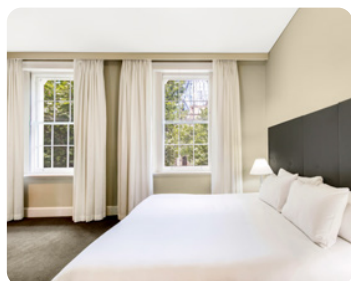


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5 – Fearless

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Adelaide Town Hall





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Symphony *Series*

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Fearless

Dmitry Matvienko
Conductor

Tamara-Anna Cislowska
Piano

—

Duration
2 hrs (incl. interval)

Fri 9 & Sat 10 August
Adelaide Town Hall

Acknowledgement of Country

Buckskin & Goldsmith arr. / orch. Ferguson

[2']

Pudnanthi Padninthi

Schumann

[19']

Manfred: Overture, Op.115

Australian Premiere

Dora Pejačević

[15']

Phantasie Concertante for Piano and Orchestra in D Minor, Op.48

Interval

Tchaikovsky

[57']

Manfred, Op.58

I. Lento lugubre

II. Vivace con spirito

III. Pastorale: Andante con moto

IV. Allegro con fuoco

Listen Later ABC Classic is recording this concert for later broadcast. You can hear it again on Tuesday 20 August at 1pm.

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Welcome



Colin Cornish AM
Chief Executive Officer

Tonight, I would like to invite you on this journey into the depths of the human psyche. We will experience two interpretations of Lord Byron's Romantic *Manfred* – a whirlwind poem revealing the secrets of forbidden love. The first composition is by Schumann, who poured his emotions into his standout overture based on the poetry. We then hear Tchaikovsky's symphonic take on *Manfred* – a composer whose own hidden desires echoed the plight of our title character.

As we present our *Fearless* program – the fifth in this year's Symphony Series – we are most proud to bring you the Australian Premiere of a gripping work by Dora Pejačević. Pejačević is one of the first Croatian composers to have worked in symphonic and concerto forms. Following on from our popular *She Speaks* festival, we are delighted to continue showcasing more music by underrepresented composers on our main stage.

In Pejačević's *Phantasie Concertante*, we also give a warm welcome to renowned Australian pianist Tamara-Anna Cislowska. The virtuoso makes her debut with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra thanks to the support of our loyal patron Mary Lou Simpson OAM. We are also thrilled to welcome back to the podium Dmitry Matvienko.

It has been another busy few months for our orchestra as we presented all of Rachmaninov's symphonies across three memorable events. In June, we joined forces with composer and music educationalist Paul Rissmann, and Adelaide-born violinist Belinda McFarlane, for a transformative week. Alongside ASO musician mentors, they conducted workshops with students and teachers that culminated in a heartwarming performance at Brighton Concert Hall, showcasing the remarkable talents and resilience of these young musicians.

In the lead-up to *Fearless*, we have also continued our conductor training program with Elder Conservatorium of Music students, providing invaluable time on the podium, and opportunities to engage in rehearsals. Later in the year, we will play the world premiere of a work the ASO commissioned from Australian composer Graeme Koehne AO, so be sure to enter our seventh Symphony Series event in your diary.

Until then, we hope you will feel moved by our performance of *Manfred* and the *Phantasie Concertante*.



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Dmitry Matvienko
Conductor

Dmitry Matvienko is the winner of the 2021 edition of the prestigious Malko Competition with First Prize and Audience Prize. He was awarded the Critics and Made in Italy prizes at the Guido Cantelli International Conducting Award. From this season, he starts his tenure as Aarhus Symphony Orchestra Chief Conductor.

He worked as musical assistant to Vladimir Jurowski in new productions of *The Nose* and *War and Peace* at the Bayerische Staatsoper. He has conducted orchestras such as Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Orchestra Teatro Regio Torino, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra del Teatro La Fenice of Venice, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lille, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Gulbenkian Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra.

In the 2024/25 season, he returns to the podium of Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Arktisk Filharmoni, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, and will make his debuts with Göteborgs Symfoniker, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini.

After a successful operatic debut in Rome, in the current season he will make his Austrian and German operatic debut, respectively with *Eugene Onegin* at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein and *Betrothal in a Monastery* at the Theater an der Wien.



