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Ensemble Apex
8 pm 9 March 2018
Music Workshop
Sydney Conservatorium of Music

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Program

Vines *sync_for_me(1) World Premiere*
Sam Weller Conductor

Shostakovich Violin Concerto No. 1
Anna Da Silva Chen Violin soloist
Sam Weller Conductor

Interval

Beethoven Symphony No. 5
Umberto Clerici Conductor

Tonight's program is proudly
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Cover photograph John B Chen

About the orchestra

Ensemble Apex was founded in 2016 by Sydney Conservatorium of Music student Sam Weller. Our focus is to present both loved and lesser known works from 20th century repertoire, also opportunities for elite soloists to perform with a full orchestra. Most of Ensemble Apex's concerts are free and are often presented with various art forms.

Now in its second season, Ensemble Apex has been involved in a variety of projects. In June 2017 we had the privilege of performing as part of Sydney's Vivid festival in Ignite Symphonic Dance Anthems presenting a night of orchestrated Dance Anthems at the City Recital Hall. We also had the privilege of sharing the stage with Grammy Award winning artist Lorde in a media launch for her new single Greenlight.

Our 2018 season is bold, vibrant and eclectic. In August we collaborate with Sydney Dance Company to present a new production of Bartok's daring ballet; The Miraculous Mandarin, and in December we celebrate our second birthday at the Conservatorium with a jazz inspired program along with an internationally renowned soloist.

Tonight we are extremely excited to present a night of firsts. Anna Da Silva Chen plays Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto, we premiere Nicholas Vines' first Symphony (the orchestras first commission) and Umberto Clerici makes his conducting debut with his first performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

sync_for_me(1) 2018
Nicholas Vines 1976
Conductor Sam Weller

Reason gets a hard time these days. In public discourse, the thinking behind modern science, technology and governance often plays second fiddle to personal relationships and feelings. sync_for_me(1) is my reaction to that.

This piece is modelled on the early classical symphony, which addressed a similar imbalance, albeit from the perspective of too much, rather than too little reason. In the mid-eighteenth century, certain German composers - notably Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach - reacted against the ultra-rationality of established musical style by embracing what they saw as the genuine, spontaneous nature of emotion. While sync_for_me(1) sounds nothing like C.P.E. Bach's symphonies, it is nevertheless a sort of spiritual cousin. The most obvious connections are the three-movement form, and the scoring for 'faux court orchestra'; that is, a classical orchestra, augmented here with extra woodwind, percussion and electronics. There is also a shared focus on expression, as demonstrated in both cases by 'melancholic' (slow) tempi and active manipulation of expectation through surprise and contrast. Most importantly, although they are coming from opposite directions, the two musics have the same goal: a fulfilling balance between reason and emotion.

I guess the moral of both stories is that you cannot express meaningfully without logic, and you can't make logic meaningful without expression... My heartfelt thanks to Sam Weller and Ensemble Apex for bringing this work to life.

Nicholas Vines

Violin Concerto No. 1 1947-1948

Dmitri Shostakovich 1906-1975
Violin soloist Anna Da Silva Chen
Conductor Sam Weller

Dmitri Shostakovich began composing his first Violin Concerto in the summer of 1947 which was completed the following year; however, the work was not performed until 1955. Shostakovich had a tempestuous relationship with Joseph Stalin and the communist party for most of his life apart from a small respite upon the completion of his Seventh Symphony (composed during the siege of Leningrad). No matter how well his music was received by the public Shostakovich's works were often denounced for being inappropriate and formalist. The success of the Seventh Symphony didn't last long. In 1946 a cultural doctrine known as the Zhdanov decree was introduced preventing Shostakovich's new Violin Concerto to be performed, to make matters worse Shostakovich was also denounced entirely as a composer. It was not until two years after Stalin's death that this gripping Violin Concerto was performed.

The concerto is potentially the first work to include the famous DSCH motif (the composers initials D Eb C B) which occurs hundreds of times throughout the concerto. The concerto is in symphonic form, beginning first with a nocturne which elaborates on a fantasy form. The second movement is a bombastic scherzo which seems to be dragged up from hell itself - Anna's wild virtuosity will be on full display here. The third movement is a Passacaglia which interestingly enough was described by the composer himself as having themes similar to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (listen out for the horns at the start of the movement). Finally after a dazzling cadenza Shostakovich takes us on a wild romp to the finish line with a Burlesque finale.

