Simone Young conducts Mozart & Bach

7 – 8 November 2026
Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

Cover photograph, Craig Abercrombie

Image Description: A photograph of a concert, taken from the perspective of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra looking out toward the audience. Conductor Simone Young stands centre, captured mid-performance, facing toward the right against the stark black background of a dark auditorium. The audience is almost entirely hidden in shadow behind her. Clad all in black, Simone's expression is a picture of dramatic tension - eyebrows raised, eyes wide, and mouth open in an O shape. Her right arm is slightly bent at the elbow and raised above her head with fingers splayed, while her long brown hair rests on her left shoulder.

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Sydney Symphony Orchestra logo
Principal Partner: Emirates logo

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Sydney Symphony Orchestra

PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

The Orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a

year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

What to Expect

Expect to enjoy yourself! Maybe your heart will beat a little faster. Maybe your hair will stand on end. It’s hard to predict or describe how the vast sound of a symphony orchestra will affect each of us. Just bring an open mind and engage with the music – close your eyes, watch the conductor and the musicians, or just sit back and let the music take you away

When do I clap?

Good question. Most pieces of music are broken up into different movements– usually, people only clap at the end of a piece, so there will be silent pauses between movements. On the next page you will see how many movements the pieces in this concert have, and the duration of each piece. But the simplest thing is to wait until the conductor turns around – or when everyone else starts applauding.

The conductor may leave the stage and come back on a few times, and acknowledge the different sections of the orchestra. You can keep clapping as long as you want to – and feel free to cheer and stomp your feet if you really enjoyed the concert!

Can I take photos or videos?

You can take photos and videos on your phone during the applause at the end of a piece of music. **Please switch your phone to silent, make sure the flash is off and dim the brightness of your screen so you don't distract other audience members.** And if you share it to your socials, tag us in your posts! We love seeing what people have captured.

Please leave professional and semi-professional camera gear at home and limit yourself to a phone camera inside the venue.

What happens at interval?

The interval will begin when the conductor leaves the stage and the lights go to their full brightness. You can choose to stay in your seat and wait, go to the bathroom, walk around or purchase food or drink from one of the foyer bars.

An announcement will play through the speaker system 10 minutes, 5 minutes and 1 minute before the concert resumes.

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2026 Concert Season

Simone Young Conducts Mozart & Bach

The Great Masters

Simone Young conductor

ELLA MACENS (born 1991)
Before Me, There Was You (2026)
WORLD PREMIERE
Commissioned by Simone Young AM and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, with the generous support of Christine Bishop

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)
Suite No.3 in D, BWV1068 (c.1730)
I. Overture
II. Air
III. Gavottes 1 and 2
IV. Bourrée
V. Gigue

INTERVAL

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)
Symphony No.39 in E flat, K543 (1788)
I. Adagio – Allegro
II. Andante con moto
III. Menuetto and Trio
IV. Finale (Allegro)

Saturday 7 November, 7pm
Symphonic Saturday

Sunday 8 November, 2pm
Sunday Afternoon Symphony

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

Pre-concert talk
By Jim Coyle in the Northern Foyer at 6.15pm (Sat) and 1.15pm on the Lounge Level (Sun).

Estimated durations
Macens – 13 minutes
Bach – 20 minutes
Interval – 20 minutes
Mozart – 30 minutes

The concert will run for approx. 1 hour 45 minutes

Cover image
By Craig Abercrombie

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land and water on which we work and perform. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Principal Partner: Emirates logo

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About the Artists

Photograph, Peter Brew-Bevan

Image Description: A portrait photograph of Simone Young. She sits in front of a grey-blue background, behind a table covered with a soft grey cloth. She rests her left elbow on the table, her left hand holding her chin as she looks directly at the camera with a soft smile. She is in her 60s, with light skin and an athletic build. Her long brunette hair flows down her back and over her right shoulder. She wears a black V-neck blouse with sheer sleeves down to the elbow. She accessorises with gold statement jewellery: chunky rings and long pendant earrings.

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SIMONE YOUNG AM conductor

Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor, Simone Young has previously held the posts of General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of both the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Her appointment as Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has recently been extended through until the end of 2029.

An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festival, Vienna Staatsoper, Berlin Staatsoper, Hamburg Staatsoper and La Scala Milan.

