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FATE

Acknowledgement of Country Jack Buckskin arr./orch Ferguson [2] Pudnanthi Padninthi Akimenko [10'] Angel: Poem Nocturne **Beethoven** [36'] Concerto for Piano No.1 in C, Op.15 I. Allegro con brio II. Largo III. Rondo. Allegro schevzando Interval **Tchaikovsky** [44'] Symphony No.4 in F Minor, Op.36 I. Andante sostenuto II. Andantino in modo di canzona III. Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

OCTOBER
Fri 10 & Sat 11
Adelaide Town Hall

Martyn Brabbins Conductor

Benjamin Grosvenor Piano

Duration

2 hrs 5 min (incl. interval)

Listen Later ABC Classic Sat 25 October 1pm

Free Pre-Concert Talk

Join us for *Classical Conversations* one hour before the concert in the stalls of Adelaide Town Hall, as ASO Section Principal Flute Kim Falconer joins conductor Martyn Brabbins to discuss the program.

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WELCOME

It is a pleasure to welcome you this evening to a program that invites all of us to reflect on fate – through Akimenko's nocturnal reverie, Beethoven's spirited beginnings, and Tchaikovsky's powerful struggle with destiny in sound. We are delighted to welcome back conductor Martyn Brabbins, who has spent the week prior to this program mentoring and coaching the members of the 2025 Australian Conducting Academy. This is one element of the pathways program that ASO supports to help develop future generations of musical leaders.

Just last week, we were thrilled to share the programs and artists that feature in our 2026 season. This is an especially meaningful occasion, as we celebrate the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra's 90th birthday, a milestone as much about our audiences as it is about the Orchestra itself. For nearly a century, your enthusiasm and support have shaped the ASO's story.

In 2026, we look forward to sharing another extraordinary year with you, ranging from grand symphonies and bold contemporary voices to unforgettable film scores and cherished family favourites. Highlights include our anniversary concert with Sir Bryn Terfel, and Chief Conductor Mark Wigglesworth leading the ASO on an extraordinary journey through the music of Wagner's *Ring*, and the complete Sibelius

symphonies performed. Families will enjoy How to Train Your Dragon performed live to the screen and Prokofiev's timeless Peter and the Wolf.

Such highlights are part of a very special season which would not be possible without significant additional and visionary support. We are proud to celebrate our 90th anniversary with the generous support of the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation.

I would like to add my personal tribute to the late John Painter AM who passed away last month. As you can read in this program tonight John was a teenager when he first started playing cello in the ASO. He went on to become an inspirational leader of musicians and influenced hundreds of developing musicians throughout Australia. I am inspired by memories of studying at the Canberra School of Music under his leadership and by the opportunity to be a member of the orchestra he founded. We send our thoughts to his family including former and current members of the ASO cello section, Chris and Sherri Handley.

Thank you for joining us this evening. I hope tonight's program leaves you uplifted, inspired, and excited for what is still to come.

Colin Cornish AM Chief Executive Officer

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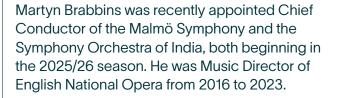
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Martyn Brabbins Conductor



A leading figure in British music, Brabbins regularly conducts top orchestras worldwide, including the Royal Concertgebouw, San Francisco Symphony, DSO Berlin, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Philharmonia, and the BBC Symphony. A passionate advocate for British music, he has led hundreds of world premieres and recorded nearly 150 CDs, including award-winning releases of operas by Korngold, Birtwistle, and Harvey.

Additionally, Brabbins has an extensive opera career, from early days at the Kirov to more recent appearances at La Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper, and houses in Lyon, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and Antwerp.

His previous roles include Associate Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Principal Guest of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, and Chief Conductor of the Nagoya Philharmonic. He is Prince Consort Professor at the Royal College of Music and Visiting Professor at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire. In 2023, he received the RPS Conductor Award for his "colossal" contribution to British musical life.



Benjamin Grosvenor Piano

British pianist Benjamin Grosvenor enjoys an acclaimed international career as a soloist and chamber musician, reflected in his extensive Decca Classics discography.

In the 2025/2026 season, he performs concertos with the Philharmonia/Rouvali, Teatro alla Scala/Honeck, Bergen Philharmonic, Sinfonia of London at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and debuts with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Recital highlights include Carnegie Hall, Chicago, Amsterdam, Singapore, Melbourne, and London. He also debuts at the Boulez Saal with Kian Soltani and performs at the Vienna Musikverein and Heidelberger Frühling in quartet with Hyeyoon Park, Timothy Ridout, and Kian Soltani.

