Symphony Series 4

Serenity

Fri 24 & Sat 25 June Adelaide Town Hall



Season 2022

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Symphony Series 4



Fri 24 & Sat 25 June **Adelaide Town Hall**

Acknowledgement of Country

Pudnanthi Padninthi

The Lark Ascending

Buckskin & Goldsmith arr./orch. Ferguson

Cathy Milliken ASO Composer in Association

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

World Premiere, ASO Commission

Earth Plays V: Ediacaran Fields

Benjamin Northey Conductor

[2']

[13']

[15']

Emily Sun Violin

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Op.28		[10']
Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) orch. Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) Pictures at an Exhibition		[35′]
I. Gnomus	VI. 'Samuel' Goldenburg and	

1. Grommus	
Promenade	'Schmuÿle'
II. The Old Castle	VII. The Market at Limoges
Promenade	VIIIa. The Catacombs
III. Tuileries	VIIIb. Cum mortuis in lingua mortua
IV. Bydlo	IX. The Hut on Fowl's Legs - Baba Yaga
Promenade	X. The Great Gate of Kiev
V. Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks	

Duration Approximately 2 hours, including a 20 minute interval

Listen Later This concert will be recorded for later broadcast on ABC Classic on 6 August at 1pm

Classical Conversation Join us at the Meeting Hall (located just behind Adelaide Town Hall) one hour before the concert as Professor Mary Droser, Associate Professor Diego Garcia-Bellido and composer Cathy Milliken explore the inspiration behind Earth Plays V: Ediacaran Fields.

The Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation and the ASO.

The Ediacaran fossils of the Flinders Ranges, first discovered by Reg Sprigg in 1946, were the inspiration behind composer Cathy Milliken's work commissioned by the ASO.

Dating back 550 million years, these fossils resolved Darwin's famous dilemma about the earliest animal life on earth and led to the first new geological time division in over 100 years—the Ediacaran—in 2005 with its reference point in the Flinders Ranges, the only one located in the southern hemisphere.

What has the Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation achieved?

The Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation was established in 2018 to protect the world's greatest record of Ediacaran fossils, right here in South Australia's Flinders Ranges.

The Foundation has raised \$400,000 for the purchase of the fossil bed and contributed to the repurposing of the historic Nilpena Blacksmith's Shop into an immersive, educational and interpretive centre where a 9 metre fossil bed is on display.

How can you help?

Join us on this journey of conservation and education as world leading researchers from SA Museum and the University of California and their students continue to explore this ancient sea floor. Your support will help facilitate education programs to make these discoveries accessible to everyone, and ensure the fossil beds and historic pastoral buildings are preserved.

Donate at www.ediacarafoundation.org



Welcome

Thanks for joining us at this special concert, which includes the world premiere of Cathy Milliken's *Ediacaran Fields*. This is a major event in our 2022 season, and another demonstration of our commitment to new music and to music by the composing women of our time.

In the week of our previous world premiere – Joe Chindamo's trombone concerto, written for the amazing Colin Prichard – we welcomed up-and-coming musicians as part of the Australian Youth Orchestra Fellowship program. Throughout the week, ASO section leaders mentored Fellows through workshops, Professional Development sessions, and rehearsals. The project culminated in the opportunity to join the ASO orchestral casual list through an audition process. One of the Fellows was called upon sooner than expected, to play in the concerts featuring Chindamo's concerto, when one of our musicians fell ill!

It's a pleasure to welcome violinist Emily Sun as soloist in tonight's concert; we're particularly grateful to her for stepping in at short notice for an indisposed Grace Clifford. We wish Grace the very best and look forward to seeing her play with us again very soon.

Conductor Benjamin Northey – always a welcome presence – will be back next week for the final concert in our celebration of female musical voices, *She Speaks 2022*. I hope you can join us then.

In the meantime, my best wishes for your enjoyment of tonight's concert.



Vincent Ciccarello Managing Director



Benjamin Northey Conductor

Australian conductor Benjamin Northey is the Chief Conductor of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and the Principal Conductor in Residence of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. *Limelight* Magazine named him *Australian Artist of the Year* in 2018.

Northey appears regularly as a guest conductor with all major Australian symphony orchestras, Opera Australia New Zealand Opera and State Opera South Australia. His international appearances include concerts with, among many others, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg and the New Zealand Symphony.

