



QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

A black and white photograph of a man with glasses, looking upwards and to the left, playing a violin. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the instrument against a dark background.

RACHMANINOV & SHOSTAKOVICH

SEASON 2026



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Welcome!

Welcome to this morning's concert. Today you can expect to receive a masterclass in orchestral composing from two Russian masters, juxtaposed with an Australian-inspired, European-flavoured work by Cathy Milliken. You will hear melodies that move you, as well as beautiful moments that show off the skill of our QSO musicians.

We are delighted to be joined by Konstantin Shamray for the Rachmaninov Concerto: if you joined us for *Brief Encounter* last year, you will have heard him performing this work with us. We are also joined by students from Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, who will perform with us during Shostakovich's Symphony No.5. Please give them a warm welcome – you saw them here first!

Thank you for joining us today; we hope you enjoy the concert.

RACHMANINOV & SHOSTAKOVICH

Concert Hall, QPAC
Friday 22 May 2026, 11.30AM

IN THIS CONCERT

Umberto Clerici Conductor
Konstantin Shamray Piano
Queensland Symphony Orchestra

PROGRAM

RACHMANINOV

Piano Concerto No.2 13'
II. Adagio sostenuto

SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No.5 48'
I. Moderato
II. Allegretto
III. Largo
IV. Allegro non troppo

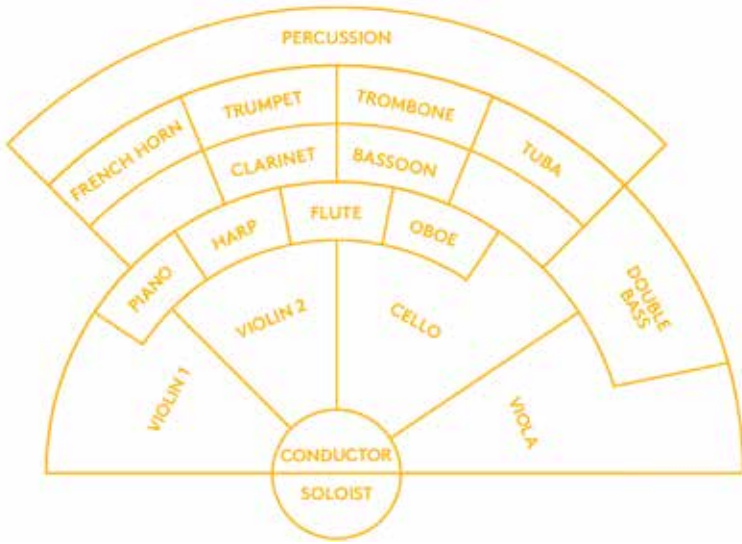
IMPORTANT INFORMATION

All concert doors open at 11am
This concert will end at approx. 1pm

This concert will be
recorded by ABC Classic
for broadcast on
13 June 2026 at 1pm



Today's Orchestra Layout



Who's On Stage

Scan the QR code for the list of musicians playing in today's concert.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Queensland Symphony Orchestra provides a spoken Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of each concert to encourage awareness and to demonstrate our respect for First Nations cultures and traditions, as well as signalling our commitment to a more inclusive and equitable society. We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of Meanjin where we work, rehearse and perform: the Turrbal and Yuggera peoples, whose deep connection to this land reminds us to always protect and care for it.

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



Artistic Summary

Only 36 years separate the two Russian works in today's program, but the political and musical landscape was unrecognisable from one to the other. Rachmaninov, writing his Second Piano Concerto from his rural family seat at the turn of the century, drew a direct compositional line from his hero, Tchaikovsky.

The mammoth piece is characterised by irresistibly long and sweeping melodic lines, which tug at the heartstrings. It's no wonder that the piece was an immediate success, and regularly tops lists of the most beloved classical music of all time.

By contrast, Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was written by a composer fearing for his life at the height of the Stalinist purges. The usual sardonic and avant-garde Shostakovich sarcasm is concealed under largely diatonic and classical forms, and a certain melodic affinity with Beethoven. The piece is Shostakovich's most-performed symphony and one of his most melodically and harmonically accessible.

Both composers were attempting to rehabilitate themselves with their respective works: Rachmaninov from a three-year bout of depression caused by the disastrous premiere of his First Symphony, and Shostakovich from Stalin's dangerous disapproval following the opening of his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Their approaches could not be more different: Rachmaninov's Concerto expresses a lovelorn yearning and a bittersweet hope for the future, while Shostakovich's Symphony is a tense and dramatic clinging on for dear life.