Past concerto engagements include the Cleveland, Boston, and Chicago Symphony Orchestras, NHK Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, DSO Berlin, Orchestre National de France, and Santa Cecilia Orchestra. In the UK, he appears regularly with all major London orchestras and at the BBC Proms.

His recital appearances span Tokyo, Berlin, Warsaw, Barbican, Southbank Centre, Wigmore Hall, and festivals including Klavierfest Ruhr and La Roque d'Anthéron. A Decca artist since 2011, he was the youngest British musician to sign with the label. His latest release features Chopin, and he recently premiered *Hommage à Liszt* by Brett Dean. Benjamin is also an Ambassador for Music Masters.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Feodor Akimenko (1876–1945) *Angel*: Poem Nocturne

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Concerto for Piano No.1 in C, Op.15

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) Symphony No.4 in F minor, Op.36

The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'fate' as: 'a power that some people believe causes and controls all events, so that you cannot change or control the way things will happen.'

In more popular modern lexicon, it could be called 'manifesting' or leaving things 'up to the universe'. Whether you are spiritual or not, whether you believe in coincidence or karma or 'the force' from Star Wars, many of us believe in an indefinable power which connects all living things.

Peter llych Tchaikovsky believed in fate. In fact, he devoted his entire **Symphony No.4 in F minor Op.36** to the concept, during one of the most emotionally fraught years of his life. Ludwig van Beethoven's **Piano Concerto No.1 in C, Op.15** may not have been inspired by fate, but it was written during a fateful period as the young composer strove to prove himself to the musical world. Feodor Akimenko's **Angel: Poem Nocturne** takes celestial inspiration from a poem depicting an angel crossing the sky, cradling a young soul.

Feodor Akimenko was a star student of Rimsky-Korsakov in his youth and one of Igor Stravinsky's first composition teachers. It's unlikely that you've heard of him – but his music has been experiencing a slow rediscovery.

Akimenko was born in the Ukraine in 1876. At just ten years old he was sent to St Petersburg to study and sing in the Royal Chapel of St Petersburg choir. He emigrated to Prague in his forties, and underwent a process of reconnecting with his Ukrainian identity and heritage.

Akimenko's Angel: Poem Nocturne is a lush and atmospheric ten-minute soundscape based on a poem by Mikhail Lermontov. It moves through various emotions as the strings gently unfurl: melancholy, peace, sorrow and wonder. The nocturne captures the otherworldly beauty of the images within the poem: a midnight sky filled with glittering stars and an angel singing quietly as it transports a young soul to the next plane.

At midnight an angel was crossing the sky, And quietly he sang;

The moon and the stars and the concourse of clouds

Paid heed to his heavenly song.

He sang of the bliss of the innocent souls In heavenly gardens above; Of almighty God he sang out, and his praise Was pure and sincere.

He bore in his arms a young soul To our valley of sorrow and tears; The young soul remembered the heavenly song So vivid and yet without words.

And long did it struggle on earth, With wondrous desire imbued; But none of the tedious songs of our earth Could rival celestial song.

Akimenko died without leaving any family members behind to tend to his musical legacy. A telling example of this is the fact his cello concerto sat in a Paris library archive for 100 years, until it was unearthed by Ukrainian conductor Kirill Karabits.



Extracting the piece was not without effort: Karabits was not allowed to make a copy of the piece without express permission. Thanks to his advocacy, in October 2022 the piece had its first performance in 100 years, performed by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Karabits reflected on the reasons Akimenko is so little-known in today's age: "It's certainly not connected to the quality of his music, or the quality of him as a composer... it's just purely bureaucratic, or some coincidences that happened... His music is full of colours... because he spent so much time in France, I would describe his music as having French elements."

Beethoven's first three piano concertos represent a significant period in the composer's life. He was young, hungry, and eager to make a name for himself in the bustling artistic mecca of Vienna – and these pieces were going to help him do it.

The composer has just turned 22 when he moved to the city permanently. It would have been an exciting time – the city was teeming with artistic life and he was studying with eminent teachers such as Joseph Haydn, Johann Albrechtsberger, and Antonio Salieri.

Piano Concerto No.1 was the second piano concerto written by Beethoven but the first to be published. Mozart's influence looms large in these early piano concertos, and it's no accident. Beethoven idolised Mozart and wanted to build on his considerable legacy.

