

2/2008

Strathfield Symphony Orchestra

The Orchestra of the Inner West

From Russia With Love

Chief Conductor & Artistic Director: Sarah-Grace Williams

In the Steppes of Central Asia - Borodin
Fire and Water (Lotus) - Kats-Chernin
Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia - Khatchaturian

Interval

Symphony No 5 - Tchaikovsky

Andante — Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Valse: Allegro moderato

Andante maestoso — Allegro vivace

8.00pm Saturday 28 June

2.30pm Sunday 29 June

Strathfield Town Hall, Corner Redmyre & Homebush Roads, Strathfield

www.strathfieldsymphony.org.au

The Orchestra

Violin 1	Viola	Flute & Piccolo	Trumpet
Paul Pokorny**	Danielle Norton*	Jacinta Mikus	Gary Clarke
Wolf Frishling	David Angell	Bruce Lane	Janette Vardy
Philip Hazell	Chris Elenor	Prue Page	David Young
Carol Henson	Helena Hatumale	Oboe	Trombone
Julia Park	Kate Hughes	Freya Bailes	Lindsay Smartt
Beatrice Ip	Martin Lee	Robin Darroch	Tom Kavanagh
Sarah Seo	Julia Pokorny	Adele Haythornethwaite	Lauren Moule
Justin White	Brendon Towney	Clarinet	Bass Tuba
Violin 2	Cello	David Abbott	Gary Levin
Elizabeth Cooney*	Laura Hitchcock*	Rachel White	Timpani
Karina Barnard	Jennifer Ainsworth	Deanne Millner	Murray Parker
Diana Barraga	Rowena Cseh	Bassoon	Percussion
Simonil Bhavnagri	Serena Devonshire	Long Nguyen	Ben Hibbard
Michelle Fox	Alicea Gedz	Alex Thorburn	Morgan Merrell
Sarah Haddad	David Oldroyd	Horn	Mark Spiteri
Marie Hodsdon	Haydn Skinner	Sharon Hatton	Luka Wang
Michelle Hood	Double Bass	Ngoc Long Vuong	Harp
Laura Jamieson	Carol Jeon*	Suzanne Wright	Helen Boyd
Rohini Mulford	Nicole Murray-Prior	John Trezise	Piano
Agnieszua Rypel-Polkas	Mark Szeto		Chad Vindin
Behram Taleyarkhan	Ryu Yoshimoto		* Denotes Principal
	Nick Lebedev		** Denotes Concert Master

Some Enchanted Evening

Don Giovanni Overture – Mozart

Violin Concerto – Susan Collins – Tchaikovsky

Symphony no 8, Dvorak

Saturday, 8.00pm, 20 September at Marrickville Town Hall

Special thanks to the Friends of the Orchestra

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*Denotes life member

Strathfield Orchestra is proudly sponsored
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Program Notes

In the Steppes of Central Asia - Borodin

Alexander Borodin is one of the most colourful characters in Russian musical history, primarily because he wasn't a musician at all. Borodin devoted his life to pioneering research on the chemistry of phosphoric acid. Composing was simply a beloved hobby.

In the Steppes of Central Asia was written for the jubilee of Tsar Alexander II, to accompany a historical tableau that would be part of the festivities. Borodin was fascinated with the far reaches of the Russian empire, and this work begins with stark, sustained high harmonics in the violins - as close as music can come, says Borodin, to painting a picture of the ethereal 'silence of the sandy steppes'. Over these harmonics the clarinet introduces what Borodin called a 'peaceful Russian song' followed by 'the melancholy strains of Oriental melodies' played initially by the English horn. Ponderous pizzicato figures in the lower strings represent the deliberate, unhurried, rather clumsy progress of a caravan making its way across 'the measureless waste'. Eventually the two melodies intertwine in a sensuous counterpoint, Russian folk meeting and melding with Oriental mysteries, suggesting an idealistic musical view of the future of Czar Alexander's empire.