Simone Young has an extensive and celebrated recording catalogue. Her first performance as Chief Conductor in Sydney, featuring Mahler's Symphony No.2 *Resurrection* and the world premiere of William Barton's *Of the Earth* was released worldwide on Deutsche Grammophon, and performances of Elgar & Vaughan Williams, *Das Rheingold* and *Gurrelieder* have been filmed for Sydney Symphony On Demand. Her Hamburg recordings include the *Ring* Cycle, *Mathis der Maler* (Hindemith), *Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln* (Schmidt) and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. She has also recorded Benjamin Britten Folksongs and songs of Richard Strauss with Steve Davislim, and songs by Wagner and Strauss with Lisa Gasteen.

Simone Young's return invitations to the great orchestras of the world in 2026 include the Suisse Romande, the Orchestre nationale de Lyon, West German Radio Orchestra Cologne, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France Paris, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco and Montreal Symphony Orchestras, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London, National Symphony Orchestra RAI (Britten *War Requiem*), and the BBC Philharmonic, Manchester. She also returns to ANAM, Melbourne to lead their orchestra in a 30th birthday celebration Gala performance.

Firmly established as one of the world's leading opera conductors, this season Simone Young returns to the Berlin Staatsoper (*Lohengrin* and *Nabucco*), La Scala Milan (the *Ring* cycle), Opera Nationale de Paris *(Katya Kabanova*), and conducts *Götterdämmerung* in concert, completing Sydney Symphony's *Ring* Cycle.

The presentation of Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Ring* Cycle in concert, commencing in 2023, has played to sold out audiences, standing ovations and 5-star reviews. A second, feature-length documentary film, *Knowing the Score*, showcasing Simone Young and her career was also internationally released in 2023.

In 2025 Simone Young was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Sydney. Her many accolades also include the 2024 Conductor of the year (British *Opera* magazine), Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera, the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna, a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, the 2013 Helpmann Award for Best Individual Classical Music Performance and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

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Your Concert at a Glance

ELLA MACENS (born 1991)

Before Me, There Was You (2026)
WORLD PREMIERE

Ella Macens' new work is a thirteen-minute single-movement piece dedicated to the composer's mother. Composed for a Baroque orchestra, it begins and ends in serene simplicity, passing through moments of echoing trumpet calls, gathering strength and speed to create sections of emphatic repetition that contrast with tender, more inward moments.

Photograph, Tenis Dimants

Image Description: A portrait photograph of Ella Macens. Ella has olive skin, her warm smile framed by long light brown hair, swept over one shoulder. She has large, white statement earrings, a dainty gold necklace and wears a black camisole. Facing

the front, her gaze focused at us, she stands outside, against a blurred background of grey green trees.

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JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Suite No.3 in D, BWV1068 (c.1730)

Bach's orchestral suites might have been written earlier in his career but were performed in the 27 years after 1723 in Leipzig by the *Collegium musicum*, a pro-am band that the composer conducted and which could field enough musicians for such a work.

The Suite, as was common in the late Baroque period, consists of a 'French' overture – stately, slowish music gives way to fast, contrapuntal work – which is then followed by a famous Air and a set of dance movements.

Our best guess is that the piece appeared around 1730, the year that saw the Ottoman-Persian War, the birth of Josiah Wedgwood and the Valparaiso earthquake.

Contemporary music included Telemann's *St Matthew Passion*, Couperin's Pièces de clavecin, Book 4, and Handel's *Partenope*.

Portrait of JS Bach c.1720, attributed to German artist Johann Jakob Ihle (1702–1774). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Image Description: This is a portrait painted with oil on canvas, with muted colours of browns, blues and greys. Bach is sitting facing the right, with his head turned to look at us with a stern gaze. He has pale skin and is wearing a wig of grey hair sculpted around his head. He is wearing a blue velvet coat and an orange waistcoat, with a white cravat around his neck.

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Symphony No.39 in E flat, K543 (1788)

Mozart's last three symphonies are the subject of much conjecture – written at the end of his short life and with no hard evidence that they were performed at the time. Many scholars feel sure that Mozart didn't write music that wouldn't be performed, and it seems likely that this was performed at least once in Mozart's lifetime. Its stablemates – the G minor Symphony and the 'Jupiter' – are perhaps better known, but this is no less a masterpiece, and has a distinctively rich sound with its use of clarinets. In the standard four-movement design, it begins with a slow introduction before the subtle but energetic argument of the first movement. There is a lengthy lyrical slow movement, followed by a menuet and a comic finale.

