

# STRATHFIELD

## Symphony Orchestra

Serious Fun!

Conductor: Sarah-Grace Williams



Painting by Leeka Gruzdev

## *The Passionate Summer Series*

*Egmont Overture* Beethoven  
*Vocalise* Rachmaninoff  
Soloist *Paul Hoskinson*  
*Carmen Suite No. 2* Bizet

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INTERVAL  
●—————●

*Enigma Variations* Elgar

8.00pm, Saturday 25 November 2006, and 2.30pm Sunday 26 November 2006

[www.strathfieldsymphony.org.au](http://www.strathfieldsymphony.org.au)

# The Orchestra

<b>Violin 1</b>	<b>Viola</b>	<b>Flute &amp; Piccolo</b>	<b>Trumpet</b>
Paul Hoskinson**	Martin Lee*	Bruce Lane	Gary Clark
Volf Frishling	Chris Elenor	Svetlana Yaroslavskaya	John Tweed
Carol Henson	Brian Allen	<b>Oboe</b>	David Young
Belisario Hernandez	Judith Baker	Kitty Blythe	<b>Trombone</b>
Marie Hodsdon	Ted Davis	Merryn Horrocks	Alison Parkin
Beatrice Ip	Jin Ai Teng	<b>Clarinet</b>	Lindsay Smartt
Julia Jooyeon Park	Brendon Towney	David Abbott	Paul Young
Vincent Leonard	Antony Harvey	Karl Murr	<b>Tuba</b>
Maryana Sywak	<b>Cello</b>	<b>Bassoon</b>	Gary Levin
Samuel Tov-Lev	Laura Hitchcock*	John Cran	<b>Harp</b>
Justin White	Nada Aubrey	Jennifer Yeh	Helen Boyd
<b>Violin 2</b>	Rowena Cseh	<b>Contrabassoon</b>	<b>Timpani and Percussion</b>
Solomon Bard*	Merle Morcom	Graeme Widmer	Merrilee McNaught*
Simonil Bhavnagri	David Oldroyd	<b>French Horn</b>	Andrew Blake
Elizabeth Cooney	Haydn Skinner	Annalisa Gatt	Lyndle Hardstaff
Karina Barnard	Geoff Widmer	Denbigh Morris	
Diana Barraga	Cathie Wiltshire	Paula Phillips	<b>* Denotes Principal</b>
Zoe Bloomfield	<b>Double Bass</b>	John Trezise	<b>** Denotes Concert Master</b>
Rohini Mulford	Carole Jeon*		
Joseph Singles	Manfred Schoen		
Behram Taleyarkhan		<b>Chief Conductor:</b> Sarah-Grace Williams	

The orchestra wishes to sincerely thank **Leeka Gruzdeff** F.R.A.S. whose painting appears on the front of this program, on the posters produced for the concert series and for your viewing in the foyer during the performances. If you would like to find out more about Leeka and her art work visit her website at [www.leekagruzdeff.blogspot.com](http://www.leekagruzdeff.blogspot.com)

The orchestra would also like to thank **2MBSFM** for their support. **2MBSFM** is Sydney's only independent classical classic station, on **102.5**, which has been operating for 32 years. Run by volunteers and reliant on listener subscriptions and company sponsorships for support, **2MBSFM** is the connoisseur's station (they play the full works, not just 'excerpts') and why not tune in on your way home!

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*Fantasia Brillante on Carmen*  
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**2.30pm Sunday 18 March**  
(free concert for seniors!)

**2.30pm Sunday 25 March**

Strathfield Town Hall  
Cnr Redmyre and Homebush Rds, Strathfield

## Special thanks to the Friends of the Orchestra

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Mrs S Myers\*

Mr D B Dunlop\*

**\*Denotes life member**

**Strathfield Symphony Orchestra is proudly sponsored by Strathfield MP Virginia Judge.**

For interviews, information and enquiries please contact the Electorate Office. [www.virginiajudge.net](http://www.virginiajudge.net)  
176 Burwood Road, Burwood NSW 2134 P: 9747 1711 F: 9747 6054 E: [strathfield@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:strathfield@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

**Strathfield Symphony Orchestra acknowledges with thanks the assistance of the Strathfield Municipal Council**



## Program Notes

### ***Carmen 2 - Georges Bizet 1838 - 1875***

As a brilliant student of the Paris Conservatory, Georges Bizet graduated with full honours. Then, aged 19, he chose to devote himself to opera. But it wasn't until aged 37 that he turned to a new project; *Carmen*. Based on a novella by Prosper Mérimée, the libretto was by Meilhac and Halévy, then known as the best writing team in the business. Bizet thoroughly immersed himself in the plot. In fact he rewrote scenes and tinkered with the orchestration until the very last minute.

*Carmen* premiered on March 3, 1875 at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. Many deemed it to be too 'realistic', with its amoral characters, tragic ending, and absence of fantasy. But, the opera's depictions of exoticism fit in very well with the recent tendencies of the Opéra-Comique. The production closed down after only 48 performances, many of which were poorly attended but later that year in Vienna Bizet's work was to be praised.

