

14 MARCH 2026

The Firebird

THE SYDNEY
YOUTH ORCHESTRA

POWERED BY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Sydney Youth Orchestras acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we work, rehearse, gather and perform; the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, the original storytellers of these lands where we learn and create music today.

We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and honour the continuation of the oldest music practice in the world.

Always Was, Always Will Be.



MIA PATOULIOS

CEO

Welcome to The Firebird! Step into a world of blazing orchestral colour as The Sydney Youth Orchestra opens its 2026 season with this afternoon's concert, featuring an extraordinary program spanning from Australian contemporary works to twentieth-century masterpieces.

SYO continues to be a vibrant hub where young musicians connect with each other through orchestral music to create extraordinary experiences. We are deeply honoured to be joined today by our Patron, Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales. Her Excellency's commitment to the arts and to nurturing the next generation of musicians is profoundly valued by the entire SYO community, and we thank her warmly for her ongoing encouragement and support of young musicians across our state.

The musicians you see on stage today represent countless hours of dedication, practice and passion. But their achievements are never theirs alone. Behind every young musician stands a remarkable network of support from the highest levels of government and business, teachers and mentors, to families and friends who encourage, uplift and make this journey possible. This level of musicianship exists because of the collective commitment of our entire SYO community. Together, we create the environment in which young people can grow, thrive and share their music with the world.

Today's concert also holds a special significance as we welcome back SYO alumnus Harry Ward, now a member of the first violins of the Berliner Philharmoniker, who returns as soloist. Harry's journey from our program to one of the world's greatest orchestras creates a powerful "if you can see it, be it" moment for our current musicians, proof that the path from this stage leads to the world's finest concert halls.

The program takes us on a musical journey across continents and generations. We open with Australian composer Jessica Wells' *Emu in the Sky*, before Smetana's beloved *Má Vlast: The Moldau* sweeps us through the Czech countryside. SYO alumnus Harry Ward then takes centre stage for the virtuosic *Violin Concerto No. 3* by Grażyna Bacewicz, the brilliant Polish composer and violinist of Lithuanian origin whose works deserve far wider recognition. After the interval, the world premiere of Paul Nicolaou's *but the sky is surely open* is followed by Stravinsky's legendary *Firebird Suite* and Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, all under the expert guidance of Chief Conductor Stanley Dodds, bringing this thrilling afternoon to a triumphant close.

Thank you for your continued support of SYO
Mia Patoulios
CEO



JAMES PENSINI

Head of Orchestral Training and Artistic Programming
Conductor of The Peter Seymour Orchestra

Good afternoon, and welcome to The Firebird, The Sydney Youth Orchestra's opening concert of 2026.

We are absolutely thrilled to welcome back Harry Ward to the SYO stage. Harry spent six formative years in the SYO program, and we are all so immensely proud of his significant achievements since, from the Karajan-Akademie to his current position in the First Violins of the Berliner Philharmoniker. Having Harry return as soloist today creates a powerful moment of inspiration for our current musicians. When they see him warming up backstage, preparing to perform Bacewicz's demanding Violin Concerto No. 3, they're witnessing their own possible futures standing right beside them.

The musicians you see on stage today sit atop an orchestral training pyramid of more than six hundred young musicians across all our SYO programs. Each time we gather to hear The Sydney Youth Orchestra perform, we celebrate not just the dedication and talent of these remarkable young people, but the entire community that supports them, the parents who drive to rehearsals, the teachers who nurture their technical growth, the conductors who challenge their musicality, and the mentors who guide their artistic development. Thank you for your support. You make this possible.

Today's program takes us on a musical journey around the world, from Jessica Wells' 'Emu in the Sky', grounded in Australian landscape and Aboriginal celestial storytelling, to the world premiere of Paul Nicolaou's 'but the sky is surely open', to the neoclassical brilliance of Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz, the mid-century modernism of German master Paul Hindemith, and finally to Stravinsky's revolutionary Russian folklore brought to life - 'The Firebird'.

The future of orchestral music is very bright. You're about to hear exactly why.

Enjoy the journey.



STANLEY DODDS

Conductor of The Sydney Youth Orchestra

The program we have selected for this concert represents two loose, but distinct, programming threads woven together. The first thread is to acknowledge composers and works from the countries of the performers, like a set of postcards.