Sam Weller

Interval

Symphony No. 5 in C minor 1804–1808

Ludwig Van Beethoven 1770–1827

Conductor Sam Weller



Nicholas Vines

Composer

Arguably one of the most recognisable pieces of all time, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony has proven to transcend time. Beethoven's iconic opening 'fate' motif (dun dun dun duuunnnn) is essentially the bread and butter for the entirety of the first movement. After the iconic opening we are launched into a tour de force guided by this original three note motif, the action only stalled for a brief moment with a surprising oboe cadenza (tonight performed by Callum Hogan). The second movement, *Andante con moto* presents itself as a theme and variations form in which Beethoven develops two themes elaborated upon so ingeniously, that melodies seem to evolve spontaneously from one to another. Beethoven's scherzo movement (the third) begins ominously in the celli and double bass before we are reminded of the fate motif as the horns launch us into a new theme. To me, the most exciting part of the work is the explosive transition from the third movement into the fourth, modulating to the long-awaited key of C major. Simon Rattle beautifully describes this moment as having 'the effect of a volcanic eruption' as the Trombones, Contrabassoon and Piccolo thunder in. Conductor and Violinist, Nikolas Harnoncourt, known for his historically-informed performances of Beethoven's Symphonies says, the Fifth is 'Beethoven's only truly political symphony, which takes its theme as the struggle against slavery and tyranny'. I'm sure you will understand why tonight.

Sam Weller

Described as 'exquisite' (Gramophone), 'riveting' (The New York Times), 'arresting' (The Boston Globe), 'compellingly original' (Boston Phoenix), 'full, extravagant and wild' (Sydney Morning Herald), and 'edgy, bright and entertaining as hell' (NewMusicBox), the works of Nicholas Vines (b.1976, Sydney) have been performed by the likes of Alarm Will Sound, BMOP, Ensemble Offspring, the Schola Cantorum Gedanesis Chamber Choir, the BT Scottish Ensemble and the Australian Piano Quartet.

He has been commissioned by organisations around the world, such as Acacia Quartet, Callithumpian Consort, Firebird Ensemble, mmm..., Guerilla Opera, Chamber Made Opera, Ensemble Apex, the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and various Sydney schools.

Recognition for Vines's work includes APRA AMCOS Art Music, Helpmann and Green Room Awards (2011/2012, 2007, 2006), runner-up in the 2010 Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, an honourable mention in the 2006 Salvatore Martirano Competition (USA), and 2nd Prize in the 'Musica Sacra 2005' Competition (Poland).



Anna Da Silva Chen
Violin soloist

Published by Wirripang, Faber Music, the Australian Composers Online Project and Alexander Street Press, the bulk of his work is available through the Australian Music Centre. Navona Records has released albums of Vines's compositions featuring the Callithumpian Consort (Torrid Nature Scenes) and Guerilla Opera (Loose, Wet, Perforated).

Graduating in 2007 with a PhD from Harvard University, Vines taught theory and composition there and at Wellesley College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, before taking up a position at Sydney Grammar School. He is also a composition tutor at the University of New South Wales, and mentor for the annual Artology Fanfare Competition, which in 2016 won the APRA AMCOS Art Music Award for Excellence in Music Education. nicholasvines.com

Anna is recognised as one of Australia's leading young violinists, praised for her 'liquid romantic tone' (Classikon), and 'blend between dazzling technique and intelligent lyricism' (Sydney Arts Guide). She has appeared as soloist with major orchestras across Australia including the Sydney Symphony, Adelaide Symphony, Tasmanian Symphony, Canberra Symphony, ACO Academy, Willoughby Symphony and The Metropolitan Orchestra among many others, performing in venues such as the Sydney Opera House, City Recital Hall Angel Place and Melbourne Recital Centre. Anna has performed in masterclasses with Maxim Vengerov, Pinchas Zukerman, Ana Chumachenko, Tasmin Little, Ulf Hoelscher and Berent Korfker, and was one of ten active participants selected to study with Professor Boris Kuschmir at the 2017 Kronberg Academy Violin Masterclasses in Germany.

Anna was a prize-winner at the Gisborne International Music Competition and was selected as a junior semi-finalist at the Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition at the age of fifteen. She has won first prizes at the Kendall National Violin Competition, National Fine Music 102.5 Young Virtuoso Award, Australian National Youth Concerto Competition, Sydney Conservatorium of Music's String Concerto Competition, NSW Secondary Schools Concerto Competition, Alf & Pearl Pollard Memorial Instrumental Award for Performance Excellence and NSW Doctors Orchestra Instrumental Scholarship of the Sydney Eisteddfod. She was a grand finalist at the ABC Symphony Australia Young Performers Awards in 2014 and string finalist for the three preceding years.



