

MOSMAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The French connection

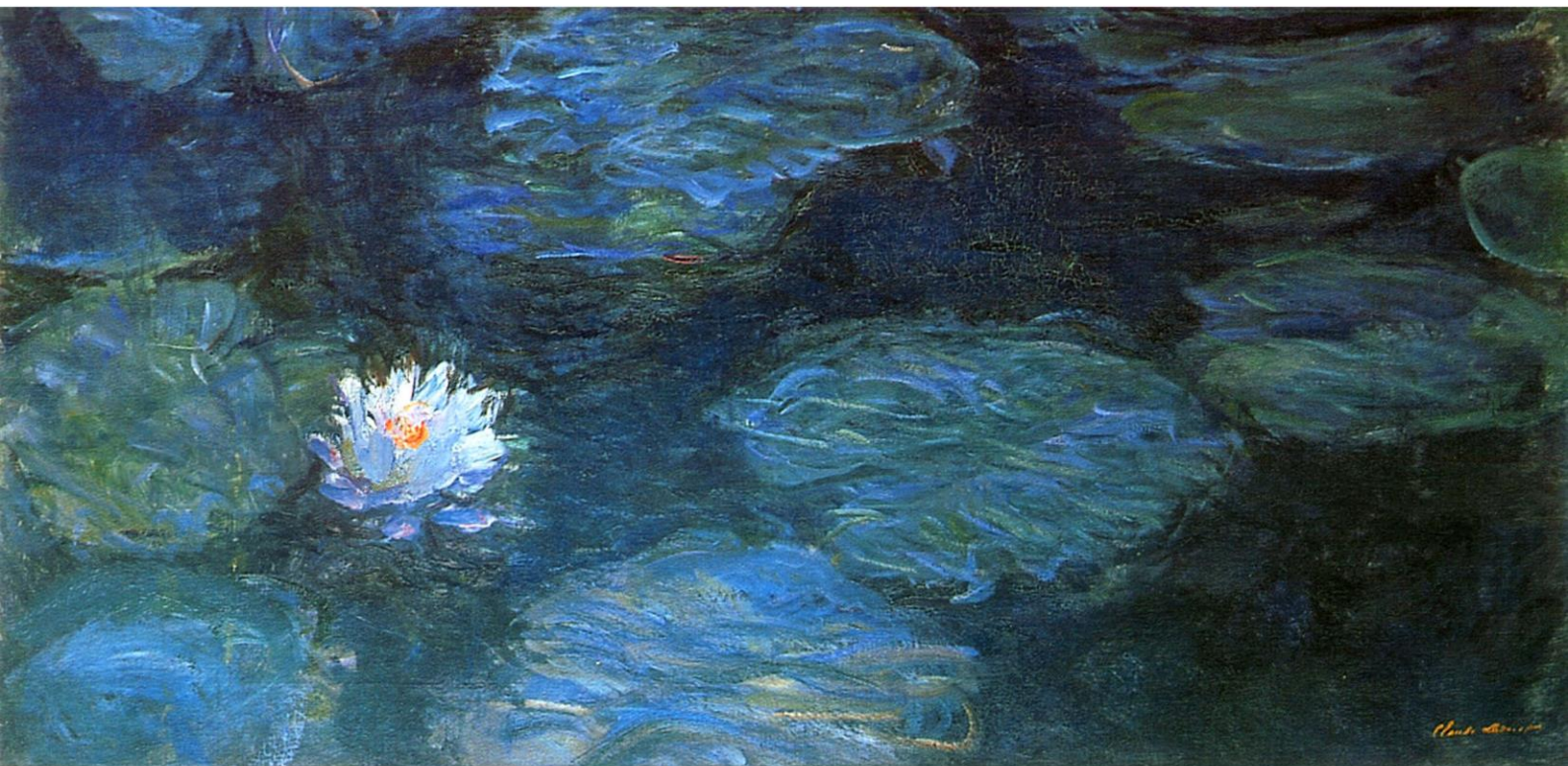
SAINT-SAËNS Danse macabre

DEBUSSY Danses sacrée et profane

DEBUSSY Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune

RAVEL Pavane pour une infante défunte

DUKAS The Sorcerer's Apprentice



Andrew Del Riccio | musical director

Natalie Wong | harp



Friday May 26 at 8pm

Sunday May 28 at 2.30pm

Mosman Art Gallery

Book online:

