



Strathfield

Symphony

2009

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Tonight's Program

Cuban Overture

Gershwin

Piano Concerto in A minor

Grieg

Soloist – Daniel Herscovitch

Allegro – Adagio – Allegro

INTERVAL

World premiere!

Redmyre Suite

Kats-Chernin

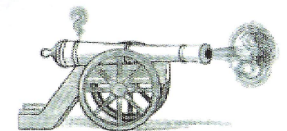
Soloist - Elena Kats-Chernin

PLUS Auction of Composer's original Sketches

Three Movements

1812 Overture

Tchaikovsky



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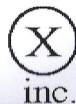
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Chief Conductor & Artistic Director Sarah-Grace Williams

Sarah-Grace Williams has gained a reputation as one of Australia's foremost conductors of her generation. She is currently the Assistant Conductor of The Queensland Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Western Australian Symphony Orchestra and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and holds the posts of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Strathfield Symphony and, the Metropolitan Chamber Orchestra, Musical Director and Conductor of the Sydney Opera House Proms Orchestra and Associate Conductor of The Occasional Performing Sinfonia. She is regularly engaged as a Guest Conductor and Presenter with many ensembles including the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Australian Institute of Music ChAIMber Orchestra and Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra.



An accomplished clarinetist and pianist, she received her Bachelor of Music Degree with Distinction. She went on to achieve First Class Honours in Conducting before continuing studies in Russia and Holland with Alexander Polishchuk and Jorma Panula respectively. A principal graduate from Symphony Australia's prestigious Conductor Program and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra's Conductors Program, Sarah-Grace has conducted most of Australia's and New Zealand's premier orchestras under the tutorage of esteemed conductors such as Johannes Fritzsich, Janos Furst, Sebastian Lang-Lessing, and Marco Zuccarini. As a result, Sarah-Grace has received invitations to conduct a number of concert seasons and secured an ongoing mentorship with Maestro Fritzsich. Sarah-Grace is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Australian International Conservatorium and is a highly sought after lecturer, vocal coach and adjudicator. She has composed, arranged and recorded music for films, theatre, symphonic ensembles, chamber groups and continues to work as a freelance Clarinetist and Pianist.

Sarah-Grace has been awarded 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.

Sobist and Composer

Elena Kats-Chernin

Elena Kats-Chernin studied music in Moscow (Gnessin Academy), Sydney (Sydney Conservatorium of Music) and Hanover, Germany (Musikhochschule). Her music featured at the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympic Games and the 2003 Rugby World Cup and she received several awards, among them Sounds Australian Award in 1996, Jean Bogan Memorial Prize in 1996, as well as Green Room and Helpmann Awards in 2004 for the score for the ballet *Wild Swans* choreographed by Meryl Tankard for the Australian Ballet.



She was a recipient of a two-year Fellowship from the Australia Council in 2005-2006, as well as the Ian Potter Commission Prize in 2004. Her piece 'Eliza Aria' from the CD *Wild Swans* (ABC Classics) has reached top spots on UK i-Tunes Classical Charts due to its use in a series of animation TV commercials for Lloyds TSB in the UK since February 2007.

Elena Kats-Chernin's piece *Russian Rag* (composed in 1995-96 and the theme for Late Night Live on ABC Radio National) was used as Max's theme in the claymation by Oscar winning Adam Elliot *Mary and Max*, released in 2009.

The *Redmyre Suite* was commissioned by the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra for the occasion of its 40th birthday.

With special thanks to Boronia Park Framing for framing the Kats-Chernin manuscripts.

Soloist

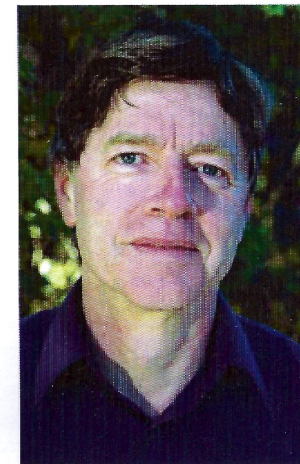
Daniel Herscovitch

Senior Lecturer Daniel Herscovitch is a concert pianist and recording artist whose repertoire ranges from Bach to Carter. A lecturer in piano since 1996, Herscovitch is also the coordinator of the postgraduate performance students at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He also lectures in piano pedagogy and chamber music.

