

London
Philharmonic
Orchestra

The power of listening

2026/27 season at
Eastbourne's
Congress Theatre

Concert
programme

**CONGRESS
THEATRE**
EASTBOURNE THEATRES

The power of listening

What happens when we really listen? This season we're exploring the extraordinary ways that listening can inspire creativity, connection and new perspectives.

To begin our journey, we asked eight Royal College of Art students to listen to a piece of music featured in our London season, from Stravinsky's *The Firebird* to Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. From there, the artists unleashed their imagination, each creating an original artwork based on their personal response to the music.

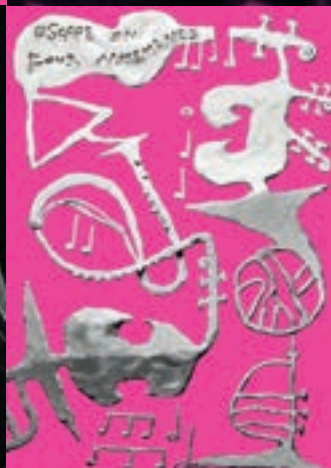
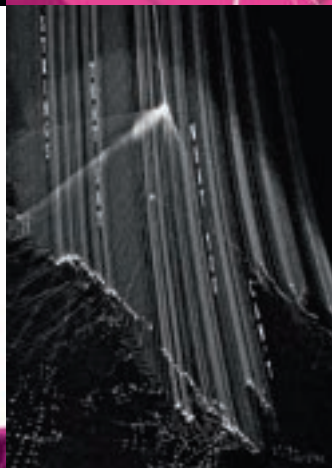
You can see how varied their visual interpretations of the music were from the artworks on this page and on the programme cover.

If you haven't had the chance to see the artworks on billboards around London, you can view them all in detail on our website. You can also find out more about each of the artists and the processes they used, as well as listen to the music that inspired them.

Check out the artworks and the pieces that inspired them:
lpo.org.uk/listening



Artworks designed by (clockwise from top left) Megan Peng, Zengyue Zhao, CTZ, Yunqi Peng, Anna Korbel, Yejin Seo, Ishita Sharma, Ruwani Rajapakse



London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jepsen

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

Congress Theatre, Eastbourne
Sunday 18 October 2026 | 3.00pm

Scheherazade

Glinka

Overture, Ruslan and Lyudmila (5 min)

Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto (34 min)

Interval (20 min)

Rimsky-Korsakov

Scheherazade (47 min)

Tom Fetherstonhaugh
conductor

Ning Feng
violin

Approximate concert finish time: 5.00pm

Pre-concert performance | 2.15pm

Enjoy a free pre-concert performance in the foyer from Soundcastle's People's Music Collective, a local ensemble that celebrates creativity, connection and community through music.

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ENGLAND**

Please note the timings shown are given only as a guide.

Welcome

Welcome to today's London Philharmonic Orchestra concert – we're delighted to be back in Eastbourne for another season, sharing the power of listening and the extraordinary connections that music can create.

Today, conductor Tom Fetherstonhaugh makes his debut with the Orchestra, taking us on a journey through the vivid world of Russian music with violinist Ning Feng. Later in the season, we'll welcome more celebrated soloists including cellist Laura van der Heijden and horn player Felix Klierer, alongside members of the Orchestra stepping into the spotlight. Every concert is an opportunity to listen, discover, and share the excitement of live orchestral music.

Beyond the concert stage, we're proud to be part of the Eastbourne community. Today, we're thrilled to welcome our friends from Soundcastle's People's Music Collective, with whom we've been building an ongoing partnership. They'll be giving a free performance in the foyer before the concert. Through our partnership with Sussex Music Hub, we're also inspiring the next generations, from BrightSparks schools concerts to Overture Days for young musicians during the school holidays. And you may spot our musicians out in the community, sharing music with groups including Eastbourne Talking Newspaper, Age Concern in Eastbourne, and the Beachy Head Ambassadors.

Music has a special way of bringing people together – to listen, discover something new and feel part of something shared. We're so pleased to share this season with you.

David Burke
Chief Executive

Jesús Herrera
Artistic Director

Welcome to the Congress Theatre

Venue Director Neil Jones

Welcome to the London Philharmonic Orchestra, today's conductor and soloist, and most importantly, to all of you in the auditorium.

Whether you're a season regular or this is your very first concert, we're pleased to welcome you to our fantastic venue, unique in its Grade II listed perfect cube design which creates an acoustic environment like no other. If there is anything we can do to improve your visit, please do chat with a member of our team.

As a courtesy to others, please ensure mobile phones are switched off during the performance. Please also note that photography and recording are not allowed in the auditorium unless announced from the stage.

Thank you for supporting classical music – sit back, relax and enjoy your afternoon.

