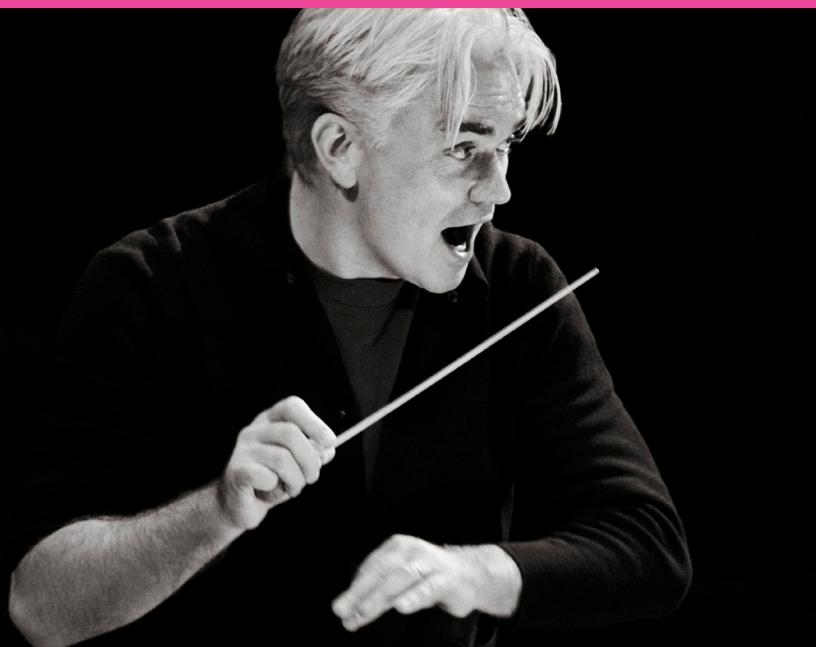




Free concert
programme

London Philharmonic Orchestra



2025/26 season
at the
Southbank Centre



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London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jebsen

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis supported by Richard Buxton

Conductor Emeritus Vladimir Jurowski KBE Patron HRH The Duke of Kent KG

Artistic Director Jesús Herrera Chief Executive David Burke

Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Wednesday 18 February 2026 | 7.30pm

Anne-Sophie Mutter plays Tchaikovsky

Sibelius

Pohjola's Daughter (12')

Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto (34')

Interval (20')

Beethoven

Symphony No. 7 (36')

Karina Canellakis

conductor

Generously supported by Richard Buxton

Anne-Sophie Mutter

violin

Concert generously supported by Sir Simon & Lady Robey CBE

Free pre-concert performance | 6.00pm | Royal Festival Hall
LPO Showcase: Junior Artists

The LPO Junior Artists perform alongside LPO musicians, Foyle Future Firsts and Junior Artist alumni under the baton of Wilson Ng, LPO Fellow Conductor 2025/26. All welcome, no ticket required.

The timings shown are not precise and are given only as a guide.
Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

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Tonight in 2 minutes

New to classical? Short on time? Your quick guide to tonight's concert.

The vibe

Anne-Sophie Mutter plays Tchaikovsky

Tonight's concert centres on superstar violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter playing one of the most famous and demanding pieces written for the instrument. Before that, we open with a short atmospheric orchestral piece based on an ancient Finnish legend. And after the interval, a symphony by Beethoven that journeys from a bright, confident opening to a slow, solemn march and a whirlwind finale.

Who's on stage?

Karina Canellakis - conductor



American conductor Karina Canellakis is the London Philharmonic Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor. She leads several concerts with the Orchestra each season, both here at the Royal Festival Hall and on tour.

Karina began her musical career as an orchestral violinist in the world-famous Berlin Philharmonic, before turning her hand to conducting. Since then she's made a name for herself worldwide, and in 2019 became the first female conductor to conduct the First Night of the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

Anne-Sophie Mutter - violin



Anne-Sophie Mutter is a big deal in the violin world, with a career spanning nearly five decades on the world's major concert stages. She's known not only for her distinctive sound and fearless virtuosity, but also for championing new music, inspiring major composers to write works especially for her.