Herscovitch studied at the Conservatorium under pianist Alexander Sverjensky and later, continued his studies with Rosl Schmid at the Musikhochschule in Munich. During his 12 years in Germany he performed extensively throughout Europe and at many international festivals. Herscovitch continues to maintain a busy performance schedule. He has appeared as concerto soloist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, has toured for Musica Viva and performed at the festivals of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. He is currently preparing for a series of concerts and masterclasses in the USA.

Daniel Herscovitch has recorded many works ranging from Mozart to Smalley. His recording of the Mozart/Grieg complete works for two pianos on the ABC Classics label was a world premiere as were also many of his recordings of contemporary works. Other CDs have been released on CSM, Tall Poppies and Continuum and ABC Classics.

A CD of Australian music for two pianos is due to be released later this year and he will shortly be recording a CD of piano trios for the Tall Poppies label.



Orchestra

Paul Pokorny - Concertmaster



Violin 1

Paul Pokorny*
Dorothy Sercombe**
Julia Park
Sarah Haddad
Carol Henson
Amanda Hoh
Michael Santhaseelan
Lyndon Swasbrook
Petroc Wilton

Violin 2

Laura Jamieson*
Simonil Bhavnagri
Volf Frishling
Rohini Mulford
Alana Pretty
Agnieszka Rypel-Polkas
Behram Taleyarkhan
Wendy Trott

Viola

Danielle Norton*
John Bellamy
Chris Elenor
Andy Kim
Josephine Lumanau
Aaron Thomas

Cello

Serena Devonshire*
Jennifer Ainsworth
Rowena Cseh
Alicea Gedz
Clare Khan
David Oldroyd
Haydn Skinner
Danni Yi Ding

Double Bass

Nicole Murray-Prior*
Robert Budniak
Moya Molloy
Ryu Yoshimoto

Flute

Jacinta Mikus
Bruce Lane
Svetlana Yaroslavskaya

Oboe

Adele Haythornthwaite
George Jessup
Lindi Todd

Clarinet

David Abbott
Nigel Clarke
Jason Kok

Bassoon

Patricia Taylor
Alex Thorburn

Horn

Sharon Hatton
Claire Cameron
John Trezise

Cornet

John Tweed

Trumpet

Gary Clarke
Janette Vardy
David Young

Trombone

Lindsay Smartt
Tom Kavanagh
Lauren Moule

Tuba

Gary Levin

Timpani

Merrilee McNaught

Percussion

Murray Parker
Jocelyn Fegent
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* Principal

** Associate Concertmaster

Program Notes

Cuban Overture

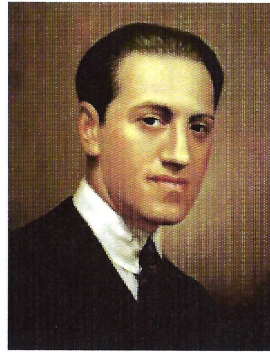
George Gershwin (1898–1937)

Throughout his tragically brief career, George Gershwin effortlessly blurred the lines between serious and popular composition. George Gershwin began writing compositions for the classical music hall, with his acclaimed *Rhapsody in Blue* premiering in 1924. Though he never composed a large-scale classical work such as a symphony, Gershwin's interest in rhythmic and harmonic complexities formed a bridge between popular music and the world of Stravinsky.

While holidaying with friends in Havana, Cuba, Gershwin described clubbing and dancing in the fabled Havana nightspots as 'two hysterical weeks in Cuba, where no sleep was had'. He couldn't ignore the music and rhythms all around him. He was intrigued by several local percussion instruments and brought home claves (what he called Cuban Sticks), bongos, maracas, and a gourd - as well as an idea for an orchestral work. He began writing in July, completing the piece in August, for a premiere on 16 August, 1932.

The work, titled *Rumba*, was met favourably and Gershwin conducted the piece three months later, renaming it *Cuban Overture* to avoid giving audience members the idea that it was simply a novelty item. He drew pictures of the four Cuban percussion instruments on the opening page of the score, and instructed that these instruments and their players be placed at the front of the orchestra during the performance.

The rhythms are those of Cuban dance. A solo clarinet introduces the slower middle section, which is accompanied by claves and bongo. With lush string writing and harmonic complexities this section builds to a march-like climax, then the piece breaks once again into dance. The finale concludes with a coda featuring the Cuban instruments of percussion. The brass section gets a chance to shine in as the work comes to an exuberant finish.