It was composed in 1788, the year that saw the madness of George III, the Russo-Swedish War, and the establishment of a penal colony at Sydney Cove.

Contemporary music included Haydn’s Symphony No.91, Viotti’s Violin Concerto No.14 and Cherubini’s *Ifigenia in Aulide*.

Portrait of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1789) by Dora Stock (1760–1832). Source: Mozarteum, Salzburg/Wikimedia Commons.

Image Description: It is a greyscale silverpoint drawing on a background of white ivory. Mozart is in profile, facing the left, looking straight ahead of him with a neutral expression. The profile emphasises a pointed nose and soft chin. There is a shadow under his eye.

He has long wispy hair, tied with ribbon into a low thin ponytail that falls down his back. Sideburns and a widow’s peak frame his face. He is wearing a coat with a high collar and wide lapels. A ruffled white cravat spills out down the front of his neck and chest.

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About the Music

ABOUT ELLA MACENS

Ella Macens is rapidly claiming her place as one of Australia’s most distinctive and celebrated contemporary classical composers. Drawing upon the lyricism of her Latvian heritage, her affinity with singer-songwriter practice and a command of contemporary classical composition, her unique compositional voice is praised for its warmth, clarity and emotional immediacy.

A graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music where she now lectures, Macen's works have been commissioned and performed by the Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmanian, Queensland and Canberra Symphony Orchestras, the Flinders and Goldner Quartets, the Australian Haydn Ensemble, Omega Ensemble, Claire Edwardes and the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, among many others. Internationally, her music has been programmed by the State Choir Latvija, Ulster Orchestra and the Seattle Youth Symphony, to name a few. In 2026, Macens composed *My Heart On Yours*, the flagship commission celebrating ABC Classic's 50th anniversary, performed by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Her wind symphony *Cloud Magic* received its European premiere with Orchestra Riga, and Simone Young AM conducted three performances of *The Space Between Stars* with the San Francisco Symphony. The Space Between Stars also featured in the ABC Classic's 100 'Greatest Of All Time' concert.

Her achievements have been recognised by the World Federation of Free Latvians and the Latvian Federation of Australia & New Zealand. In 2023 Macens' first Sydney Symphony commission *RELEASE* was a finalist in the APRA AMCOS Art Music Awards (Work of the Year: Large Ensemble), affirming her place as one of Australia’s most distinguished creative voices.

Before Me, There Was You was commissioned by Simone Young AM and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, with the generous support of Christine Bishop.

It is scored for 2 oboes, 3 trumpets, timpani, harpsichord and strings.

This is its world premiere.

ABOUT *BEFORE ME, THERE WAS YOU*

The composer writes:

Several months ago, I found myself captivated by a video a friend posted online. She read from her journal, 'I met my ninety-year-old self for coffee this morning.' The video imagined a conversation between her current self and a version of herself 50 years from now – how her 90-year-old self would perceive her now, what wisdom and insight each would share. It touched on a feeling I have been experiencing a lot this year – moments in which I look around at my family, my home and the natural environment that surrounds us and feel an intense sense of awe, love, and grief. I find myself soaking it all in, simultaneously imagining a future in which I am looking back on these moments as memories.

When I started sketching this work, I was thinking about my beautiful mum, Viktorija, who would be celebrating her 70th birthday at the time of the premiere. As my hands traced the keys of her 130-year-old piano, searching for the first glimpse of life for this composition, a vocal melody arose above three intimate clusters on the piano. The lyrics came effortlessly, 'Before me, there was you.' For a brief period, I will be exactly half her age: an alignment that occurs only once in our lifetime. This became a lens through which I reflected on continuity, lineage and the passage of time.

The piece came to be grounded in gratitude - for family, for the generations before us, for all that had to happen to make this moment possible. The work acknowledges my now 91 and 94-year-old grandmothers – their early years in war-torn Latvia and the long journey to Australia where their new lives began. This piece honours the immeasurably long chain of stories, sacrifices, migrations, loves, losses, choices and chances that centre us where we are today.

