



SEASON 2020

MISO

MEDIA KIT

DALE BARLTROP & SOPHIE ROWELL • NICOLA BENEDETTI
VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY • JOYCE YANG • GIL SHAHAM

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

January



Chinese New Year

ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE,
HAMER HALL



Friday 31 January

Yi Zhang conductor
Jieni Wan piano

Now in its seventh year, the MSO's Chinese New Year concert has become one of Australia's major cultural highlights with capacity audiences rejoicing in a true blend of western and eastern traditions.

Bring your family and friends to experience this unique musical celebration, featuring classical masterworks and some of the biggest names in Chinese music.

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra wishes you a happy, safe and prosperous Year of the Rat.

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February

Sidney Myer Music Bowl Free Concert Series

The Sidney Myer Free Concerts are the perfect soundtrack to summer in the city at one of Melbourne's most iconic outdoor venues.

Admission is free, gates open at 4.30pm and concerts begin at 7.30pm. Entry is on a first in, best dressed basis.



1/Around the World with the MSO

Wednesday 5 February

Tianyi Lu conductor
Emily Sun violin

Jordan Moore Fanfare[^]
R. Strauss *Aus Italien – On the Beach at Sorrento*
Matthew Hindson Violin Concerto
Australian Postcards
Dvořák Symphony No.9 *From the New World*

[^] World premiere of MSO commission

Spend a night under the stars and be transported around the globe in an international musical adventure.

Featuring favourite works by Richard Strauss, Dvořák and Australia's own Matthew Hindson, the MSO is led by assistant conductor Tianyi Lu in the first of MSO's free concerts at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

Richard Strauss' visit to Italy when he was 22 resulted in his 'symphonic fantasy' *Aus Italien*. In four movements, he conjures the emotions of the sun-soaked nation, from the glories of the Eternal City to the labyrinthine streets of Naples. Seeped in the romance and history of the Amalfi Coast, the work's third movement, *On the Beach at Sorrento* relies on an intricate and complex balance between the strings and woodwind.

Matthew Hindson's violin concerto, *Australian Postcards*, is a sometimes frenzied, sometimes elegiac response to his own travels around this country; a reminder that even home can feel strange and unfamiliar. Guest violinist and 2018's ABC Young Performer of the Year, Emily Sun will tackle the fiendish demands of this major Australian work.

The night concludes with one of the most popular symphonies of all time, Dvořák's Symphony No.9 *From the New World*. A magnificent, highly sensitive, response to the opening up of the Americas, it bristles with the excitement and power of discovery.

February

Sidney Myer Music Bowl Free Concert Series

2/Dance, Dance, Dance

Saturday 8 February

Benjamin Northey conductor

e.Motion 21 dancers

Katie Noonan singer

Yaron Lifschitz artistic director

Libby McDonnell choreographer

Dvořák *Carnival Overture*

Elena Kats-Chernin *Wild Swans*

Bartók *The Miraculous Mandarin*
Suite

Ravel *La Valse*

Celebrate music and dance with the MSO, acclaimed vocalist Katie Noonan, and the mesmerising e.motion21 dancers in this special Sidney Myer free concert.

A tribute to all things dance, this performance, conducted by Benjamin Northey opens with Dvořák's popular *Carnival Overture*. A piece that instantly bursts to life, it has a driving rhythmic structure all the way to its bold conclusion. Ravel's *La Valse* is thrilling, reflective of a dangerous, deconstructed Viennese waltz, where a sinister undercurrent flows beneath a stunning surface

Renowned Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin's *Wild Swans* will be performed by Katie Noonan and dancers from all abilities company, e.Motion21. Originally written for the ballet, this piece draws on the Hans Christian Anderson tale, with a nod to Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. Kats-Chernin consistently tops polls of composers beloved by Melbourne audiences with this suite.

The MSO also performs Bela Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* Suite, a scandalous piece that caused a riot at its 1926 premiere.

3/La Dolce Vita

Friday 14 February

Benjamin Northey conductor

MSO Horn Quartet

Wagner *Flying Dutchman* Overture

Khachaturian *Adagio* from
Spartacus

Richard Mills *Island Signal Island*
Song

Respighi *Fountains of Rome*

Respighi *Pines of Rome*

Celebrate the sounds of Italy with the MSO and conductor Benjamin Northey in this sumptuous Valentine's Day concert. Conjuring the romance and splendour of this magical country, this is the third and final of our free concerts at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

Central to the program are two works by Italian composer Ottorino Respighi, *Fountains of Rome* and *Pines of Rome*. Two tone poems of great majesty which bring images of the Eternal City to vivid life.

Respighi harnessed the full power of his musicians to conjure the terracotta sunsets and resounding cathedral bells of La bella Roma. With some of the most thrilling music written for horns, in this special event the MSO Horn Quartet is set to shine.

Transporting you back to ancient Rome, Aram Khachaturian's *Adagio* from "Spartacus" takes the sword and sandal clichés of the story and elevates them into the purest expression of undying love and resistance.

The MSO will also perform an original composition by Richard Mills, *Island Signal Island Song* and Wagner's overture from *The Flying Dutchman* in this romantic night under the stars.

February



Beethoven 9, Circa and Cheetham

Season Opening Gala

Thursday 20 February / 11am (MSO Mornings)
Saturday 22 February / 7.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Benjamin Northey conductor
Circa Contemporary Circus
Maija Kovaļevska soprano
Jacqueline Dark mezzo-soprano
Paul O'Neill tenor
Warwick Fyfe bass
MSO Chorus

Deborah Cheetham *Dutala (Star-Filled Sky)**^
Beethoven Symphony No.9

* Composer in Residence

^ World premiere of MSO commission

Share the joy with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's Season Opening Gala, where the epic struggle for peace and ultimate triumphant bliss of Beethoven's 9th Symphony will be physically embodied by leading Australian contemporary circus artists, Circa.

In the year of his 250th birthday, 2020 sees symphony orchestras across the globe celebrating the brilliance of Beethoven, and his perennially popular and important artistic output. Here the MSO presents his final symphony in a dynamic and dramatically different style to any other performance worldwide.