Piano Concerto in A Minor

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

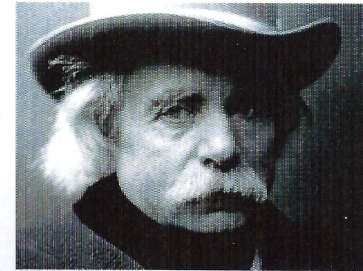
To understand Grieg's music, one must imagine the narrow, steep-walled inlets of the sea along Norway's western coast, created long ago by the chiselling of receding glaciers. The majestic fjords of Norway were where Grieg's heart and soul were at home. He went to study in Germany but Grieg held fast to his Norwegian identity in his music.

Grieg was only 25 when he wrote the piano concerto and it was to become one of the most popular piano concertos ever composed.

The concerto opens with a drum-roll and solo cascade of octaves, after which the woodwinds play a simple main theme with periodic, intricately embroidered statements by the soloist. A contrasting theme, heard from the cellos is soulful. Trumpets usher in the development section and sound once again at the recapitulation. Just before the end of the first movement, we hear a solo cadenza.

The second movement is a structurally uncomplicated Adagio in 3/8 time that begins with introspective, muted strings over which the piano rhapsodizes. Throughout the movement a series of delicate trills signal the entrance of the piano, until a dramatically angular version of the main theme shatters the placid mood. The serenity of the beginning of the movement returns and leads to a quiet ending that lapses without pause into the third movement.

This final movement is perhaps the most affected by Grieg's Norwegian origins. It begins with a main theme presented by the piano that incorporates rhythmic patterns from Norway's national folk dances. The movement's second subject is quicker, and far more elaborate, but no less folk-like. After a tranquil episode, the main theme returns. The piano soloist performs a brief cadenza, the music transforms from minor to major, and yet another folk dance theme picks up the pace further. The concerto concludes with a brilliant, virtuosic final cadenza, and a triumphant ending based on the earlier solo flute melody. It is a flash of majesty to match the magnificence of Norway's fjord coastline.



Redmyre Suite

Elena Kats-Chernin

In 1808 a grant of 570 acres of what is now known as Strathfield was made to James Wilshire. Most of this land was acquired by Samuel Terry in 1824 and renamed the 'Redmyre Estate' after Terry's birthplace in Yorkshire. Redmyre became part of the newly named Strathfield in 1855 along with Druitt Town (now Strathfield South) and Homebush. The Boulevard of today was once Redmyre Boulevard, and by 1888 the spelling had changed to Redmyre.

The Aldine Centennial History of NSW, 1888 tells us:

This suburb is purely residential. The location is beautiful. The houses are of the better class of merchants and retired people. It is worthy of note, and what its citizens desire to have mentioned is, that there are no public-houses in the borough, although there are already within the municipality 1,129 electors.

When tossing around ideas for the Strathfield Symphony's 40th birthday, it was thought an Australian commission would be appropriate as the orchestra has always championed Australian music. Elena Kats-Chernin was our first choice. Her music is profound but accessible and is much loved. Like Bach, she borrows freely from the past and from herself, and also like Bach, she enhances the original.

Elena couldn't have been more supportive or enthusiastic about the idea of writing for a community orchestra for the first time, and working with her on the project has been a joy and a privilege.

*Bruce Lane
Strathfield Symphony*



When Bruce Lane first approached me about this commission, I was very excited about writing for a community orchestra for the first time. This orchestra was celebrating its 40th Birthday, a big milestone. I wanted to write a piece which evoked the past and had lyrical as well as celebratory moments. As in *Wild Swans*, the form of the suite enabled me to realise different moods.

In the first movement which starts in E major I look back at the music of Bach, his famous Air with the walking pizzicato (plucked strings) of the bass and Chopin (Etude in E major) and merge the two pieces. I think that while looking at the musical past, I am also finding my way into the musical present. Here the strings have the biggest role in setting up the texture, with horns and trumpets sharing the melody with the woodwinds, the melody then moving between sections of the orchestra. This movement is about calmness and contentedness, looking back in pride.

Movement two has more to do with the Strathfield train station and my personal experiences with that train station. Just before I started writing my son Alexander, who suffers from schizophrenia, was found wandering the train tracks at Strathfield train station at night – luckily, he was noticed by a superintendent on watch at the time – and this was a strong influence in this movement. Strathfield's development is strongly linked to the railway, and I wanted to describe the rhythm of the city on the move, in almost a dramatic way.