The music is infused with a quiet determination and reflection. The pulling apart and a weaving back together. The solo story in the collective field. The bittersweet intersection of gratitude and grief, marked by an awareness of the transience and impermanence of all things. The ache that accompanies beauty. The feeling of standing inside a moment while simultaneously recognising that it cannot be held or preserved. Of love we hope we will feel forever.

For Mum, my anchor and our constant source of all things rich and loving.

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***A*BOUT JS BACH**

The Bach family had dominated music in the Lutheran heartland of the central German provinces since the early 16th century and was linked by marriage to most of the other prominent musical dynasties there.

As Christoph Wolff has noted, we can never know just how it was that such prodigious talent was concentrated in one family – *the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* contains entries for fourteen Bachs (of which only three are of Sebastian's generation), with a list of also-rans that contains many more. It is clear, though, that the profession of music was, like a trade, carried on from father to son. Indeed, the status of musicians like the Bachs was akin to that of tradesman well into the early 18th century.

Sebastian Bach was orphaned before his tenth birthday and was brought up by a much older brother, Johann Christoph, who was organist in the small Thuringian town of Ohrdruf. It is generally agreed that Christoph 'laid the foundation' for Sebastian's keyboard technique, and for his intense interest in the construction of keyboard instruments, especially the organ. His first job as a musician, though, was as a violinist in the orchestra of the Duke of Weimar for six months in 1703; he returned some years later serving as chamber musician and organist from 1708 to 1717. In the interim he held a series of organist positions in towns such as Arnstadt and Mülhhausen, but in 1717 entered the employment of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. This was possibly the happiest period of Bach's life, though he was devasted at the death of his first wife Maria Barbara, but soon married Anna Magdalena Wilcke, a fine musician herself. The Prince had been raised a Calvinist so required no music for his chapel, but maintained a distinguished music staff for whom Bach wrote some of his most important instrumental music.

With the Prince's marriage to an unmusical bride, Bach left and took up employment in the city of Leipzig where he would spend the 27 years until his death in 1750. He was Cantor of the Thomasschule, training the students to provide music at the city's two main churches. This period saw the composition of the bulk of his surviving church music, notably cantatas for regular Sunday use and larger works like the *St Matthew* and *St John Passions* for Eastertide. But Bach also cultivated instrumental works, taking over the directorship of the local Collegium musicum (a pro-am orchestra founded by the composer Telemann) for which a number of larger scale pieces, some for visiting soloists keen to work with Bach, were doubtless written. The Collegium musicum performed at Zimmermann's Coffee House.

Bach's innovations included his development of the keyboard concerto – often based on works (by himself or other composers like Vivaldi) for single-line instruments. The 48 preludes and fugues of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* explored, probably for the first time, the use of all possible keys, and works like *The Art of Fugue* (not Bach's title) or the B-minor Mass are mind-blowing compendiums of technical and structural ingenuity.

Portrait of JS Bach c.1720, attributed to German artist Johann Jakob Ihle (1702–1774). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Image Description: This is a portrait painted with oil on canvas, with muted colours of browns, blues and greys. Bach is sitting facing the right, with his head turned to look at us with a stern gaze. He has pale skin and is wearing a wig of grey hair sculpted around his head. He is wearing a blue velvet coat and an orange waistcoat, with a white cravat around his neck.

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ABOUT THE ORCHESTRAL SUITE NO.3

David Garrett writes:

No autograph of the full score for Bach's four orchestral suites exists, but there are written parts, some by the composer, made for performances by the Leipzig Collegium musicum.

Scholars are not sure for what purpose these suites were composed. Many of Bach's purely instrumental works (the *Brandenburg* concertos, violin concertos, Book 1 of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*) date from the period of his employment at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen from 1717-1723, where his patron the Prince was skilled in playing the violin, viola da gamba and harpsichord as well as being a good bass singer. Until recently, authorities have concluded that all the original versions of these suites originated at Cöthen, but Christoph Wolff in the *New Grove Dictionary* claims that Suites 2 and 3 are demonstrably of Leipzig origin.

The Leipzig Collegium Musicum seems generally to have had more instrumentalists available to it than the Cöthen court. The surviving parts of this Suite show that it was conceived for a double orchestra: two groups of four instrumental parts each. One consists of three trumpets and kettledrums, the other of two violins, violas and continuo. The two oboes play in unison with the violins throughout; according to Thurston Dart they were an afterthought, added to give the strings more bite.