This revolutionary staging of the towering masterpiece of the symphonic repertoire will be performed alongside a world premiere by MSO 2020 Composer in Residence, Deborah Cheetham AO – a work composed exclusively to accompany Beethoven 9.

Written for full symphony orchestra, Cheetham draws on the soaring emotions and spirit of Beethoven's work to complement the classic in original and innovative style.

In this first-time collaboration between the MSO and Circa, ten world-class acrobats will present Beethoven's music in a physical form – with expressive choreography intricately woven to reflect the score.

Australian soloists mezzo-soprano Jacqueline Dark, tenor Paul O'Neill and bass Warwick Fyfe join Latvian soprano Maija Kovaļevska, the MSO Chorus and newly-appointed Principal Guest Conductor Benjamin Northey for the final movement of the remarkable Ninth Symphony.

Beethoven 9 and Circa will also be performed as part of MSO Mornings on Thursday 20 February at 11am. Deborah Cheetham's New Work will not be performed as part of this special one hour program.

March



Alexander Shelley

An Alpine Symphony

Thursday 5 March / 7.30pm
 Saturday 7 March / 2pm
 Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Alexander Shelley conductor
 Alexandra Dariescu piano

Gordon Hamilton *Far South*
 Grieg Piano Concerto
 R. Strauss *Alpine Symphony*

The MSO invites you on the ultimate adventure through music, with an aural voyage which traverses the highest peaks, deepest forests and takes you to the ends of the earth.

Alexander Shelley conducts the MSO in this concert of three major works starting with Australian composer Gordon Hamilton's *Far South*. Hamilton began composing the unique work on a trip to Antarctica in December 2019, incorporating recordings of ice cracking, wind whipping the ice caps and even whale and bird song.

Superstar Romanian pianist Alexandra Dariescu makes her MSO debut with Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto – a work requiring great flexibility and trust in the relationship between soloist and orchestra.

The final piece for the program is Richard Strauss' *Alpine Symphony*. Initially inspired by a childhood hiking experience, Strauss was moved to write the work after the death of his friend and fellow composer Gustav Mahler. It premiered in 1915 to instant acclaim. The orchestration conjures the scent of pine, the cascade of a ravine and the electricity of an approaching storm.



Miguel Harth Bedoya

Scheherazade

Friday 13 March / 7.30pm
 Saturday 14 March / 7.30pm
 Monday 16 March / 6.30pm
 Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Miguel Harth Bedoya conductor
 Harriet Krijgh cello

Kodály *Dances of Galánta*
 Lalo Cello Concerto
 Rimsky-Korsakov *Scheherazade*

This March the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra brings one of the greatest musical stories of all time to life, Rimsky-Korsakov's gorgeously textured *Scheherazade*.

Peruvian conductor Miguel Harth Bedoya makes his MSO debut, leading the orchestra through this magical work based on *Scheherazade*, the star storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights* who escaped death by drawing her executioner further and further into the tale. Sweeping and immersive, the work shifts and turns like the legendary story.

Scheherazade was composed in 1888, and draws on both Rimsky-Korsakov's career as an officer in the Imperial Russian Navy and his lifelong fascination with folklore. The suite evokes the brine and the sea-spray that would accompany Sinbad on his many journeys, and brims with exoticism.

It was a passion for folk music that drove Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály to the creation of *Dances of Galánta*, based on the musical traditions of what is now Slovakia. Richly evocative of Romani culture, it is a work of complexity and romance.

Dutch cellist Harriet Krijgh joins the MSO for French composer Édouard Lalo's beautiful Cello Concerto.

March



Christian Li

Beethoven and Mendelssohn

Thursday 19 March / 7.30pm
Melbourne Town Hall

Friday 20 March / 7.30pm
Costa Hall, Geelong

Benjamin Northey conductor
Christian Li violin

Lachlan Skipworth *Spiritus*
Mendelssohn Violin Concerto
Beethoven Symphony No.7

Twelve-year-old Australian violinist Christian Li tackles one of the great violin concertos under the baton of conductor Benjamin Northey, in a spectacular program at the Melbourne Town Hall this March.

Li will perform Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, a piece designed to test the mettle and prove the worth of any aspiring concert violinist. The prodigious Li won the prestigious Menuhin Competition at the tender age of 10 and made

his debut with the MSO in 2018 in front of 10,000 people at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

Beethoven was actively encouraged by his musician father, and was just seven when he was launched into the public arena. His great works would come later in life, including the Symphony No.7. A work of effortless melodic phrasing, this will enchant you from its opening bars.

Led by Benjamin Northey, the MSO will open this special event with Lachlan Skipworth's *Spiritus*.

From the birth of genius to its grand fulfilment, this is a concert as tribute to the prodigy, young and old.

Melbourne Ensemble

Sunday 22 March / 11am
ABC Southbank Centre,
Iwaki Auditorium

Freya Franzen violin
Christopher Cartlidge viola
Rachael Tobin cello
Stephen Newton double bass
Jack Schiller bassoon
Philip Arkinstall clarinet
Saul Lewis horn
Deborah Cheetham soprano

Adolfe Blanc Wind Septet
Deborah Cheetham *Woven song: Above Knowing**[^]
Dohnányi String Trio

* *Composer in Residence*
^ *World premiere of MSO commission*

MSO Composer in Residence Deborah Cheetham AO joins a stunning septet of Melbourne musicians for a world premiere, in a concert that celebrates those outside the spotlight.

Despite his rich and highly accomplished output, Adolphe Blanc's chamber works composed for private performances kept him largely out of the public eye.

One of these works is his Septet in E Major. The Septet was not a common combination of instruments for Romantic composers, there was no clear successor to Beethoven's famous Op.20 Septet, until Blanc's in 1861. With excellent part-writing for violin, viola, cello, bass, clarinet, horn and bassoon, the Melbourne Ensemble will give this piece the performance it deserves.

Above Knowing is part of MSO's Composer in Residence Deborah Cheetham's *Woven Song* series. The works are inspired by tapestries by Indigenous artists, which are hung in Australian embassies around the world. She joins the ensemble in her role as a soprano, in this world premiere of her own composition.