London Philharmonic Orchestra



Tonight there are over 80 LPO musicians on stage. Our musicians represent over 14 different nationalities, and many enjoy busy solo, chamber and teaching careers alongside their orchestral work.

Turn to page 6 to see a full player list.

What to expect

Take your seats...

The Orchestra tune up their instruments, then the conductor, Karina, enters the stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...



12 min

Jean Sibelius Pohjola's Daughter

Inspired by an ancient Finnish legend, this vivid musical poem paints a sweeping picture of a hero's impossible quest, full of icy Nordic colours, surging drama, and moments of quiet wonder.



3 movements

34 min

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto

with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter

A concerto is a showpiece for a solo instrument accompanied by the orchestra. You'll hear the violin sing long, sweeping melodies, chatter playfully over light, dance-like rhythms, and then race through an exhilarating finale. It's a brilliant showpiece that blends virtuoso sparkle with a warm, romantic heart.

Longer classical pieces are often made up of **movements**, or shorter sections. Applause is usually saved for after the final movement.

Maybe an **encore**!

The soloist might play a little extra surprise piece, if the applause is loud enough!

Interval 20 min



4 movements

36 min

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No. 7

Beethoven composed nine symphonies, and this is one of the most popular. Throughout the four movements, it's driven by bold rhythms and a steady sense of forward motion, from a bright, confident opening to a slow, solemn march and a whirlwind finale. It's pure energy and momentum, with the whole orchestra caught up in the thrill of the dance!

After the final piece, we applaud the Orchestra. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Pieter, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause, with rounds of bows bringing the evening to a celebratory close.

Want to read more? Turn to page 10 for a deeper dive into this evening's pieces.

Welcome

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

We're the UK's largest centre for the arts and one of the nation's top five visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. As a charity, we bring millions of people together by opening up the unique art spaces that we care for.

The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward Gallery, National Poetry Library and Arts Council Collection. We're one of London's favourite meeting spots, with lots of free events and places to relax, eat and shop next to the Thames.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you need any information or help, please ask a member of staff. You can also email hello@southbankcentre.co.uk or write to us at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX.

Subscribers to our email updates are the first to hear about new events, offers and competitions. Just head to our website to sign up.

Printed with the planet in mind

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LPO news

Just announced: *Strictly* dancers join the LPO



For our Saturday 21 March concert, 'Four Seasons of Buenos Aires' at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, we're excited to welcome BBC One's *Strictly Come Dancing* dancers Lauren Oakley and

Kai Widdrington, who will perform a live tango on stage during the concert.

We're thrilled that Lauren and Kai will also join us afterwards for an 'After Dark' post-concert performance from 8.30pm in the QEH foyer. LPO string players will perform an intimate set of tango music, featuring more live dance from Lauren and Kai.

'After Dark' tickets are £10, or free to ticket-holders for the main evening concert. Book now via lpo.org.uk/whatson

Tonight's free pre-concert performance: LPO Junior Artists

The LPO Junior Artists programme supports talented teenage musicians from backgrounds currently under-represented in professional UK orchestras. Junior Artists spend a season with us and become fully immersed in the workings of the LPO. They are each mentored by a member of the Orchestra, and take part in a variety of performances, behind-the-scenes activities and skills workshops, as well as events to inspire future generations of young musicians.

Before tonight's concert, this year's Junior Artists will give a free performance in the Royal Festival Hall at 6pm, performing alongside LPO musicians, Foyle Future Firsts and Junior Artist alumni in a celebration of vibrant young talent. They will be conducted by Wilson Ng, LPO Fellow Conductor 2025/26. The programme includes a world premiere by former LPO Young Composer Zach Reading, written especially for and with input from these incredible young musicians. They will also perform music by Beethoven, Debussy and Coleridge-Taylor.

No ticket required, everyone welcome!