Sam Weller
Conductor
Ensemble Apex

Sam Weller was born in Sydney, NSW and is a current student at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music studying a Bachelor of Performance majoring in Saxophone under Dr Michael Duke. Sam is a member of the Luxum Saxophone Quartet who toured to Italy in 2017 as part of the Estivo chamber music program.

Sam began conducting in 10th grade at Newtown High School of the Performing Arts and made his debut as a conductor that same year with his school's orchestra upon the stage of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall in an exchange performance between Sydney and Beijing. Since then Sam has been a part of the Symphony Services Scholars Conducting program and more recently in 2017 was appointed the inaugural Sydney Youth Orchestra Conducting Fellow.

In January this year Sam had the privilege of being selected as an active participant in the Australian Conducting Academy where he conducted the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra under the guidance of Maestro Johannes Fritzschn.

In 2016 Sam founded Ensemble Apex, a chamber orchestra based at the Sydney Conservatorium. The ensemble is dedicated to diversifying classical music's audience and all though still young has performed many classical and contemporary concerts including engagements with guest musicians from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, performing as part of Sydney's VIVID festival and with Grammy award winning artist Lorde.



Umberto Clerici
Guest conductor
Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Born in Turin in 1981, Umberto Clerici began the study of cello in his town at the age of five at the Suzuki School with Antonio Mosca, with which he graduated at the Conservatory 'G. Verdi' of Turin. Having attended courses with some of the most important contemporary cellists, including Mario Brunello, David Geringas and Steven Isserlis, in 2007 he earned the Soloist Diploma from the Hochschule für Musik Nürnberg-Augsburg, studying with Julius Berger.

Umberto debuted at the age of 17, playing Haydn's D Major cello concerto in Japan, and from 2002 began a fully-fledged solo career, winning the National Association I.C.O. competition in Rome, which led him to perform in the concert seasons of 12 major Italian orchestras.

Umberto's accolades include awards in a number of significant international competitions, including the 'Janigro' in Zagreb and the 'Rostropovich' in Paris. Umberto is the only Italian cellist other than Mario Brunello, to have won a prize at the renowned 'Tchaikovsky Competition' in Moscow.

In 2003 he debuted at the Salzburg Festival and in 2012 he performed Tchaikovsky's 'Rococo variations' with the Orchestra of the Teatro Regio in Turin conducted by Valery Gergiev.

For 4 years he was principal cello at the Teatro Regio in Turin. In the same years he was invited as guest principal cello at the Orchestra Filarmonica del Teatro alla Scala of Milan.

Umberto plays a cello by Carlo Antonio Testore, made in Milan in 1758.

Orchestra

Violin 1

Gemma Lee
Ben Tjoa
Mishi Stern
Seamus MacNamara
Noam Yaffe
Myri Kim
Marianne Liu
Marshall Read
Rain Liu

Violin 2

Mia Stanton*
Emily Beauchamp*
Amy Huang
Annabelle Carter
Emma Martin
Lucy Macourt
Sophia Vasic
Lizzy Greenhalgh
Lydia Sawires

Viola

Henry Justo*
Justin Julian
Sergio Insuasti
Freyja Meany
Phoebe Gilbert
May Bardsley
Sophie Nickel

Cello

James Morley*
Miles Mullin Chivers
Nick McManus
Fiona Cheng
Soobee Kim
Suzannah Keene

Double Bass

Jaan Pallandi*
Adrian Whitehall
Jason Henery
Will Hansen
Linh Nguyen

Flute/Piccolo

Laura Chung*
Dana Alison
Rachel Howie

Oboe

Callum Hogan†
Eve Osborne

Cor Anglais

Joshua Oates

Clarinet

Clare Fox*
Olivia Hans-Rosenbaum
Alex McCracken
Bass Clarinet

Bassoon

Tiger Chou*
Brighdie Chambers
Ashleigh Jo
Contra Bassoon

Horn

Aidan Gabriels*
Andrew London
Eve McEwen
Pei Yin Xu

Trumpet

Alfred Carslake*
Sam Thompson

Trombone

Amanda Tillett*
Cian Malikides
Will Kinnmont
Bass

Tuba

Luke Bartley*

Percussion/Timpani

Adam Cooper Stanbury*
Sami Butler
Niki Johnson
Huon Bourne-Blue

Piano/Celeste

Scott McDougall

Harp

Will Nichols

Electronics

Lewis Mosley

*denotes principal player
bold denotes concertmaster

Acknowledgements

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We have had the pleasure of working with the following companies and highly recommend their services:

Design - Austen Kaupe
Publicity - CutCommon magazine
Sheet music - Clear Music

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