March / April

To Bach and Back Sophie Rowell

Thursday 26 March / 7.30pm
Melbourne Recital Centre

Friday 27 March / 7.30pm
Robert Blackwood Hall, Monash

Sophie Rowell director / violin
James Crabb accordion

J.S Bach Orchestral Suite No.3
Aulis Sallinen *Barabbas Variations*
J.S Bach Concerto in A minor
Agri / Carli *Desde Adentro*
Grieg *Holberg Suite*

MSO Concertmaster Sophie Rowell leads the MSO through Bach, Sallinen, Grieg and Antonio Agri in this joyful concert series at Melbourne Recital Centre and Robert Blackwood Hall.

The concert sees the genius of Bach refashioned, with classical accordionist James Crabb performing as soloist. The Scottish virtuoso has been praised the world-over for his versatile musicianship. Crabb has appeared with the London Philharmonic, BBC Scottish, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and countless contemporary world-class ensembles.

Crabb brings his passion and acclaimed authority for the music of Astor Piazzolla to the program by way of Argentinian Antonio Agri's *Desde Adentro*. Agri and Piazzolla met and began collaborating in 1961, when Agri joined the composer's Quinteto Nuevo Tango. Piazzolla would later make Agri the lead violin in his 1968 musical, *María de Buenos Aires*. Here Crabb leads a performance of Agri's *Desde Adentro*, meaning "from within", originally recorded with conductor José Carli in 1997.

Sallinen's *Barrabas Variations* also features accordion as the solo instrument, a melancholy work which builds from a frenetic atmosphere, featuring trills and repeated rhythms to a haunting, wistful conclusion.

Sophie Rowell leads the Orchestra in Bach's Orchestral Suite No.3 and Concerto in A minor, highlighting the composer's mastery of harmony and counterpoint.



Hardenberger: Trumpet Royalty

Thursday 16 April / 7.30pm
Saturday 18 April / 2pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

André de Ridder conductor
Håkan Hardenberger trumpet

Wagner *Lohengrin* Act 1: Prelude
HK Gruber *Aerial*
Schumann Symphony No.2

Internationally renowned trumpeter, Håkan Hardenberger joins the MSO in April to perform *Aerial*, the contemporary masterpiece written for him by HK Gruber.

This uncanny and haunting work was composed specifically for the world's leading trumpeter and HK Gruber's personal friend, Håkan Hardenberger. Keen to expand the limits of what the trumpet can do, Gruber asked Hardenberger if he could play trumpet and sing at the same time.

Hardenberger answered directly, "I don't know". Three weeks later, Gruber arrived home to find a message on his answering machine. It was Hardenberger singing and playing trumpet at the same time.

Aerial is one of the great collaborations between composer and player. The piece begins with a sense of otherworldly strangeness, notes bend and slide; high romanticism suddenly curdles into the sinister.

Schumann's Symphony No.2 is an extraordinary example of an artist composing his way to health. Bright and hopeful, the score reflects what Schumann himself referred to as the "power of resistance of spirit". We welcome André de Ridder, who the *Wall Street Journal* labelled "one of the world's most daring conductors" to lead the MSO in this special performance.

Rounding out the program is Wagner's delicate and graceful opening, the sublime prelude of *Lohengrin*.

May



Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

Symphonic Dances

Friday 1 May / 7.30pm

Saturday 2 May / 7.30pm

Monday 4 May / 6.30pm

Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Benjamin Northey conductor

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

MSO Chorus

Fauré *Pavane*

Beethoven Piano Concerto No.4

Rachmaninov *Symphonic Dances*

One of the world's leading interpreters of Beethoven, pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, returns to the Melbourne stage to perform the beautiful Piano Concerto No.4, led by Principal Guest Conductor Benjamin Northey.

Precision and sensitivity are vital for the delicate dance between piano and orchestra that is Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.4. The piece became something of the bookend to the composer's performing career. At the premiere, Beethoven was the soloist, and years later, it would be his final solo performance with orchestra. Since then, many of the world's greatest pianists have tackled it, including Beethoven specialist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, who has been described as "powerfully assured", "phenomenal" and "blisteringly precise".

Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* was his final composition, and in many ways a summing up of his influences. Typically lush and rhythmically dynamic, it also contains several quotes of the composer's earlier works, including his first symphony.

Featuring the wonderful MSO Chorus, the concert opens with one of the most widely loved orchestral pieces, Gabriel Fauré's *Pavane*.

The Five Beethoven Emperor Concerto

Thursday 14 May / 7.30pm

Saturday 16 May / 2pm

Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Stanislav Kochanovsky conductor

Jonathan Biss piano

Brett Dean *Gneixendorf Music – A Winter's Journey*[^]

Brahms Symphony No.4

Beethoven Piano Concerto No.5 *Emperor*

[^] Australian premiere of MSO co-commission

In the 250th anniversary year of one of the world's greatest composers, Beethoven, the MSO celebrates the maestro with a difference. In this must-see event, the renowned *Emperor* concerto is performed alongside Australian composer Brett Dean's answer to Beethoven, his *Gneixendorf Music – A Winter's Journey*.

The climax of a brilliant international experiment, Brett Dean's *Gneixendorf Music* is his response to a challenge by iconoclastic American pianist and curator Jonathan Biss. Five composers over five years have been commissioned to write their own piano concertos in response to Beethoven's, and Dean's is the final in the series. Dean's concerto is an attempt to enter the state of the mind of Beethoven, as he confronted some profound familial conflicts and failing health towards the end of his life. The "Gneixendorf" in the work's title refers to a small Austrian village where Dean spent time in the summer of 2013 and where the Australian composer stumbled on a relatively unknown episode of Beethoven's life.

Though it was subsequently dubbed the *Emperor* concerto, in reference to then Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, it's not a title Beethoven ever used himself. The uplifting Piano Concerto No.5 was composed while Beethoven himself was surrounded by destruction and despair. With his hearing fast diminishing and the Napoleonic Wars raging across Europe, including his home city of Vienna, its remarkable Beethoven could create something so inspiring when surrounded by such misery.

St Petersburg-born conductor Stanislav Kochanovsky returns, after his triumphant turn conducting the MSO's performance of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* suite in 2019.

