



**sydney symphony
orchestra**

David Robertson

Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

BRAHMS & SIBELIUS

Janine Jansen plays Brahms

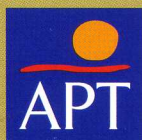


APT MASTER SERIES

Wednesday 18 March 2015

Friday 20 March 2015

Saturday 21 March 2015





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APT MASTER SERIES

WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH, 8PM

FRIDAY 20 MARCH, 8PM

SATURDAY 21 MARCH, 8PM

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SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL



BRAHMS AND SIBELIUS

Daniel Blendulf *conductor*

Janine Jansen *violin*

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Violin Concerto in D, Op.77

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giocoso

INTERVAL

NIGEL BUTTERLEY (born 1935)

Never this sun, this watcher

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

Symphony No.5 in E flat, Op.82

Tempo molto moderato – Allegro moderato

Andante mosso, quasi allegretto

Allegro molto



92.9 ABC
Classic FM

Friday night's performance will be broadcast live across Australia by ABC Classic FM.

.....
Pre-concert talk by Scott Davie at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer. Visit sydneyssymphony.com/speaker-bios for more information.

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Estimated durations:
38 minutes, 20-minute interval,
12 minutes, 30 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 9.55pm.

PRESENTED BY



Johannes Brahms Violin Concerto in D, Op.77

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giocoso

Janine Jansen *violin*

Cadenza by Joachim

Brahms spent the summers of 1877–79 in the lakeside village of Pörschach in Carinthia, producing the Ballades for piano (Op.75), the Symphony No.2 and his Violin Sonata in G (Op.78) – all works which share an atmosphere of pastoral beauty shot through with nostalgia. But as Brahms scholar Karl Geiringer notes, the ‘crowning masterpiece’ of this time is the Violin Concerto.

The Concerto, like the G major Sonata, was composed for the great virtuoso Joseph Joachim, whom an ecstatic 15-year old Brahms had heard play the Beethoven Concerto. In 1853 their friendship began in earnest, with Joachim writing to Brahms’s parents of how ‘Johannes had stimulated my work as an artist to an extent beyond my hopes...my friendship is always at his disposal’. Brahms similarly admired Joachim – significantly as a composer rather than performer, saying that ‘there is more in Joachim than in all the other young composers put together’.

While Joachim was intimately involved with the creation of

Keynotes

BRAHMS

Born Hamburg, 1833

Died Vienna, 1897

Brahms is often thought reactionary: he valued classical forms, admired composers of the past, and his choral music is firmly rooted in the traditions of the baroque period. Yet his musical language and manner of using the orchestra clearly represents mid-19th-century romanticism in all its richness and emotive power. It took Brahms 15 years to compose his first symphony; he was keenly aware of the looming shadow of Beethoven. But the second symphony followed swiftly four months later in 1877, and the violin concerto soon after.

VIOLIN CONCERTO

Brahms wrote this concerto for his good friend and violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim. Since Brahms was not a violinist, he consulted Joachim as he worked, sending him drafts and urging him to ‘mark those parts that are difficult, awkward, or impossible to play’. A composer himself, Joachim enthusiastically offered suggestions and composed a cadenza, which he performed at the concerto’s premiere. In the second movement, *Adagio*, the solo violin steps back from the spotlight and plays ‘second fiddle’, accompanying an exquisitely lyrical solo from the oboe. The virtuosic last movement, an exuberant rondo, has a distinct gypsy character – a tribute by Brahms to his Hungarian violinist friend and collaborator.



The Focus Group

In 1878 Brahms sent his friend, the legendary violinist Joseph Joachim, the solo part of his new violin concerto. Joachim told him that, while it was sometimes difficult to tell how a concerto would work from the violin part alone, it appeared at first glance to be a very pleasing and successful work.

'I wish I could go through it with a violinist less good than you,' Brahms wrote back, 'for I am afraid you are not sufficiently blunt and severe.'

The composer then sent music to another friend, the conductor Hans von Bülow, who responded with the quip that Max Bruch had written a concerto for the violin, while Brahms had written one *against* the violin.

The violinist Henry Wieniawski, himself the composer of some fiendishly difficult violin concertos, also received a copy and declared it to be simply unplayable.

And when, after the premiere, the violinist Pablo de Sarasate was asked if he intended to play the new concerto, he responded (referring to the beginning of the *Adagio*): 'I don't deny that it is very good music, but do you think I could fall so low as to stand, violin in hand, and listen to the oboe play the only proper tune in the work?'

While Joachim was intimately involved with the creation of early works of Brahms's chamber music, it was not, strangely enough, until those summers by the lake at Pörtschach in the 1870s that Brahms wrote solo music for his friend. Geiringer notes that, in the case of both concerto and sonata, Brahms 'conscientiously asked his friend's advice on all technical questions – and then hardly ever followed it', but in fact at crucial points Joachim's advice on technical matters was invaluable. This consisted mainly of tinkering with certain figurations to make them more gratifying to play. But Joachim was also a profoundly serious artist – like Brahms – and out of their collaboration came works in which the element of virtuosity never overshadows the musical argument, despite the work's many technical challenges. Joachim also wrote a cadenza for the concerto which is still frequently heard today.