We are very happy to welcome on stage with us this morning some students from Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, playing side-by-side with our musicians in the Shostakovich. QSO is committed to offering opportunities to invest in the future generation of classical musicians. The Side-by-Side program gives real world experience to emerging artists.

Queensland Symphony Orchestra

As one of the largest performing arts companies in Queensland and the state's only professional symphony orchestra, Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO) is renowned for its high quality, breathtaking performances of both classical and modern compositions that engage audiences of diverse musical tastes, interests, and ages.



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Listening Guide

SERGEI RACHMANINOV

(1873-1943)

PIANO CONCERTO NO.2 IN C MINOR, OP.18

II. Adagio sostenuto

In 1897, the premiere of the First Symphony, which Rachmaninov had been anticipating for nearly two years, turned out to be a disaster. Tormented by his failure, Rachmaninov retreated from Moscow and was unable to compose anything else of importance for the next two years. In his own eyes, he was finished as a composer at the age of 24.

Relatives, concerned about the composer's fragile mental state, enlisted the services of Dr Nikolay Dahl, a psychotherapist, who had for some years specialised in treatment by hypnosis – though it is more likely that the treatment consisted of extended conversations between the doctor, himself an accomplished amateur musician, and his patient on a wide range of musical topics. Rachmaninov's enthusiasm for composition returned and he began the long-postponed work on the Second Piano Concerto, which he would dedicate to Dr Dahl.

After a muted orchestral introduction, the lyrical second movement opens with a series of slow, soft arpeggio passages from the piano. An acceleration of the tempo leads to a cadenza followed by a brief coda.

Adapted from a note by Nina Apollonov © 1997

Rachmaninov is remembered for the irresistibly grand and sweeping melodies of his orchestral and piano works. Having fled Russia for the USA following the October Revolution, he struggled to settle outside of his native country, and his compositional output declined in favour of concert appearances as a conductor or soloist. One of the great piano virtuosos of the 20th century, he could reportedly play an interval of a twelfth in each hand.

SYMPHONY NO.5 IN D MINOR, OP.47

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Largo
- IV. Allegro non troppo

Possibly there has never been as much debate over a composer's intentions as with this symphony. Shostakovich began the work some 15 months after his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* had been condemned in *Pravda* as 'muddle instead of music'. The price to be paid for ignoring the views of the Communist Party during Stalin's dictatorship could be high. Shostakovich knew of people 'disappearing'. And the Fifth Symphony, first performed in Leningrad on 21 November 1937, was therefore seen for many years as Shostakovich's completely understandable compliance with the anti-modernist artistic precepts of Soviet officialdom - 'A Soviet artist's reply to just criticism', assumed at the time to be Shostakovich's own subtitle for the work.

Solomon Volkov's book *Testimony* in 1976, however, painted a portrait of a composer who knew how to get his views across in ways dull-witted party officials could never detect. Though subsequent commentators scorned Volkov's claim to have ghostwritten Shostakovich's memoirs, the contents of the book have not been entirely debunked: Maxim Shostakovich has said that the book depicted the father he knew.

What Volkov and a number of other writers reveal is a composer who did not buckle under official bullying, and encoded political criticism in his music. What evidence does the music provide?

The Fifth's first movement is in a clearly recognizable classical sonata form, with jagged first and lyrical second themes; angry-sounding ostinati on the piano and pizzicato basses clearly begin the 'development section'.

The second movement is a traditional scherzo with a playful trio, but listeners at the first performance wept during the *Largo*. Many said how extraordinary it was to be able to experience emotion when the whole society was built on a paranoid secreting of thoughts and feelings.

Much of the debate about the meaning of this symphony revolves around the finale. Officials were quick to hail it as an expression of triumph. But *Testimony* has Shostakovich saying: "...The rejoicing is forced, created under threat.... It's as if someone were beating you with a stick saying, 'Your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing,' and you rise, shaky, and go marching off, muttering 'Our business is rejoicing, our business is rejoicing.'"

Listening Guide

When doubts about *Testimony* first surfaced, writers such as Christopher Norris mocked Western liberals who thought they had discovered 'cryptic messages of doom and despair' in music which 'sounds, to the innocent ear, like straightforward Socialist Optimism'. Yet such a close friend of Shostakovich as Mstislav Rostropovich said, 'Anyone who thinks the finale is triumph is an idiot.'

With a piece of Absolute music such as a symphony, however, it will always be up for debate what's in the sound of the music.