London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Mark Allan

Uniquely groundbreaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been celebrated as one of the world's great orchestras since Sir Thomas Beecham founded it in 1932. Our mission is to share wonder with the modern world through the power of orchestral music, which we accomplish through live performances, online, and an extensive education and community programme, cementing our position as a leading orchestra for the 21st century.

Our home is at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, where we're at the beating heart of London's cultural life. You'll also find us at our resident venues in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden, and on tour worldwide. In 2024 we celebrated 60 years as Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, combining the magic of opera with Glyndebourne's glorious setting in the Sussex countryside.

Soundtrack to key moments

Everyone will have heard the Grammy-nominated London Philharmonic Orchestra, whether it's playing the world's National Anthems for every medal ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, our iconic recording with Pavarotti that made *Nessun Dorma* a global football anthem, or closing the flotilla at The Queen's Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant. And you'll almost certainly have heard us on the soundtracks for major films including *The Lord of the Rings*.

Sharing the wonder worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. In 2023 we were the most successful orchestra worldwide on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, and in 2024 we featured in a TV documentary series on Sky Arts: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', which was nominated for a 2025 BAFTA. During 2025/26 we're once again working with Marquee TV to broadcast selected live concerts to enjoy at home.

Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included some of the greatest historic names like Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2021 Edward Gardner became our 13th Principal Conductor, and Vladimir Jurowski became Conductor Emeritus. Karina Canellakis is our current Principal Guest Conductor, and Sir George Benjamin our Composer-in-Residence.

Next generations

We're committed to nurturing the next generation of musicians and music-lovers: we love seeing the joy of children and families experiencing their first musical moments, and we're passionate about inspiring schools and teachers through dedicated concerts, workshops, resources and training. Reflecting our values of

Pieter Schoeman

Leader

collaboration and inclusivity, our OrchLab and Open Sound Ensemble projects offer music-making opportunities for adults and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

Today's young instrumentalists are the orchestra members of the future, and we have a number of opportunities to support their progression. Our LPO Junior Artists programme leads the way in creating pathways into the profession for young artists from under-represented communities, and our LPO Young Composers and Foyle Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. We also recently launched the LPO Conducting Fellowship, supporting the development of outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds under-represented in the profession.

2025/26 season

This season's theme, *Harmony with Nature*, explores humanity's bond with the natural world through works by Beethoven, Sibelius, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Dvořák; masterpieces of an era that saw nature as a mirror of human emotion. Closer to our own time, we'll hear from composers as diverse as Duke Ellington, John Luther Adams and Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, who have all found a source of creative energy in the processes of nature.

Highlights with Principal Conductor Edward Gardner include symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Brahms and Rachmaninov; a pair of concerts spotlighting 20th-century Central European composers; an evening dedicated to Elgar; and a performance of Berg's *Wozzeck* to end the season. We'll also welcome back Karina Canellakis and Vladimir Jurowski, as well as guest conductors including Robin Ticciati, Kirill Karabits, Mark Elder and Kahchun Wong. Our lineup of soloists this season includes violinists Anne-Sophie Mutter, Alina Ibragimova, James Ehnes and Himari; cellist Nicolas Altstaedt; and pianists Yefim Bronfman, Alexandre Kantorow and Tomoko Mukaiyama. The season features nine world and UK premieres, including Tan Dun's choral 'Ode to Peace' *Nine*, and *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* by jazz icon Terence Blanchard.

This season also sees tours to South Korea and across Europe, as well as a wide range of performances and community events in our Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden residencies.



© Benjamin Ealovega

Pieter Schoeman was appointed Leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2008, having previously been Co-Leader since 2002. He is also a Professor of Violin at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance.

Pieter has performed worldwide as a soloist and recitalist in such famous halls as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Moscow's Rachmaninoff Hall, Capella Hall in St Petersburg, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, and the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. He has also appeared as Guest Leader with many prestigious orchestras across the world. As a chamber musician, he regularly appears at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall. His chamber music partners have included Anne-Sophie Mutter, Veronika Eberle, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Boris Garlitsky, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Martin Helmchen and Julia Fischer.