The Violin Concerto has some of the expansive dimensions of Brahms's first piano concerto. This is especially true of the spacious first movement which, like that of Beethoven's Violin Concerto, takes up more than half the work's playing time, and which begins with a long, symphonic exposition of its main themes. Like its companion Second Symphony, the Concerto is in D major, a key which composers like Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius used for violin concertos as it makes

A place where 'so many melodies fly about that one must take care not to tread on them.'

BRAHMS DESCRIBES HIS SUMMER RETREAT IN PÖRTSCHACH



Brahms with Joachim

use of the instrument's natural resonance; like the Symphony it has something of a visionary Romantic tone.

Brahms originally thought to write the piece in four movements, making the central pair a scherzo and contrasting slow movement. But he wrote to Joachim that the 'middle movements – naturally the best ones – have fallen through. So I have substituted a feeble adagio'. Feeble is of course hardly the word for this piece: derived from the simplest of musical figures (the falling broken chord with which the oboe introduces the theme and the violin then begins) it evolves into one of Brahms's most soulful but restrained movements. As such it provides a wonderful contrast to the gypsy style finale, with its pyrotechnic solo line and exciting use of displaced accents.

Joachim premiered the piece in Leipzig in 1879, but the response was tepid, and only through Joachim's persistence did it gradually gain its rightful place in the standard repertoire. Brahms and Joachim fell out over the violinist's divorce in 1884, the rift lasting until Brahms wrote the Double Concerto for violin and cello in 1887. But that's another story.

GORDON KERRY © 2006

The orchestra for Brahms's Violin Concerto calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

The SSO first performed the concerto in 1939 with soloist Jeanne Gautier and conductor Malcolm Sargent, and most recently in 2012 with conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy and soloist Lisa Batiashvili.

The First Performance

Joseph Joachim once said that the greatest of the German violin concertos, 'the one that makes fewest concessions', was Beethoven's, and that Brahms's concerto came closest to Beethoven's 'in its seriousness'.

So it's no surprise that he proposed, for the premiere of the Brahms, a program with Beethoven's Violin Concerto at the beginning, and the new concerto at the end. The middle was to be filled with songs, two movements from one of Bach's partitas for solo violin and an overture by Joachim himself.

Brahms had the kinds of doubts that occur to any thoughtful programmer: 'Beethoven shouldn't come before mine – of course, only because both are in D major. Perhaps the other way around – but it's a lot of D major – and not much else on the program.'

Nonetheless, the program went ahead as Joachim had planned. If nothing else, it indicates his great stamina as a performer – performing two such monumental, and for us similar, works on the one program. But Michael Steinberg offers the reminder that to Joachim and his listeners these were not two established masterpieces but 'one classic and a new and demanding work by a composer with a reputation for being difficult'.



HARALD HOFFMANN

Janine Jansen

violin

Born in the Netherlands in 1978, Janine Jansen began studying violin at the age of six with her father, and later with Coosje Wijzenbeek, Philipp Hirschhorn and Boris Belkin. She went on to win numerous prizes and recording awards, including four Edison Classical Awards, three ECHO Classical awards, the German Record Critics' Prize, the NDR Music Prize for outstanding artistic achievement, and most recently the Concertgebouw Prize. She was awarded a Dutch Theatre and Concert Association (VSCD) Classical Music Prize for individual achievement, and a Royal Philharmonic Society Instrumentalist Award for performances in the UK.

She has played regularly with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic and the New York Philharmonic. She was featured artist at the 2014 BBC Proms, culminating in her appearance at the famous Last Night of the Proms. Her most recent appearance with the SSO was in 2009 when she played the Dvořák concerto.

This season she makes return appearances with the San Francisco Symphony under Michael Tilson Thomas, the Orchestre de Paris under Paavo Järvi, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic

Orchestra under Sakari Oramo and the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Valery Gergiev. In November 2014 she gave the premiere of Michel van der Aa's Violin Concerto with the RCO conducted by Vladimir Jurowski, followed by further performances of the work with Andrew Litton and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra.

Already this year she has appeared with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Antonio Pappano, and with the London Symphony Orchestra in a six-concert European tour conducted by Daniel Harding. She also takes Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* on tour with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta and directs the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in concerts in Germany, France and the Netherlands.

She is a dedicated chamber musician and her schedule includes recital tours with pianist Itamar Golan in the Netherlands and USA. She is also the founder and curator of the annual International Chamber Music Festival in Utrecht.

Janine plays the 1727 'Baron Deurbroucq' Stradivarius kindly loaned to her by the Beares International Violin Society.



