

Symphony *Series*

7 – Reverie

Fri 25 & Sat 26 Oct
Adelaide Town Hall



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Symphony *Series*

7

Reverie

Alpesh Chauhan
Conductor

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet
Piano

—

Duration
1 hr 50 min (incl. interval)

Fri 25 & Sat 26 October
Adelaide Town Hall

Acknowledgement of Country

Buckskin arr. / orch. Ferguson

[2']

Pukiyana, Jack's Song

World Premiere, ASO Commission

Koehne

[15']

Bittersweet Symphony

Ravel

[23']

Concerto for Piano in G

I. Allegramente

II. Adagio assai

III. Presto

Interval

Berlioz

[49']

Symphonie fantastique Op.14

1. Rêveries (Passions)

2. Un bal (A Ball)

3. Scène aux champs (Scene in the Country)

4. Marche au supplice (March to the Scaffold)

5. Songe d'une nuit du sabbat (Dream of a Witches' Sabbath)

Listen Later ABC Classic is recording this concert for later broadcast. You can hear it again on Saturday 16 November at 1pm.

Classical Conversation Join us in the Adelaide Town Hall auditorium one hour before each concert for our free *Classical Conversations* as Graeme Koehne and Graham Abbott discuss the music.



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S O F I T E L
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Welcome



Simon Lord
Director, Artistic Planning

All concerts are special, but this one is especially so since it includes a World Premiere.

Once upon a time, the music composed by Maurice Ravel and Hector Berlioz that we'll hear tonight was new. Symphony orchestras are not museums, and new music – particularly Australian contemporary music – is the life blood of our artform. This evening, we hear the first performance of an ASO commission from one of Australia's most distinguished composers: Graeme Koehne, his *Bittersweet Symphony*.

And it is with great pleasure that we welcome back to Adelaide two very special guest artists. The French pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet who is our soloist in Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G* and conductor, Alpesh Chauhan.

Alpesh made his ASO début in 2022 with an electrifying account of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony. Tonight, alongside our new commission, Alpesh will lead us through Berlioz's groundbreaking *Symphonie fantastique*.

Famously, Leonard Bernstein once described it as 'taking a trip and winding up screaming at your own funeral...' Along with romantic poets such as John Keats and Jean Cocteau, Hector Berlioz was a user of opium, and this hallucinogenic music conjures up a world of vivid dreams and terrifying nightmares. The symphony ends with *Dream of a Witches Sabbath* featuring a wild dance ushered in by the distant funereal tolling of church bells. Such is their sonic significance, tonight's two bells have travelled halfway across Australia and are on generous loan from our friends at the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Our thanks to them.

And, of course, our thanks to you for joining us. The ASO's 2025 Season is now on sale. Please do grab a brochure or jump on-line to explore what's on offer, including music from Johannes Brahms to Elena-Kats-Chernin to Billy Joel and much, much more.

I hope that you enjoy this evening's musical adventure.



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Alpesh Chauhan
Conductor

British conductor Alpesh Chauhan is Principal Guest Conductor of Düsseldorfer Symphoniker and Music Director of Birmingham Opera Company, championing a unique approach to bringing opera to the wider community of Birmingham, the most recent production of Tippett's *A New Year* being praised for "exemplary music-making." (The Guardian)

Forthcoming highlights include debuts with Stavanger, Detroit, and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras, Orchestre National de Belgique, PhilZuid, and Orchestre de Auvergne.

Returns include to Oslo Philharmonic, City of Birmingham, Melbourne, Adelaide Symphony, and BBC Philharmonic Orchestras, Orchestra de La Fenice, and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra with whom he currently partners on a Tchaikovsky cycle with Chandos Records. Their first two albums were released in 2023 and 2024 to critical acclaim: "*Spell-binding Tchaikovsky packs an emotional punch.*" (BBC Music Magazine) Other recent guest conducting projects include with Atlanta Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Hallé, West Australian Symphony, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, Toronto Symphony, London Philharmonic, and Malmö Symphony Orchestras.

Born in Birmingham, he studied cello and on the prestigious Master's Conducting Course at the Royal Northern College of Music. He was conferred an Honorary Fellow of the RNCM in 2024 and in 2022 received an OBE for Services to the Arts in Queen Elizabeth II's 2022 New Year's Honours.