May



Dale Barltrop

The Lark Ascending Dale Barltrop

Thursday 21 May / 7.30pm
Melbourne Recital Centre

Friday 22 May / 7.30pm
Costa Hall, Geelong

Dale Barltrop director / violin
Stephen Newton tenor

Purcell *Fantasias for Strings*

Holst *St. Paul's Suite*

Howard *Passacaglia (to End Prejudice)*

Vaughan Williams Five variants of *Dives and Lazarus*

Purcell Excerpts from *The Fairy Queen*

Britten *Les Illuminations*

Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending*

MSO Concertmaster Dale Barltrop takes us on a journey through the greats of English composition.

Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* is tainted by the sadness and sacrifice of war in a myriad of ways. Composed in 1914, the premiere was put on hold after the outbreak of World War I, the composer himself serving in France. The premiere was eventually given in 1921, when Vaughan Williams longed for a time and a world that no longer existed. This nostalgia

is reflected in the score. A musical response to overwhelming loss, created before Vaughan Williams ever knew how much he, and the world would need it.

The stoicism, poise and reticence that has come to be associated with the English disposition, is steeped in Williams' output, and it's something violinist and MSO Concertmaster Dale Barltrop means to champion. Along with *Lark* is Williams' Five Variants of *Dives and Lazarus*, based on a 16th century folk song. It is awash with the emerald green of the English countryside, lush and accommodating.

The giant of 20th century English composition, Benjamin Britten, is represented by *Les Illuminations*, his 1940 song cycle with text taken from a collection by French poet Arthur Rimbaud. Multi-musically-skilled MSO Double Bassist Stephen Newton performs here as tenor soloist.

MSO also performs the *St Paul's Suite*, by Gustav Holst, most renowned for the legendary orchestral suite *The Planets*.

Janáček, Beethoven and Moore

Sunday 24 May / 11am
ABC Southbank Centre,
Iwaki Auditorium

Andrew Macleod flute / piccolo

Thomas Hutchinson oboe

Philip Arkinstall clarinet

Jon Craven bass clarinet

Jack Schiller bassoon

Nicolas Fleury horn

Laurence Matheson piano

Janáček *Mládí* for wind sextet

Jordan Moore New work[^]

Beethoven Quintet for Piano and Winds

[^] World premiere of MSO commission

A concert that captures the curiosity of youth, with a sextet to echo its nostalgic charm and a world premiere by a young Australian composer.

Mládí, the title of Czech composer Leoš Janáček's wind sextet translates to "Youth" – somewhat surprising considering Janáček was near 70 when it was written in 1924. Truly an original work of woodwind chamber music, *Mládí* is a melancholic consideration of the composer's childhood – written with the wisdom and skill of an entire career's compositional experience.

Before Beethoven composed the symphonies for which he is so adored today, a 27-year-old Ludwig tried his hand at a quintet for the then, rather unusual combination of piano and winds. Only beginning to make his mark in Vienna as a composer in 1796, this quintet showed a slice of the genius Viennese society would come to know in the years ahead.

This chamber recital also features a world premiere by MSO's 2020 Cybec Young Composer in Residence Jordan Moore, providing an opportunity to hear a brand new musical reflection of youth itself.

June



Beethoven Pastoral Project

A Global Event

Thursday 4 June / 11am (MSO Mornings)

Friday 5 June / 7.30pm

Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor

Narek Hakhnazaryan cello

Glazunov *Chant du ménestrel*

Tchaikovsky *Variations on a Rococo Theme*

Beethoven *Symphony No.6 Pastoral*

Learn more at

beethoven-pastoral-project.com

On World Environment Day, the MSO will participate in an international United Nations-led project to raise awareness and inspire our city to take a stance on climate change. And there is nothing, more evocative of the beauty and fragility of the natural world, than Beethoven's *Symphony No.6*, affectionately known as the *Pastoral*.

For Beethoven, nature was a place of relaxation, solitude and inspiration. Today, nature is under threat and humankind is on a course to damage our environment beyond repair. Beethoven's Sixth *Symphony* musically depicts the harmonious unity between mankind and nature this special project seeks to champion worldwide

To lead this tribute to the world around us, MSO is thrilled to welcome back towering international figure, Vladimir Ashkenazy. Now in his 80s, the irrepressible Ashkenazy has led the greatest musical ensembles in the world and has a long association with orchestral music in Australia.

Armenian star cellist, Narek Hakhnazaryan will join Ashkenazy and the MSO to perform Alexander Glazunov's *Chant du ménestrel* for Cello and Orchestra and Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo theme*. Hakhnazaryan's interpretation of the *Variations* has been heralded as having "spectacular technical prowess that made even the most elaborate of the variations seem effortless".

Beethoven's Sixth *Symphony* and Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* will also be performed as a one hour program for MSO Mornings on Thursday 4 June at 11am.

June



Tianyi Lu

Swan Lake and Saint-Saëns

Thursday 11 June / 7.30pm
Melbourne Town Hall

Friday 12 June / 7.30pm
Robert Blackwood Hall, Monash

Tianyi Lu conductor

Li-Wei Qin cello

Ravel *Le Tombeau de Couperin*

Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No.1

Tchaikovsky *Swan Lake* Suite

MSO Assistant Conductor Tianyi Lu makes her Melbourne Town Hall debut, alongside brilliant Australian-Chinese cellist Li-Wei Qin in this Romantic concert of Ravel, Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky.

It's hard to believe there was a time when Tchaikovsky genuinely thought his music for the ballet *Swan Lake* would fall into oblivion.

The first impression of *Swan Lake* came about thanks to Anna and Tanya Davidová, Tchaikovsky's cherished nieces. Uncle Piotr presented a summer afternoon's entertainment to them in 1871, music that the composer then merged with selections from two of his early ill-fated operas, creating the first version of *Swan Lake*. But it was far from a great success at its Moscow premiere six years later and Tchaikovsky feared his music would be forgotten.

Before his death in 1893, Tchaikovsky asked his publisher for a copy of his score, as he intended to select a suite from it. He never did, but the suite – whoever chose the pieces – is a Romantic orchestral masterpiece adored the world-over. The ballet would of course, go on to become one of the most popular of all time.

Camille Saint-Saëns' first Cello Concerto premiered in 1873 – a time when pianos and violins most frequently took centre stage in the concerto format. Known for its compression of the traditional three-movements into one uninterrupted 20-minute piece, Saint-Saëns champions the cello with a solo part which demonstrates both its lyrical and dramatic qualities.