Tamara-Anna Cislowska
Piano

Tamara-Anna Cislowska is one of Australia's most globally recognised classical pianists. Winning prizes in London, Italy, and Greece, Tamara's accolades include ABC Young Performer of the Year, the Freedman Fellowship, an APRA AMCOS Art Music Award for Performance of the Year (ACT), and the 2015 ARIA Award for Best Classical Album. She has nearly 8 million streams on Spotify, and 10 ARIA number-one albums through ABC Classics, Deutsche Grammophon, and Naxos.

Tamara has toured Japan and the United States as a cultural ambassador, and performed at London's Purcell Room, the Kleine Zaal of Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and New York's Frick Collection, and as soloist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, and all major Australian symphony orchestras. Tamara gave the world premiere of Elena Kats-Chernin's Piano Concerto No.3 *Lebewohl*, commissioned for Cislowska. Touring highlights include with Circa for New York's White Light Festival, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra to London's Barbican Centre for *Mountain*. 2024 season highlights include Canberra International Music Festival, Sunshine Coast Chamber Music Festival, and performances as soloist with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra for recordings due for 2025 release.

Curator, music director, librettist, and composer, Tamara also hosts weekly show *Duet* on ABC Classic FM. Her chart-topping album of performances from *Duet* was nominated for Best Classical Album in the 2022 ARIA Awards.

About the Program

Schumann (1810–1856)

Manfred: Overture, Op.115

Pejačević (1885–1923)

Phantasie Concertante for Piano and Orchestra in D Minor, Op.48

Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Manfred, Op.58

Composers will not shy away from a good story – even if it has already been set to music. Ravel was fascinated with Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* when he composed his own French impressions of the legend. Numerous composers have written about the charismatic character of Don Juan.

And most of us have heard Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev's equally memorable settings of *Romeo and Juliet*, which they composed more than half a century apart.

Rarely do we have the chance to hear such works performed side by side. Tonight's program, inspired by the Romantic tale of *Manfred*, allows us to gain insights into some of the greatest minds in music. Not only may we compare the way Schumann and Tchaikovsky infused their lived experiences into their gripping interpretations of Lord Byron's poetry – but we will also hear the Australian premiere of a work by Dora Pejačević, whose music is imbued with her passion for the Romantic arts.

To fully appreciate tonight's program, we must first know what plagued Lord Byron. His 1817 poem *Manfred* is semi-autobiographical, and its riveting narrative represents his troubled psyche. Born in 1788, George Gordon Byron was the son of an officer who lost their family fortune, leaving Byron's mother to raise him. In a twist of fate, the 10-year-old Byron would receive a substantial inheritance from his great-uncle and move into Newstead Abbey, its Gothic-style peaks overlooking the meadows of Nottinghamshire. The young Lord Byron went on to receive a fine education in London, but soon faced a major heartbreak that would influence the way he thought about love: his engaged cousin Mary

turned him down. Byron then formed a passionate relationship with a male chorister – an experience he wrote about with cautious ambiguity. This was not an era of acceptance; the same would be true for Tchaikovsky.

As Byron grew older, he became infatuated with women who were forbidden to him. After his cousin Mary (and his other cousin Margaret), Byron pursued the stepsister of *Frankenstein* author Mary Shelley, resulting in the birth of an illegitimate child he placed in a convent. In Italy, he had an affair with the wife of his landlord, and another with the wife of a baker. But it was his own half-sister Augusta that caused the biggest stir – not only because one of the daughters she bore was most likely his, but because the gossip surrounding their incestuous partnership would haunt him to the extent that he felt driven out of England. He expressed his guilt in *Manfred*, fashioning his experiences into the title character who ultimately takes responsibility for his own actions.

Escaping the mess of his life, Byron travelled to the Swiss Alps and it was there among the glaciers that he found inspiration for this dramatic poem. The tale is set in the mountains after its opening scene in which Manfred stands in his Gothic castle – reminiscent of Newstead Abbey – to call upon the spirits. He asks them for oblivion so he may escape the horrors of his mind, but they will not grant it. Later, he stands on an icy cliff, contemplating his fate while avalanches crash around him before a hunter helps him to safety. Manfred confides in the hunter that he loved a woman "as we should not love". He is speaking of Astarte – the character who almost



Lord Byron, depicted by Joseph-Denis Odevaere on his deathbed, was a passionate philhellene, and his premature death was mourned especially in Greece. The poet is shown surrounded by symbols of ancient art and culture, with the titles of his poems inscribed along the edge of his bed.

certainly symbolises Byron's half-sister Augusta. By the end of the poem, Manfred dies without redemption or punishment. When confronted with the spirits, he holds himself to account, and chooses to grasp control over his fate: "I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey – but was my own destroyer, and will be my own hereafter."