He studied conducting with John Hopkins at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. In 2001, he was awarded first prize in the Symphony Australia Young Conductor of the Year Competition. Following further tuition at Finland's prestigious Sibelius Academy, he completed his studies at the Stockholm Royal College of Music with Jorma Panula in 2006.

With a progressive and diverse approach to repertoire, he has premiered major new works by Brett Dean, Peter Sculthorpe, Elena Kats-Chernin, Matthew Hindson and many others. He has collaborated with a broad range of artists including Piers Lane, Alban Gerhardt, Amy Dickson, Slava Grigoryan and Marc-André Hamelin, as well as such popular artists as Tim Minchin, Kate Miller-Heidke, Barry Humphries, Kurt Elling, James Morrison and Tori Amos.



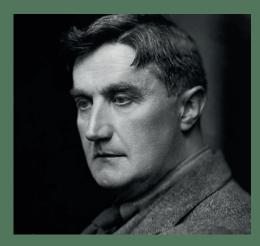
Emily Sun Violin

Remarkable for her versatility across the concerto, recital and chamber music repertoire, Emily is a multi-international prize winner, having been awarded the 2018 ABC Young Performer of the Year, the 2016 UK Royal Overseas League 'Commonwealth Musician of the Year', and prizes at Yampolsky International Violin Competition (Russia), Brahms International Violin Competition (Austria), and Lipizer International Violin Competition (Italy).

As a concerto soloist, Emily has appeared with orchestras worldwide including the Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Tasmanian and Canberra Symphony orchestras; Arlington Symphony, Arizona Symphony and Garland Symphony Orchestras in USA; Shanghai Youth Orchestra and Qingdao Symphony Orchestra in China; Orchestre de Royal Wallonie and Orchestre de Chambre Namur in Belgium. She has performed recitals in some of the world's leading concert venues including the Sydney Opera House, Wigmore Hall London, Tchaikovsky Great Hall Moscow and Auditorium du Louvre Paris.

In the world of chamber music, Emily has collaborated with, among others, Maxim Vengerov, Gary Hoffman, Danny Driver, Gemma Rosefield and Tamara-Anna Cislowska, and is regularly invited to perform at music festivals across Europe and Australia.

Emily plays a 1760 Nicolò Gagliano violin, kindly loaned to her through the Beare's International Violin Society.



Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) The Lark Ascending

Emily Sun Violin

Inspiration for *The Lark Ascending* came from a poem of the same name by George Meredith (1828-1909).

'He rises and begins to round, He drops the silver chain of sound, Of many links without a break, In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake...'

Vaughan Williams composed the work in 1914, just before the outbreak of World War I when birdsong was gradually to be replaced by the horrifying sounds of conflict and destruction; but he put the score aside until 1920. It was dedicated to violinist Marie Hall, who gave the first performance with Geoffrey Mendham in December 1920 in an arrangement for violin and piano. (The first orchestral performance took place in June 1921.)

The brevity of *The Lark Ascending* belies its significance in the emergence of what came to be referred to as English Pastoralism. Alarmed at the spread of industrialism over the English landscape, writers such as George Meredith, Edward Thomas, W.H. Hudson and Thomas Hardy sought to promote and preserve a quintessentially English landscape through the literary medium. Following its first public performance, English critics described *The Lark Ascending* as the pre¬eminent example of English Pastoralism in music. *The Times* reported that 'it showed serene disregard of the fashions of today or yesterday. It dreams its way along.' But musicologist Wilfrid Mellers said that 'by no other composer is the interdependence of man and Nature more movingly expressed.'

The Lark Ascending is in a simple ternary form. While the rhapsodising violin soars far above the countryside in the first section, it is drawn earthward in the central section which features a simple folk-like theme introduced initially by the flute and clarinet. The 'folk-song' constrains even the lark as the soloist's melismas become separate and marked notes forced into duple patterns. In the last section the main theme is fully orchestrated and the tempo more animated, but in the final ethereal moments the soloist's lyrical melody is heard alone as the lark flies beyond our vision of this tranquil idyll.

Abridged from an annotation by Catherine Hocking ©2001

Performance History

Robert Cooper was the soloist in the ASO's first performance of *The Lark Ascending*, given in December 1968 under conductor Patrick Thomas. The Orchestra's most recent performance took place in May 2015 conducted by Guy Noble. The soloist was Niki Vasilakis.