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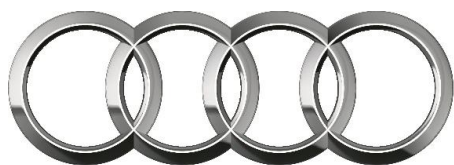
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Message from Musical Director Andrew Del Riccio



The year is almost half over, and once again, Mosman Symphony Orchestra is back presenting what we believe will be a joyous program of French music. There is something for everyone, the kids in us with the quirky *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, or the sublime Debussy *Prelude à l'après-midi du faun*, and plus wonderfully expressive music from Ravel and Saint Saëns. We are also welcoming harpist Natalie Wong to perform Debussy *Dances Sacred and Profane*. Natalie was recently studying in Germany and plays with what I am sure you will agree, is stunning control and virtuosity.

The orchestra is busy on quite a few fronts now. Apart from our regular subscription concerts, we have also founded a chorus. This ensemble will perform both in its own right, and with the orchestra, opening up many new possibilities for repertoire to present. (If you are interested in singing in a choir, just collar one of the orchestra members, and we will get you connected!) This concert also sees quite a few percussion instruments present. We have been gradually building up the instruments the orchestra owns, so it can play more adventurous pieces. Apart from timpani, bass drum and cymbals, we now own a glockenspiel, and this concert is its christening! Plans are afoot for 2018, as well as preparation for the rest of this year, so please write our dates in your diary and come along!

Thank you for attending today; I trust you will enjoy our music as much as we enjoyed preparing it.

Andrew Del Riccio – musical director

Notes on the Program

La danse macabre Op 40 by Camille Saint-Saens (1835-1921)

One of the repertoire's most popular orchestral works, this was based on a song for voice and piano, with a French text by the poet Henri Cazalis. It reads in part:

*Death at midnight plays a dance tune
Zig zig zig, on his violin.
The winter wind blows and the night is dark ...
Through the gloom white skeletons pass
Running and leaping in their shrouds ...
But hist! of a sudden they quit the round
They push forward, they fly; the cock has crowed.*

Music and poem are based on the old superstition that Death, appearing at midnight every year on Hallowe'en, has the power to call forth the dead from their graves to dance for him while he plays his fiddle. The skeletons dance until the break of day, when they must return to their graves until the next year.

La danse macabre, written in 1874, is a good example of an orchestral tone poem: that is, a piece of music that represents a particular storyline. Saint-Saens was inspired to explore this genre by his contemporary Franz Liszt (1811-1886).

The piece opens with the harp playing a single note representing the chiming of midnight, and soft chords and pizzicato from the string section. This leads to eerie chords in E flat and A, played by the solo violin, representing death on his fiddle. The main waltz theme is heard on a solo flute, then on the violins, and the flute and solo violin begin to trade parts of the main theme. The main waltz theme and a descending scale are also heard throughout the various sections of the orchestra, with the xylophone representing the rattling bones of the skeletons as they dance.

The solo oboe breaks into the energetic dance, representing the rooster crowing at daybreak. One final violin solo is joined for a statement by the orchestra and the piece ends very softly, with the pianissimo representing the dawn breaking and the skeletons returning to their graves.

When it was first performed, the piece was not well received, with critics referring to 'the horrible screeching' from the solo violin; they didn't like the use of the xylophone either. Shortly after the premiere, however, the piece was transcribed into a piano arrangement by Franz Liszt. It is a popular choice for dance performances, was used as a recurring motif in Jean Renoir's classic film *The Rules of the Game*, and an adaptation was used as the theme music for the British TV series *Jonathan Creek*.