MARCO BORGGREVE

Daniel Blendulf *conductor*

Born in Stockholm in 1981, Daniel Blendulf began his career as a cellist, after studying with Torleif Thedéen and Heinrich Schiff. In addition to his successful solo career, he was a member of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. Changing track, in 2008 he won First Prize at the Swedish Conducting Competition, and went on to graduate from Stockholm's Royal College of Music in 2010. In 2014 he was awarded the Herbert Blomstedt Conducting Prize, presented to him by King Carl Gustaf of Sweden.

As one of Scandinavia's most promising younger conductors, he is already working at the highest level in his native Sweden. He appears regularly with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and this season he also makes return appearances with the Gothenburg Symphony and Swedish Chamber Orchestra.

During the 2014–15 season he makes a number of significant international debuts. In addition to his Australian debut in these concerts with the SSO, these include appearances with the New Zealand Symphony and Malaysian Philharmonic orchestras.

He made his Norwegian debut with the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra in November, and, already this year, made first appearances with the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, and in the UK with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Recent highlights include a performance with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra as part of Denmark's Midsummer's Day celebrations, his 2014 Finnish debut with the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, and concerts with the Macao Orchestra and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife. With the Malmö Symphony Orchestra he conducted the premiere of Britta Byström's *Invisible Cities*.

As an opera conductor, Daniel Blendulf has directed the Royal Swedish Opera in productions of *Carmen* (with Katarina Dalayman in the title role), *Don Pasquale*, and the 2012 world premiere of Anders Eliasson's chamber opera *Karolina's Sleep*. Other productions have included Gounod's *Faust* with Folkoperan and Berg's *Wozzeck* with Norrlands Opera in Umeå.

Violinist grasps the meaning of Brahms

MUSIC

Sydney Symphony
Violin: Janine Jansen.
Conductor: Daniel
Blendulf. Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House,
March 18.

MURRAY BLACK

WATCHING a recent performance on YouTube of the Brahms Violin Concerto by Dutch violinist Janine Jansen, I was struck by the unfailing elegance of her playing. She brought the same qualities to her superb account of the concerto with conductor Daniel Blendulf and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Where Viktoria Mullova in 2009 practically bludgeoned the

piece into submission and Ray Chen in 2011 seemed slightly overawed by it, Jansen captured the concerto's dual character of epic nobility and rhapsodic lyricism.

She was fearless in the bravura passages — with dazzling dexterity in the sustained sections of double-stopping and high harmonics — but always maintained crystalline articulation and a refined, focused tone.

Jansen's strong attack and rhythmic acuity created an engaging account of the gypsy-inspired finale, and she displayed exquisite delicacy and cantabile phrasing in her quietly impassioned reading of the slow movement.

Underpinning it all was Jansen's deep understanding of the concerto's longer lines. Her cadenza thrilled with its pyrotechnics but she also shaped it with purpose and meaning.

A similar focus on musical structure was apparent in Blendulf and the orchestra's majestic account of Sibelius's Symphony No 5. Sibelius grappled with the symphony for many years before he was satisfied with it.

Blendulf illuminated this sense of struggle while achieving the organic development so essential to a successful performance.

Key to this was his tempo and dynamic contrasts: deftly de-

ployed accelerandos, ritardandos, crescendos and diminuendos made the musical developments inevitable.

Blendulf charted a bold interpretative course, using sharp-edged, grainy sonorities in the slow movement to give the sense of chill winds blowing through an icy landscape. And, in the exhilarating finale, soft woodwind twittering and subtle col legno double bass snaps gently buttressed the famous horn theme.

Australian composer Nigel Butterley turns 80 this year. In tribute, the SSO played his most recent orchestral work *Never This Sun, This Watcher* (2004). It was a

fascinating exploration of texture and colour.

The music was in constant flux as ideas continually appeared, disappeared and reappeared in altered form.

Subdued string figures were often haunted by spectral woodwind gestures and quietly snarling muted brass chords.

Blendulf effortlessly negotiated the work's rapid changes of tempo, dynamics, mood and texture, and the orchestra responded with precision and insight.

Concert repeated tonight and tomorrow. Bookings: (02) 8215 4600. Tickets: \$39-\$140.

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DOOR

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SUB9CONC

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE, CONCERT HALL

APT Master Series

JANINE JANSEN PLAYS BRAHMS

Sibelius 5

Friday Mar 20, 2015

8:00 PM

Surname: Breedveld

SECTION

ROW

SEAT

SUB9CONC

BOX W

22

78.00

ID: 16959600



ID: 16959600

1000974836

15JJ02E

Code = 6

DOOR

14

SUB9CONC

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE, CONCERT HALL

APT Master Series

JANINE JANSEN PLAYS BRAHMS

Sibelius 5

Friday Mar 20, 2015

8:00 PM

Surname: Breedveld

SECTION

ROW

SEAT

SUB9CONC

BOX W

21

78.00

ID: 16959600