Beethoven did the Viennese performance circuit with Piano Concerto No.1 and 2, showcasing his skills as a composer and a virtuosic concert pianist. Fellow pianist and composer Jan Václav Tomášek heard Beethoven perform these pieces and had mixed feelings: "I admired his powerful, brilliant playing, but his frequent daring changes from one melody to another, putting aside the organic, gradual development of ideas, did not escape me. Evils of this nature frequently weaken his greatest compositions, those which sprang from a too exuberant conception. The listener is often rudely awakened... The singular and original seemed to be his chief aim..."

Piano Concerto No.1 was a significant leap forward for Beethoven's compositional output. It's written for larger orchestral forces than Piano Concerto No.2 (which he began sketching as a teenager) and runs at forty minutes when the cadenza is performed.

Musicologist Howard Glass describes Beethoven's inventive use of melodic development: "In the first movement, after turning a tentative knocking motif into a boldly assertive first subject in C major, Beethoven plays tonal 'peekaboo' with the second subject, introducing it on the violins in the unexpected key of E-flat, then having the winds interrupt and trying again in F minor, and then again in G minor on the way to G major, which was the 'correct' key for a second subject. Episodes like this, which expand both the time-scale and harmonic structure of the music, raised eyebrows among schooled musicians in the 1790s.

The surprise in the A-flat-major slow movement is the orchestration. Removing the trumpets and drums was standard in concerto middle movements (and trumpets never played in A-flat anyway), but Beethoven also drops the flute and oboes, leaving an orchestra of strings, bassoons, horns and clarinets. This makes for a subdued, middle-heavy sound, and turns the highest wind instrument, the first clarinet, into a soloist. The rondo finale is light-fingered and whimsical, marked Allegro scherzando to emphasize its playfulness."

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony signalled a leap forward in the composer's command of the symphonic genre. Unusually for a self-critical composer, he was very happy with the composition, writing "I adore terribly this child of mine; it is one of only a few works with which I have not experienced disappointment."

In many ways, Tchaikovsky epitomises the image of a tortured Romantic composer. He had a turbulent personal life, never experienced financial prosperity, was often cruelly dismissed by critics, and his life was cut short by the same disease that killed his mother when he was a boy.

The period surrounding the Fourth Symphony was one of the most intense of Tchaikovsky's life. He made a rash decision to marry a woman he barely knew to mask his homosexuality, which backfired spectacularly and caused the composer even more anguish. He left his wife two months after the wedding and they never lived together.

Tchaikovsky reflected in his diary: "There is no doubt that for some months I was insane, and

only now, when I am completely recovered, have I learned to relate objectively to everything which I did during my brief insanity."

But this was also the time in which he began a correspondence with an older woman who would go on to become his enduring patron and trusted confidant: Nadezhda von Meck. The wealthy widower became enchanted with the composer after hearing a piano reduction of The Tempest and vowed to assist him financially. For thirteen years the two maintained a close friendship despite never meeting in person, exchanging hundreds of letters on a variety of subjects. The relationship appears to have provided a safe space for the composer to express himself, artistically and personally. Nadezhda von Meck's financial support also allowed Tchaikovsky to stop teaching at the Moscow Conservatory and devote his time entirely to composing.

Tchaikovsky dedicated Symphony No.4 to Nadezhda, with the anonymous inscription "To my best friend". After the symphony's premiere, Nadezhda wrote to Tchaikovsky to ask whether the work followed some kind of hidden story. Tchaikovsky wrote back that while he usually answered that question with a definitive 'no', in this case he would relay his inspirations behind each movement of 'their' symphony.

The first movement of the symphony is a journey in itself, accounting for almost half of the piece's running time. It begins with a bang with a brass fanfare. "This is *Fate*: this is that fateful force which prevents the impulse to happiness from attaining its goal, which jealously ensures that peace and happiness shall not be complete and unclouded,



which hangs above the head like the sword of Damocles, unwaveringly, constantly poisoning the soul. It is an invincible force that can never be overcome — merely endured, hopelessly."

But there are more emotional peaks and troughs to follow: "The bleak and hopeless feelings grow stronger and intense. Is it not better to escape from reality and to immerse oneself in dreams?

Oh joy! Out of nowhere a sweet and gentle daydream appears. Some blissful, radiant human image hurries by and beckons us away.

How wonderful! How distant the obsessive first theme of the *allegro* now sounds! Gradually the soul is enveloped by daydreams. Everything gloomy and joyless is forgotten. Here it is, here it is — happiness!

No! These were daydreams, and Fate wakes us from them: And thus all life is an unbroken alternation of harsh reality with fleeting dreams and visions of happines... No haven exists... Drift upon that sea until it engulfs and submerges you in its depths."