Danses sacrée et profane by Claude Debussy (1862-1918)



Claude Debussy 1908

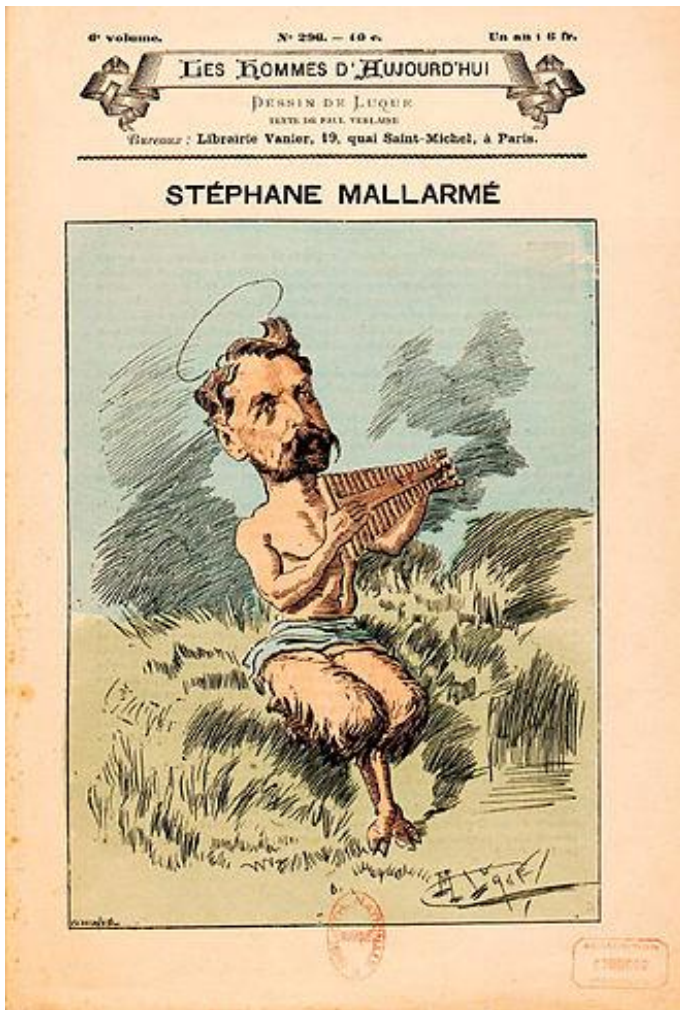
Although Debussy did not compose any work that could properly be called a concerto, he did leave several small-scale works for solo instruments with orchestra. One such is the so-called 'Sacred and profane dance' for harp and strings, written in 1904 as a commission from the Pleyel firm of instrument manufacturers. Debussy was given this commission to celebrate a revolutionary new instrument, the chromatic harp, invented by the company's chief director Gustave Lyon. (At the time harpists were interested but they found that the two intersecting rows of strings, providing a string for every chromatic note, made the instrument less resonant, and adversely affected the tone, so they soon abandoned it.) Like many other Impressionist composers, Debussy liked writing for the harp because of the special effects possible on it, including crystal clarity as well as blurring.

There are two parts in this piece, connected to form a single movement. In the first dance Debussy creates an atmosphere of ancient religion. Chant-like phrases in the strings and chords from the harp express harmonies that suggest an almost mediaeval spirituality, which links this section harmonically with Debussy's opera *Pelleas et Melisande*, composed a few years earlier. This is followed by a more mysterious melody against four repeated rising notes from the harp. After a brief recapitulation of the initial material, a cascade of broken chords ends in a slow motif in the low register of the harp.

The adjective 'profane' describing the second dance does not have the same meaning in French as in English. Rather than implying desecration or blasphemy, the word is related to a secular, earthy or sensual character – in this case that of popular Spanish culture. Debussy was inspired by Spanish music in several of his pieces for piano (notably 'Estampes') and in this piece he used offbeat, lilting rhythms and more lush harmonies. This work was written while Debussy was composing *La Mer*, his most ambitious orchestral piece, and the ebb and flow of the dynamics in *Danse profane* are reminiscent of the larger work.