Pieter has performed numerous times as a soloist with the LPO. Highlights have included an appearance as both conductor and soloist in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, the Brahms Double Concerto with Kristina Blaumane, Florence Price's Violin Concerto No. 2, and the Britten Double Concerto with Alexander Zemtsov, which was released on the LPO Label to great critical acclaim.

Pieter's chair in the LPO is generously supported by Neil Westreich.

New video series: 'Humans of the Orchestra'

Scan the QR code to watch our interview with Pieter



On stage tonight

First Violins

Pieter Schoeman* Leader
Chair supported by Neil Westreich
Alice Ivy-Pemberton
Co-Leader
Kate Oswin
Chair supported by Eric Tomsett
Lasma Taimina
Chair supported by Irina Gofman & Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave
Minn Majoe
Chair supported by Dr Alex & Maria Chan
Katalin Varnagy
Martin Höhmann
Yang Zhang
Wing Yan Alison Kwok
Thomas Eisner
Chair supported by Ryze Power
Nilufar Alimaksumova
Ronald Long
Julian Schad
Jamie Hutchinson

Second Violins

Emma Oldfield Principal
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews
Nynke Huijkema
Nancy Elan
Marie-Anne Mairesse
Joseph Maher
Sophie Phillips
Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra
Kate Birchall
Ashley Stevens
Sioni Williams
Ricky Gore
Kate Cole

Violas

Przemysław Pujanek
Guest Principal
Carys Barnes
Katharine Leek
Martin Wray
Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden
Benedetto Pollani
Raquel López Bolívar
James Heron
Kate De Campos
Richard Cookson
Charles Cross

Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal
Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden
Wayne Kwon
Chair supported by an anonymous donor
David Lale
Francis Bucknall
Leo Melvin
Helen Thomas
Iain Ward
Rasmus Støier Andersen

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal
George Peniston
Tom Walley
Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton
Laura Murphy

Chair supported by Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter
Charlotte Kerbegian
Catherine Ricketts

Flutes

Tom Hancox Guest Principal
Hannah Grayson

Piccolo

Stewart McIlwham* Principal

Oboes

Emanuel Abbühl
Guest Principal
Alice Munday
Chair supported by David & Yi Buckley

Cor Anglais

Sue Böhling* Principal
Chair supported by Dr Barry Grimaldi

Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont* Principal
Chair supported by Sir Nigel Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton
Thomas Watmough
Chair supported by Roger Greenwood

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

Jonathan Davies* Principal
Chair supported by Sir Simon Robey
Helen Storey*

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

John Ryan* Principal
Mark Vines Co-Principal
Martin Hobbs
Duncan Fuller
Gareth Mollison

Trumpets

Paul Beniston* Principal
Chair supported by the Williams family in memory of Grenville Williams

Tom Nielsen* Principal
Anne McAneney*

Cornets

Tom Nielsen*
Ben Jarvis

Trombones

Mark Templeton* Principal
Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton
David Whitehouse

Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

Tuba

Lee Tsarmaklis* Principal
Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Timpani

Marney O'Sullivan
Guest Principal

Harp

Sue Blair Guest Principal

Assistant Conductor

Wilson Ng

**Professor at a London conservatoire*

The LPO also acknowledges the following chair supporters whose players are not present at this concert:

The Candide Trust
Gill & Garf Collins
Victoria Robey CBE
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Joe Topley & Tracey Countryman

Karina Canellakis

Principal Guest Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra

© Marco Borggreve



Internationally acclaimed for her symphonic and operatic performances characterised by interpretive depth, refinement and emotional impact, Karina Canellakis is welcomed by the finest musical institutions across the globe. She has been Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 2021, and is also Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra.

In October 2025 Karina conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra in two Royal Festival Hall concerts featuring works by Lili Boulanger, Stravinsky and Mozart, as well as a concert at Saffron Hall, where the LPO is a resident orchestra. Tonight's concert will be followed by a seven-city European tour with Anne-Sophie Mutter, giving concerts in five German cities, as well as in Vienna and Luxembourg.