Cathy Milliken (born Brisbane) Earth Plays V: Ediacaran Fields

World Premiere

The Ediacaran world seems magically peaceful, with soft-bodied creatures – sometimes quite large ones – co-existing with more plant-like biota living in a marine environment. The remaining fossils reveal the perfect symmetry of these creatures, described as enigmatic, tubular, frond-shaped and mostly sessile. They are known for being the earliest known assemblage of complex multicellular organisms.

In a sense they could be understood as a peaceful co-existence of cells which assemble to become a larger organism, eventually hosting many diverse forms of cells – quite like a large social living complex where all co-exist for the greater good (although this is probably a most unscientific and idealised perspective). They are preserved in layers and folds of sandstone rock, each fossil caught in a momentary immortalised event.

One wonders what they were doing just before that moment – perhaps grazing on microbial mats, enjoying their warm, sun-filled shallow watered basin? The ruins of Pompeii show us touching records of such moments before the volcanic eruption of Vesuvius. Photographs from excavations at the Ediacaran fossil site in South Australia show these layers, reminding one of pressed flowers between the paper leaves of a book. Enter the Cambrians into this peaceful world, with their mineralised skeletons and sharp militaristic protrusions. There is debate about whether their seemingly militaristic intervention was long in coming or a veritable explosion, but it certainly brought about the demise of the Ediacarans in their unweaponised state. Coexistence seems a fragile affair – and one that humans could perhaps begin to attempt.

The composition *Ediacaran Fields* looks to a canonic overlay of musical material, as well as interventions which foreshadow the destruction of these musical overlays. The work begins seven times over, referencing the biblical beginning of life; this 'holding' or recording of time precedes the burgeoning forth of complex life revealed as small musical cells which repeat and overlay in playful and idyllic coexistence. A sombre theme is heard throughout the piece, reappearing as a coda and disappearing into the sound of stones hitting together in a field of silence.

Ediacaran Fields is the fifth part of the orchestral composition *Earth Plays*, which was given its Australian Premiere by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in 2016.

Ediacaran Fields was commissioned by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, supported by Mary Louise Simpson in honour of her mother, Grace Margaret McArthur.



Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Op.28

Emily Sun Violin

The Spanish violin virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908) became the toast of Europe during the second half of the 19th century and his fiery interpretations, incomparable technique and pure tone inspired many leading composers to write works for him. Max Bruch's Second Violin Concerto, Lalo's Concerto in F minor and *Symphonie espagnole*, Wieniawski's Second Violin concerto and Dvořák's Mazurek Op. 49 all owe their existence to Sarasate's dominating presence on European concert stages.

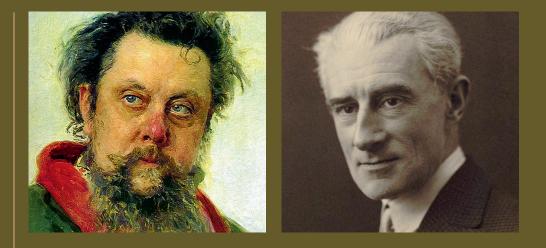
Saint-Saëns was also attracted to Sarasate's musicianship; for him he composed his first and third Violin Concertos, as well as the Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso. It's easy to see the appeal of Sarasate's playing for a composer like Saint-Saëns - indeed there were similarities in their musical strengths and weaknesses. While both were superb technically and capable of virtually anything within their areas of specialisation, both were nevertheless criticised by their contemporaries for a lack of emotional commitment. In both cases (Saint-Saëns as composer, Sarasate as performer) it seemed that their music came too easily, resulting in performances of formal perfection but little soul. And yet for all that, there is no doubting that the music resulting from their collaboration has endured well beyond their lifetimes, as tonight's performance of the Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso demonstrates.

Saint-Saëns wrote it for Sarasate in 1863, and like so many of his works it is a brilliant, polished and stylish vehicle for a virtuoso performer. The Introduction is predominantly sombre in character, while the Rondo is notable for the deft interplay of duple and triple metres. Its graceful, lilting theme dominates the work, contrasted only by a more serious second subject and an exquisite but strangely unrelated intermezzo of just 20 bars' duration. This brief intermezzo forms one of the highlights of the work. As the virtuoso Leopold Auer wrote, 'it's as if the composer had deliberately decided to turn his inspiration into another channel and create something novel.' The syncopated initial theme soon returns, however, and after some brilliant passage work for the soloist, a Più allegro section brings the work to a sparkling conclusion.

