Symphony Series 2

Fri 21 & Sat 22 April Adelaide Town Hall





Adelaide Symphony Orchestra Season *2023*

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Symphony Series 2

Fri 21 & Sat 22 April Adelaide Town Hall Benjamin Northey Conductor

Emily Sun Violin ASO Artist in Association

Duration 2 hrs 20 mins (incl. interval)

Acknowledgement of Country Jamie Goldsmith arr./orch. Ferguson <i>Pudnanthi Padninthi II – Wadna</i>	[2']
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) Le corsaire, Op.21	[10']
World Premiere, ASO Commission Elena Kats-Chernin (born 1957) Fantasie im Wintergarten Concerto for violin and orchestra Movement 1 ($J = 176$) Movement 2 ($J = 40$) Movement 3 ($J = 88-92$)	[30']
Emily Sun Violin	
Interval	

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op.78 Organ

Adagio – Allegro moderato – Poco adagio Allegro moderato – Presto – Maestoso – Allegro

Listen Later ABC Classic is recording this concert for later broadcast. You can hear it again at 1pm on Sunday 14 May.

Pre-Concert Talk Join us at the Meeting Hall (located just behind Adelaide Town Hall) one hour before each concert for our free *Classical Conversations*, in which composer Elena Kats-Chernin will be talking to composer and violinist Belinda Gehlert.

[36']

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Welcome

The ASO has been blessed to have many outstanding Concertmasters over the years, and just last month we welcomed Kate Suthers to the chair; it's a pleasure to have her with us. Recently we lost the great Ladislav Jasek, former ASO Concertmaster. From 1983 to 1993, he was an invaluable member of the orchestra, admired for his leadership and joyful approach to music-making. His legacy will forever be felt by those who had the privilege of playing alongside him and witnessing him perform.

This is the first Symphony Series concert in which Emily Sun appears a soloist with us in her capacity as ASO Artist in Association. It's always a pleasure to have Emily perform with us, and her new role will allow for a deepening of our connection with her, and a richer collaboration, which I'm sure will be immensely rewarding in the year ahead.

Wild is a perfect example of this new dynamic in action, as the concert features the World Premiere of *Fantasie im Wintergarten*, commissioned by the ASO and written especially for Emily by one of Australia's most important composers, Elena Kats-Chernin. In recent seasons, our commitment to music by women has led to performances by composers as diverse as Cathy Milliken, Lisa Illean, Missy Mazzoli and Emily Howard, to name a few. It's a thrill to add Elena's new work – her first violin concerto – to this list.

My best wishes for your enjoyment of Wild.



Colin Cornish AM Chief Executive Officer



Benjamin Northey Conductor



Emily Sun Violin

Australian conductor Benjamin Northey is the Chief Conductor of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's Principal Conductor in Residence. Previously Resident Guest Conductor of the Australia Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra (2002-2006) and Principal Conductor of the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra (2007-2010), *Limelight* magazine named him *Australian Artist of the Year* in 2018.

Northey also appears regularly as a guest conductor with all major Australian symphony orchestras, Opera Australia (*Turandot, L'elisir d'amore, Don Giovanni, Così fan tutte, Carmen*), New Zealand Opera (*Sweeney Todd*) and State Opera South Australia (*La sonnambula, L'elisir d'amore, Les contes d'Hoffmann*). His international appearances include concerts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Malaysian Philharmonic and the New Zealand Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia and Christchurch Symphony Orchestras.

He has collaborated with a broad range of artists including Maxim Vengerov, Julian Rachlin, Karen Gomyo, Piers Lane, Tim Minchin, k.d. lang and many others.

Northey is highly active in the performance and recording of new Australian orchestral music, having premiered dozens of major new works by Australian composers.

In 2023, he conducts the Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Tasmanian and Christchurch Symphony orchestras, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic. Emily Sun is the 2023 Adelaide Symphony Orchestra Artist-in-Association. 'Possessed of a superb talent' (The Australian), with 'a searing and poetic tone' (The Guardian), Emily Sun's powerful sound and compelling interpretations have earned her international renown, winning the Royal Overseas League Competition (UK), ABC Young Performers Award (Australia), prizes at the Lipizer International Violin Competition (Italy), Yampolsky International Violin Competition (Russia), and Brahms International Violin Competition (Austria), and was awarded the Tagore Gold Medal, presented to her by King Charles III.

This season, Emily performs as soloist with the Sydney, Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras with conductors Jaime Martin, Mark Wigglesworth, and Asher Fisch along with concerts at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, for Musica Viva Tasmania, and more.