While Tchaikovsky shared an intimate connection with Byron's themes of forbidden love, Robert Schumann's earlier resonance with *Manfred* was more abstract. The German composer struggled with his mental health; he and his composer wife Clara wrote many letters detailing his emotional dysregulation and auditory hallucinations. He was diagnosed with psychotic melancholia, though in recent times researchers in musicology and psychiatry alike have attributed his symptoms to possible schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, heavy metal poisoning, and syphilis. He used to stay up in bed reading *Manfred*, and like its title character, he was cursed to labour through sleepless nights. Perhaps the composer sought comfort in the familiarity of Lord Byron's poetry: his late father August Schumann – also prone to melancholia – was a publisher who had translated some of the author's writing, among other works of literature.

Schumann wrote *Manfred* as incidental music – a form of composition that generally accompanies a stage production or similarly narrative-driven event. The music is designed to be atmospheric and respond to the emotional cues of the story. Schumann wrote 15 short pieces to conjure the turbulent emotions throughout Byron's tale, but he needn't have invested himself so extensively into this project. Byron himself did not intend for this metaphysical work to be presented on the stage:

it was a dramatic poem, so he hoped his evocative cliff-top scenes would be performed within the mind of the reader. From Schumann's incidental music, only one piece of *Manfred* remains popular: the overture. As a standalone work, it encompasses the entire emotional journey of the main character, and contains everything he had needed to communicate through his music.

Schumann's *Manfred* Overture opens with an abrupt orchestral blast before strings play their agony-fuelled melody. We hear some startling moments that may allude to the spirits emerging from the shadows of Manfred's Gothic castle. Schumann instructs the musicians to gain pace, and we enter the dark and spiralling minds of composer and poet alike. A sense of urgency is accomplished through Schumann's insistent call and response, and after the continuous rise and fall of disturbingly tense and repetitive passages, the overture concludes on a pianissimo minor chord: faithful to the poem, there is no judgment in Manfred's parting, and he claims death without Heaven or Hell. Liszt conducted the Weimar premiere of this work in 1852, just two years before Schumann attempted suicide. Two more years would pass before the composer's death in an asylum. He had told Liszt that his *Manfred* Overture was one of his greatest works.

We now travel forward a few decades – but remain in the spirit of the Romantic era – to explore the music of Dora Pejačević. The composer was born in 1885 – coincidentally, the year Tchaikovsky wrote his *Manfred* Symphony. The Croatian-Hungarian composer was born into nobility, and she was well read and well travelled. She played multiple instruments, and received private music

lessons along with some training at the Croatian Music Institute. But she was mostly self-taught in composition – an extraordinary fact when considering she started writing music at 12, and developed a flourishing career in an era that rarely took women’s works seriously. On one occasion, celebrated Austrian-American composer Arnold Schoenberg admitted he had doubts about the capabilities of women in composition – yet he went on to champion one of Pejačević’s pieces, confronting his own personal biases in favour of outstanding music.

Although Pejačević was forced to contend with these common cultural attitudes, her artistic voice was no less groundbreaking: she is known for writing Croatia’s first symphony and first piano concerto, and her works were regularly performed throughout Europe – but only during her lifetime. They are hard to find on Australian concert programs of the 21st Century: we have waited until this very day to hear the first live performance of her *Phantasie Concertante* in this country.

Pejačević’s inner world was enriched through literature, and she maintained a diary tracking the countless works she consumed. Authors such as Dostoyevsky, Wilde, and Nietzsche all appear on her reading log. (Nietzsche had composed his own interpretation of *Manfred* – and to that extent, Pejačević had written some songs based on Nietzsche.) Musically, Pejačević’s influences included both Schumann and Tchaikovsky, and like Schumann, she composed in feverish bursts of inspiration.

The philosophically minded Pejačević turned sharply away from her elite upbringing to explore profound themes in her music. She had lived through the tragedies of war when she volunteered as a nurse during World War I – an experience that would stay with her. Her 1919 *Phantasie Concertante* is at times more terrifying than the avalanches of the Swiss Alps. It boasts piano and string melodies more heartrending

than forbidden love. From the opening crash of the cymbals to the broad flow of strings, the expressive fluctuations in dynamic to the virtuosic piano lines, we can hear Pejačević’s knowledge and appreciation of the Romantic arts. She wielded this knowledge to forge her unique and revolutionary voice in Croatian music.