Movement three has more of a celebratory nature. It starts with brass chords to salute the birthday. Then we have a section moving in a challenging irregular metre of 10/8 (10 quavers to a bar). The brass saluting chords return towards the end of the piece, the piece itself ending in a somewhat light, reflective and optimistic manner. As usual with my music, there are changing shades of darkness and lightness in the texture, harmony and orchestration.

Elena Kats-Chernin

1812 Overture

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

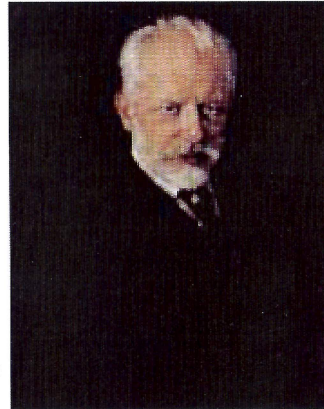
Tchaikovsky was at the height of his career when he was commissioned in 1880 to compose a piece for performance at the All-Russian Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in 1882. For the exhibition, he wrote a tribute to one of the most triumphal moments in Russian history, the defeat of Napoleon's invading army near the beginning of the century.

Most of Tchaikovsky's music is at least somewhat programmatic, but in no other piece is the program quite so transparent. The overture begins with a Novgorod peasant tune, played first by the strings, representing the simple purity of Mother Russia. One can almost imagine the land itself as a slumbering giant. Suddenly, the serene atmosphere is broken by a stormy passage heralding the incipient war. It was as if a messenger burst through the doors into a church service announcing 'We've been invaded'.

A single snare drum signals the march of Napoleon's army onto the scene, announced by the horns. The Russian imperial army defends its territory in a fierce clash, but the invader prevails as bits of the French national anthem *La Marseillaise* periodically rise above the clamour. The Russians retreat.

In quiet retrospect, the people mourn the desecration of their homeland by invaders and prepare to rise against the French. The Battle is resumed, but once more *La Marseillaise* is heard, as the French prevail, and once again the people mourn. Yet a third time the Russian troops attack, and this time the land itself - the sleeping giant - rises up to join with its people and throw off the invader's yoke.

The victorious third conflict leads to a celebration unprecedented in orchestral music: a salute by cannons, pealing of church bells, the Czarist national anthem, along with the solemn melody that opened the work. Tchaikovsky even throws in snatches of the march that originally heralded the arrival of the French, but *La Marseillaise* is nowhere to be heard. Mother Russia has prevailed, and joy is everywhere.



Strathfield Symphony – 40 years on

Strathfield Symphony Orchestra was formed by local violin teacher Emily Finn and gave its first performance on 5 July 1969 under the baton of Richard Gill. * The newspapers reported the night as a great success, the Town Hall was packed and people were turned away.

Since then hundreds of players have enjoyed the musical satisfaction and camaraderie of playing in a symphony orchestra. It has provided opportunities for players of varying standards, amateurs and professionals alike, from young players still at school to extraordinary musicians in their 90s like Miriam Hyde, composer, pianist and lifelong friend of the orchestra, and Solomon Bard, who after retiring from a decade of conducting the orchestra, returned to lead the second violins. Solomon recently completed a conducting engagement in Hong Kong at the tender age of 92 (93 last month!).

Conductors

After his auspicious beginning, Richard Gill returned to conduct in 1973-4. There then followed a succession of conductors until Matthew Krel was appointed in 1987. He stayed until 1994. Matthew was very knowledgeable and enthusiastic, with uncompromisingly high standards. Sadly, Matthew died in May this year.

In 1995 Solomon Bard was appointed, and so began a very happy and musically productive era. Solomon suggested we advertise as the *Strathfield Friendly Symphony Orchestra*, and indeed we later adopted *Serious Fun* as our byline. We have now adopted *The Orchestra of the Inner West* as our byline as we strive to broaden our audience. Solomon involved himself in committee work, finding music, watching our finances and often donating his fees to the orchestra.

When Solomon decided it was time to retire in 2004 we appointed Paul Dhasmana as conductor. Paul did fine work with the orchestra until accepting an appointment as piccolo to The Queensland Orchestra in 2006. One of the highlights of Paul's tenure was our joint concert with the Taverner Consort of Voices performing the Mozart *Requiem* and Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* with Deborah de Graaff.



Another was our trip to Goulburn where we were bemused to find that our reduced numbers with some holes had become holier as we were renamed St Rathfield Symphony Orchestra.