Simon Trpčeski

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No.2

Friday 19 June / 7.30pm
Saturday 20 June / 7.30pm

Monday 22 June / 6.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Dalia Stasevska conductor

Simon Trpčeski piano

Jordan Moore New work[^]

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No.2

Tchaikovsky Symphony No.5

[^] World premiere of MSO commission

Dedicated to the man who saved him from a desperate downwards spiral, Rachmaninov's second piano concerto was a significant personal and professional success. The rhapsodic showpiece has been adored since its premiere at the turn of the 20th century. In this performance, renowned Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski plays the multi-faceted work alongside the MSO, led by Finnish-Ukrainian conductor Dalia Staeveska.

Exquisite and stormy, complex and romantic, Rachmaninov's second piano concerto is full of great drama, but also moments of painful fragility.

Rachmaninov, like many artists, was incredibly sensitive to criticism. He completely shut down as a composer after the negative reaction to his first symphony and fell into a deep depression that lasted several years. This piano concerto was dedicated to Nikolai Dahl, his physician and therapist.

Tchaikovsky's fear of failure was akin to Rachmaninov's. A relatively unsuccessful premiere of his fourth symphony evoked an anxiety in him to prove, not only to his audience but to himself, that he could create another work of critical acclaim. Sadly the response to his Symphony No.5 was mixed and the composer felt deeply dejected. Today the piece is one of his most-loved symphonic works.

The MSO opens with the world premiere of a new work by Cybec Young Composer in Residence Jordan Moore.

June



Dark Romance: Tchaikovsky and Bruckner

Thursday 25 June / 7.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Friday 26 June / 7.30pm
Costa Hall, Geelong

Lawrence Renes conductor
Joyce Yang piano

Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No.1
Bruckner Symphony No.4 *Romantic*

The range and depth of Late Romantic music is on stunning display in this darkly suggestive and passionate concert featuring renowned pianist Joyce Yang.

From the opening horns calling out the first thundering chords, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 seems to burrow into the depths of human experience; it's strangely private even when it feels most visionary. The relationship required between pianist and orchestra is also exceptionally intimate, to achieve the delicate balance of colour and texture.

It is with great anticipation the MSO welcomes back acclaimed pianist Joyce Yang to perform this much-loved work. Yang has been variously described as being capable of a "tremendous suggestive power and imagination" and simply "astounding".

Known with the composer's approval as the *Romantic* symphony, Bruckner's Symphony No.4 is a gorgeous, evocative work. The music is a wide-ranging recreation of the natural world and humanity's ambivalent place in it.

Under the baton of returning Dutch-Maltese conductor Lawrence Renes, the swirling emotion and psychological complexity of the Late Romantic style will come bursting to life.

July



Legends Gil Shaham Plays Brahms

Thursday 9 July / 7.30pm

Saturday 11 July / 2pm

Arts Centre Melbourne,
Hamer Hall

Cristian Măcelaru conductor

Gil Shaham violin

Dvořák *Legends* No.1 and No.3

Brahms Violin Concerto

Shostakovich Symphony No.1

Internationally renowned violinist Gil Shaham performs Brahms' incredibly complex Violin Concerto in this spectacular concert led by Romanian conductor Cristian Măcelaru.

Brahms' Violin Concerto is a virtuosic, fiendishly complicated work. It is suitable only for the world's most capable violinists and those inclined to appreciate its beauty. Legendary American-Israeli violinist Gil Shaham has played the piece to great acclaim the world over.

Accompanying this work is a cycle of pieces originally written for piano but later arranged for orchestra, Dvořák's *Legends*. After interval, audiences will be treated with Shostakovich's dynamic Symphony No.1. Written in 1895 but only premiering in Australia in 1985, the instrumental parts of the symphony were discovered by chance in 1944, after the composer's death.

Brahms: A German Requiem

Friday 17 July / 7.30pm

Saturday 18 July / 7.30pm

Monday 20 July / 6.30pm

Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Sir Andrew Davis conductor

Camilla Tilling soprano

Samuel Hasselhorn baritone

MSO Chorus

Beethoven *King Stephen Overture*

Beethoven *Ah! perfido*

Brahms *Ein deutsches Requiem*

MSO Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis returns to conduct one of the most moving tributes to grief and remembrance, Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* – A German Requiem.

Brahms called it *Ein deutsches Requiem* to distinguish it from the traditional Latin settings, to lift it from the merely religious and create something humanist and secular. A German requiem was not specifically for the German people; Brahms' wanted it to speak to all humanity. A transcendent choral work with gloriously tender parts for baritone and soprano, it is a work that speaks to the best of us.

Brahms began composing *Ein deutsches Requiem* early in 1865, shortly after the death of his mother. The profound sense of loss and overwhelming grief is unmistakably threaded throughout the music. But the work also contains a wondrous feeling of gratitude. Where most requiems focus on the dead, Brahms' begins with the living. The first words are "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted".

This concert will also feature two works by Beethoven; a fitting tribute to the man whose bust stared down at Brahms while he composed. First, the rarely-heard *King Stephen Overture*, which was commissioned by Emperor Francis I of Austria for the opening of a theatre in Pest. Second is the stunning, emotionally tempestuous concert aria *Ah! perfido*, most famously sung by Maria Callas.

Sir Andrew Davis conducts, with soprano Camilla Tilling and baritone Samuel Hasselhorn to join the formidable MSO Chorus.

July



Nicola Benedetti

Nicola Benedetti

Mid-Season Gala

Thursday 23 July / 11am (MSO Mornings)

Saturday 25 July / 7.30pm

Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Sir Andrew Davis conductor

Nicola Benedetti violin**

Deborah Cheetham *Yiramboi (Tomorrow)**^

Elgar Violin Concerto

Mussorgsky / Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition*

* Composer in Residence

^ World premiere of MSO commission

** Soloist in Residence is supported by MSO Life Members
Marc Besen AC and Eva Besen AO.

MSO's 2020 Soloist in Residence, acclaimed violinist Nicola Benedetti joins the orchestra under the guidance of Sir Andrew Davis in this spectacular winter feast of classical music, which will open with the world premiere of a new work by MSO Composer in Residence Deborah Cheetham AO.