Jean-Efflam Bavouzet
Piano

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet enjoys a prolific recording and international concert career. Orchestral engagements during the 2024/25 season include Orchestre National de France, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and Royal Northern Sinfonia, amongst others. Jean-Efflam visits Wigmore Hall in November for *Tour de Debussy*, and in May for a concert of Ravel's solo piano works – a program he will also tour in Italy and the United States.

Previous notable performances include Carnegie Hall with London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonie de Paris with Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, BBC Proms with BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and a China tour with Philharmonia. He recently appeared with Budapest Festival Orchestra, São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

Jean-Efflam records exclusively for Chandos. His recent release, *Pierre Sancan: A Musical Tribute* with BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, won the Gramophone Editor's Choice and Diapason d'Or. Other acclaimed recordings include his complete Haydn Piano Sonatas series, complete Beethoven Concertos, Bartók's Piano Concerti, and complete Prokofiev Piano Concerti with BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. The latter won a 2014 Gramophone Classical Music Award. He recorded Stravinsky's Complete Works for Piano and Orchestra, and the Ravel Piano concerti with BBC Symphony Orchestra which won Gramophone and BBC Music Magazine awards.

About the Program

World Premiere, ASO Commission

Koehne (born 1956)

Bittersweet Symphony

Ravel (1875–1937)

Concerto for Piano in G

Berlioz (1803–1869)

Symphonie fantastique Op.14

Symphonie fantastique is an expression of frenzy. Having exhausted the language of love letters, Hector Berlioz turned to music in an attempt to win the affection of an actress he admired from a distance. His Romantic composition is autobiographical; an opium-fuelled vision of himself. It depicts an artist obsessed with a woman who he dreams of murdering before he is executed. He then finds her in Hell where she dances to a medieval mass for the dead.

This is the story concertgoers will often read about. But what much of the literature fails to convey about 'An Episode in the Life of an Artist' – as the work is subtitled – is how truly autobiographical it is. *Symphonie fantastique* is not a standalone opium-fuelled nightmare – it is the culmination of a lifetime's worth of macabre experiences that shaped the mind of its composer. It is how he was raised, and what he studied. It is his mental state, and his desire. To understand *Symphonie fantastique* is to understand Berlioz's life in its entirety, without taking the music at face value.

Berlioz was raised by a strict Catholic mother and physician father; already the stage is set for his work to come. As a boy, he loved music, and his father bribed him with a new flute if he would enrol in medicine. Berlioz tried to follow in his father's footsteps, and in 1821 travelled from his home in the French Alps to learn the medical sciences in Paris – a less-than-sanitary experience, as to be expected of the time. The Pitié-Salpêtrière University Hospital had a gruesome history as a gunpowder factory, a prison for sex workers, and

the site of a massacre. By the time Berlioz visited the site as part of his studies, he experienced first-hand the horrors of its dissection theatre. In his memoirs, he wrote of the smell emanating from limbs and skulls; the birds scavenging for wet remains. It did become easier, though: he enjoyed the odd dissection, even tossing spare flesh to a hungry rat!

During this early era of modern medicine, opium was studied as a substance that could dull pain – and cause wild hallucinations. For both reasons, artists experimented with the drug. It became the subject of an influential book by Thomas De Quincey, a writer who took opium for pain and creativity, then became addicted. His complex *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* was translated into French by Alfred de Musset in 1828 – just two years before Berlioz's own opium-inspired 'episode' premiered.

Unsurprisingly, Berlioz – who maintained his love of music through concertgoing in Paris – decided to step away from the ghastly 19th Century medical sciences. His father was vaguely supportive of his decision to pursue music at the Conservatoire, but his devout mother cursed him. His music teacher Jean-François Lesueur thought Berlioz's dramatic musical voice should be tamed through theory. While he may have developed his compositional skills, Berlioz could not restrain his passion and agitation. His mental health deteriorated; such a state among artists is often romanticised as creative fervour. But Berlioz developed severe monomania – an unshakeable fixation that spawned his *Symphonie fantastique*.



A portrait of the Irish actress Harriett Smithson by George Clint.

