

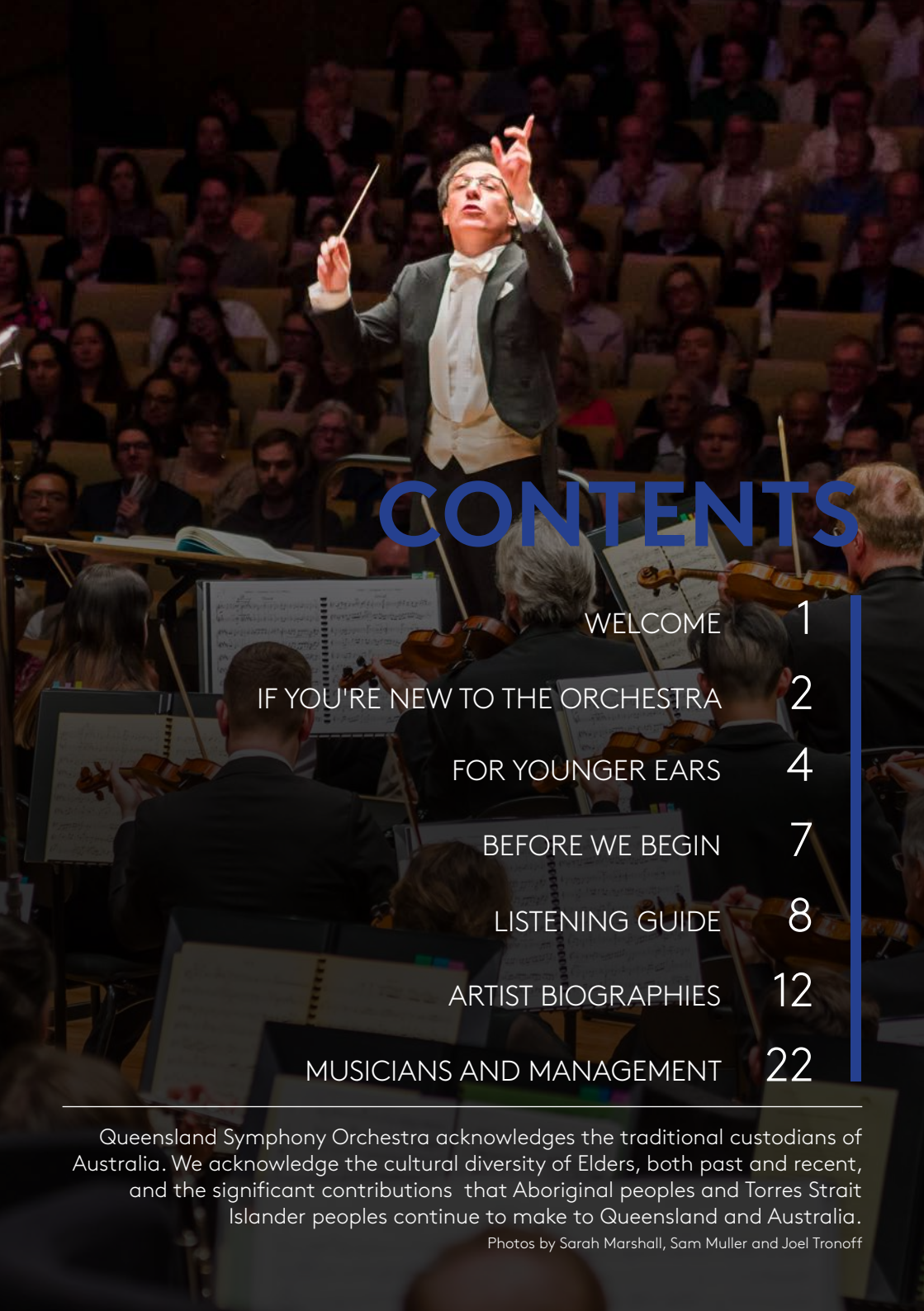
A portrait of conductor Umberto Giacomini, a man with dark hair, wearing a black tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a white bow tie. He is holding a baton in his right hand. The portrait is set against a dark background and is framed by a large, dark blue, semi-circular shape on the right side of the overall image.