October 2025 saw Karina's first full album release on the LPO's own label: a pairing of Tchaikovsky's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, recorded live in concert at the Royal Festival Hall (LPO-0137: see page 13).

As Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, this season Karina programmes and leads a range of newly commissioned works alongside great masterworks at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and the TivoliVredenburg in Utrecht. Other 2025/26 highlights include her debut with the Vienna Philharmonic at the Mozartwoche Salzburg; and her debut at the Hamburg State Opera with Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and Zemlinsky's *A Florentine Tragedy*. She returns this season to the Swedish Radio Symphony, Vienna Symphony, Chicago Symphony and San Francisco Symphony orchestras, and also makes her debut with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva.

Karina conducts at least one opera-in-concert each season with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra at the Concertgebouw, and next month will lead Britten's *Peter Grimes* featuring Allan Clayton in the title role.

2023 saw the start of a multi-album collaboration between Karina, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and Pentatone, with their debut release, Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* and *Four Orchestral Pieces*, earning a Grammy nomination. Her second album for Pentatone, Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, was released in April 2025 to glowing international reviews.

Karina has developed close relationships with several of the world's leading orchestras, regularly returning to the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, Vienna Symphony and Munich Philharmonic, and top American orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco symphonies, and the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras. She was Principal Guest Conductor of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra from 2019–23, and in 2023/24 was Artist-in-Residence at Vienna's Musikverein.

Already known to many in the classical music world as a virtuoso violinist, Karina grew up in New York City. She was encouraged to become a conductor by Sir Simon Rattle while playing in the Berlin Philharmonic as a member of the Karajan-Akademie. She spent several years performing as a soloist, guest leader and chamber musician, until conducting eventually took over after she won the Sir Georg Solti Award in 2016.

Karina Canellakis's position at the LPO is generously supported by Richard Buxton.

Anne-Sophie Mutter

violin



© Andreas Orth

Anne-Sophie Mutter is a musical phenomenon: for nearly five decades she has been a fixture in the world's major concert halls, making her mark on the classical music scene as a soloist, mentor and visionary. The four-time Grammy Award winner is equally committed to the performance of traditional composers as to the future of music. So far, she has given world premieres of 34 works – Thomas Adès, Unsuk Chin, Sebastian Currier, Aftab Darvishi, Henri Dutilleux, Sofia Gubaidulina, Witold Lutosławski, Norbert Moret, Krzysztof Penderecki, Sir André Previn, Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann and John Williams have all composed for her.

Anne-Sophie Mutter has appeared regularly with the LPO, both in London and on tour – in fact, she is by far the soloist who has performed most often with the Orchestra. Their most recent collaboration was in January 2024, when she gave the UK premiere of John Williams's Violin Concerto No. 2, dedicated to her by the composer. Following tonight's concert, she will embark on a tour of Germany, Vienna and Luxembourg with the Orchestra and conductor Karina Canellakis.

This season, Anne-Sophie Mutter once again reflects her musical versatility and her unrivalled standing in the classical music world with performances in Europe, the Far East and North America. In September 2025, she gave performances of Thomas Adès's *Air – Homage to Sibelius*, dedicated to the violinist, and Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 1 in B flat major, with Cristian Măcelaru and the Orchestre National de France in Bucharest and Paris. A chamber music tour followed in October: with cellist Pablo Ferrández and pianist Yefim Bronfman, she performed Beethoven's 'Archduke' Trio and Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A minor in Germany, Switzerland, Spain and France. At the Vienna

Musikverein in October, Anne-Sophie gave three world premieres: *Three Dances* by Max Richter, an arrangement of Johann Strauss's 'Csardas' from *Die Fledermaus*, and *When the World Was Waltzing* by John Williams.