The tipping point was a trip to the theatre in 1827. The 24-year-old Berlioz attended a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in which the actress Harriett Smithson played Ophelia. He would later rave in his memoirs about 'the impression made on my heart and mind by her extraordinary talent, nay, her dramatic genius'. Harriet became his fixation – or, when transposed into music, his *idée fixe*. He poured his lust-fuelled agony into *Symphonie fantastique*, which he composed to impress her.

From his intimate encounters with death, shame, and romantic frenzy, we can now see the bigger picture of his *Symphonie fantastique*. Instead of sensationalising the work as an artist's opium trip, we can appreciate the way it represents the life experience of its composer – and a broader culture of exploration that placed opium firmly in the arts and sciences of the day.

Symphonie fantastique premiered in Paris, 1830. It takes the style of program music, meaning it tells a story beyond the notes on the page. The first movement *Dreams – Passions* sets the scene: an artist spirals through joy and suffering when he thinks about the woman he loves – his *idée fixe* represented through flutes and violins. He then watches her dancing in *A Ball*. In the pastoral third movement *Scene in the Country*, we may imagine Berlioz himself returning to his home village to contemplate his desires. Then darkness creeps in for a *March to the Scaffold*: the artist takes opium and dreams of his own execution as punishment for killing his love. In *Dream of a Witches' Sabbath*, he attends his Hellish funeral where the woman dances with ghosts and monsters to the *Dies irae* hymn.

When Harriet finally heard *Symphonie fantastique* – and discovered it was composed about her – her fate became part of the story. Berlioz overdosed on opium, and told her to marry him – then he would take the antidote. She agreed, but their relationship was doomed: she became an alcoholic, and they separated quickly. Still, when Berlioz died in 1869, her body was exhumed and laid to rest beside his own. Even in death, he could not let go of his fixation.

As we progress along the timeline of French composition, we emerge from the Romanticism of Berlioz and into new traditions forged largely by Maurice Ravel. Ravel was born on the sunnier side of France, Ciboure, six years after the death of Berlioz who he called 'a musician of great genius and little talent' – echoing Lesueur's opinion of his passionate former student. Ravel's France was one of increasing globalisation, and he was influenced by cultural events including the Paris Exposition that also inspired Debussy. On the other side of the world, North America was a drawcard – and for reasons both artistic and political, composers such as Rachmaninov, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg travelled there during the Jazz Age. Ravel spent time in America in 1928, conducting concerts and performing as a pianist thanks to the support of Pro-Musica, a society founded in the 1920s to encourage European talent to visit America. It was a fitting opportunity for Ravel who enjoyed infusing his compositions with jazz: his *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*, *Violin Sonata No.2*, and ***Piano Concerto in G*** were all composed around the time of his trip, and they reveal his appreciation for American styles.

Ravel finished his Piano Concerto in G in 1931. It is often compared to Gershwin's music, and for good reason. Ravel had attended a performance of Gershwin's musical *Funny Face*. When he had a birthday party, Gershwin arrived as his guest and played some music from *Rhapsody in Blue* on the spot! Gershwin wanted music lessons from his French counterpart – but Ravel did not want to influence the compositional style of an American artist whose works he admired in return. Today, Ravel's concerto is occasionally paired with Gershwin on concert programs because it reveals a warm respect for the American music of their day – from the cowboyish whipcrack that opens the piece to the noir-like muted brass, and bluesy scales from the pianist. The work premiered in Paris.

While there are two French pieces on today's program, there is very little that connects them, let alone links them with the new Australian composition by Graeme Koehne. At a stretch, we may contemplate the way each of these artists rejected the strict confines of tradition. Their works share the creative philosophy of knowing the rules before you break them – and indeed, the rules of music should be broken with each turn of a new century. Koehne's 2024 *Bittersweet Symphony* is a composition that simultaneously sits alongside the classics of the orchestral repertoire and positions itself as an outlier. It is a rebellious work that borrows just as much from alternative rock as it does from classical music.