Umberto's Mahler



QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

23 + 24 FEB 2024
CONCERT HALL, QPAC



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Queensland Symphony Orchestra acknowledges the traditional custodians of Australia. We acknowledge the cultural diversity of Elders, both past and recent, and the significant contributions that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to make to Queensland and Australia.

Photos by Sarah Marshall, Sam Muller and Joel Tronoff

WELCOME

I am very excited to open our 2024 Maestro Season with Mahler's mysterious and magnetic 7th Symphony. The least performed among Mahler symphonies and one that QSO haven't played since 2010, this is a huge challenge for an orchestra.

It is considered a difficult symphony to listen to, but I disagree. It is more enigmatic than other works by him, yet the narrative is very clear. It begins exactly where his epic 6th symphony ended, with our hero (Mahler himself) shattered by the three hammer blows representing his personal and professional tragedies.

The first movement meanders toward obscurity, in a sort of suspended travel. We still hear some subdued march rhythm, reminiscent of the 6th, but the music is much calmer. The orchestral colours are incredible, with every kind of possible blend among almost 100 musicians.

The second part is about the most symbolic element in Germanic Romanticism: the night. It commences with a night walk. Several sounds of nature enter, with horn calls, birdsongs and cowbells in the distance. The piece then takes a ghostly turn, with shadows and spirits floating around the orchestra. This section then concludes as a serenade to the night: marked *amoroso* (with love) and reduced in instrumentation. Our concertmaster, Natsuko Yoshimoto, introduces the movement with a violin solo, while a horn solo, above the gentle tones of a guitar and mandolin, creates this magical serenade.

The last part of the symphony was initially criticised for its apparent lack of refinement and for being too loud and bombastic. For me, it narrates the transfiguration, both emotionally and physically, from the night and obscurity into the light and redemption. It is boisterous, celebratory and loud on purpose; to symbolise that life can be good, simple and joyful, despite its many adversities.

Umberto Clerici
Chief Conductor

IN THIS CONCERT

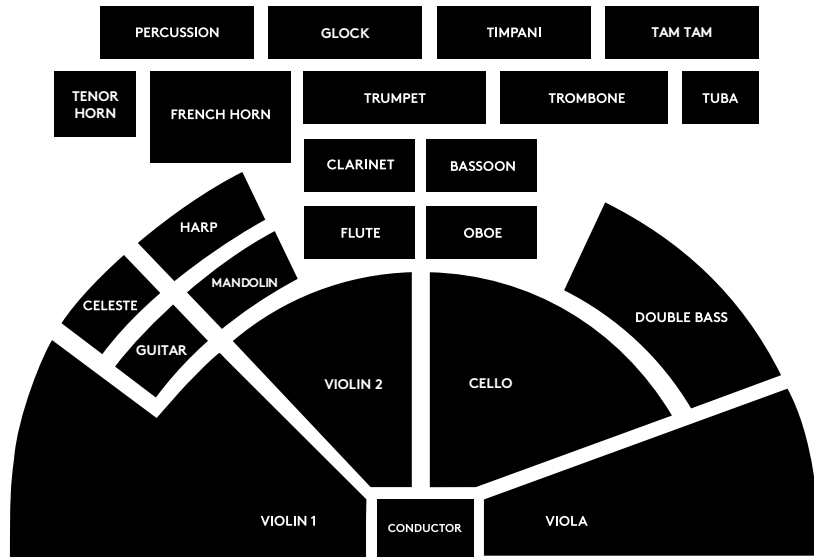
Conductor Umberto Clerici

PROGRAM

MAHLER	Symphony No. 7 in E minor	
	I. Langsam - Allegro	22'
	II. Nachtmusik I	15'
	III. Scherzo: Schattenhaft	9'
	IV. Nachtmusik II	15'
	V. Rondo-Finale	16'

Relive this concert on ABC Classic 10 March at 12pm AEST.

IF YOU'RE NEW TO THE ORCHESTRA



WHO SITS WHERE

Orchestras sit in sections based on types of instruments. There are four main sections in the symphony orchestra (strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion) and sometimes a keyboard section.

STRINGS

These instruments produce sound by bowing or plucking stretched strings.

- First and Second Violin
- Viola
- Cello
- Double Bass
- Harp

WOODWIND

Wind instruments produce sound by being blown into.