© Symphony Australia

Performance History

The ASO performed this work for the first time in November 1949 in Murray Bridge. Henry Krips conducted; Carmel Hakendorf was the soloist. Niki Vasilakis was soloist in the ASO's most recent performance, which took place in Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens in January 2011, conducted by Benjamin Northey.



Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) orch. Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Mussorgsky wrote *Pictures at an Exhibition* as a set of piano pieces. They were his memorial to a friend, the 39-year-old artist Victor Hartmann, who had died of a heart attack in 1873. Mussorgsky had met Hartmann in 1870, when the artist had been brought into Mussorgsky's circle by the critic Vladimir Stasov. 'Grief, grief!' cried Mussorgsky, at news of Hartmann's death:

...this talentless fool of a death mows on, without considering whether there is any necessity for his accursed visit... I would understand if talents sprouted like mushrooms... What might Hartmann not have done... Poor, orphaned Russian art.

The following year, 1874, Stasov mounted an exhibition of about 400 of Hartmann's works – paintings, drawings, designs and jewellery. He suggested that Mussorgsky assuage his grief in some sort of memorial, and it was this exhibition which inspired Mussorgsky to produce what became *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a set of 'tone-portraits' based on a selection of Hartmann's works.

There have been various orchestrations of *Pictures* over the years: Rimsky-Korsakov,

Stokowski, and Vladimir Ashkenazy are among those who have tried their hands. It is said that 'the large number of arrangements...indicates the essentially orchestral nature of Mussorgsky's [pianism].'

The most famous orchestration, however, is that of Maurice Ravel in 1922. He had an affinity with Mussorgsky's music and Russian music in general, but Ravel also orchestrated the music of others as a way of engaging with their music the way an interpretative artist does.

Some say that Ravel's orchestration presents a travel-brochure Russia. His orchestration is spicy, lurid, exotic. 'His' *Gnomus*, for example, (brittle xylophone, tart trumpet, eerie string glissandos) is prettier than Mussorgsky's original. Yet, so assured is Ravel's orchestration, that one almost believes *Pictures at an Exhibition* to be his conception to begin with. We listen again to Mussorgsky's piano version and ask, what better choices could an orchestrator have made?

Pictures at an Exhibition begins with the *Promenade*, an introduction in a varying 5/4 and 6/4 metre, meant to represent the composer himself wandering around looking at the Promenade I. Gnomus Promenade II. The Old Castle Promenade III. Tuileries IV. Bydlo Promenade V. Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks VI. 'Samuel' Goldenburg and 'Schmuÿle' VII. The Market at Limoges VIIIa. The Catacombs VIIIb. Cum mortuis in lingua mortua IX. The Hut on Fowl's Legs - Baba Yaga X. The Great Gate of Kiev

paintings. What begins as a single line followed by chords in the piano original is presented as a solo trumpet followed by tutti brass and, later, massed strings and winds, providing altered perspectives.

Gnomus is inspired by Hartmann's design for a small gnome-shaped nutcracker. *The Old Castle* is based on a watercolour of a troubadour singing before a medieval castle. According to the *BBC Music Guide* 'no-one has employed [alto saxophone] to better effect.'

The third *Promenade* has a fuller orchestration, in response to the thicker chords of Mussorgsky's original. Ravel opts predominantly for winds in *Tuileries*, based on Hartmann's watercolour of one corner of the famous French garden.

Bydlo, Polish for 'cattle', refers to a drawing of two oxen pulling a heavy cart. Listening to the piano original with its heavy bass chords and opening *fortissimo* one is reminded of the realist Mussorgsky's attempts at pantomimic accuracy. But Ravel's *Bydlo* begins as a distant forlorn tuba solo, which builds with the addition of other instruments before returning to solo tuba – as if the cart has passed on its way.

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks is based on costume designs for the ballet *Trilby*. The dancers' legs stick out from the shells. Ravel's clacking winds conjure the image of farmyard activity.

'Samuel' Goldenburg and 'Schmuÿle' is often presented with Stasov's sanitised title: Two Jews – One Rich, the other Poor, but, according to musicologist Richard Taruskin, Mussorgsky's intention was definitely unflattering, which is backed up by the fact that no Hartmann picture by that name exists. The stuttering muted trumpet solo here is often used as an orchestral audition piece.