Tchaikovsky summons the spirits in the opening of his *Manfred Symphony*. The first movement begins *lento lugubre* – slow and dismal. While we cannot know what hid in Tchaikovsky’s heart as he wrote this four-movement work, we do know the circumstances that surround it. He did not initiate setting Lord Byron’s poetry to music; he only wrote this symphony because his fellow composers Mily Balakirev and Hector Berlioz had each rejected the project. But when Tchaikovsky took on the tale of *Manfred*, he composed it with vigour – and it is impossible to ignore the intimate similarities that unite composer, author, and character. Both Byron and Tchaikovsky’s marriages were disasters. They were not allowed to express their true sexualities. They were driven by shame, which was inflicted upon them by the values of their times, and which manifested in self-punishment. But the more unusual connection is found in their experiences with taboo relationships. We may speculate that Tchaikovsky’s version of Astarte was his own nephew Vladimir Davydov. So devoted was Tchaikovsky that in his will, he left Davydov the rights to his compositions; he’d also dedicated his Sixth Symphony to the beloved younger nephew.

Tchaikovsky composed his *Manfred Symphony* in 1885. The second movement features some charming folklike melodies over harp textures, depicting fairies and waterfalls before the pastoral third movement. Tchaikovsky bolsters the final movement with the booming presence of the organ, and he presents a breathtakingly powerful depiction of Manfred’s death.

Stephanie Eslake

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5 Minutes with *Tamara-Anna Cislowska*

You are performing Dora Pejačević's *Phantasie Concertante* with the ASO. What drew you to this piece?

I'm always intrigued and excited by unearthing new and unique works, especially by such a fascinating and talented woman.

Dora Pejačević was the first Croatian to write a symphony, died tragically young before she could reach the zenith of her powers and was not only gifted and trailblazing but was a woman of fortitude and courage, speaking out about the moral deficiencies she observed in her own social class -

"Faced with misery in the world, the like of which there has never been, their thoughts remain exactly as they were before the War. They are only excited when they are threatened with the danger of losing part of their wealth. They weren't in the least upset about the most wretched and disgraceful acts in the War. They are devoid of all higher feelings, far from all big ideas, any kind of humanity, or any social progress."

You've performed a wide range of works, from Mozart and Haydn to Joe Hisaishi's scores for Studio Ghibli films. What do you enjoy most about exploring music from different eras and genres?

There is so much, in fact, unlimited richness and variety in the music of all eras. Every time I play a piece by a genius composer, I sense that I learn so much about that composer's personality and circumstances. Sometimes it's as if the repertoire suggests itself to me. I've been very lucky in

my career to have had the chance to perform lesser-known works such as Barber and Britten's piano concertos, Rawsthorne, Sculthorpe, Liszt's Totentanz, MacDowell, De Falla. All of these pieces have left their mark on me, and their lessons.

Music is just music, as Leonard Bernstein used to say. Music is there to be played and to be enjoyed.

Reflecting on your career, you've emphasised the importance of adaptation, resilience, and seizing opportunities. Could you share a pivotal moment where these qualities played a crucial role in shaping your journey as a musician?

To adapt - anything can happen onstage, in a recording, to a piano, to yourself. You have to think quickly and adapt even quicker, perhaps these moments happen right at the crucial moment of a performance. For example, in a previous concert and broadcast of Chopin with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, just in the final bars of tutti before the solo entry, my chair made an alarming click and suddenly plummeted about 6 inches. This changes your whole perspective at the instrument. That situation required enormous adaptation and resilience!

To seize opportunities you have to be prepared. There is no point being offered a job to perform works you don't know. Expand your repertoire to include as many concerti as you can - learn one or two per year and quite soon you'll amass a large collection. Invaluable!

Tamara-Anna Cislowska is generously supported by Mary Lou Simpson OAM

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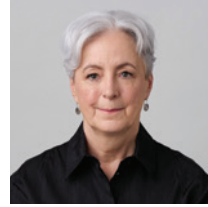
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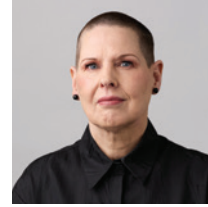
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