INTERVAL

Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune by Claude Debussy (1862-1918)



Stéphane Mallarmé as the faun, cover of the literary magazine *Les hommes d'aujourd'hui*, 1887

The 'Prelude to the afternoon of a faun' was inspired by the poem of the same name written by the contemporary French poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), which describes a faun playing his pan pipes alone in the woods. He becomes aroused by passing nymphs, pursues them unsuccessfully then lies down to sleep, only to have dreams filled with visions. It is one of Debussy's most famous works, and is considered a turning point in the history of Western music. Debussy wrote of it that 'The music of this prelude is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather, there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realise his dreams of possession in universal Nature.'

Apparently Mallarmé was unhappy that his poem was used as the basis for music, considering that the words themselves were sufficient. But when Debussy invited him to the premiere he was delighted, and wrote to the composer: 'Your illustration of the Afternoon of a Faun, which presents a dissonance with my text only by going much further, really, into nostalgia and into light, with finesse, with sensuality, with richness. I press your hand admiringly.' One of the ways in which Debussy expresses homage to Mallarmé – and something musicologists have picked up, though chances are Mallarmé didn't – is that Mallarmé's text adds up to 110 lines, and there are 110 bars in the Prelude. Moreover, the second section of the Prelude starts at bar 55, exactly halfway through the work, and there is a natural break halfway through the Mallarmé poem.

To the casual listener, the Prelude is deceptive in several ways. For one thing, it is complete in itself, not a prelude to anything. And at first listening it sounds almost casual, almost free form. However, analysis reveals that the piece consists of a complex organisation of musical motifs, carefully developed and exchanged between various sections of the orchestra. The work is scored for three flutes, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, percussion, two harps and strings.

The main theme is introduced by the solo flute with delicate and harmonically adventurous underpinnings of muted horns, strings and harp. The piece exhibits many of Debussy's best-known compositional characteristics: extended whole tone scale runs, harmonic fluidity and very sophisticated and intricate shading in the orchestration.

As well as being a fascinating example of the limits of tonality at the time of its composition, the Prelude has had a long and distinguished lineage in popular culture. Most famously, in 1912 it was made into a short ballet with costumes and sets by Leon Bakst, choreographed and performed by the world-famous dancer Vaslav Nijinsky; the ballet became notorious because of its non-traditional costumes and movements. Nijinsky was associated with the ballet for the rest of his life.

American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein gives a fascinating analysis of *L'après-midi d'un faune*, available on YouTube.

Pavane pour une infante defunte by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)



Detail from Velázquez, *Las Maninas*, 1656

Originally written for solo piano, this 'Pavane for a dead princess' was composed in 1899 when Ravel was a twenty-four-year-old student of composition at the Paris Conservatoire under Gabriel Faure. He described it as 'an evocation of a pavane' – a slow processional dance widely popular in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – 'that a little princess might, in former times, have danced in the Spanish court.' But when he was asked how he arrived at the title he said that he just liked the sounds of the words and put them together, that was all.

This piece, described in one program note as an 'antique miniature', is not intended to pay tribute to any princess who actually existed, but rather as a salute to Spanish customs – as Ravel did in other pieces,

notably *Rapsodie espagnole* and his other massively popular work *Bolero*. All his Spanish-inspired pieces show a richness and sensuality, combined with a lightness of touch, that remained characteristic of Ravel throughout his career. He dedicated the Pavane to his patron, the Princesse de Polignac.