In *Catacombs* Hartmann painted himself, the architect Vasily Kenel and a guide with a lantern exploring the Paris catacombs. The orchestration is almost brutally simple.

Catacombs moves into Con mortuis in lingua mortua. We hear a variation of the Promenade theme, with oboes playing against sepulchralsounding high string tremolos. Mussorgsky wrote on the piano score: 'Hartmann's creative spirit leads me to the place of skulls and calls to them – the skulls begin to glow faintly from within'. The Hut on Hen Legs refers to a Hartmann design for a clock face in the form of Baba-Yaga, the witch in Russian folk tales, who lives in a hut mounted on the legs of a giant fowl. The Great Gate of Kiev, Hartmann's architectural design for a commemorative structure, provides the inspiration for a massive, blazing finale.

G.K. Williams Symphony Australia © 1999/2001

Performance History

The ASO first played Ravel's orchestration of *Pictures at an Exhibition* in November 1955, conducted by Tibor Paul. Garry Walker conducted the Orchestra's most recent performance, in March 2015.

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5 Minutes with ASO's Conductor Laureate *Nicholas Braithwaite*

What does the ASO's conferral of the honorary title 'Conductor Laureate' mean to you?

As a conductor, one's life consists very much of 'fly in, fly out' engagements – a week or two with an orchestra and then you don't see them again for a year or more. There is little opportunity to maximise the abilities of either yourself or the orchestra. The first rehearsals are spent sniffing around like a pair of dogs meeting for the first time. I think the most meaningful music making happens over time with people you know and with whom you have a commonality of approach. Having this musical relationship means you begin the rehearsal process much further along the path.

I first started working with the ASO in the early 80s, was Chief Conductor between 1987 and 1991, and have since worked with them on and off. I feel we have a relationship of musical confidence. They know me with all my faults and whatever virtues I might have and can work around those, and I know them likewise. That is an enormous joy, and a privilege. Having the honorary title of 'Conductor Laureate' is a wonderfully gratifying recognition of a relationship and a body of work over a major part of my life. It is greatly meaningful and something that I treasure.

How has the ASO changed over the last 40 years?

When I first worked with the ASO it was a fine orchestra. By the late 90s it was much more than that – international press reviews for the 1998 Ring cycle praised the ASO to the highest level, in league with the best the world has to offer. There is now a solidity to their music making together with a confidence in their performance that puts them amongst the very best. You're renowned as a Wagner conductor, and in Symphony Series 5 – Spellbound you will conduct Der Ring ohne Worte. Do you still discover new ways to interpret Wagner?

I have never regarded 'new' as a synonym for 'good'. I really hope I haven't found new ways to interpret Wagner's music because to me that implies imposing something onto the music that is not actually there. What I do hope I have discovered is a greater depth of understanding of what the composer is striving for and how I might realise that. The richness of this music and the philosophical drama that inspires it is never ending. Growing to understand it is a lifelong journey.

Are there any ambitions you have yet to achieve?

To conduct a bit better next time.

What do you hope to see the ASO achieve in the future?

It would be really good to see the funding base increase for the player establishment, which would widen the range of programming possibilities greatly. The other thing would be a dedicated Concert Hall, the lack of one being – as I see it – a great restraint on the progress of the orchestra currently.

With thanks to Nicholas Braithwaite for his great music making and advocacy of the ASO, and to the ASO Conductors' Circle, a group of extraordinary benefactors who support the ASO's Artistic Leadership Team.

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Holly Piccoli* Guest Principal 1st Violin

Alison Heike** Principal 2nd Violin

Lachlan Bramble~ Associate Principal 2nd Violin

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Double Basses David Schilling^{**} Jonathon Coco~ Harley Gray Belinda Kendall-Smith Stephen Newton Gustavo Quintino

Congratulations *Suzanne Handel Principal Harp*

Congratulations Suzanne Handel, Principal Harp Please join us in congratulating Suzanne Handel on an extraordinary career as she leaves the ASO after 29 years of service.

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Piccolo Julia Grenfell*

Oboe Joshua Oates** Renae Stavely~

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Jonathon Coco Associate Principal John Sulan QC & Ali Sulan J



Jacky Chang Dr Melanie Turner J

Contra Bassoon



Harley Gray Bob Croser ♪





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Timpani



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Liz Ampt .





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