2026 began with a tour to Taiwan and Hong Kong, during which Anne-Sophie brought John Williams's Violin Concerto No. 2 to Asia and performed film themes with the Hong Kong Philharmonic and the National Symphony Orchestra Taiwan. Next month, she will perform Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the Israel Philharmonic under Lahav Shani, and later this spring she embarks on a tour of Germany with the Berlin Baroque Soloists. The programme includes Mozart violin concertos, André Previn's Violin Concerto No. 2 with two harpsichord interludes – which the composer dedicated to her and which she premiered – as well as Aftab Darvishi's *Likoo* for solo violin, commissioned by the violinist and premiered in April 2025.

In August 2026, a residency at the Lucerne Festival will mark Anne-Sophie's 50th stage anniversary there. The celebrations begin with an artist talk in Meggen, the place where she made her debut in 1976. This will be followed by two concerts: she will conduct the Lucerne Festival Orchestra from her violin, performing Darvishi's *Likoo* and concertos by André Previn and Mozart. Penderecki's Second Violin Concerto (*Metamorphosen*) – another central work in her oeuvre – is also on the programme. Together with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Manfred Honeck, this multi-layered work, written especially for her by the composer, will be performed as the third part of her stage anniversary in Lucerne.

In collaboration with Alpha Classics, Anne-Sophie Mutter is releasing a series of works written for her under the name 'ASM Forte Forward'. The first album in the series, 'East Meets West', will be released on 27 March 2026 and features works by Darvishi, Chin, Adès and Widmann, while Deutsche Grammophon is honouring her anniversary with a comprehensive catalogue initiative spanning 40 years of collaboration.

Anne-Sophie Mutter dedicates herself to supporting tomorrow's musical elite and numerous charitable projects. In 2022, she joined the foundation board of the Lucerne Festival. In 1997, she founded the Association of Friends of the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation, to which the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation was added in 2008. These two charitable institutions provide support for scholarship recipients, tailored to the Fellows' individual needs.

Programme notes

Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

Pohjola's Daughter

1905–06

The *Kalevala* is the Finnish national epic. Its poetry and stories are drawn from both Finland and Karelia, the lands shared between modern-day Finland and Russia, which have long been a source of dispute. The texts are ancient, but had largely disappeared from Finnish consciousness until Elias Lönnrot published an edition in 1835, from which point the *Kalevala* again became a symbol of national pride.

A committed patriot, albeit speaking only Swedish at the beginning of his life, Sibelius made a rigorous study of Finnish literary culture, as spurred by his fiancée Aino Järnefelt. Enthralled by the *Kalevala*, he found 'pure music' in its metre, images and atmosphere. 'All my moods derive from the *Kalevala*', he wrote to Aino in 1891, before embarking on what would become his *Kullervo* Symphony. It began a whole series of works that derived their inspiration, programmes, even rhythms from passages of the *Kalevala*, including 'four legends' about one of the epic's heroes, Lemminkäinen, and, in 1905–06, a 'symphonic fantasia' about Pohjola's Daughter.

The piece concerns an older hero from the *Kalevala*, Väinämöinen, who is making his way home from the far north ('Pohjola'). There, he encounters a strange, beautiful woman, sitting on a rainbow and weaving a cloth of gold. He asks her to join him on his journey, but she challenges him to build a boat from her spindle. Evil spirits intervene and, having failed the task, Väinämöinen has to carry on alone.

Sibelius describes the tale in a vivid, 12-minute sonata-form structure, in which a 'bardic' cello provides the introduction, the brute force of the brass section speaks of Väinämöinen, and the strings and the woodwind – as well as, notably, the harp (evoking the central spinning wheel) – introduce the beautiful daughter of the title. At last, she laughs shriekingly in Väinämöinen's face, before he wends his desolate way and recedes into the frozen distance.