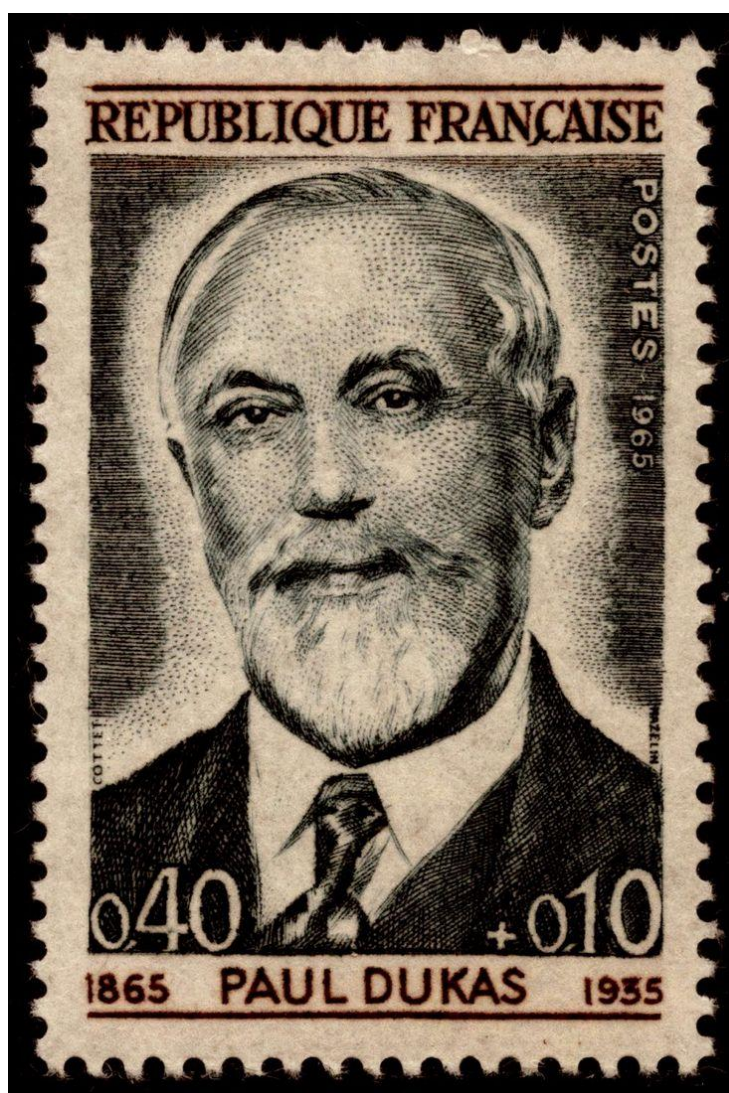
He intended the work to be played extremely slowly – probably more slowly than in any modern interpretation. However, told one performer who had been doggedly wringing every possible bit of emotion out of the piece that the work was called ‘Pavane for a dead princess’, not ‘Dead pavane for a princess’. He himself made a piano roll of the piece in 1921 in Paris, and the pace itself is anything but brisk.

Ravel orchestrated the Pavane in 1910. He gave the lead melody to the horn, and scored the piece for two flutes, oboe, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, harp and strings.

Many composers tend to dislike their early successes later in life, and Ravel was no exception. Years after it was published he said he regarded it as conventional and unimaginative, and unduly influenced by the work of his contemporary Emmanuel Chabrier. Over the last century concertgoers have disagreed with him, and they continue to do so: this remains one of the most popular works in the piano and orchestral repertoires.

The sorcerer’s apprentice (L’apprenti sorcier) by Paul Dukas (1865-1935)

Most people know this work from the segment in the 1940 Walt Disney movie *Fantasia* in which Mickey Mouse tries to use magical means to collect water and fails spectacularly. Disney’s rendering, in fact, follows the original very closely. Dukas based his 1897 music on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s 1797 poem *Der Zauberlehrling*, which describes how an old sorcerer leaves his workshop and tells his apprentice to fetch water. Tired of using buckets, the apprentice casts a spell allowing a broom to do the work for him, but is unable to stop the broom. Panic-stricken, he splits the broom in two with an axe, but each piece is transformed into a new broom that takes up a bucket and continues fetching water at twice the original speed. In the midst of disaster, the sorcerer returns and breaks the spell, telling his apprentice that powerful spirits should be called only by the



master himself.

In the German-speaking world, the last lines of Goethe's poem in which the apprentice implores his master for help -- 'from the spirits that I call, sir, deliver me!' -- have become a cliché, often invoked when a politician summons help or uses allies he or she cannot control.