Scottish sensation Nicola Benedetti was named BBC Young Performer of the Year in 2004, aged just 16. She studied at the renowned Menuhin school in Surrey and still a teenager, signed a £1 million recording contract. Now one of Britain's most successful violinists, here Benedetti plays Elgar's Violin Concerto, one of the most adored pieces of music in the British canon.

No English composer before Elgar had produced a widely successful violin concerto, and the work stands as one of the composer's greatest achievements. Intensely passionate, full of longing and insight, it reflects Elgar's sensitivity and grace.

The MSO will also perform the evocative and intensely visual *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky, a piece inspired by the drawings of his friend, artist and architect Viktor Hartmann. *Pictures* is a masterclass in how to extract all the colour and drama an orchestra can provide.

Opening this special evening will be the world premiere of Cheetham's latest work *Yiramboi (Tomorrow)*.

Elgar's Violin Concerto and Deborah Cheetham's *Yiramboi* will also be performed as part of MSO Mornings on Thursday 23 July at 11am. Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* will not be performed as part of this special one hour program.

September



Karen Gomyo

Mozart and Mahler

Friday 4 September / 7.30pm
 Saturday 5 September / 7.30pm
 Monday 7 September / 6.30pm
 Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Pietari Inkinen conductor
 Karen Gomyo violin

Wagner *Tannhäuser* Overture
 Mozart Violin Concerto No.3
 Mahler Symphony No.1 *Titan*

The great Finnish conductor Pietari Inkinen makes his MSO debut with the thrilling sounds of Mahler's first symphony, Mozart's third violin concerto and Wagner's overture to his opera, *Tannhäuser*.

Mozart wrote all five violin concertos in 1775, when he was just 19-years-old, and then never wrote another. He moved on from the violin and began a musical love affair with the piano.

His Violin Concerto No.3 is demonstrably different from the earlier works, which were brilliant but conventional. The third is suddenly more expansive, more experimental and somehow more personal. It is also a wonderful showcase for a violinist. Japanese-Canadian Karen Gomyo returns to display its ranging qualities.

A composer who consistently ranks on Melbourne's favourite composer lists, Gustav Mahler is as important as he is popular. Reflections of both the past and glimpses of the future are heard in his first symphony, titanic and awe-inspiring.

This program opens with Wagner's overture to his 1845 opera *Tannhäuser*. A musical summary of the entire work, this overture is one of orchestral vignettes – depicting the tale of seduction and sacred devotion to come. Wagner himself called this music, “sensuously exultant”.

Songs of America Thomas Hampson

Thursday 10 September / 7.30pm
 Saturday 12 September / 2pm
 Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Ludovic Morlot conductor
 Thomas Hampson baritone
 MSO Chorus

Copland *Old American Songs*
 Bernstein *Divertimento*
 John Adams *Harmonium*

The Great American Songbook is anything but standard in this glorious celebration, featuring the vocal power and captivating musical intelligence of renowned baritone Thomas Hampson.

One of the finest singers America has produced in the past century, the legendary lyric baritone Thomas Hampson returns to the MSO, teaming up with French conductor, Ludovic Morlot. A career spanning more than 80 roles across the greatest opera houses of the world and more than 170 recordings, Hampson now largely devotes his performing life to the art of song.

Aaron Copland was known as the Dean of American composers, and his sweeping melodies seem to embody the sound of America itself. His *Old American Songs* are richly suggestive of prairie life, of the minstrel tradition, even of revivalist music, and together paint a vast portrait of the country's character.

There was a definite French connection in Copland's development, having studied in Paris and fully immersed himself in French culture. He associated with some of the greatest artists of the day, and when back in the States he remained well connected. He met one young man at a party who would become a dear friend and confidante: Leonard Bernstein.

Bernstein is represented here by his *Divertimento*, a work he wrote for the Boston Symphony. The program also includes John Adams' 1980 work *Harmonium*.

The Music Director of Seattle Symphony from 2011–2019, French conductor Ludovic Morlot's association with American music continues here with this concert of musical and cultural connections, as vast and varied as the United States itself.

September

Russian Splendour

Thursday 17 September / 7.30pm
Melbourne Town Hall

Friday 18 September / 7.30pm
Robert Blackwood Hall, Monash

Benjamin Northey conductor
Stefan Cassomenos piano

Prokofiev Piano Concerto No.3
Shostakovich Symphony No.5

Prokofiev and Shostakovich, two towering talents of Russian music, come alive in this electrifying demonstration of their brilliance, conducted by Benjamin Northey.

They were two of the great Russian pianist/composers of the 20th century, born only 15 years apart. During his lifetime, Prokofiev was a controversial figure in the West, having returned to Russia right when Stalin's tyranny was becoming apparent. But Shostakovich worked under the regime, often for blatant propaganda purposes.

Now, we see how their music transcends politics and can appreciate the true splendour and conviction in their great works.

Prokofiev is the composer with the greater breadth, having written the film score of Eisenstein's Alexander Nevsky; the cherished orchestral work for children, *Peter and the Wolf*; and the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. His symphonies and concertos are wonderfully rich, as his Piano Concerto No.3 demonstrates here.

Shostakovich is arguably deeper, more emotionally expressive, than Prokofiev. His Symphony No.5 is certainly complex, ambiguous and even slightly unnerving.

Led by Principal Guest Conductor Benjamin Northey and featuring acclaimed Australian pianist Stefan Cassomenos, this Town Hall performance promises an evening of Russian orchestral mastery.



Genevieve Lacey

Absolute Bird Genevieve Lacey

Thursday 24 September / 7.30pm
Melbourne Recital Centre

Paul Kildea conductor
Genevieve Lacey recorder

Vivaldi Concerto in C Major for Flautino
Moondog *Birds of Paradise*
Hollis Taylor *Absolute Bird Concerto*
Rebel *Les éléments*
Erkki-Sven Tüür *Whistles and Whispers from Uluru*

Renowned Australian recorder virtuoso Genevieve Lacey's extraordinary skills will trace the ways the natural world has influenced music composition, in this celebration of the beauty of birdsong.