Recent highlights include as soloist with the West Australian, Adelaide and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras and London Mozart Players with conductors Vasily Petrenko, Benjamin Northey, Tan Dun and Howard Griffiths; for Musica Viva Australia, Sydney Festival, with the EU Chamber Orchestra, Qingdao Symphony Orchestra, and alongside Maxim Vengerov at Buckingham Palace. Emily's debut album 'Nocturnes' (ABC Classics) was nominated for a 2021 ARIA award for 'Best Classical Album' and reached No. 1 on the Classical Charts.

Emily is a Violin Professor at the Royal College of Music London, and plays on a 1760 Nicolò Gagliano violin, kindly loaned by Beares International Violin Society.



Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) Le corsaire, Op.21

For Romantic artists storms at sea symbolised the insignificance of culture in the face of the immense power of nature. Storms featured prominently in poetry by Byron and Goethe, the paintings of Turner, and in music. Berlioz, Mendelssohn and Wagner were just three of many leading composers who sought to depict the storm at sea in their work. Berlioz's concert overture *Le Corsaire* was inspired in part by his experience of an actual tempest which he had encountered on a voyage from Marseilles to Livorno.

The overture began its career in 1844 as La tour de Nice (The Tower of Nice – after a spectacular coastline ruin which Berlioz admired as he composed the piece). The work's initial failure led Berlioz to revise it between 1846 and 1851. It became Le corsaire rouge (The Red Corsair) in response to Byron's Corsair and also from James Fenimore Cooper, whose tale The Red Rover features the prominent landmark of a tower on a rocky coast – perhaps a reference to Berlioz's original source of inspiration for the piece. Berlioz removed 'Red' from the title after Cooper died in 1851. The opening of the overture features two cracking chords leading into various flourishes from the strings and chordal figures in the wind. As if to parallel the violent mood changes in Byron's poem, a quiet *adagio* soon appears, but is then overthrown by the quicker tempo and some extended orchestral development. The more lyrical second theme is introduced by the violins, but is then merged into the orchestral fabric as the 'fantasy' elements of the overture take over and the music moves onward with all the restless energy of Berlioz's familiar Romantic impulses.

Symphony Australia © 1997

Performance History

Thomas Matthews conducted the ASO's first performance of the overture *Le corsaire* at an open-air concert in January 1960. Most recently, the Orchestra performed the work under Nicholas Carter's direction in February 2017, in Adelaide Town Hall.



Movement 1 (J = 176) Movement 2 (J = 40) Movement 3 (J = 88–92)

Elena Kats-Chernin (born 1957) Fantasie im Wintergarten Concerto for violin and orchestra

WORLD PREMIERE

Emily Sun Violin

The composer writes:

This work was commissioned by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra with generous support from Mary Lou Simpson OAM. Mary Lou and I have known each other for many years, this being our third composing project together. The much-loved international soloist Emily Sun had mentioned, through our shared agent, that she had long wished to play a violin concerto written by me, and I wrote *Fantasie im Wintergarten* especially with her in mind.

This Concerto was inspired by some of the ideas from a 1920s German silent film. At the core of the film is a tragic human story of love and betrayal that takes place inside the fairground and circus world; most of the show scenes are performed at a renowned Berlin venue that still exists today, called Wintergarten. For this concerto, I felt that I could build upon such contrasting themes as light and shadow, tango and chaos, showy or surreal atmosphere, yearning, lyrical or foreboding – all those opposing or related themes would give Emily a great vehicle to showcase virtuosity, and edgy sounds, as well as heartbreakingly poetic suspended lines.

From the textural point of view the violin writing moves between the soloistic and – *prima inter pares* – the symphonic.

Fantasie im Wintergarten is in three distinct movements, and there are motivic elements that weave through all three movements in different guises.

First movement

After a short introduction a recurring four-note tango motive appears in the violin's lowest register, which is followed by a succession of unsettling motives. This movement finishes with a highly punchy, sonorous, rhythmic dance firstly in C minor and, after a short interjection, in D minor.



Second movement

Sombre blues-like phrases in the low woodwinds build the introduction. The solo violin appears, with long notes eerily caressing the gentle chordal and melodic patterns of the strings. The horn and trumpets herald the return of the winds and brass, with trumpet, piccolo and flute playing the eerily long notes, and the solo violin taking on a role of gentle colour wrapping. The chord of G seventh is a climactic point of this movement, which then concludes in a subdued manner, with the reprise of the introduction material.

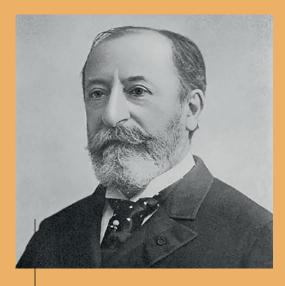
Third movement

It begins with what I call the 'fatal clamation sequence'. The following violin solo theme, with its somewhat morbid cabaret style accompaniment (mostly in brass and strings), reflects the entangling nature of the salon and circense atmosphere.