The second movement stays in melancholic territory, a feeling of "regretting the past, and yet not wishing to begin life over again. Life is wearisome. It is pleasant to rest and look around. Memories abound! Happy moments when the young blood boiled, and life was satisfying. There are also painful memories, irreconcilable losses. All this is now somewhere far distant. It is both sad, yet somehow sweet to be immersed in the past...

"The third movement expresses no specific feeling. Whimsical arabesques, vague images which can

sweep past the imagination after drinking a little wine and feeling the first phases of intoxication. The spirit is neither cheerful, nor sad. Thinking about nothing in particular, giving free rein to the imagination, which somehow begins to paint strange pictures... Amid these memories there suddenly comes a picture of drunken peasants and a street song... Then, somewhere in the distance, a military procession passes. These are completely incoherent images which sweep through the head as one falls asleep. They have nothing in common with reality; they are strange, wild, and incoherent..."

Tchaikovsky decides to end the symphony on a positive note. He uses the Russian folk tune 'A little birch tree stood in the field' as the central idea and whips the melody into a frenzy by the end of the movement, before bringing back the *fate* motif.

"If within yourself you find no reasons for joy, then look at others. Go out among the people. See how they can enjoy themselves, surrendering themselves wholeheartedly to joyful feelings. Picture the festive merriment of ordinary people.

Hardly have you managed to forget yourself and to be carried away by the spectacle of the joys of others, then irrepressible *fate* appears again and reminds you of yourself. But others do not care about you, and they have not noticed that you are solitary and sad. Reproach yourself, and do not say that everything in this world is sad. Joy is a simple but powerful force. Rejoice in the rejoicing of others. To live is still possible."

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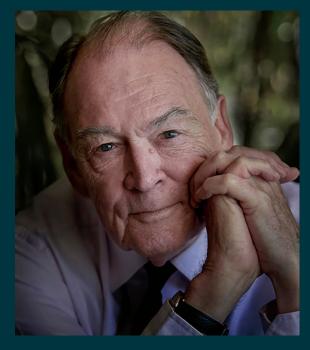
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Vale John Painter AM

The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra pays tribute to former Principal Cello John Painter (1932-2025).



John Painter—Photo courtesy Australian Chamber Orchestra.

The musicians and staff of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra were greatly saddened to learn of the death of John Galloway Painter AM on Saturday 13 September 2025.

John was a hugely significant figure in Australian music in the second half of the twentieth century. Born in Adelaide on 28 September 1932, Painter demonstrated musical talent early, winning a two-year scholarship to study with Harold Parsons at Adelaide's Elder Conservatorium at the age of 12. The following year, in just his fourth year of learning cello, John was offered a position in the South Australian (now Adelaide) Symphony Orchestra.

A restless student, John left the Elder Conservatorium without completing the final year of his degree and moved to Sydney in 1949, spending 18 months studying with Laurie Kennedy and working in nightclubs and dancehalls. But in 1950, still only 18, John was offered the role of Principal Cello back in Adelaide, where he also won the ABC's Concerto & Vocal Competition.

He later joined the Cello section of the Sydney Symphony (1954-1965, and Principal from 1960), founding the Australian Chamber Orchestra in 1975 and later directing the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (1982-1985) and Canberra School of Music (1985-1995).

His connection to and influence on several generations of musicians was profound, whether as performer, administrator, teacher, union advocate or as the head of major institutions.

In 1974, driven by a desire for young professionals to refine their musicianship by repeated performances of the same program and touring to different venues around the country – and to create a smaller, focused ensemble that would drive higher musical standards across the country – John formed the Australian Chamber Orchestra. John led the ACO's first performance in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House on 21 November 1975 and remained with the ensemble for a decade; it's continued success is a testament to the solid foundation that he built.

John moved from the Conservatorium in Sydney to the Canberra School of Music in 1985, leading it for a decade and growing its reputation to be the leading music school in the country, after which he served as Director of the Australian Institute of Music (AIM) in Sydney from 1997-2003.

He was also a driving force behind the eventual establishment of the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) in 1996, a judge of the Sydney International Piano Competition, Chair of adjudicators for the Australian Cello Awards, board member and Deputy Chairman (1978-84) of Musica Viva Australia. He eventually retired in Canberra where he remained deeply engaged in the capital's music scene, including serving on the board of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra.

In recognition of his incredible contribution to Australian music, John was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1981 and received the Sir Bernard Heinze Memorial Award in 2002.

Edited and reproduced courtesy of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, with text by Hugh Robertson.

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