One origin of Bach's suites lay in the 'French' suite (*allemande* – *courante* – *sarabande* – *gigue*, with optional dances such as the *gavotte*, *minuet*, *rigaudon* and *bourrée* sandwiched between *sarabande* and *gigue*), as standardised by the German composer Froberger (1616–1667), who spent his later years in France. Bach, however called his orchestral suites *Ouvertüren*, a form of shorthand which became common in Germany, and referred to a 'French' overture followed by a set of dances. The *ouverture* as standardised by Lully in his operas consisted of a slow, often majestic introduction with dotted rhythms, followed by a fast fugal section, then a return of the slow opening. Suites for orchestral performance arose in France when the most popular dance numbers from an opera were performed away from the stage. This was Bach's model, although he reduced the Lullyian string texture from five parts to four after the fashion of the Italian composers of *concerti grossi*.

Although the music of the suite was closely based on dances which were actually popular when it was developing as a form, it was not written as music to be danced to but was dance-inspired music. The dance steps and rhythms gave a stimulus to the musical imagination and an ordered structure for musical thought. Bach's expression and ideas go far beyond the limitations of the original dance form. His choice and arrangement of dances is very free, as can be seen from the variety of dances to be found in his orchestral suites. What is so remarkable in all these works is Bach's carefully worked-out balance between solo and tutti passages, between harmonic and polyphonic writing; and his thoughtful choice and ordering of dances for the emotional and musical contrasts available from different dance rhythms.

The *Ouverture* is followed in this suite by an *Air* which had become excessively famous in a lush Romantic arrangement for solo violin and keyboard (the *Air on the G String*, arranged by Wilhelmj). In Bach's original conception it is a much more beautiful piece, keeping some of the character of a measured dance, and with much interest in the interplay of the string parts.

Originally a peasant dance, probably from Gap in the Dauphiné region of France, at court the *gavotte* became a moderate dance in pastoral style, having two, or more usually four, beats to the measure with phrases beginning and ending in the middle of a bar. The second *gavotte* was often in the style of *musette* imitating bagpipes over a drone bass. This is not the case in Suite No.3's coupling of two very festive-sounding dances.

The *bourrée* was the most vigorous and earthy of the old dance forms used in the suite; it possibly originated in the Auvergne. It is a skipping lively dance in 2/4 or 4/4, beginning with an upbeat on the fourth beat of the bar, giving greater vigour than the *gavotte*, which it resembles.

Suite No.3 closes with a *gigue*, customarily the final movement in the classical suite. Adapting the English or Irish jig, the French turned the *gigue* into a dance in compound duple time: 6/8 or 6/4, with wide intervals and fugal texture.

Bach's Suite is scored for 2 oboes, 3 trumpets, timpani, harpsichord and strings.

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A*BOUT MOZART*

Mozart began to compose at the age of five, and made his debut as a performer a year later. His father, Leopold, genuinely believed that his son was a 'miracle that God had allowed to be born in Salzburg', while being keenly aware of the commercial potential of having a child prodigy to exhibit on tours of London, Paris, and various cities in Italy and the German-speaking world. He played before aristocrats and crowned heads, and composed everything from solo sonatas to operas.

The Mozarts were employed by the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, but, reaching adulthood, Wolfgang decided to settle to Vienna in 1781.

His career there was largely very successful. Around 1782 he was Vienna's star composer and performer of piano concertos, but composing *The Marriage of Figaro* changed the course of his career, and the nature of opera, forever.

Mozart's pre-eminence in opera – whether it was fully appreciated at the time-stemmed in part from his exposure to Baroque music, and especially to the counterpoint of composers such as JS Bach. Mozart was not the only Viennese composer to come within the orbit of Baron Gottfried van Swieten, a friend of CPE Bach and connoisseur of the Baroque, but it was his great insight that counterpoint – where two or more independent melodic lines are sounded at the same time – could make music drama even more exciting: characters could now (as they do in *Figaro*, especially) deliver their lines simultaneously yet coherently.

From mid-1788 to the beginning of 1791 things were difficult for Mozart. As happens in show-business, his popularity in Vienna had temporarily waned for various reasons. Also, the city's musical life was put on hold while the Austro-Hungarian Empire went to war with the Turks – theatres closed and many of Mozart's patrons left town so as not to be conscripted. Short of cash, Mozart and his wife Constanze suffered ill-health and Mozart was depressed at his prospects.