The culmination of the essence of all the previous material arrives when the initial four-note tango returns, announced by big orchestral chords, almost like a march. This morphs into the *Fantasie's* final, resolving phase, which includes a violin cadenza referencing the 'fatal clamation sequence' from the start of this movement, leading into a mournful lament.

© Elena Kats-Chernin 2023

The ASO's commission of *Fantasie im Wintergarten* is generously supported by Mary Lou Simpson OAM. Performance in the Berlin Wintergarten from 1929. The Wintergarten of the Hotel Central was used as a revue theatre from 1887 until its destruction in 1944. Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo/Alamy Stock Photo



Adagio – Allegro moderato – Poco adagio Allegro moderato – Presto – Maestoso – Allegro

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op.78 Organ

Saint-Saëns was something of an Anglophile. So it was a happy coincidence that when he was making plans for another symphony, the Royal Philharmonic Society invited him to perform as both conductor and pianist at one of its London concerts. As the non-profit Society could not afford the requested fee of £40, they suggested £30, plus a formal commission to write the Third Symphony under the Society's auspices.

Saint-Saëns agreed and immediately began work on the symphony, saying to the Society: 'It will be terrifying, I warn you.' And he wasn't wrong. Considering the Society's financial state at the time, the prospect of an outsize orchestra complete with organ and multiple pianists must have struck fear into the heart of at least the Treasurer.

And as the blood pressure of Society members rose, so too did the key of the symphony. 'This imp of a symphony has gone up a half-tone; it didn't want to stay in B minor and is now in C minor,' Saint-Saëns advised the long-suffering Society members as he worked on the ever-expanding piece.

In the end, Saint-Saëns came up with a symphony in two parts, but still more or less using the traditional four movements. The first part consists of an *Allegro* and *Adagio*, corresponding to conventional first and second movements, and the second part is a scherzo and finale merged into one. The use of the organ was inspired by Liszt's employment of it in his symphonic poem *Hunnenschlacht* (Battle of the Huns) and the published version of the *Organ* Symphony is dedicated 'to the memory of Franz Liszt', who had died shortly after the premiere.

That premiere occurred on 19 May 1886 in St James's Hall, London, with the composer conducting, as well as appearing as soloist in his own Fourth Piano Concerto. On the whole, the reception was excellent, despite the best efforts of a few Wagnerians in the audience. Afterwards, the great admirer of British royalty was introduced to the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII). A Paris premiere, the following year, was a great success and prompted Charles Gounod to proclaim, 'There goes the French Beethoven.'

Saint-Saëns summarised the symphony by saying, 'I have given all that I had to give... What I have done I shall never do again.' And he was as good as his word. The *Organ* Symphony was to remain his supreme achievement in music and it is still one of his most frequently performed works. In recent years it has actually achieved a certain popular success, following its quotation in the soundtracks for the movies *Babe* and *Babe: Pig in the City*.

Saint-Saëns was a virtuoso by nature. Indeed, the ongoing criticism of his music has been that his prodigious technical facility and ability to dazzle sometimes distract from the greater impact of the music itself. Certainly in the Organ Symphony Saint-Saëns gives literal meaning to the cliché 'pulling out all the stops'. While much of the organ writing is subtle, even understated, climaxes are marked by thunderous passages for the organ, and deliberately grandiose scoring. The 'first movement' develops through a kind of Lisztian transformation of themes, whereby the thematic material appears in a series of varying guises rather than being developed in a strictly Classical sense. After the 'first movement' has led without pause into the 'second', the organ enters, surprisingly discreetly, as an accompaniment to the mystical main theme, marked Poco adagio. The scherzo ('third movement') begins the second half of the piece, and much of its thematic material derives albeit vastly transformed – from the preceding Adagio. From here Saint-Saëns introduces all