The work, orchestrated for flute, piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, cornet, trombone, timpani, harp and strings was immediately successful. (The poem was originally published as part of the orchestral score.) Its popularity did not please Dukas, who became increasingly irritated that this became his best known work, even in his lifetime. His annoyance does deserve some sympathy, considering how much other work he composed. Much of this was exceedingly substantial, and included an opera, a ballet, a symphony and two substantial works for piano, none of which is performed these days.

Dukas was also a music critic, and later in his life he was appointed professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire. He was widely admired by both conservative and avant-garde composers of the time, and he and Debussy were lifelong friends, though Debussy did not consider Dukas' music to be sufficiently French. Dukas' students included Maurice Durufle, Olivier Messaien and Joaquin Rodrigo.

Critics have observed that *The sorcerer's apprentice* has become such a popular and widely performed concert piece that it has totally eclipsed its composer's other surviving works – and even the Goethe poem. According to *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 'The popularity of *L'apprenti sorcier* and the exhilarating film version of it in Disney's *Fantasia* possibly hindered a fuller understanding of Dukas, so that single work is far better known than its composer.' Many have seen this as regrettable, considering the cleverness, sophistication and evocative qualities of the one work for which Dukas is widely known.

Thank you for your company today. We hope to see you again. Please join us for refreshments after the concert

Natalie Wong – harp



Natalie began harp lessons at the age of twelve with Hazel Hu, after first learning the piano, flute, and violin. Having decided to pursue the harp as her main instrument, she then studied with Louise Johnson and Jane Rosenson at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and was awarded a Bachelor of Music (Performance) with first class honours.

As an avid orchestral musician, Natalie gained much experience through the Sydney Youth Orchestras, SBS Youth Orchestra, AISOI, various community orchestras, Sydney Sinfonia, and toured to Europe with the Australian Youth Orchestra. Aged 19 she made her first appearance with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra playing second harp, and at 21 played principal harp in Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. Natalie's passion for learning led her to travel across Europe to undertake lessons and masterclasses with many different eminent harpists. To pursue further studies, she moved to Berlin where she gained a Masters degree under Professor Maria Graf at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler. She also studied intensively with Marie-Pierre Langlamet, principal harpist of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

While living in Germany, Natalie performed in a variety of solo, chamber music and orchestra concerts, and worked frequently as guest principal harp in the Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester Frankfurt. Other professional engagements included performances in Hannover, Dresden, Opera Lab Berlin, Brandenburger Symphoniker, and a tour to Russia under Valery Gergiev, performing alongside members of the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra and various German orchestras.

Since her return to Sydney, her hometown, Natalie has performed regularly as guest principal harp with the Opera Australia Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. She also enjoys teaching and composing, and has performed some of her own solo and chamber music compositions in public concerts in Sydney, Berlin, Tignes, and at the World Harp Congress.

Mosman Symphony Orchestra Concert Dates 2017

September 1 & 3

Rimsky, Ravel, Brahms

Gregory Kinda – piano

November 10 & 12, Bach, Beethoven & Brahms

Anthony Aarons – trumpet, Brian Kim – flute, Rachel Tolmie – oboe

Plus ...

June 23 and 25

Choral concert

December 10

Christmas concert with Mosman Symphony Chorus

Dates may change: please check our website www.mosmanorchestra.org.au

Mosman Symphony Orchestra

Andrew Del Riccio – Musical Director



Andrew Del Riccio holds degrees in performance from the NSW State Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, in conducting from the University of British Columbia and education from the University of Western Sydney. He has studied at the Schola Canorum Basiliensis in Switzerland and the Boston Conservatory, conducting master courses in the Czech Republic and in London. While completing a Masters in Opera Conducting in Canada, Andrew conducted many performances, including two seasons of Hansel und Gretel, and seasons of La Finta Giardinera, Turandot 127 (world premiere at Summerstock Festival), L'histoire du Soldat, The Medium, numerous premieres of student works, new music reading workshops, and student ensembles for recitals and juries. In Australia, Andrew's conducting interests have led to the formation of ensembles including the St Peters Chamber Orchestra and The Unexpected Orchestra. He has been Musical Director of the Mosman Symphony Orchestra since 1999, conducting world premieres of works by Michiel Irik and Mathew Chilmaid with them. He has also worked with the Lane Cove Youth Symphony, North Sydney, Strathfield and Sydney University Symphony Orchestras and conducted concerts as an assistant conductor with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra. Andrew currently teaches music at Trinity Grammar School and also has a busy private teaching practice.