Sarah-Grace Williams then stepped into the breach. She has taken the orchestra to new heights since

2006, through a combination of excellent musicianship, attention to detail, involvement with all aspects of management and a determination to achieve high standards. Some of the highlights have been Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances*, Holst's *Planets Suite* and Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* with Susan Collins. In Westlake's *Antarctica* she had to co-ordinate orchestra and soloist with the film of the same name. Sarah-Grace has recently been appointed Assistant conductor to four of Australia's major orchestras: Queensland, Adelaide, Western Australia and Tasmania. However, her appointment will not stop her continuing her work with us .

The Orchestra Community

Many players and former players have interesting stories to tell:

The Edwards family – Miriam Hyde, local resident, composer, pianist and teacher, known to generations of Australian piano students and pianists, supported the orchestra all her life and played with us until into her nineties. Her second piano concerto was memorable. We've played many of her works over the years. Her husband, Marcus Edwards, was the first treasurer of the orchestra, played violin from 1972-1974, and was a strong supporter during his lifetime. When he died, Miriam lost her muse and composed no more. Their daughter, Christine Edwards, played violin with the orchestra from 1973-1986 and has attended almost every concert and general meeting since then. Christine now concentrates on her accomplished piano playing.



The Widmer family – Geoff played cello from 1978 for 20 years, was President from 1978-1988, and then Vice President and achieved the building of stage extensions, the conductor's podium and other pieces of minor and major engineering.

Geoff has also made cellos which are well regarded. His son, Graeme, played bassoon from 1977-1982 and occasionally returns to play his very fine contrabassoon.

The Young family – David Young has played trumpet with the orchestra since 1988. Two of his sons have also played with us.

Carol Henson – violinist since 1987, Paralympian and Australian representative in sailing. Carol has lost a leg to cancer but is always the first to volunteer to move tables and chairs, set up the orchestra and do any other work needed.



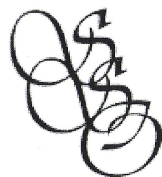
Pat Taylor played flute from 1972-1983 and bassoon from 1984- 1999. We are delighted to welcome her back for this concert.

Shirley Mahableshwarwallah, a non-player, has been with us almost from the beginning, helping on the committee and, dressed in her magnificent saris, serving tea, coffee and food to generations of audiences. She is our rock.

* For an interesting account of the first 30 years, see Geoff Widmer's *The 30 Years Story*.

Bruce Lane

STRATHFIELD SYMPHONY
Orchestra of the Inner West



Orchestral Masterpieces

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune Debussy

Cello Concerto in E minor Elgar
SOLOIST: Patrick Murphy

Romeo and Juliet Suite no 2 Prokofiev

8.00pm Saturday, 26 September 2009
Strathfield Town Hall

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Immortal Beloved - Saturday, 5 December 2009

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Acknowledgements

The commission of the Redmyre Suite was assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, and by the New South Wales Government through its arts funding body, Arts NSW.

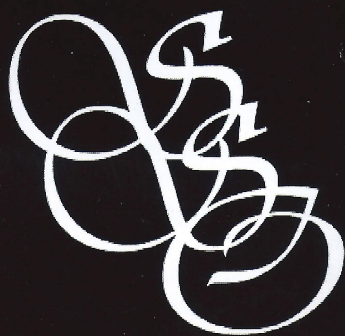
Thanks to Elena Kats-Chernin for her unbounded generosity – playing in the première of *Redmyre Suite*, donating her manuscript sketches, and in so many other ways.



About the Orchestra

Strathfield Symphony Orchestra is a community orchestra based in the inner-west Sydney suburb of Strathfield. The orchestra is comprised of approximately 60 players. It rehearses most Monday nights and gives four programs a year, plus a special concert for seniors in Senior Citizens' Week. The orchestra aims to promote musicmaking in the community, to provide exciting and enjoyable concert programs, to nurture young talent, and to showcase the works of Australian composers.

The orchestra was founded by Emily Finn, a music teacher in Strathfield. The first performance was held on 28th June 1969 and was conducted by Richard Gill. Over the years many talented young musicians have played with the orchestra, the youngest being nine-year-old violinist Kim Marshall. In recent years the orchestra has played works by many Australian composers including Elena Kats-Chernin, Nigel Westlake, Vincent Leonard, Michael Easton and Solomon Bard. In 2008 the orchestra commissioned Elena Kats-Chernin to write a work for the orchestra's 40th Birthday Concert on 4th July 2009. Australian composer and pianist Miriam Hyde was a keen supporter and good friend of the orchestra. She played with the orchestra as soloist and the orchestra has performed many of her works.



www.strathfieldsymphony.org.au