- Flute/Piccolo
- Clarinet/E-flat Clarinet/Bass Clarinet
- Oboe/Cor Anglais
- Bassoon/Contrabassoon

KEYBOARD

Keyboard instruments are played by pressing keys.

- Piano
- Celeste
- Organ

BRASS

Brass players create sound by vibrating their lips. When this vibration is pushed through large brass tubes, it can create significant noise.

- French Horn
- Trumpet
- Trombone/Bass Trombone
- Tuba

PERCUSSION

These instruments create sound by being struck or, for the harp, plucked or strummed. Some instruments just make a sound; others play particular notes.

- Timpani, Bass drum, Snare drum, Cymbals, Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Vibraphone, Tam-tam, Triangle, Sleigh Bells.

WHO'S ON STAGE TODAY



Find out who's on stage today, scan the QR code below.



FOR YOUNGER EARS

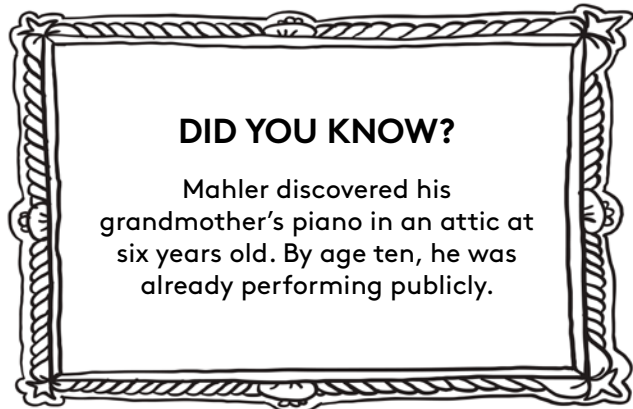
GUSTAV MAHLER

Symphony No.7 in E minor

We don't use the phrase 'tour de force' lightly. So, when we say both today's symphony and conductor are a 'tour de force' we mean it. Every Mahler symphony is a musical journey and every concert conducted by our Chief Conductor, Umberto Clerici, is a powerhouse experience.

MUCH ADO ABOUT MAHLER

Gustav Mahler, or Gus to his friends, was a Romantic composer born in Bohemia in 1860. Let us explain ourselves: by 'Romantic' we refer to the era of music, art and architecture from around 1798 to 1837 in which artists and musicians drew on social change, revolutions, and emotions to create. By 'Bohemia' we're actually referring to what is now an area in Czechia. Across Bohemia and around the world, Mahler was famous for his innovative compositions and emotionally intense music. The symphony you will hear today is a wonderful example of that – it sounds like something you might hear in a movie or a ballet, with each movement you can't help but envision a scene.



THE MUSIC

Mahler's symphony is made up of five beautiful movements. While the Symphony was finished in 1905, the movements were composed separately. In 1904, Mahler wrote the second and fourth movements, but had writer's block until the summertime in 1905 in which he finished the remaining three. Each movement he did compose in the end has its own personality and flair, and highlights particular instruments.

Movement 1

We start off by being carried slowly into a marching procession before a violin melody full of yearning takes over. We can't help but imagine trudging through a dark forest and encountering creatures along the way. Throughout this movement, Mahler pulls together three marches from the orchestra before the violins plunge us suddenly back into the introduction.



Movement 2

Mahler opens the second movement with a mysterious atmosphere, and brooding horn (no wonder brass players love Mahler) to create a sense of solitude that eventually gives way to a spirited allegro, with musical nods to the movement we have just heard. This movement is intricate and complex – Mahler once described it as a "tragic night without stars or moonlight."



FOR YOUNGER EARS

Movement 3

A ghostly scherzo (which is a light and playful composition) starts off this eerie movement. Often listeners think of ghosts and shadows when they hear this movement. The drums and violins scurry around notes—you might imagine spiders scurrying around a haunted castle. In a kind of twisted waltz, witches might emerge. Finally, the movement unravels and fades away.



Movement 4

The fourth movement is a dreamlike realm of strings and woodwinds. There is a warmth created as the two sections play off of each other in a way that recalls loving, familiar memories.