Unfortunately, due to the initially negative reception of *Carmen*, followed by his untimely death at the age of 36, only three months after the opera's première, Bizet never lived to see the immense success of *Carmen*, only a few months later.



### ***Enigma Variations - Edward William Elgar 1857 - 1934***



In 1899, at the age of 42, Elgar's first major orchestral work, the *Enigma Variations*, was premiered in London establishing him as the pre-eminent British composer of his generation. This work is formally titled *Variations on an Original Theme*; the word 'Enigma' appears over the first six measures of music, which led to the familiar version of the title. There are two enigmas underlying the variations. The first and more readily solved is the identity of each of the 'friends pictured within'. 'After a long and tiresome day's teaching [i.e., giving violin lessons], he recalled, 'aided by a cigar, I musingly played on the piano the theme as it now stands.' He then proceeded to entertain his wife by altering the theme as it might be played by - or reflect the characteristics of - certain of their friends. Only the thirteenth variation has given rise to speculation that Elgar's use of asterisks

rather than initials or a pet name may hide the true identity of the subject, possibly an old flame of Elgar's.

But Elgar himself hinted at, and encouraged speculation over, a second, musical enigma, a popular tune which does not itself appear in the variations but of which the theme is the counterpoint. It is of course possible that this was one of Elgar's 'japes' and that the tune does not exist. If so, it has become a spectacularly successful jape, taken to great lengths and sparking a feverish debate that continues unabated. *Auld Lang Syne* is the most frequently touted candidate but excerpts from a range of works by composers Elgar admired have been found to show strong musical similarities with the theme while another convincing argument has been put forward in favour of *Rule Britannia* as the solution. The speculation is intriguing but the mystery can never be satisfactorily solved, for Elgar took the answer to the grave with him.

**I** (L'istesso tempo - 'C.A.E.'). The initials identify the composer's wife, Caroline Alice Elgar.

**II** (Allegro - 'H.D.S.-P.'). Hew David Steuart-Powell, an amateur pianist.

**III** (Allegretto - 'R.B.T.'). Richard Baxter Townshend, a popular author who enjoyed mimicry and whose voice rose in pitch during excited performances.

**IV** (Allegro di molto - 'W.M.B.'). William Meath Baker, a country squire, barking orders to his guests and making a brusque exit.

**V** (Moderato - 'R.P.A.'). Matthew Arnold's son Richard, good-natured but given to day-dreaming.

**VI** (Andantino - 'Ysobel'). Miss Isabel Fitton, an amateur violist who had trouble crossing from one string to another.

**VII** (Presto - 'Troyte'). Arthur Troyte Griffith, an architect, persistently unsuccessful in his attempts at playing the piano.

**VIII** (Allegretto - 'W.N.'). This variation is actually not so much a portrait of Miss Winifred Norbury, a music-lover and nonstop talker, as an evocation of her splendid house, the scene of numerous performances and gatherings of musicians.

**IX** (Moderato - 'Nimrod'). A reference to the slow movement of the *Pathétique Sonata* in the opening of this variation represents Elgar and his closest friend, the aforementioned August Jaeger (whose surname, the German word for 'hunter,' is clearly hinted at in the heading of this variation), engaged in a discussion of Beethoven.

**X** (Intermezzo - 'Dorabella'). Dora Penney (Mrs. Richard Powell, daughter of the Rector of Wolverhampton) was a vivacious young woman whose curious speech pattern Elgar tried to imitate here. His remark to her that she of all people ought to have guessed the identity of his theme has been cited in support of the *Rule Britannia* possibility, since the figure of Britannia appeared on the old British penny.

**XI** (Allegro di molto - 'G.R.S.'). George Robertson Sinclair was the organist of Hereford Cathedral; his bulldog Dan is heard barking as he jumps into the River Wye to fetch a stick.

**XII** (Andante - 'B.G.N.'). Basil G. Nevinson, an amateur cellist who played trios with Elgar and H.D.S.-P.

**XIII** (Moderato - \*\*\* - Romanza). Lady Elgar is said to have inserted the asterisks, presumably to cloak the identity of Lady Mary Lygon, who had sailed for Australia at about the time Elgar began composing the Variations; the citation of Mendelssohn's overture *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* was thought to allude to her ocean trip. The possibility was raised, however, that the allusion may have been to Helen Weaver, to whom Elgar had been engaged in 1883-84 and who also sailed to Australia, but in this case as an emigrant rather than a visitor. It now seems most likely that the unidentified subject was actually Alice Stuart-Wortley, a daughter of the English painter Sir John Everett Millais.

**XIV** (Finale: Allegro - 'D.U.'). A self-portrait, of which Elgar (called 'Edoo') by his wife) noted: 'Written at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraging as to the composer's musical future, this variation is merely intended to show what E.D.U. intended to do. References are made to two great influences upon the life of the composer: C.A.E. and Nimrod.

The whole work is summed up in the triumphant broad presentation of the theme in the major.'