By 1791 the economy had recovered, and, in the last year of his life, Mozart fulfilled numerous commissions such as the Requiem and *The Magic Flute*, which, had he lived, would have made him rich and famous. His death at 35 was probably the result of kidney failure, certainly not poisoning; his burial in a mass grave was in accordance with the practice mandated by the imperial government.

Portrait of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1789) by Dora Stock (1760–1832). Source: Mozarteum, Salzburg/Wikimedia Commons.

Image Description: It is a greyscale silverpoint drawing on a background of white ivory. Mozart is in profile, facing the left, looking straight ahead of him with a neutral expression. The profile emphasises a pointed nose and soft chin. There is a shadow under his eye.

He has long wispy hair, tied with ribbon into a low thin ponytail that falls down his back. Sideburns and a widow's peak frame his face. He is wearing a coat with a high collar and wide lapels. A ruffled white cravat spills out down the front of his neck and chest.

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*A*BOUT SYMPHONY NO.39

David Garrett writes:

American musicologist Neal Zaslaw has questioned two of the three most common assumptions about Mozart's last three symphonies. The assumptions are: that we do not know for what orchestra or for what occasion they were composed; that they were intended as an interrelated trilogy; and that they were never performed during Mozart's lifetime, showing how unappreciated he was by his contemporaries.

Zaslaw suggests that the symphonies were written for the subscription concerts Mozart scheduled for June and July 1788, of which only the first took place owing to insufficient subscribers. The grouping of the three symphonies may have been designed to appeal to publishers who liked to put out such works in groups of three or six. Mozart was also trying to arrange a trip to London, for which good new symphonies were an essential requirement. One or more of these symphonies may have been among the unidentified symphonies Mozart is known to have performed on a German tour in 1789.

So only the first statement remains unquestioned, that we don't know the exact occasion or orchestra. For, even though Mozart may not have had a particular

occasion in mind, he can hardly have been said to have composed purely as a result of an inner artistic stimulus: this would be foreign to what we know, both of his own practice and of the late 18th-century musical world.

It is quite possible that the Symphony in E flat was played in concerts in Vienna on 16 and 17 April 1791, when a large orchestra under Salieri performed a ‘grand symphony’ by Mozart. Mozart’s friends, the clarinettists Johann and Anton Stadler, were in the orchestra and this symphony, like many other Mozart works in E flat, omits oboes and gives very prominent parts to the pair of clarinets. Their mellow tone suffuses a symphony which Tovey described as ‘the *locus classicus* of euphony’. It is hard to say why it has remained less widely performed than the G minor and the *Jupiter* Symphonies, but the fact remains. Zaslaw suggests that it fares less well in large halls on modern instruments, partly because of the ‘flat’ key, but there is no lack of power and grandeur, as the slow introduction immediately reveals – only the third of these Haydn-inspired introductions in a Mozart symphony, and the last.

The first movement is a ‘singing *Allegro*’ – ‘strong ideas presented in a deliberately understated way’ (Zaslaw). Actually, the slow introduction allows Mozart to begin quietly, reserving the power for later. The same pattern obtains for the second subject, where magical use of pizzicato lower strings alternates with liquid clarinets.

The slow movement is in the (for Mozart) unusual key of A flat major. It is a long movement – basically serene in mood, despite a passionate episode in F minor. There is a great sense of forward momentum in spite of the somewhat sectional arrangement of the material, which becomes increasingly richly scored, notably in the successive wind entries over a pedal point.

The *Menuetto* has courtly poise and pomp, with an accompaniment of repeated wind chords that Beethoven must have remembered when writing the second movement of his Eighth Symphony. In the *Trio* the world of the wind serenades is recalled in an Austrian *Ländler*, with the second clarinet in the low register gurgling its accompaniment to the first.

The monothematic *Finale* may be a deliberate tribute to Haydn who used this method of construction so often. It is made witty and even perhaps saucy by interruptions from the bassoon and flute.

Notes by David Garrett © 1999 (Bach), 1991 (Mozart)

The symphony is scored for flute, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

The date of its premiere is unknown. The earliest eyewitness account of a performance was in Hamburg in March 1792.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work on 20 August 1940, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.