Today's programme cover

Artwork by Royal College of Art student Ruwani Rajapakse: 'Letting go, one note at a time'. Designed while listening to Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, performed by the LPO under Edward Gardner.



Part of The Power of Listening project. See all eight artworks and listen to the music that inspired them:
lpo.org.uk/listening

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On stage today

First Violins

Alice Ivy-Pemberton Leader
Chair supported by the Hodson family

Lasma Taimina

Chair supported by Irina Gofman & Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave

Minn Majoe

Chair supported by Dr Alex & Maria Chan

Martin Höhmann

Chair supported by Hans-Wilhelm & Evelyn Jenckel

Alison Strange

Gabriel Bilbao

Jamie Hutchinson

Camille Buitenhuis

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Alice Hall

Eve Kennedy

Second Violins

Claudia Tarrant-Matthews
Principal

Chair supported by anonymous donors

Fiona Higham

Ashley Stevens

Nancy Elan

Joseph Maher

Ricky Gore

Anna Croad

Harry Kerr

Caroline Sharp

Matthew Bain

Violas

Miguel Sobrinho

Guest Principal

Benedetto Pollani

Alistair Scahill

Jisu Song

Raquel López Bolívar

Terry Nettle

Charles Cross

Mark Gibbs

Cellos

Henry Shapard Principal

Francis Bucknall

Auriol Evans

Deni Teo

Rasmus Støier Andersen

Louise Dearsley

Double Basses

Stephen Williams

Guest Principal

Tom Walley

Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Lowri Estell

Yijia Cui

Flutes

Thomas Hancox

Guest Principal

Camilla Marchant

Stewart McIlwham*

Piccolo

Stewart McIlwham*

Principal

Chair supported by The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

Oboes

Helen Barker

Guest Principal

Jack Tostevin-Hall

Cor Anglais

Sue Böhling* Principal

Chair supported by Dr Barry Grimaldi

Clarinets

Thomas Watmough

Principal

Chair supported by Roger Greenwood

Paul Richards*

Bassoons

Jonathan Davies* Principal

Chair supported by Sir Simon Robey

Rory McGregor

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

John Ryan* Principal

Kristina Yumerska

Mark Vines Co-Principal

Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra

Jonathan Quaintrell-Evans

Jonathan Farey

Trumpets

Paul Beniston* Principal

Chair supported by the Williams family in memory of Grenville Williams

Tom Nielsen* Principal

Tom Watts

Trombones

Mark Templeton* Principal

Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Sam Cox

Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

Tuba

Lee Tsarmaklis* Principal

Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Timpani

Feargus Brennan

Guest Principal

Percussion

Andrew Barclay* Principal

Chair supported by Gill & Garf Collins

Oliver Yates

Chair supported by an anonymous donor

Tom Plumridge

Francesca Lombardelli

Julie Scheuren

Harp

Rosanna Rolton Principal

**Professor at a London conservatoire*

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

Anonymous donors
Sir Nigel Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton
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Joe Topley & Tracey Countryman
Neil Westreich
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About us: London Philharmonic Orchestra



Uniquely groundbreaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, since 1932 we've been recognised as one of the world's leading orchestras, celebrated for our excellence, versatility, invention and inclusivity. Our mission is to create unrivalled orchestral experiences on stage and cultivate human connections beyond it. We achieve this through our exceptional live performances, pioneering education and community projects, acclaimed recordings, online activity and trailblazing international tours.

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

Life's big 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*.

Connecting worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. We're the most followed UK orchestra on Instagram, the most followed orchestra globally on TikTok, and the third most followed globally across all social platforms. Our 2024 Sky Arts documentary series, 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', was nominated for a 2025 BAFTA, and a second series, 'Inside the Music', will be broadcast this autumn.

Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included great 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 in recognition of his impact as Principal Conductor from 2007–21. Karina Canellakis is our current Principal Guest Conductor, and Sir George Benjamin is 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 collaboration and inclusivity, our OrchLab and

Alice Ivy-Pemberton

Leader

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 offer a range of opportunities to support their progression. Our LPO Junior Artists programme creates pathways into the profession for young players from under-represented backgrounds, and our LPO Young Composers and Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. The LPO Conducting Fellowship supports the development of outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds under-represented in the profession.

2026/27 season

Our season theme, *In Search of Purpose*, explores the human spirit's resilience and quest for meaning, inspired by Beethoven's triumph over despair and the ways subsequent composers have used music as a vessel to confront life's big questions. Principal Conductor Edward Gardner returns with programmes including Britten's *War Requiem*, Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, and Composer-in-Residence George Benjamin's opera *Lessons in Love and Violence*. We'll also welcome back titled conductors Karina Canellakis and Vladimir Jurowski, as well as Chief Conductor & Artistic Advisor Designate Paavo Järvi.

