



At Home *with* GEORGE ELLIS

One of Australia's most prolific composer-conductors shares his joy for music with *Selector*.

Words **Brendan McCallum**

A singular figure at the intersection of Australia's popular and high cultures, George Ellis' musical resume reads like a literal symphony of accomplishment, a who's who of collaborations. From conducting at the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony to his latest work, *Mimi's Symphony* (with beloved performer Justine Clarke), Ellis' passion is exuberant and infectious. "When conducting," he says, "I'm noticing this beautiful sound, how well it was composed... it makes me feel amazing. My job is to reflect that."

What are you working on at present?

I'm working with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra on a disco-themed outdoor concert. Songs like 'I Will Survive' and 'Shake Your Groove Thing'. We're really looking forward to it!

That juxtapose between popular and classical is one of your hallmarks, isn't it?

To me, it's magic. It started with The Beatles when I was very young. I was four years old listening to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and I just fell in love with the sound of pop song melodies accompanied by strings.

Whereabouts do you call home?

My parents are Greek and they came out to Australia



in 1956 and couldn't afford anything near the city. I was born in Penrith. When I was three, we moved to Marrickville and I've been in the inner west ever since.

I bet you throw a great party.

I do love to have parties and I love an open plan space. My apartment is a warehouse conversion with a very high ceiling that makes it feel bigger than it really is!

Is there a favourite dish you make that's a signature for you?

I love salmon pasta with steamed broccoli or red capsicum. Or both. Or zucchini and carrot. With chilli powder, ginger and turmeric, a little dill and coriander. Just put some oil on the tray and bake.

What about wine?

Wine, I love wine. A lovely Pinot Gris but I'm also ok with Chardonnay. I like Bunnamagoo.

What's the most extraordinary thing you've seen with your own eyes?

It's probably a cliché but seeing my two children being born I'll never forget. To see a new life coming into the world is absolutely transformational, it makes you believe in humanity. 🐾