Fire and Water (Lotus) - Kats-Chernin



Born in 1957 in Tashkent, Elena Kats-Chernin emigrated to Australia in 1975 and is now one of Australia's leading composers. She writes about these works: 'In 2003 I was asked to write two pieces for the Rugby World Cup Opening Ceremony, for two segments called Fire and Water. The Fire segment would feature very tall figures, with real fire and dancing! I was asked to write something energetic, even a little clownesque, with pauses and 'angular' rhythmic motifs. The piece called Water was named Lotus by me because the organizers were talking about these white flowers in conjunction with the production. The piece was to be danced by the group "Strange Fruit" on tall poles. It was meant to be a lyrical and poetic piece, at the same time keeping the rhythm straightforward for the dancing/swaying on the poles.'

Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia - Khachaturian

Aram Khachaturian's four-act ballet *Spartacus* begins in Act 1 as the Roman consul Crassus returns to Rome from his latest conquests in a triumphal procession. Among his captives is the Thracian king Spartacus and his wife Phrygia. Spartacus laments his captivity and bids a bitter farewell to Phrygia, who is taken off to join Crassus's harem of concubines. To entertain Crassus and his entourage, Spartacus is sent into the gladiatorial ring and is forced to kill a close friend. Horrified at his deed, Spartacus incites his fellow captives to rebellion. Our music begins with Act 2 as the escaped captives celebrating their freedom. Meanwhile, Crassus entertains the Roman patricians with a lavish entertainment, including fights between blindfolded gladiators. The seductive Aegina incites a sexual orgy. Spartacus and his men disrupt the orgy and rescue the slave women, including Phrygia. The insulted Aegina insists that Crassus pursue the slave army immediately. The lovers celebrate their escape to the *Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia*.



Symphony No 5 - Tchaikovsky



Tchaikovsky was born into a family of five brothers and one sister, he began taking piano lessons at age four and showed remarkable talent, eventually surpassing his own teacher's abilities. By age nine, he exhibited severe nervous problems, not least because of his overly sensitive nature. The following year, his family sent him to St. Petersburg to study at the School of Jurisprudence. The loss of his mother in 1854 dealt a crushing blow to the young man. In 1866, the composer relocated to Moscow, accepting a professorship of harmony at the new conservatory and shortly afterward turned out his First Symphony suffering, however, a nervous breakdown during its composition. In 1876, Tchaikovsky travelled to Paris with his brother, Modest, and then visited Bayreuth, where he met Liszt, but where Wagner snubbed him. By 1877, Tchaikovsky had become an established composer. But it was also a time of woe: in July, Tchaikovsky, despite his homosexuality, foolishly married Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova, an obsessed admirer, their disastrous union lasting just months. The composer attempted suicide, in the midst of this episode. Near the end of that year, Nadezhda von Meck, a woman he would never meet, became his patron and frequent correspondent. Throughout his life his struggle with his homosexuality, the critics and his individual character of his music, as he wasn't composing nationalistic music like the great Russian composers of the day, persistently dogged him.

Tchaikovsky never spoke about a program for his 5th symphony. But Nicholas Slonimsky, in the 1950's, discovered statements in Tchaikovsky's notebooks which indicate a confessional autobiographical intent: *Introduction. Complete resignation before Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Allegro. (I) Murmurs, doubts, plains, reproaches against XXX ... (II) Shall I throw myself in the embrace of faith?* Evidently the answer to that question was in the affirmative, for Tchaikovsky wrote to Mme von Meck at that time that faith gave him 'a shield against which the blows of Fate are absolutely in vain'. It is widely believed that with 'Providence' he's referring to 'act of God' and the XXX he mentions refers to his continuing struggle with coming to terms with his homosexuality. This struggle was at its peak when writing the 5th Symphony and resonates again and again in the piece via the *motto* theme. In each movement you will hear the ominous motto theme return, often interrupting the more optimistic music as he seems drawn back to remember his struggle. In the final movement after the extended introduction, it is transformed into a majestic and confident processional. In the finale proper, initiated by an eruption of drums and a savage dance-like passage, through a sequence of new tunes and instrumental colours, the *motto* is now exultant, jubilant, ringing with self-confidence. Following a false ending, a long, triumphal coda - the 'Fate' *motto* as a march, with the slow-march theme from the first movement similarly transformed into a fanfare as a final embellishment - ends the work on a note of exuberant affirmation.