The name is a direct reference to The Verve's 1997 Britpop hit *Bitter Sweet Symphony*, a throwback that encapsulates the very nature of Koehne's work. His genre-busting composition draws from old and new styles to project contrasting moods of dark and light, bitter and sweet. It is a piece that conveys no particular narrative, but more broadly celebrates a narrative of creative independence. In his *Bittersweet Symphony*, Koehne turns his back on the post-war modernist

styles in which he was trained as a musician growing up in 1970s Australia. He intentionally seeks to escape the expectation that 20th- and 21st-Century composers should perpetuate a soundworld that projects feelings of angst: his *Bittersweet Symphony* features a happy ending, which is not always common in the music of his contemporaries.

Still, Koehne's works are often considered postmodern and his self-awareness becomes a playful quality that feeds back into his symphony. As a composer, he prefers his music to be compared to the 'quotidian' aesthetic – a creative philosophy that places value in the ordinary; the everyday. And in a single day, we might find ourselves circulating between jazz and alternative pop on the radio, or listening to a classical work followed by a film score. We might put on an easy listening record, then attend a performance of Latin American music. Each of these styles has been handpicked for inclusion in *Bittersweet Symphony*. The Latin American rhythms that feature in the introductory theme are revisited at the end of the work, which includes a fugal episode – a layering of the motif where each instrument has the chance to voice the musical idea. As the instruments are united in their differences, so are the genres and traditions Koehne examines through his symphony.

Bittersweet Symphony is an Adelaide Symphony Orchestra commission, and this concert marks its world premiere. As history places Berlioz's work within the context of opium as a scientific and creative fuel, and Ravel's within the era of globalised soundworlds, perhaps Koehne's music will be remembered for what it means to his own time and place in Australia: a tall poppy-like rejection of cultural elitism in favour of keeping things real. A bit of pop here, a bit of classical there – no worries.

Stephanie Eslake

ASO

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Mark Wigglesworth
Chief Conductor Designate

Mark Wigglesworth's *Season 2025* Highlights

I am immensely excited for the 2025 Season. The range of music that the ASO performs is impressive and I am fortunate that we are able to play pieces from such a huge variety of composers. We really do cover all bases in 2025! Whether it is the breathtaking Viennese classical masterpieces of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, or the extraordinary outpouring of emotions that lie behind great 20th Century composers like Shostakovich or Walton, the orchestra's innate sense of taste and style is a joy to be part of.

The centre piece of our season focuses on the four symphonies of Brahms, arguably the most perfect composer of all time. Perfect because his music is both private and public, passionate and thought provoking, fiercely dramatic as well as gloriously romantic. His symphonies are stories of great depth and development, ones we can imagine for ourselves without ever feeling we are being told how we should respond. Brahms allows us to connect our own imaginations with those of others. We are linked, but never controlled.

I am also excited to be joined during Symphony Series by the violinist Clara-Jumi Kang, cellist Daniel Müller-Schott, and pianist Sir Stephen Hough at Brahms: The Symphonies. These three musicians redefine the role of a soloist within the concerto repertoire. Total mastery of their instruments enables them to offer a collegiate approach to the most combative of forms. Their skill and humility results in music-making of the highest calibre.

I know these musicians are looking forward to coming to Adelaide, but I am also thrilled to be working with the home-grown talent of the Elder Conservatorium of Music at one of our concerts as part of *Born in Vienna*. Guest artists from overseas show that music knows no borders, and our next generation of brilliant orchestral players blurs the line between the present and the future. Music truly does create its own sense of space and time.

Explore the full program at aso.com.au

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Concertmaster
Cameron Hill**
Associate Concertmaster
Holly Piccoli*
Principal 1st Violin
Alison Heike**
Principal 2nd Violin
Helen Ayres~
Guest Associate
Principal 2nd Violin
Janet Anderson
Ann Axelby
Runa Baagø
Louise Beaston
Minas Berberyan
Gillian Braithwaite
Julia Brittain
Elizabeth Collins
Zoe Freisberg
Belinda Gehlert
Zsuzsa Leon
Danielle Jaquillard
Lucy Macourt
Alexis Milton
Michael Milton
Ambra Nesa
Julie Newman
Liam Osborne
Alexander Permezal
Kemeri Spurr
Niki Vasilakis

