original German poem by Richard Dehmel

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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.



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2022 Collection Chardonnay, Yarra Valley

Elegant and refined, this Yarra Valley Chardonnay entices with notes of white nectarine, citrus blossom and a whisper of toasted hazelnut. The palate is pure and beautifully textured, with vibrant stone fruits and a subtle mineral edge. Gentle oak and time on lees add depth, finishing crisp and effortlessly graceful, a Chardonnay to elevate any occasion.



2023 Collection Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley

A classic Yarra Valley Pinot Noir combining the drive and precision of the upper Yarra and the weight and flesh of the lower Yarra.

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2019 Collection Barossa Shiraz

This wine has lifted aromas of dark berries, plum and liquorice with subtle hints of nutmeg, clove and vanilla pod. The palate is rich and mouth-filling with ripe, juicy blackberry and mulberry fruits.

Supple, velvet-like tannins support the fruit and provide structure, leading to a long, savoury finish.

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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 Yen Sharratt

People & Culture Manager

Keanna Mauch People & Culture Coordinator

Sue Burnet

Work Health & Safety Specialist