Movement 5

In typical Mahler fashion, the symphony reaches an exhilarating conclusion. The fifth movement unleashes the full force of the orchestra. The music hurtles to a triumphant end (if you've heard Mahler before, you know he always finishes with a big flourish). Listen out for themes from the previous movements woven in, like the fiery march from the first movement.



BEFORE WE BEGIN

Before the performance begins, get to know a few musical terms in the Listening Guide.

Movement	A symphony is often divided up into different sections, each called movements.
Downbeat	The first beat of each bar.
Cor anglais	A double-reed woodwind instrument in the oboe family, also known as an "English horn."
Waltz	An elegant dance which has groups of three beats, with the first beat receiving the most emphasis.
Glissando	An upwards or downwards slide between notes.



LISTENING GUIDE

Gustav Mahler (1770–1827)

Symphony No.7 in E minor (Edition Kubik 2012)

- I. Langsam - Allegro
- II. Nachtmusik I
- III. Scherzo: Schattenhaft
- IV. Nachtmusik II
- V. Rondo-Finale

Mahler's symphonies are epics of the orchestral world.

However, the seventh symphony has long been the most neglected and misunderstood of his masterpieces. It's been called the 'ugly duckling' of Mahler's symphonies, a work first thought too confusing and disjointed to ever appeal to audiences. But just as the ugly duckling becomes an elegant swan, Mahler's seventh has come to be recognised for its elusive beauty, and its magnificent portrayal of dusk evolving into dawn, rich with the allure of nature's splendour.

It is the tenor horn that conjures the symphony's first melody. This unusual instrument is a stranger to the orchestra but, as we will come to discover, is not its only unusual addition. Resembling a small tuba, the tenor horn has a sweet, round tone which soars over a determined thrumming of strings. From here the first **movement** unfurls. Mahler's typically large orchestra means all hands are on deck, with every sound offering a new, intricate colour. This movement is vast, and ventures between the funereal and the triumphant, as ephemeral as the natural landscape.

This symphony was composed as Mahler began to reach international acclaim not only for his conducting, but his composing too. As a full-time conductor, the summers were the only periods that Mahler could devote serious time to composing, and it was in the Austrian countryside that the first sketches of the seventh symphony began. However, Mahler initially did not have another symphony in mind. Instead, two works entitled 'nachtmusik' (night music) were written in 1904, and a year later, he decided to integrate them into a larger work.

Movement one, however, was troublesome. For weeks Mahler fretted over composing the rest of the symphony, and this summer almost passed with little progress. Then, out rowing, as his oars first dipped into the river, the theme of the first movement came clearly to him. From there, the rest of the symphony flowed quickly, and was promptly shelved. It was not until 1908, three years after its completion, that the symphony was performed. And even then, almost until the very **downbeat** of the concert, Mahler was frantically making revisions.

Mahler's wife Alma recalls him on the day of the first performance, bedridden from nerves and surrounded by discarded sheets of music. It wasn't the content of the music that Mahler was particularly worried about, but the instrumentation. A number of younger composers had jumped on board to help with the preparation of parts and the final flurry of alterations, and the process of editing became a more extensive affair than the original composition. As the rehearsal process went on, Mahler's confidence gradually returned, but somehow he knew this unconventional symphony would never quite have the glorious reception he could have hoped for.

Beyond the twisting, almost tormented opening, two solo horns announce the opening of the second movement. The first horn is bold, the second, muted, replies with a dull echo. Gradually the woodwind enters, the clarinet in sinewy, scurrying motions, while the **cor anglais** takes the horn's crowing theme. It builds quickly to an almost savage glory; our descent into the depths of the night has begun. The violins and violas tap their upturned bows percussively against their strings, timpani unexpectedly thunder through our scene. A sweet dance emerges, then night-time again encroaches. Throughout, fragments of the horn call subsist, amid a soundscape teeming with life, balanced carefully between the fear of the unknown, and the wonder of a world hidden under the nocturnal.

This fear of the unknown prevails in the third movement, as the low grumble of the orchestra begins a spooky mockery of a **waltz**. The strings **glissando** from note to note, an almost drunken, off-kilter attempt at their melody. A viola solo is a haunting addition, while the busy overlapping of the orchestra contorts this dance into a shuddering nightmare.