Genevieve Lacey is particularly familiar with the idea of birdsong as creative fodder, having recorded an album that uses the song of the pied butcherbird as its principle motif. Here Lacey performs a work by the same composer, Hollis Taylor's *Absolute Bird Concerto*. A gorgeous amalgam of found sound, field recordings, and live music, it will transport you to the soundscape of the unmistakable Australian bush.

The Baroque bursts with birdsong too. Lacey tackles one of its most fiendish and simultaneously effortlessly beautiful examples with Vivaldi's Concerto in C Major for Flautino – an instrument capable of dazzling flights up and down the scale. Jean-Féry Rebel's *Les éléments* astonishes with its almost modernist attacking strings, and evokes the flocking of birds as a chaotic dance.

With Estonian composer Erkki-Sven Tüür's *Whistles and Whispers from Uluru*, again written for Lacey, and idiosyncratic American composer Moondog's *Birds of Paradise*, this will be a glorious tribute to the eternal beauty of birdsong.

October



Daniel Müller-Schott

Death and Desire Strauss and Dvořák

Thursday 1 October / 7.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Friday 2 October / 7.30pm
Costa Hall, Geelong

Fabien Gabel conductor
Daniel Müller-Schott cello

R. Strauss *Don Juan*
R. Strauss *Death and Transfiguration*

Dvořák Cello Concerto

French conductor Fabien Gabel leads the MSO through a concert of Strauss and Dvořák dedicated to the principle forces of nature: death and desire.

In music, these two great forces are often shown in harmony or opposition, like magnets attracting and compelling. Richard Strauss dealt directly with both themes, in his tone poems *Don Juan* and *Death and Transfiguration*.

Strauss' version of *Don Juan* seduces scores of women as he searches for femininity's ideal, and when he can't find it he wills death

to come to him. The piece conjures all the swagger and mortification that this scenario suggests, with some magisterial parts for the horns and beautifully sensual woodwinds.

Death and Transfiguration opens with a long, mournful largo evoking the sick artist, slowly fading, before plunging into a violent and clamorous battle between the forces of life and death. The transfiguration, when it comes, is a glorious and deeply moving release.

To complete this grand meditation is Dvořák's Cello Concerto, played by talented German cellist Daniel Müller-Schott. Dedicated in part, to the composer's dying sister-in-law, Dvořák's Cello Concerto is a piece brimming with yearning and the tenderness that accompanies impending loss.

Phantasy and Romance

Sunday 11 October / 11am
ABC Southbank Centre,
Iwaki Auditorium

Kathryn Taylor violin
Gabrielle Halloran viola
Miranda Brockman cello
Michael Pisani oboe
Brock Imison bassoon
Kenji Fujimura piano

Britten *Phantasy Quartet*
Poulenc Trio for oboe, bassoon
and piano
Brahms Piano Quartet No.3

This stunning concert of Britten, Brahms and Poulenc provides a window into the souls of these remarkable artists.

Benjamin Britten's *Phantasy Quartet*, composed when he was only 19, had a rather lukewarm reception when the BBC broadcast it back in 1933. But seen in the context of the English composer's entire oeuvre, the work contains many elements that would go on to define his singular genius.

Brahms was a particular influence on Britten, who claimed that, "at the ages of 13 and 16 I knew every note of Beethoven and Brahms". The Piano Quartet No.3 was written when Brahms was living with Clara Schumann, helping her run the household while her husband, Brahms' mentor Robert Schumann was in an asylum. It is ostensibly dedicated to Goethe, and his character Werther, though it's possible to detect Johannes' feelings for Clara amid the work's swirling Romanticism.

Rounding out this intimate concert is French composer Francis Poulenc's extraordinary Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano. Effortlessly melodic and witty, it is a perfect demonstration of the composer's distinct style.

November



Carmina Burana

Season Finale Gala

Saturday 7 November / 7.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Andrea Molino conductor
Emma Matthews soprano
Kanen Breen tenor
Christopher Magiera baritone
MSO Chorus
National Boys Choir of Australia

Stravinsky *Petrushka* Suite
Orff *Carmina Burana*

Like great crashing gods bursting through the skies to wake the dead, the thundering *Carmina Burana* returns to Hamer Hall this November showcasing the MSO Chorus in all its glory.

Brilliant Italian conductor Andrea Molino returns to lead this mammoth work, with an appearance by Australian opera stars Emma Matthews and Kanen Breen, American Christopher Magiera, alongside the massive combined musical power of the MSO, MSO Chorus and National Boys Choir.

A piece of light, joy, ferocity and booming bombast, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* is immediately impactful. The piece features a driving rhythmic structure, grand shifts in mood and eventual ecstatic climax. But the 1936 cantata has a dark history. Its premiere in Frankfurt made Orff's name in the cultural circles of the Nazi Party, and the taint of that association clung to the work and the composer for decades. But the piece has outlived its past and has become one of the most often-performed choral works of the 20th century, with numerous references throughout popular culture.

Stravinsky had just enjoyed immense success with his *Firebird* at the Paris Opera in 1910, when he intended to begin work on a piece about pagan Russia. The famed *Rite of Spring* would have to wait as a work about a clown puppet; *Petrushka* began forming in his mind. He again teamed up with Ballet Russes impresario Serge Diaghilev, to whom he played a portion of his work-in-progress score. Diaghilev began to sketch the accompanying ballet, and the work premiered with Vaslav Nijinsky in the title role, to great acclaim in June of 1911.

November

American Heroes Gershwin and Copland

Thursday 12 November / 7.30pm
Melbourne Town Hall

Friday 13 November / 7.30pm
Costa Hall, Geelong

Gemma New conductor
Simon Tedeschi piano

Salina Fisher *Rainphase*
Gershwin Concerto in F
Copland Symphony No.3

Exciting, young New Zealand conductor Gemma New makes her MSO debut with a stunning collection of American greats.

The day after the raging success of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* that he was approached to write a "real piano concerto", something closer to the traditional classical model. Rather than turn his back on the then current musical forms, Gershwin decided to incorporate them. The result was Concerto in F, a work that ranges effortlessly over different musical structures, to create something truly unique. Australian pianist Simon Tedeschi joins the orchestra for this performance.