Other notable performances include those led by Eugene Goossens (1948), Alceo Galliera (1950), Jascha Horenstein (1962), Dean Dixon (1964), Willem van Otterloo

(1973 & 1974), Hiroyuki Iwaki (1981), Edo de Waart (1995) and David Robertson (2018)

Our most recent performances were under Donald Runnicles in 2023.

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Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Image Description: The Sydney Symphony Orchestra assembled on the Sydney Opera House's Concert Hall’s golden brush box stage. Clad in traditional black concert dress with instruments in hand, the ensemble of over 100 musicians, frames Chief Conductor Simone Young, distinguishable in a flowing white top.

End of image description

Performing in this Concert

FIRST VIOLINS

Harry Bennetts
Associate Concertmaster
Alexandra Osborne
Associate Concertmaster
Jennifer Booth
Sophie Cole
Sercan Danis
Georges Lentz
Emily Long
Alex Mitchell
Alexander Norton
Liam Pilgrim
Benjamin Tjoa
Leone Ziegler
Brian Hong°
Hannah Kim*

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Marina Marsden
Principal
Emma Jezek
Assistant Principal
Alice Bartsch
Emma Hayes
Shuti Huang

Monique Irik
Wendy Kong
Nicole Masters
Robert Smith
Caroline Hopson°
Emily Qin°

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Justin Williams
Acting Associate Principal
Sandro Costantino
Rosemary Curtin
Carl Lee
Justine Marsden
Felicity Tsai
Leonid Volovelsky
Andrew Jezek°
Stephen Wright°

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Leah Lynn
Assistant Principal
Catherine Hewgill
Principal Emeritus
Kristy Conrau
Fenella Gill
Timothy Nankervis
Elizabeth Neville
Christopher Pidcock
Adrian Wallis

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Principal
Jaan Pallandi
Acting Principal
Steven Larson
Richard Lynn
Benjamin Ward
Harry Young°

FLUTES

Emma Sholl
Principal
Carolyn Harris

OBOES

Shefali Pryor
Principal
Eve Osborn°

CLARINETS

Olli Leppäniemi
Principal
Christopher Tingay

BASSOONS

Todd Gibson-Cornish
Principal
Fiona McNamara

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Rachel Silver
Emily Miers°
Rodrigo Ortiz Serrano*
Sarah Bernard*

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David Elton
Principal
Cécile Glémot
Chris Moran*

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Nick Byrne
Acting Associate Principal
Jeremy Mazurek°
Christopher Harris
Principal Bass Trombone

TUBA

Steven Rossé
Principal

TIMPANI

Antoine Siguré
Principal

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos
Principal
Timothy Constable
Tim Brigden*

HARPSICHORD

Simone Young
Ruckers Double Harpsichord by Carey Beebe, Sydney 2003
Supplied by Carey Beebe Harpsichords
Prepared by Nathan Cox & Carey Beebe

Bold Principal
* Guest Musician
° Contract Musician
† Sydney Symphony Fellow

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Donald Runnicles
Principal Guest Conductor
Benjamin Northey
Conductor in Residence
Vladimir Ashkenazy
Conductor Laureate
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Concertmaster
Vicki Olsson Chair

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Alexandra Osborne
Associate Concertmaster
Helen Lynch AM & Helen Bauer Chair

Fiona Ziegler
Assistant Concertmaster
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Sun Yi
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Kirsty Hilton
Principal
Marina Marsden
Principal Emeritus
Emma Jazek
Assistant Principal
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Benjamin Li
Nicole Masters
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Robert Smith
Maja Verunica

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Principal
Richard Waters

Principal
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Leonid Volovelsky

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Simon Cobcroft
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Leah Lynn
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Kees Boersma
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Flutes
Emma Sholl
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Kaitlijn Sergeant
Principal

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Shefali Pryor
Principal
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Clarinets
Olli Leppäniemi
Principal
Francesco Celata
Associate Principal
John Curtis AM Chair
Christopher Tingay

Bass Clarinets
Alexander Morris
Principal

Bassoons
Todd Gibson-Cornish
Principal
Matthew Wilkie
Principal Emeritus
Fiona McNamara

Contrabassoon
Noriko Shimada
Principal

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Samuel Jacobs
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