Armine Gargrtsyan – acting concertmaster



Armine migrated to Australia 5 years ago, and has been part of Mosman Symphony Orchestra since 2011. She began playing the violin when she was 6 years old in Armenia, where she was born. She graduated in the violin faculty of The Tchaikovsky Specialized Music College for Gifted Students in Yerevan, Armenia. While studying at the specialised school she travelled and performed with the violin ensemble of the school in various locations such as Moscow. She

finished her studies, receiving a Bachelor of Music Degree in Violin Teaching and Performance in Yerevan's Komitas State Conservatorium (Armenia). While studying at the conservatorium she started playing professionally in the special opera orchestra dedicated to the vocal school of the conservatorium as first violinist. After graduation she has worked with the Armenian National TV & Radio Symphony Orchestra, Yerevan's Symphony Orchestra and the Acapulco Symphony Orchestra in Mexico. She is currently employed as a casual rank and file violinist with AOBO (Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra). She also plays on a freelance basis with other orchestras and groups in Australia and teaches both violin and piano.

Armine says, 'Having played with variety of orchestras from around the world, I have been lucky to have travelled extensively to various major cities, such as Moscow, Marseilles, Chicago, Shanghai, Mexico City and other major cities in Mexico.'

'I look forward to playing more with MSO and contributing to the community and the performing arts and music.'

Orchestra Musicians

First Violin: Armine Gargrtsyan (acting concertmaster*), Julian Dresser, Nicole Gillespie, Annika Herbert, Eugenia Leung, Calvin Ng, John Philp

Second Violin: Emily Jones (leader), Shari Amery, Margaret Duncan, Sarah Hatton, Aeree Kim, Melissa Lee, Daniel McNamara, Kate Robertson, Bridget Wilcken

Viola: Daniel Morris (leader#) Mark Berriman, Bob Clampett, Zhiliang Chen, Gemma Grayson, Brett Richards, Hannah Shephard

Cello: Michal Wieczorek (leader+), Yvette Leonard, Ian Macourt, Karly Melas, Scott Rowe, Michaela Williams

Bass: Cosimo Gunaratna, Moya Molloy, Amanda Stead, James Zhang

Oboe: Kim d'Espiney, Cate Trebeck

Flute: Linda Entwistle, Jacqueline Kent, Jan Squire

Piccolo: Jan Squire

Clarinet: Allan Kirk, Hayley Mitchell

Bassoon: Bob Chen, Bianca Bacchiella

French Horn: Stefan Grant, Rafael Salgado, Derek Shangdian Wang, Radu Boros

Trumpet: Will Sandwell, Mark Hornibrook

Cornet: Anthony Aarons

Trombone: Greg Hanna, Matthew Keegan, Kevin Skues

Tuba: Greg Moloney

Percussion: Lisa Beins, Rufina Ismail, Michelle McDonald, Robert Oetomo, Jessie Wang,

Harp: Georgia Lowe, Natalie Wong (*in Debussy Prelude*)

* Chair of Concertmaster in memory of Carolyn Clampett

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+ Chair of Principal Cello is sponsored by Smiling Smiles Orthodontics, Mosman

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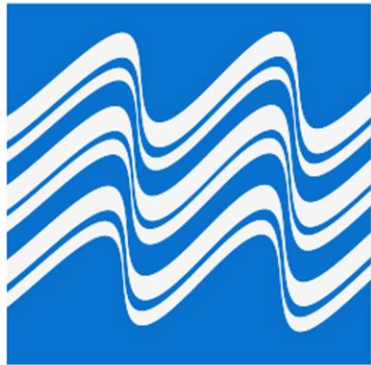
When the student is ready the teacher will appear. ZEN

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