## Our Conductor

Sarah-Grace Williams is fast gaining a reputation as one of the leading Australian conductors of her generation, appearing regularly with orchestras, choirs and musical theatre companies across the country. In February 2006, she was appointed Chief Conductor of the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra. Sarah-Grace is also Associate Conductor with both The Occasional Performing Sinfonia (TOPS) and the Australian Institute of Music (AIM) Orchestra. She is Musical Director of Il Bel Mondo (Opera vocal consort), Director of the AIM Showcase Vocal Ensemble and annual Guest Conductor with the Penrith Symphony Orchestra (PSO). She was recently engaged by the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra (New Zealand) to conduct 6 concerts in their education series in 2007.



An accomplished clarinetist and pianist, Sarah-Grace completed her Music degree at the University of Western Sydney in 1992, graduating with distinction in performance and composition. She received a scholarship for academic excellence and went on to achieve First Class Honours in Conducting before continuing conducting studies overseas with Maestro Alexander Polishchuk (St Petersburg Conservatoire, Russia) and Maestro Jorma Panula (Amsterdam, Holland). Sarah-Grace has also studied conducting under Christopher Seaman, Daniel Porcelijn, Marco Zucarrini and Janos Furst.

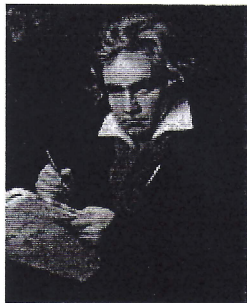
As part of her involvement in Symphony Australia's Conductors Programme, Sarah-Grace has conducted some of Australia's premier orchestras including Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, The Queensland Orchestra and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in both rehearsals and concerts. She has also toured as a conductor throughout Europe, Asia, Great Britain and New Zealand.

Recent conducting highlights include performances with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (in conjunction with Symphony Australia's Conducting Programme), Handel's 'Messiah' with the Penrith Symphony Orchestra and Penrith City Choir in 2003/2005 (and again in December this year), conducting the orchestra of the Sydney Anglicare Prom Praise concerts at the Sydney Town Hall (2004) with soloist Simon Tedeschi, working as the Musical Director for the Australian Institute of Music's production of Bernstein's 'Candide' and writing/presenting a Baby Proms 'Pops for Tots' with PSO.

Sarah-Grace lectures in Conducting, Musical Theatre, Performance Studies, History and Aural at the Australian Institute of Music (tertiary) and works as a Musical Director and Vocal Specialist for the Catholic Schools Performing Arts (CaSPA). She is also a highly sought after Vocal Coach and teacher of Keyboard, Performance Studies and Clarinet.

## Program Notes

### ***Egmont Overture* - Ludwig Van Beethoven 1770 - 1827**



When in 1809 the Burgtheater of Vienna asked Ludwig van Beethoven, a great admirer of Goethe, to compose incidental music for a revival of his play *Egmont*, he accepted with enthusiasm. Goethe's play depicted the Spanish persecution of the people of the Netherlands during the inquisition of 1567-68. Count Egmont, a Catholic who is loyal to the Spanish, nevertheless sees the injustice of their actions and pleads for tolerance from the Spanish King. Greatly displeased, the King sends the cruel Duke of Alva to command the Spanish forces in the Netherlands to do the King's will. Egmont is arrested and sentenced to death. Yet he knows that rebellion is in progress, and firmly believes that soon the people will be free.

The Overture begins in a somber and serious mood. The dark music of the opening conveys profound oppression of the spirit, and the opening motive clearly represents the ominous tyrant of the play. But soon the tempo picks up, speeding into a vigorous Allegro featuring the cellos; and we hear the hero's confidence and heroic defiance as he descends into the depths of battle. The tyrant's motive from the introduction evolves throughout the overture, becoming increasingly rhythmic and dark until at last Egmont's execution can be heard. Immediately the mood of the work turns triumphant and celebratory, featuring the strings in the highest register and the shimmering sound of the piccolo. The music embodies Egmont's conviction that death is not an end when hope thrives and ideals remain intact.

### ***Vocalise* - Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff 1893 - 1943**

Rachmaninoff was born in Semyonovo, near Novgorod in Northwestern Russia. He studied the piano from age 4 and at age nine entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory and in 1885 was sent to finish his studies as pianist and composer at the Moscow

Conservatory. Now considered one of the greatest 20th century pianists, his compositions were strongly rooted in the romantic period. He was able to write lush melodies, and Hollywood embraced his style of writing and stole from him freely.

The Fourteen Songs Op. 34 were written during the most fruitful and successful period of Rachmaninoff's life. These songs were inspired by and dedicated to the singers, Leonid Sobinov, Felia Litvin, Antonina Nezhdanova and the legendary Fyodor Chaliapin. The last of the Fourteen Songs was a wordless melody titled *Vocalise*, written for Antonina Nezhdanova, a coloratura soprano of the Moscow Bolshoi Opera. *Vocalise* has become one of the most popular songs ever written and has appeared in transcriptions for almost every solo instrument. Rachmaninoff transcribed this song for orchestra in 1919, and it has remained one of his most popular orchestral miniatures.