It is always important to me to showcase works of contemporaries and I am particularly thrilled that not only do we have two representatives of the younger generation of upcoming Australian composers on the program, but Paul Nicolaou is also an SYO alumni. Jessica's work is an Acknowledgement of Country composed as part of Artology's "To Country" series, whilst Paul's work tells the story of Icarus, who after obtaining the ability to fly, discovers a sense of freedom in escaping the boundaries of the Earth.

Harry Ward is a first violinist with the Berlin Philharmonic and himself also an alumni of SYO. He shall feature as soloist in Grazyna Bacewicz's 3rd Violin Concerto, a little known but highly attractive work and deserving of greater attention. I have had the professional opportunity in the past year to become more deeply acquainted with Poland and have acquired a great appreciation for the wonderful music and culture in this increasingly important Central European country.

Interwoven with this theme based on country and people is that of the natural elements - fire, water, earth and air, representing energy, emotion, stability and freedom respectively. We include the Firebird Suite both for its popularity and primal energy; The Moldau as an emotional experience of nature; the Australian composers both reference the sky and air, whilst Hindemith's work is earthy and at the same time a rollicking great ride. I think the program is diverse and attractive and gives The Sydney Youth Orchestra the opportunity to showcase their many qualities.



HARRY WARD

Guest Soloist - Violin

Australian violinist Harry Ward enjoys a multifaceted career as soloist, chamber and orchestral musician. He currently resides in Berlin where he is in the first violins of the Berliner Philharmoniker, following his studies at the Karajan-Akademie with Noah Bendix-Balgley.

Harry has performed as soloist with various orchestras, including das Symphonie-orchester Berlin, Elision Ensemble, Xiamen Philharmonic, Hangzhou Philharmonic, Orquesta Sinfónica de Michoacán, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. As a chamber musician, he has collaborated with members of quartets such as Emerson, Michelangelo, Ehnes, and the Australian string quartets, as well as participated in concerts with the late Joseph Silverstein. In 2017, Harry was invited to perform at the Rome Chamber Music Festival, collaborating with Edgar Meyer and members of the Venice Baroque Orchestra. In 2019, he was selected as an Emerging Artist of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, working with Helena Rathbone.

Harry has a deep passion for new music and has recently joined ELISION Ensemble, one of Australia's leading new music collectives. His performances with them include Australian premiers of both Liza Lim's violin concerto *Speak, Be Silent* and *Extinction Events* and *Dawn Chorus*. Harry maintains a keen interest in session work and has collaborated with producers such as Glenn Hopper and 18Yoman with most notable features on American rapper and singer-songwriter Lil Nas X's latest album *Montero*. During 2020-21, Harry was honoured to be chosen as a Futuremaker Artist with *Musica Viva Australia*, participating in tours and performances while receiving mentorship from a variety of international artists.

His educational background includes studies at the Australian National Academy of Music with Robin Wilson, Kunstuniversität Graz with Boris Kuschnir, the Robert McDuffie Center for strings with David Halen and Amy Schwarz-Moretti and the Sydney Conservatorium with the late Professor Alice Waten and Professor Peter Zhang. Currently, he performs on a 1780 Pietro Landolfi on loan from private benefactors.



PAUL NICOLAOU

Composer

'but the sky is surely open' follows the journey of a boy named Icarus, son of Daedalus, from Ancient Greece. After obtaining the ability to fly, Icarus finds a sense of freedom in escaping the boundaries of the Earth. He becomes infatuated with this new sensation: defying the limits of man.

Fragments of the score are marked with small quotes taken directly from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. These include, 'but the sky is surely open', 'Let me warn you, Icarus', 'the boy began to delight in his daring flight', and 'drawn by desire for the heavens, soared higher'.

Throughout the piece, we explore moments of playfulness and meditation. Just as Icarus begins bound to the earth, the ensemble opens with a weighted and subdued introduction marked 'With gravity'. This precedes a melodic and dynamic ascent towards a moment of tension, foreshadowing coming events. Next we hear a flurry of excitement and anticipation as the ensemble begins their flight through the sky. Leading into the final minutes of the work, both the ensemble and Icarus ascend into the heavens, soaring higher and higher in register and increasing in emotion and intensity. This builds to a staggering halt. All momentum is suddenly lost – Icarus' flight into the sun. In the aftermath, the concert hall is filled with the ensemble's decaying resonance.