There are suggestions of the Charleston, ragtime, jazz and blues throughout the work, and a flexibility in the way these disparate elements emerge from one another. Unsurprising from the composer of *Porgy and Bess*, which refused to conform to set notions of opera or musical theatre, and *An American in Paris*, which is as much a ballet as a musical. The Concerto in F is likewise a consummate fusion, and magnificently effective live.

Accompanying this work is Copland's Symphony No.3, another pillar of 20th century American composition. A grand and stirring work, composed between 1944 and 1946, it suggests the mammoth achievements of the United States at the close of WWII without a hint of triumphalism.

New Zealand conductor Gemma New brings with her a work by fellow New Zealander Salina Fisher, *Rainphase*. Inspired by the rain falling on the city of Wellington, it is sonically adventurous and beautifully evocative.

Ode to Joy Beethoven Symphony No.9

Thursday 19 November / 7.30pm
Saturday 21 November / 7.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Xian Zhang conductor
Lauren Fagan soprano
Caitlin Hulcup mezzo-soprano
Simon O'Neill tenor
Shenyang baritone
MSO Chorus

Tan Dun Choral Concerto *Nine**
Beethoven Symphony No.9

* Australian premiere of MSO co-commission

The year 2020 sees the MSO present a year-long celebration of the genius of Beethoven, at the 250th anniversary of his birth. In this program, a superb Australian and international cast of singers will bring the breadth and wonder of the famous composer's last masterpiece to life.

Led by acclaimed Chinese-American conductor Xian Zhang, this concert celebrates the idea of music as a bridge between nations, the connective tissue in humanity's narrative.

Beethoven's ultimate masterpiece, the Ninth Symphony is astonishing as much for the context of its composition as for the music. It was the final of Beethoven's symphonies, written when he was almost totally deaf. At the work's premiere in 1824, though the orchestra hired another conductor, Beethoven insisted on directing himself. The symphony's finale was met with rapturous applause, which the maestro could not hear. It is said the contralto turned him around to face the audience, and people waved handkerchiefs so he could see their adulation.

To complement this sublime work, the Orchestra will perform *The Nine*, the mesmerising composition by MSO Artistic Ambassador Tan Dun. This work is Dun's response to Beethoven, co-commissioned by the MSO and the Philharmonic Society of London – the very group who commissioned the Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

With the full force of the MSO Chorus, and a wealth of international talent, this is a live experience to rival all others – a genuinely global *Ode to Joy*.

November

Flute, Viola and Harp

Sunday 22 November / 11am
ABC Southbank Centre,
Iwaki Auditorium

Christopher Moore violin / viola
Prudence Davis flute
Yinuo Mu harp

Ibert *Deus Interludes*

Sofia Gubaidulina *Garden of Joys and Sorrows*

Tōru Takemitsu *And then I knew 'twas wind*

Debussy *Sonata for flute, viola and harp*

The exquisite combined sound of these three instruments has an intimacy, rich timbre and sonorous complexity that is both powerful and playful. It was something Claude Debussy knew, composing his sonata for flute, viola and harp in 1915. It is a stunning and supple piece, capable of long mournful phrases and sudden flights of movement.

Experimental Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina has a widely differing approach with her *Garden of Joys and Sorrows*, a piece that captures an otherworldly atmosphere through a series of musical flourishes, often at the limits of the instruments' ranges. It is daring and strangely beautiful.

And then I knew 'twas wind, by one of the 20th century's most important Japanese composers, Tōru Takemitsu, is another striking argument for this combination of instruments. Delicate and intricate, it was influenced by the Debussy, but has wonderfully idiosyncratic signature of its own.

The program begins with Frenchman Jacques Ibert's 1946 piece *Deux Interludes*.



James Ehnes

Beethoven Double Bill

Friday 27 November / 7.30pm
Saturday 28 November / 7.30pm
Monday 29 November / 7.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Benjamin Northey conductor
James Ehnes violin

Beethoven *Violin Concerto*
Beethoven *Symphony No.3 Eroica*

One of the most loved symphonies in the world, the *Eroica* comes to life in this superb Beethoven double bill.

Known widely as the *Eroica* (heroic) symphony, Beethoven's third suffered a notorious controversy over its dedication. Beethoven originally dedicated it to Napoleon, but during composition when the latter crowned himself Emperor, Beethoven was greatly disappointed. In disgust, he allegedly tore Napoleon's name off the manuscript. The composer's notion of heroism didn't sit well with the Frenchman's notion of tyranny.

Heroism itself is a concept that flows through the work in ambiguous ways, and there is a suggestion that the truly heroic act is the confrontation with death. It is telling that the symphony was played at the funerals of such diverse figures as Felix Mendelssohn, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Completing the double bill is Beethoven's only violin concerto, played by Grammy Award-winning Canadian violinist James Ehnes. A work not well received in Beethoven's lifetime, it was revived by Mendelssohn to great acclaim. It has since become one of the most important violin concertos ever written.

December



Messiah

Saturday 5 December / 7pm
 Sunday 6 December / 5pm
 Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

Nicholas McGegan conductor
 Madeleine Pierard soprano
 Fiona Campbell contralto
 Andrew Goodwin tenor
 Hadleigh Adams bass
 MSO Chorus

Handel *Messiah*

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and MSO Chorus combine in the greatest musical Christmas tradition of all, Handel's *Messiah*, conducted by Handel expert Nicholas McGegan.

An annual festival tradition for many, the work is most famous for its "Hallelujah" chorus, during which the audience traditionally stands. Handel composed his oratorio celebrating the life, death and resurrection of Christ in 1741, in an astonishing 24 days. Not quite a burst of divine inspiration, the prodigious pace was typical for Handel. The work eventually established itself as a classic, with many variations and revivals since its premiere. Despite its changes, the *Messiah* has remained a stalwart of the Christmas calendar across the globe.

Starring soprano Madeleine Pierard, mezzo Fiona Campbell, tenor Andrew Goodwin, bass Hadleigh Adams alongside the full MSO Chorus, the piece is renowned for using the tools of opera – recitative, arias and choruses – as well as the strength of the symphony orchestra, for its depth and unmistakably Baroque sound.

Nicholas McGegan OBE is one of the world's greatest Handel experts and has been hailed as one of the finest Baroque conductors of his generation. McGegan has produced more than 50 recordings of Handel over a six-decade career.