Five days after he conducted the premiere of his 6th Symphony Tchaikovsky drank a glass of unboiled water, a careless move that year in Saint Petersburg, where countless cases of cholera had recently been reported. He died four days later.

Our Conductor & Artistic Director

Sarah-Grace Williams has gained a reputation as one of the leading Australian conductors of her generation. Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of Strathfield Symphony Orchestra since 2006, Sarah-Grace also holds the positions of Musical Director and Conductor of the Sydney Opera House Babies Proms, Associate Conductor of The Occasional Performing Sinfonia (TOPS) and Musical Director of the AIM Showcase Vocal Ensemble 'Proclaim'. Additionally, Sarah-Grace regularly appears as a Guest Conductor and Presenter with many other ensembles including the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, The Queensland Orchestra (TQO), Penrith Symphony Orchestra and Australian Institute of Music ChAIMber Orchestra.

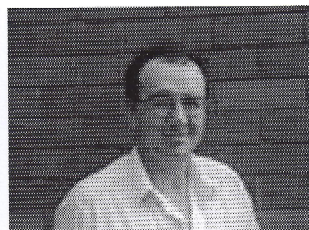
An accomplished clarinetist and pianist, Sarah-Grace graduated from her Music degree with distinction in performance and composition. She went on to achieve First Class Honours in Conducting before continuing her conducting studies in Russia and Holland. Sarah-Grace has studied with esteemed conductors Alexander Polishchuk, Johannes Fritsch, Jorma Panula, Christopher Seaman, Daniel Porcelijn, Marco Zucarrini and Janos Furst and is a leading graduate from the prestigious Symphony Australia Conductor Development Programme, where she conducted the Melbourne, Queensland and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras in both rehearsals and concert. Sarah-Grace was also selected as one of only five conductors to conduct the Auckland Philharmonia in conjunction with their Graduate Conductor's Programme in 2005.

Sarah-Grace has been awarded numerous prizes including the Symphony Australia Podium Scholarship, University of Western Sydney Prize for Academic Excellence, the Sound Devices Prize for excellence in Performance and the Guitar Factory Scholarship.

Lecturing at both the Australian Institute of Music (AIM) and the Australian International Conservatorium of Music (AICM) she is regularly engaged as Musical Director and Vocal Specialist for the Catholic Schools Performing Arts (CaSPA). She has composed, arranged and recorded music for films, theatre productions, symphonic ensembles and chamber groups and remains a highly sought after Vocal Coach. Sarah-Grace continues to work as a freelance Clarinetist and Pianist.



Our Concert Master



Paul Pokorny is the Concertmaster of the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra and has also appeared as soloist. He has played in many of the amateur and freelance orchestras in Sydney. He has worked with many of Sydney's most prominent musicians, having been, variously, Concertmaster of the North Shore Youth Orchestra, Lane Cove Symphony, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Warringah Symphony, Encore Kammerorchester, the Sydney Serenade, the Sydney Occasional Orchestra and for many years, the Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra. Paul was also recently a Principal violin with the Balmain Sinfonia and has played with such groups as the Solar Chamber Orchestra and the Bourbaki Ensemble. Paul is a keen chamber musician, and is first violin with the Opus Four String Quartet and the Strathfield String Quartet. Paul is also concertmaster for occasional event orchestras, such as for Present Australia, at the Sydney Opera House.

In addition to performing freelance function work, with such groups as the Mellowtones, for many years Paul has been an active orchestral leader and player for many of Sydney's musical societies, playing regularly for the musical societies of Chatswood, Willoughby, Rockdale Opera, Zenith Theatre, various G&S societies and Encore Theatre. Paul also enjoys singing and playing piano.

The Strathfield Symphony Orchestra acknowledges with thanks the assistance of the Strathfield Municipal Council.



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