Photo Credit: John Swainston



JESSICA WELLS

Composer

'Emu in the Sky' was written as an "Acknowledgment of Country," at the invitation of Christopher Sainsbury, Professor of Music at the Australian National University for the Artology "To Country" program. The work pays respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have used astronomy in their culture for thousands of years. For thousands of years the stars have served many purposes - navigation, timekeeping, and food gathering - and represent the homes of ancestors, animals, plants and spirits. The Emu in the Sky itself is seen near the Southern Cross and, unlike many Western constellations, its form is created by the dark patches within the Milky Way.

The music evokes the Australian night sky through shifting orchestral colours. Twinkling stars are symbolised by the glockenspiel, while a mysterious atmosphere gradually unfolds across the orchestra before giving way to a broad, expansive melody intended to capture the vastness of the universe. In this way the piece also reflects something shared by all Australians - the experience of standing beneath the same night sky and feeling connected to the stories and histories it holds.

Photo Credit: Steven Godbee

GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ

Composer

Łódź - Poland, 1909
Warszawa - Poland, 1969

Remarkable composer and violinist. Pedagogue and writer. Today recognised as the greatest Polish female composer and an eminent figure in 20th-century music.

Grażyna Bacewicz, today considered the greatest Polish female composer and an outstanding figure in 20th century music, built her musical position with true determination, combining her career as a violinist with her work as a composer. She quickly became one of the most prominent representatives of the neoclassical movement in music, before reforming her style and giving it a highly individual expression.

Born in 1909, like many other artists from Central Europe, she had to face the political realities of

her time – she witnessed, among other things, two world wars and the Stalinist regime. She studied at the Warsaw Conservatory with Kazimierz Sikorski (composition), Józef Jarzębski (violin) and Józef Turczyński (piano). Despite the music community's dismissive attitude towards women composers at the time – at the beginning of her artistic career, its representatives saw her primarily as a violinist, often treating her creative ambitions as whims – Bacewicz continued to compose and perform her own works, gaining increasing respect and recognition. Bacewicz, however, paid no heed to this and continued to compose and perform her own works, gaining increasing respect and recognition.

Grażyna Bacewicz's creative and artistic activity was crowned with numerous

successes. She performed recitals and concerts conducted by outstanding conductors on European stages. She won awards in both fields, and her music, appreciated by conductors and performers, was increasingly present at concerts and festivals in Poland and abroad.

Today, Bacewicz's music is experiencing a renaissance. In her concertos, sonatas, symphonies and smaller works, we find extremely interesting sound solutions. Excellent recordings are appearing (including by the BBC Symphony Orchestra), and the works are constantly being performed, in 2024 at Wigmore Hall in London, the Philharmonie de Paris, SR Berwaldhallen in Stockholm and Bozar in Brussels, among others. Bacewicz's works also reflect the era in which

GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ

Composer

she lived, characterised by a departure from exuberant romanticism, a search for beauty in classical form, but also an avoidance of well-worn patterns. Her strong, disciplined, consistent, yet feminine and sensitive musical language and rich compositional imagination reflect her personality as a creator.



Grażyna Bacewicz's
works are published by
PWM Edition



Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

THE SYDNEY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

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CONDUCTOR - Stanley Dodds

Jessica WELLS

Emu in the Sky

Bedřich SMETANA

Má Vlast (My Country): No. 2 River Moldau

Grażyna BACEWICZ

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 3

Violin Soloist - Harry Ward

INTERVAL

Paul NICOLAOU

but the sky is surely open - Première

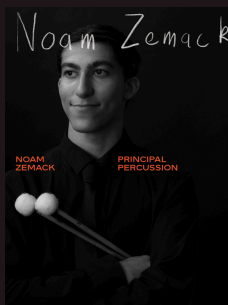
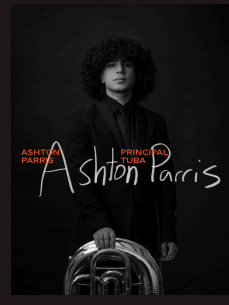
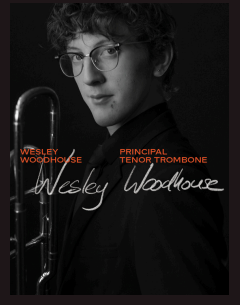
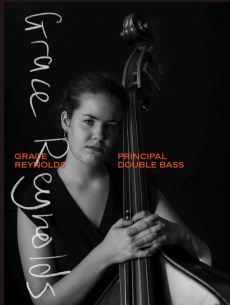
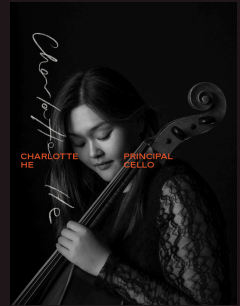
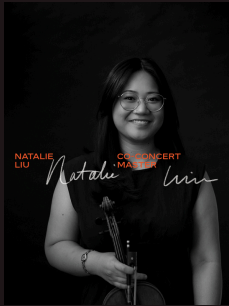
Igor STRAVINSKY