Gordon Kalton Williams
Symphony Australia © 2000/2009

Battling the strict and oppressive Stalinist regime throughout his career, **Shostakovich** was touted as a triumph of the Soviet Union during his lifetime. Denounced twice by Stalin during his career, a disputed memoir suggests he hid subversive messages within his music. His myriad symphonies, operas, string quartets, piano works and film scores often self-quote and run the gamut from bleakness to grotesquerie.

Artist Biographies



UMBERTO CLERICI

CONDUCTOR

After a career spanning more than 20 years as a gifted cello soloist and orchestral musician, Umberto Clerici has consolidated his diverse artistic achievements to rapid acclaim as a conductor. Since 2023 he has been the Chief Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

It was in Sydney in 2018 that Clerici made his conducting debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House. Following a swift trajectory of prestigious conducting engagements, he is now in high demand in the southern hemisphere and Europe.

In addition to his busy schedule with the Queensland Symphony, other recent and future engagements include the Volksoper Wien with Steven Isserlis, New Zealand Symphony with Daniil Trifonov, debuts with Orchestra del Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Orchestre de l'Opéra de Rouen and Orchestra Regionale Toscana. Clerici continues a special relationship with the Sydney Symphony, and will return in 2026 to the Opera House with a programme featuring Bryce Dessner and Dvořák. Each season also sees Clerici conducting on the podiums of Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras.

In the operatic sphere, Clerici recently enjoyed his second collaboration with Opera Queensland (Puccini's *La bohème*) and he will make his opera debut with the Volksoper Vienna with Bizet's *Carmen*.



KONSTANTIN SHAMRAY

PIANO

Australian-based pianist Konstantin Shamray is greatly admired as a performer not only of formidable technique but deeply poetic musicianship.

In Australia, recent and future highlights include the Sydney Symphony (with Umberto Clerici), Australian Chamber Orchestra, West Australia Symphony (with Asher Fisch and Dmitri Matvienko), Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (with Douglas Boyd and Andrew Litton), Tasmanian Symphony (with Otto Tausk) and Queensland Symphony (with Benjamin Northey and Umberto Clerici).

Chamber music plays a strong role in Shamray's career and highlights include performances with the Australian String Quartet, Richard Tognetti, Satu Vanska, Li-Wei Qin, Kristian Winther, Daniel Muller-Schott and Jeroens Berwaerts to name a few.

As a recitalist, Shamray is also a firm favourite at Australia's most prestigious venues/festivals such as Ukaria Cultural Centre, Adelaide Festival, Melbourne Recital Centre and the International Piano Series.

Shamray's debut album with ABC Classic entitled 'Bells Across Europe' will be released later this season. This draws from his very own doctorate thesis inspired by the use of bells in music through the ages.

Shamray is a Senior Lecturer in Piano at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.



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Sharon Schimming
Director-General, Department of Education

Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) rests on the lands of the Yuggera and Turrbal peoples. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this country and recognise their rich cultural heritage and enduring connection to the land, waters and skies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are this country's original storytellers, and it is our privilege to continue to share stories and be a place of gathering on this land that has been a meeting place for millennia.

Thank you to all our donors for their generous support of the QPAC Foundation, which enables us to reach beyond the stage and bring a sense of belonging, community engagement, and joy to all Queenslanders.

We give heartfelt thanks to QPAC's Principal Partners Hyundai and MinterEllison and we acknowledge the valued support of all our corporate partners who help make our work possible.

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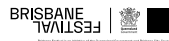


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Coming Up



Beethoven, Dvořák & Smetana

FRI 12 JUN 11.30AM & SAT 13 JUN 7.30PM

Concert Hall, QPAC

Umberto Clerici Conductor
Ivan Karizna Cello

SMETANA *The Bartered Bride Overture*
DVOŘÁK Cello Concerto
BEETHOVEN Symphony No.7



Rising Stars

FRI 26 JUN 7.30PM

Queensland Conservatorium Theatre, Griffith University

Luke Dollman Conductor
Rebecca Goobanko Soprano
Jake Lyle Baritone
Reuben Tsang Piano

A stage for tomorrow's most exciting performers: featuring 2024 Lev Vlassenko Winner Reuben Tsang in Mozart's Piano Concerto No.23, and a selection of operatic favourites from Mozart, Rossini and Lehár. This concert is a showcase of Queensland's emerging talent.



Ravel & MacMillan

FRI 17 JUL & SAT 18 JUL 7.30PM

Concert Hall, QPAC

Jaime Martín Conductor
Claire Edwardes Percussion
Voices of Birralea

JAMES MACMILLAN *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*
RAVEL *Daphnis and Chloé*



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