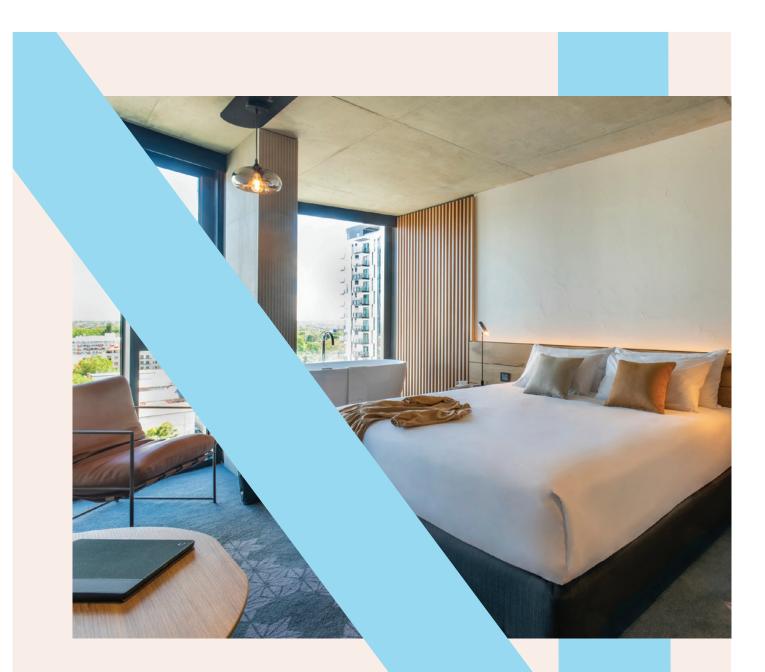
the fireworks he can. The tempo increases to *Presto*, the orchestration becomes more vibrant and new themes are superimposed over the existing ones, before the organ almost lunges into the finale.

This concluding section is a good example of the differing value-judgements which Saint-Saëns' music invites. The climax builds through fanfares, four-hand piano figures, loud organ chords and extensive fugal writing, carrying the work through to its triumphant conclusion. Depending on one's viewpoint, Saint-Saëns either demonstrates his unrivalled compositional virtuosity, or simply goes over the top. However, no one can doubt that the *Organ* Symphony has demonstrated its enduring appeal.

Martin Buzacott Symphony Australia © 1998

Performance History

Eugene Goossens conducted the Orchestra's first performance of Saint-Saëns' *Organ* Symphony, in June 1951, in the Adelaide Town Hall. The ASO's most recent performance of the work took place in April 2018. The Adelaide Town Hall was the venue; Nicholas Carter conducted.



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5 Minutes with Composer *Elena Kats-Chernin*

We spoke to Elena Kats-Chernin ahead of the World Premiere of her Violin Concerto *Fantasie im Wintergarten*, an ASO commission written especially for ASO Artist in Association Emily Sun.

What is your relationship with the ASO?

I have been fortunate to have had a wonderful ongoing relationship with ASO, which started in 1996 with a recording of the *Fantasy on an Anthem*. It continued with ASO recording a whole CD of my works for orchestra, including *Displaced Dances* and "Zoom and Zip" in the early 2000's. I am very excited to be working with this very creative orchestra again.

Does knowing the soloist make a difference when composing?

Knowing the soloist is comparable to knowing who will be the protagonist in a play or a film and it makes a huge difference to me. I vividly imagine that performer while writing. It even helps me to know the size of their hands. I have been fortunate to see and hear Emily perform several times, and I kept coming back to this image, while composing the piece.

Can you share the inspiration and themes behind your composition?

Not long before I commenced composing this concerto I had completed a score for a German silent film from the 1920s. At the base of that film is a tragic human story that plays out in the fairground and circus milleu. Working on that film was all-consuming and I was so engrossed in its themes that I felt driven by some of its ideas to spill over into the violin concerto which was my next composition. I designed the concerto as if it was a fantasy on those themes, from the place called "Wintergarten" in Berlin where variety shows were performed.

Can you tell us about the musical style of the piece?

The style of the piece is what you might call a synthesis of 1920s sensibility with its punchy rhythms, dance and blues elements, muted brass and clanky percussion sounds as well as salon music flavours. At the core of this violin concerto is a tense, mysterious and suspenseful, sometimes abstracted atmosphere and I would almost call it 'Fantasy Elegy'.

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Bequests

The ASO gratefully acknowledges recent bequests to the orchestra In memory of Jill Barrington In memory of Barbara Carter In memory of Bob Maynard In memory of Dr Ian Hodgson and Elaine Hodgson In memory of Janet Ann Rover

Anonymous (4)

Dr Malcolm Mackinnon & Dr Alison Mackinnon AM Professor Susan Magarey Ian Maidment Ruth Marshall & Tim Muecke Lee Mason David & Ann Matison Jacqueline McEvoy Carolyn Mitchell **Diane Myers Graham Norton** Rosemary & Lew Owens Tom F Pearce **David & Janet Rice** Drs I C & K F Roberts-Thomson Trevor & Tanya Rogers David & Anne Rohrsheim Jill Russell Warren & Margaret Scharer

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Donation by the ASO Players Association in memory of Ladislav Jasek, former ASO Concertmaster

The ASO would like to thank the 1,449 donors who gave other amounts. A complete list of donors of \$250 or more can be found at aso. com.au/aso-donors

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