Programme note © Gavin Plumley



Jean Sibelius

Programme notes

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1840–93

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35

1878

Anne-Sophie Mutter violin

1. Allegro moderato – Moderato assai

2. Canzonetta: Andante –

3. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

If there is a sense of reawakening, perhaps even of rebirth, to the start of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto, it is an entirely appropriate one. Only days before he started composing it in March 1878, he had been picking at a new piano sonata with scant success: 'Am I played out?', he wrote in a letter. 'I have to squeeze out of myself weak and worthless ideas and ponder every bar.' He was writing from the house at Clarens near Lake Geneva, where he was staying as part of his six-month escape from Russia following the personal disaster and resultant mental breakdown (there had even been a suicide attempt) provoked by his ill-considered marriage the previous year. In that period of wandering, he had completed both the Fourth Symphony and the opera *Eugene Onegin*, but begun very little that was new in itself.

It was now, however, that the arrival of Josef Kotek, a violinist and former pupil from the Moscow Conservatory (and possibly a former lover), brought a recovery in the composer's spirits. The two spent much time playing chamber music together, and within three days Tchaikovsky was enthusiastically at work on the Violin Concerto. The sketches were completed eleven days later and the scoring a fortnight after that, by which time Tchaikovsky had also managed to provide a new slow movement to replace the original (which survives as *Méditation* for violin and piano). The work got a lukewarm reception at its first performance in Vienna in 1881 with Adolf Brodsky as soloist, but the

Programme notes

Russian premiere in Moscow nine months later set it firmly on the way to the popularity it enjoys today.

Of the pieces Tchaikovsky and Kotek played through together, one that particularly impressed the composer was Édouard Lalo's new *Symphonie espagnole* for violin and orchestra, both for its 'freshness' and for the fact that 'like Léo Delibes and Bizet, [Lalo] does not strive for profundity, but carefully avoids the routine, seeks out new forms, and thinks more about musical beauty than observing established traditions, as the Germans do'. That freshness certainly finds its way into Tchaikovsky's Concerto, which inhabits a very different world from the tortured emotionalism of his recent symphony and opera. But there is something here, too, of the unforced and unassuming formal simplicity of Lalo's approach, though this is not to say that it is without craft. The first movement is a sonata form with an elegant introduction and two clearly discernible big

melodies amid some more fleeting themes, all bound together by subtly glinting thematic connections. 'Musical beauty' is also present; like Mendelssohn in his Violin Concerto – whose formal quirk of a cadenza placed before the moment of recapitulation it also recalls – Tchaikovsky manages effortlessly to make natural partners of lyrical grace and virtuoso brilliance.

Tchaikovsky's designation of the slow movement as a *Canzonetta* acknowledges its essentially song-like nature (complete with woodwind introduction and play-out), but does little to hint at its Slavic melancholy. That Russian flavour is then raised to a newly boisterous level in a Finale that sports two dance-like themes, the first excitably athletic, the second a more lyrical one whose innate soulfulness quickly overcomes the rustic drones with which it first appears.

Programme note © Lindsay Kemp

Interval – 20 minutes

An announcement will be made five minutes before the end of the interval.

Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto on the LPO Label



Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto
Lalo Symphonie espagnole for violin and orchestra

Augustin Hadelich violin
Vasily Petrenko conductor (Tchaikovsky)
Omer Meir Wellber conductor (Lalo)
London Philharmonic Orchestra