L'Oiseau de feu (The Firebird), Suite

Paul HINDEMITH

Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber

PRINCIPALS 2026



Musicians

VIOLIN 1

Khang Mai
Sophia Juarez
James Krockenberger
Wansi Huang
Violet Krockenberger
Casey Chen
Elaine Huang
Caitriona Fox
Zoe Ty
Scarlett Seybold
Vicky Ying
Angelina Jin

VIOLIN 2

Natalie Liu
Bettina Minogue
Ethan Powell
Caitlin Murphy
Clayton Poon
Dylan Yeun-Hay
Stefan Kowalik
Gloria Huang
David Milic
Koki Takamura
Andrew Dharma

VIOLA

Spencer Oxnam
Haruki Muramatsu
Alice Moon
Nick Thu
Julian Lang
Derek Wu
Sophie Gan
Aleksei Prakhly
Si-Yun Tan
Lola McKenzie
Tina Dong

CELLO

Charlotte He
Elden Loomes
Juliette Roumanoff
Marcus Tyler
Erik Wild
Alexander Benz
Kai Hall
James Grennan
Aleifr Tinkler-Smith
Aidan Tran
Claire Pepperell

BASS

Grace Reynolds
Sam Pankhurst
Yolanda Dolenac
Noah Taylor

FLUTE

Ellie Foulkes
Kai Simpson-Smith
James Hillier
Christina Zhou

OBOE

Molly Grogan
Cate Sandbach
Orin Kim Narushima
Evie Young

CLARINET

Amelia Dillon
Hannah Christie
Emma Lang
Tessa Darby

BASSOON

Lyndon Coward
Edmund Huang
Rose Hart
Emily Ava Wan

FRENCH HORN

Josephine Kilham
Sophie Moulds
Eloise Brunsdon
Rory Hodgson
Kian Shanahan

Musicians

TRUMPET

Alexander Butler
Maksim Stevanovski
Matilda Dearden

HARP

Paul Nicolaou

PIANO

Andrew Dharma

TROMBONE

Wesley Woodhouse
Joel Gilmour

BASS TROMBONE

Tom Borbilas

TUBA

Ashton Parris

TIMPANI

Noam Zemack

PERCUSSION

Bilal Arrigo
Joshua Chee
Ollen Djonov
Narah Padilla-Smith
Hayden Markham-Ball

**THE SYDNEY
YOUTH ORCHESTRA**

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OUR DONORS

On behalf of the young musicians, staff and Board of Sydney Youth Orchestras, we would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals, companies and foundations for their support and generosity in championing the future of orchestral music in Australia.

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If you are interested to learn more about how your donation will make a positive impact on SYO, please contact Georgia Wilson, Head of Development, at georgia.wilson@syo.com.au.

OUR PEOPLE

The success and vibrancy of SYO would not be possible without our team of talented, passionate and hardworking staff. We thank you all for your continued dedication and commitment to the development of young musicians and for your part in building a thriving, musical community.

* SYO Alumni

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Sydney Youth Orchestras is a not-for-profit organisation and relies on the generosity of our supporters to run our programs.

Please consider donating by following the QR code, or contact Georgia Wilson, Head of Development to discuss making a gift:
georgia.wilson@syo.com.au.

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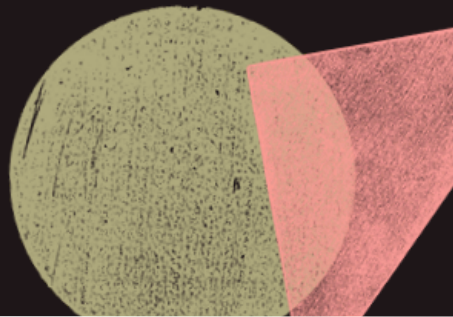
OUR PARTNERS

We wish to thank each of our supporters for their continued involvement and contribution toward the future of SYO and the next generation of young musicians.



Sydney Youth Orchestras
is supported by the
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through Create NSW.