Violas

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Acting Associate Principal
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Martin Alexander
Lesley Cockram
Linda Garrett
Anna Hansen
Natalie Maegraith
Rosi McGowran
Anna Webb

Cellos

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Acting Section Principal
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Joseph Freer
Gemma Phillips
David Sharp
Shuhei Lawson
Andrew Leask
Cameron Waters

Double Basses

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Belinda Kendall-Smith~
Acting Associate Principal
Jacky Chang
Harley Gray
Holly Little
Gustavo Quintino

Flutes

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Lisa Gill

Piccolo

Julia Grenfell*

Oboes

Joshua Oates**
Renae Stavely~

Cor Anglais

Peter Duggan*

Clarinets

Dean Newcomb**
Mitchell Berick*

E-Flat Clarinet

Mitchell Berick*

Bass Clarinet

William Branson*
Guest Principal

Bassoons

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Leah Stephenson

Contra Bassoon

Jackie Newcomb*

Horns

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Philip Paine*
Emma Gregan
Timothy Skelly

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Gregory Frick
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Tubas

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Colin Dunsford AM in
memory of Lib Dunsford ♪



Cameron Hill
Associate
Concertmaster
Graeme & Susan
Bethune ♪



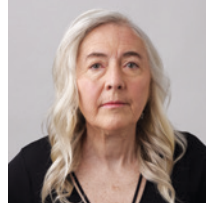
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Principal 1st Violin
Bruce Debelle AO KC ♪



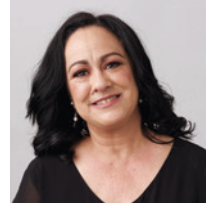
Hilary Bruer



Elizabeth Collins
In memory of
Don Creedy ♪



Jane Collins



Danielle Jaquillard
K & K Palmer ♪



Alexis Milton



Michael Milton
Judy Birze
& Ruth Bloch ♪



Julie Newman
Hon Diana Laidlaw AM ♪

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Section Principal
In memory of
Mrs JJ Holden ♪



Lesley Cockram



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John &
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Rosi McGowran
Liz & Mike Bowen ♪



Michael Robertson
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memory of their daughter
Carolyn ♪



Martin Alexander

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Section Principal
Daniel & Sue Hains ♪



Jacky Chang
Dr Melanie Turner ♪



Harley Gray



Belinda Kendall-Smith
In memory of Dr Nandor
Ballai & Dr Georgette
Straznicky ♪



Kim Falconer
Section Principal



Lisa Gill
Dr Tom & Sharron Stubbs ♪



Julia Grenfell
Principal
In memory of Father
Kevin McLennan &
Barbra McLennan ♪

Flutes

Piccolo

Bassoons

Contra Bassoon

Horns



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Section Principal
Pamela Yule ♪



Leah Stephenson
Liz Ampt ♪



Jackie Newcomb
Principal
Norman Etherington
AM in memory of
Peggy Brock AM ♪



Adrian Uren
Section Principal
Roderick Shire
& Judy Hargrave ♪



Sarah Barrett
Associate Principal
Annabel Barrett ♪



Emma Gregan
The Richard Wagner
Society of South
Australia ♪



Philip Paine
Principal
Tom Pearce
& Peggy Barker ♪

Tuba

Timpani

Percussion



Stanley McDonald
Principal
Thomas Kimber
& Katrina Bochner ♪



Andrew Penrose
Principal
Andrew & Denise
Daniels ♪



Steven Peterka
Section Principal
FASO in memory
of Bev McMahon ♪



Sami Butler
Associate Principal
Percussion/Timpani
Annabel Barrett ♪



Alison Heike
Principal 2nd Violin
FASO in memory of
Ann Belmont OAM ♪



Lachlan Bramble
Associate Principal
2nd Violin
In memory of
Deborah Pontifex ♪



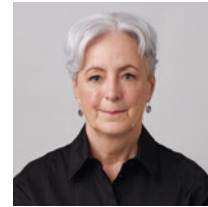
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In memory of
Gweneth Willing ♪



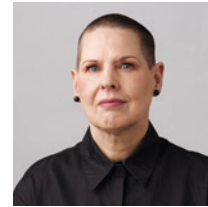
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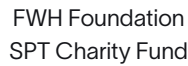
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