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Acclaimed pianist to perform Rach 3

Top Russian conductor for Sydney concerts

Celebrated Russian conductor Alexander Lazarev will lead the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) this month, playing works by Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich.

KATHERINE TERS
RBTH

Under Lazarev's direction, from May 8 to 10 the SSO will perform Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 15 in A major* and the Rach 3 – Rachmaninoff's *Third Piano Concerto in D minor*. The Rach 3 will be played by visiting Czech pianist Lukas Vondracek.

In an interview with RBTH, Vondracek said that "as far as piano literature goes, it doesn't get much more challenging than the Rach 3. ...when you look beyond the sheer number of notes, you'll find incredible passion and complex musical structures in this work. Without a doubt,

it's among my favourite piano concertos."

Acclaimed by the German newspaper *Stuttgarter Zeitung* as one of the "greatest pianistic talents of our times," 27-year-old Vondracek made his debut at just 14, when he played with the Czech Philharmonic.

Born to pianist parents, Vondracek comes from a small town in the north-east of the Czech Republic. He is also a protege of Vladimir Ashkenazy, pianist and the SSO's Russian-born principal conductor until last year.

"I've been lucky enough to perform regularly with Ashkenazy since I was a teenager," Vondracek said. "He taught me how to discover the nuances and colour in music; and just watching and listening to his playing has always been educational and inspiring for me."



Pianist Lukas Vondracek made his debut with the Czech Philharmonic when he was just 14.

Vondracek last played in Sydney in 2007, when he performed Rachmaninoff's *Paganini Rhapsody*, also with the SSO.

"I've been lucky enough to perform with Ashkenazy since I was a teenager," Vondracek said.

He said he had never worked with Lazarev before and was very much looking forward to it.

Lazarev is a prolific performer and recording artist, known for the broad scope of his repertoire, which rang-

ed from the 18th century to avant-garde. In Soviet times, he was well-known for his efforts in disseminating and promoting the work of contemporary Soviet and foreign composers.

A graduate of both St Petersburg and Moscow conservatories and a prize-winning conductor during Soviet times, Lazarev is acclaimed in Russia and known for his longstanding associations with Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre. From 1987 to 1995, he was the theatre's chief conductor and artistic director, and more recently (2009 to 2010) he was the conductor in residence there.

Lazarev has also conduct-

ed the St Petersburg Philharmonic, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Symphony No. 15, Shostakovich's last, is considered to be a semi-autobiographical work. Written in the summer of 1971 in Repino, it is famous for its quotations, which include an outburst of Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, use of Wagner's Fate leitmotif from the *Ring Cycle* and allusions to Glinka and Mahler.

Shostakovich said in conversation with his friend Isaak Glikman: "I don't quite know why the quotations are there, but I could not, *could not*, not include them."

Live capture of the *Marco Spada* will show in cinemas across Australia in May

Bolshoi ballet to screen in Australia

Live captures of performances at the world's best theatres are broadening access to companies like the Bolshoi Ballet.

KATHERINE TERS
RBTH

From May 10, Australia's Sharmill Films will be presenting cinema screenings of the live capture of the Bolshoi's performance of *Marco Spada*. The ballet, which premiered in Moscow at the end of last year, was filmed at the Bolshoi Theatre on March 30. It will be screened in cities and regional centres across Australia.

Marco Spada, also known as *The Bandit's Daughter*, was created at the Paris Opera in 1857. It is a three-act ballet-pantomime, with choreography from Joseph Mazilier and music adapted from Daniel Auber's comic opera of the same name. The Bolshoi has revived Pierre Lacotte's 1981 production of the ballet, which was performed at the Rome Opera and in which Rudolf Nureyev played the lead.

The new production stars American David Hallberg and St Petersburg-born dancers Evgenia Obraztsova and Olga Smirnova.



A scene from *Marco Spada*, courtesy of the Bolshoi.

The live capture will be screened at Melbourne's Cinema Nova, Village Cinemas Rivoli and Palace Dendy Brighton; and at Sydney's Cremorne Orpheum, Dendy Opera Quays and the Palace Chauvel, among other cinemas.

Established in 1967 by Natalie Miller, Sharmill Films specialises in distributing European films and alternate content captured live. To date, that alternate content has included theatre, opera and ballet.

"The Met Opera in New York was the first company to start capturing their per-

formances live in high definition for cinema screenings," Sharmill Films' Kate McCurdy told RBTH.

After that, Great Britain's National Theatre and the Bolshoi Ballet followed their example, she said. Other ballets by the Russian company Sharmill has distributed in Australia include *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty* and, more recently, a new production of *Jewels* by George Balanchine.

"We've had very positive reactions from Australian audiences to screenings of titles from the Bolshoi," McCurdy said, adding that the quality of the captures was so high that audiences had views equivalent to the best seats in the house.

OTHER EVENTS

Matters of the heart museum



PRESS PHOTO

The Russian Society of Cardiology (RSC) will be taking part in the World Congress of Cardiology 2014, which is running in Melbourne from May 4 to 7.

Russian cardiologists will introduce a joint social project of the RSC and the World Heart Federation (WHF) called the Heart Museum. Through a series of interactive displays, this educational project for children demonstrates the heart's structure and functions and provides advice on how to maintain cardiovascular health. One display consists of costumes which let the wearers feel what it is like to be five, eight or 15 kilograms heavier. The RSC also joined the international initiative "Red dress," a project which aims to increase awareness about the prevention of cardiovascular diseases in women.

In the steps of Genghis Khan

Australian adventurer, author and film-maker Tim Cope will be talking about his new book *On the Trail of Genghis Khan* at the Sydney Writers Festival on May 23. Released by Bloomsbury last year, the book describes Cope's journey across the Eurasian steppe from Mongolia through Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine.

Cope, who speaks Russian from his days studying to be a wilderness guide, is passionate about the traditional cultures of Russia and Central Asia.

In response to recent events in Ukraine, Cope is keen to talk about his experiences with the Crimean Tatars.

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