TAFE^{NSW}





SPECIAL THANKS

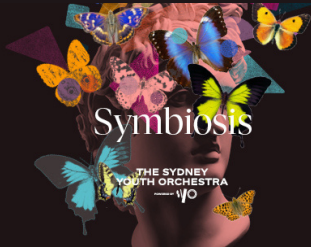
SYO would like to thank our tutors,
mentors, families, volunteers, and
collaborators for their continuous and
dedicated contributions.



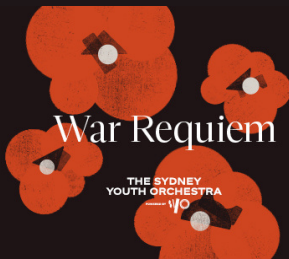
2026

THE SYDNEY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

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Symbiosis – Saturday 1 August 2026, The Sydney Youth Orchestra's finest musicians join together in an intimate chamber music showcase exploring the interplay between individual artistry and collective expression.

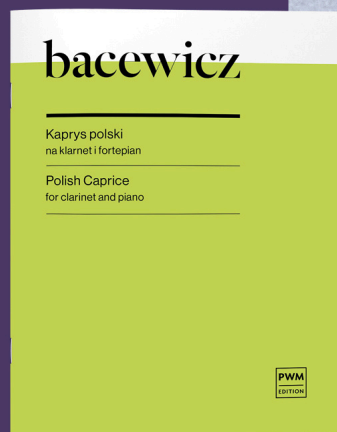
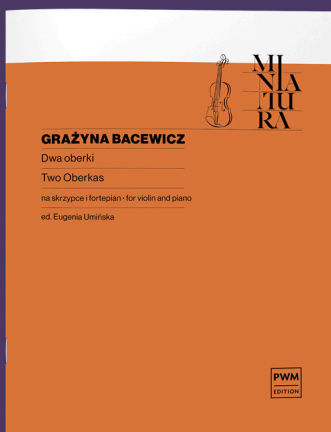
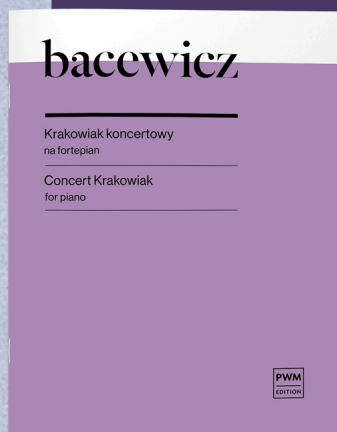


War Requiem - Saturday 17 October 2026, Sydney Opera House. Conductor Brett Weymark OAM leads The Sydney Youth Orchestra and Sydney Philharmonia Choirs in Britten's monumental work, weaving the Latin Requiem Mass with the wartime poetry of Wilfred Owen.

www.soundsofpoland.pl



Discover the Sounds of Poland. Discover Grażyna Bacewicz.



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SYO Winter School

Join SYO for five fun and intensive days of rehearsals and tutorials with Sydney's best educators, culminating in a concert at Sydney Conservatorium of Music to showcase your week of work.

Visit syo.com.au



SYO Winter Symphony

Work alongside inspiring mentors, conductors and tutors from Sydney's finest music educators in the Winter Symphony Orchestra 2026, a week of intensive rehearsals, tutorials and workshops culminating in a showcase concert at the Sydney Conservatorium.

Our conductor this July is Christopher Hayles, a passionate music educator whose career spans the Royal Academy of Music, international stages and 15 years as Head of Woodwind, Brass & Percussion at MLC School.

Auditions close May 28th. Registration open now.

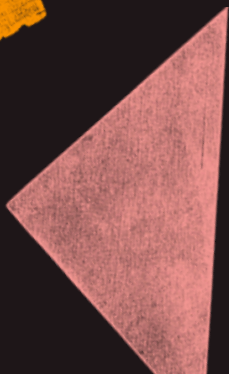
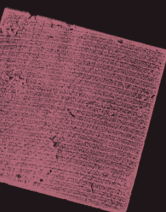
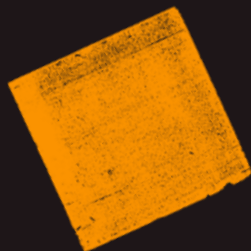
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STAY CONNECTED



Hosted by Matthew Coorey, Tempo speaks with some of the biggest names in orchestral music, exploring their journey from youth orchestra to world stage. The podcast series also features questions from SYO musicians.

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Sydney Youth Orchestras



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