But night is not only to be feared, but is the backdrop for romance, and so the fourth movement, the second of the earlier composed 'nachtmusik' movements portrays. Guitar, harp and mandolin become the featured accompaniment to a devoted love song. The orchestra quietens, and in its smallest, most intimate form weaves an elegant serenade that slips into silence.

Don't be too lulled by this fourth movement, as the finale begins with a bang. The timpani leads the charge as the brass erupts into triumphant fanfare. The symphony's pastoral roots are not forever lost; a clearing of woodwind chirps and flutters, and sweet pastoralism humbly rises between the columns of elated brass. After the darkness of the first four movements, this finale's light is almost blinding. While excerpts of previous material glimmer throughout, there is a fresh vibrancy about this finale, the journey to a world far away from where we began. The tolling of bells rings in the conclusion of Mahler's seventh, and the arrival of a hopeful dawn.

© Paige Gullifer

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



Umberto Clerici Conductor

After a career spanning more than 20 years as a gifted cello soloist and orchestral musician, Umberto Clerici is widely regarded for his seamless transition to the podium now as an acclaimed conductor. The 2024 season will mark Clerici's second as Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in addition to being a frequent guest with several leading orchestras.

Umberto began his career as a virtuoso cellist making his solo debut at the age of 17 performing Haydn's D Major cello concerto in Japan. After years of performing on the stages of the world's most prestigious concert halls, Umberto took up the position as Principal cello of the Teatro Regio di Torino following which he was Principal Cello of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra from 2014 to 2021.

It was in Sydney in 2018 that Umberto made his conducting debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House. Following a swift trajectory of prestigious conducting engagements, Umberto is now in high demand with the major symphony orchestras throughout Australia and New Zealand.

In addition to his role Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Umberto's 2024 conducting engagements include returns to the podiums of the Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras together with a three-week series with the Sydney Symphony for 'Symphony Hour' that Umberto himself has expertly curated. Other recent highlights include his debut with the Tasmania Symphony and a hugely successful debut in opera conducting Verdi's *Macbeth* with Opera Queensland.

Upcoming European conducting engagements in early 2024 include Elgar's cello concerto with Steven Isserlis for the Volksoper Vienna, Orchestra del Teatro Massimo in Palermo and Orchestra Regionale Toscana.

As a cellist, Umberto is beloved by audiences worldwide, having performed internationally as a soloist at New York's Carnegie Hall, Vienna's Musicverein, the great Shostakovich Hall of St Petersburg, Auditorium Parco della Musica in Rome, the Salzburg Festival and is one of only two Italians to have ever won a prize for cello in the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition.

Umberto plays cellos by Matteo Goffriller (*made in 1722, Venezia*) and Carlo Antonio Testore (*made in 1758, Milano*).



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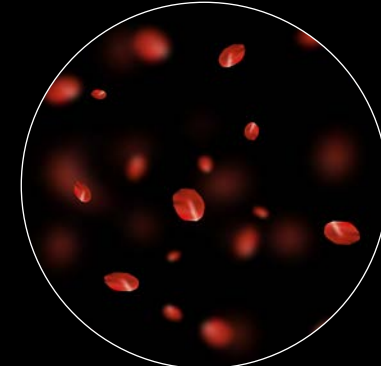
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Opera Gala

FRI 8 MAR 7.30PM
SAT 9 MAR 1.30PM
Concert Hall, QPAC

Conductor Giordano Bellincampi
Artists Sae-Kyung Rim
Kang Wamg
Phillip Rhodes
Choir Voices of Birralee

Music from:
Tosca • La Bohème • Madame Butterfly
Manon Lescaut and more.



Hopelessly Devoted: A CELEBRATION OF OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

SAT 6 APR 1.30PM + 7.30PM
Concert Hall, QPAC

Conductor Nicholas Buc
Artists David Campbell
Jess Hitchcock
Georgina Hopson
Christie Whelan Browne



Messiah

THU 28 MAR 7.30PM
Concert Hall, QPAC

Conductor Brett Weymark
Artists Celeste Lazarenko
Stephanie Dillon
Alexander Lewis
Christopher Richardson
Choir Brisbane Chamber Choir
Handel *Messiah*

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