LPO-0094



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Programme notes

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Symphony No. 7 in A major

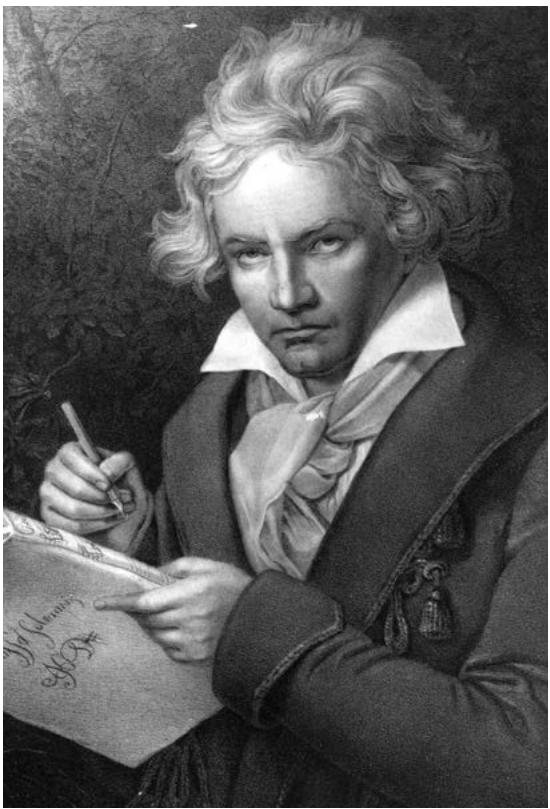
1811–12

1. *Poco sostenuto – Vivace*

2. *Allegretto*

3. *Presto – Assai meno presto*

4. *Allegro con brio*



A black and white engraving of Ludwig van Beethoven. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark coat over a white cravat and a patterned scarf. He has long, wavy hair and is looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. His left hand holds a pencil, and his right hand rests on an open book or manuscript on a table in front of him. The manuscript has some handwritten musical notation and text, including 'A. Salomon' and 'A.D.'.

Four years separate Beethoven's Sixth and Seventh symphonies, four years in which Beethoven's health went into steep decline. Over the course of six months between 1811 and 1812 he was twice ordered by doctors to spend time at a spa in the Bohemian town of Teplitz to help him recover from a spate of illness. His diaries from this time convey his despondency and heartache, even admitting to thoughts of suicide. Where then, did Beethoven find the sunny demeanour that characterises his Seventh Symphony? Brisk, joyous and radiating warmth, it is one of Beethoven's most carefree symphonic works, a symphony that Richard Wagner would later call 'the apotheosis of the dance herself'.

Beethoven, for his part, referred to it as his 'Grand Symphony in A', adding in a letter to the impresario Johann Peter Salomon that he considered it 'one of my best works'. And 'grand' is certainly a fitting description. The introduction to the opening *Vivace* is longer than any symphonic introduction ever composed before: it takes Beethoven nearly four suspense-laden minutes to reach the *Vivace*, by which time the last thing we are expecting is the ebullient romp that follows.

But it is the solemn *Allegretto* that has become the Symphony's calling-card. Although it is not 'slow' in the traditional sense (*Allegretto* meaning 'fairly brisk'), the *Allegretto* is the *de facto* slow movement in an otherwise spirited symphony. Muted both in tone and dynamics, this rather sombre series of variations upon a repetitive, walking theme has been compared to

Programme notes

a funeral procession – and for good reason. Just as the first movement was carried along by its propulsive rhythmic accompaniment, repetition abounds here too, but here the ‘long-short-short long-long’ ostinato has quite the opposite effect. Every time it seems to get going, we stall once more, as though the procession were inching forwards only to stop, take stock, and set off again. Only when Beethoven begins to spin out long, languorous countermelodies does the procession find its momentum and a remarkable grandeur emerges out of this rather unassuming theme, only to peter out and sidle off into the distance once more.

There is nothing unassuming, however, about the scherzo that follows. Composed in F major, that same errant key that made its first appearance in the expansive introduction, the scherzo is a whirlwind of tossed-out melodic fragments and sudden dynamic contrasts, relaxing only briefly in the more measured, rustic trio sections – which again recall elements of the composer’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony. And then, with little more than a couple of punchy chords to pull us back to the home key, Beethoven launches headlong into the finale, a wild, unbound *Allegro* that Tchaikovsky called

‘a whole series of images, full of unrestrained joy, full of bliss and pleasure of life’. While the conductor Thomas Beecham was rather less kind (‘What can you do with it? It’s like a lot of yaks jumping about’), there is no denying its physicality. Joy spills over into raucousness, the gloom of the *Allegretto* long forgotten, as the finale hurtles along with an earthy, unrestrained energy that flirts with dance but borders on bedlam.

Programme note © Jo Kirkbride

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