Our lineup of soloists this season includes Alice Sara Ott, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Hilary Hahn, Pekka Kuusisto, Renée Fleming and Mitsuko Uchida, and we join the London Philharmonic Choir in celebrating its 80th anniversary year with Fauré's *Requiem* alongside a choral world premiere by Dame Judith Weir. The season concludes on 24 April with Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, again with the LPC. New music remains a core pillar this season, with further premieres by Mark Simpson, Jacob Mühlrad, Dai Fujikura and Kevin Puts.

The season also sees tours to China, Spain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the Canary Islands, as well as performances and community events in our Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden residencies.



Alice Ivy-Pemberton joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra as Co-Leader in February 2023.

Praised by *The New York Times* for her 'sweet-toned playing', Alice has performed as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician to international acclaim. While growing up in New York City and studying with Nurit Pacht, Alice made a nationally televised Carnegie Hall debut aged ten, and was a finalist at the Menuhin International Competition at the age of 12.

Alice earned her Bachelors and Masters degrees at The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho as a fully-funded recipient of the Kovner Fellowship. During her studies she won Juilliard's Violin Concerto Competition, performed extensively with the New York Philharmonic and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and led orchestras under the baton of Barbara Hannigan, Xian Zhang and Matthias Pintscher. Upon graduating in 2022 she was awarded the Polisi Prize and a Benzaquen Career Advancement Grant in recognition of 'tremendous talent, promise, creativity, and potential to make a significant impact in the performing arts'.

An avid chamber musician, Alice has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Anthony Marwood, Gil Shaham and members of the Belcea, Doric, Juilliard and Brentano string quartets, and performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Festival appearances include Music@Menlo, Moritzburg and Yellow Barn. Also a passionate advocate for new music and its social relevance, Alice created *Drowning Monuments*, a noted multimedia project on climate change that brought together five world premieres for solo violin.

Tom Fetherstonhaugh

conductor

© Kaupo Kikkas



has worked on productions of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (The Grange Festival).

Tom started his musical journey with the Suzuki method of violin playing, and was a chorister at Westminster Abbey. He read music at Merton College, Oxford, and studied conducting with Sian Edwards at the Royal Academy of Music. He graduated from the Academy with Distinction and a DipRAM prize in 2021, and was awarded Associate Honours (ARAM) in 2024 for his contribution to the music profession.

Tom Fetherstonhaugh is Artistic Director of Fantasia Orchestra, with whom he has conducted four BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

Today's concert is Tom's debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. This season he also makes his Philharmonia Orchestra debut, and returns for engagements with Britten Sinfonia, Welsh National Opera and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, with whom he maintains a close relationship. He was Assistant Conductor at the BSO between 2022–24, where he conducted 70 performances, and he is delighted to be returning for 12 concerts in 2026/27.

Tom has enjoyed re-invitations in the last season to the BBC Philharmonic, Manchester Camerata, National Symphony Orchestra Ireland, Orchestra of Opera North and Ulster Orchestra, including several subscription-series concerts.

Artistic collaboration is at the heart of Tom's work. This season he performs with soloists Dame Evelyn Glennie, Guy Johnston, Isata Kanneh-Mason, Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Martin Owen, Elena Urioste and Laura van der Heijden. Wider cultural partners this year include sculptor Anthony Gormley, actor Dame Sheile Hancock, photographer Mary McCartney, and musician and composer Nitin Sawhney.

Tom has a growing profile in opera, and made his Welsh National Opera debut with 'Play Opera LIVE' earlier this year. He has been assistant conductor for Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and Bernstein's *Candide* (WNO); Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* (Opera North); and Verdi's *Macbeth* and David Matthews's *Anna* (The Grange Festival), and

Ning Feng

violin

© Tianyou Zhang



Ning Feng is recognised internationally as an artist of great lyricism, innate musicality and stunning virtuosity; 'his silvery tonal purity, immaculate intonation and gently beguiling musicality have a way of making most other players sound decidedly effortful by comparison' (*BBC Music Magazine*). He has performed across the globe with orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and Hong Kong Philharmonic and in recital and chamber concerts at some of the world's most important venues and festivals. *The Washington Post* has described him as 'a wonderful player with a creamy, easy tone and an emotional honesty', and *Gramophone* said of his Brahms Sonatas recording that '[his] tone is simply ravishing, even when it soars into the stratosphere...'

As well as today's performance with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, highlights of Ning's 2026/27 season include appearances with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Kammerakademie Potsdam and Ensemble del Arte, and recitals at London's Wigmore Hall, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Premiere Performances Hong Kong, Melbourne Recital Centre, and UKARIA Cultural Centre in South Australia. He will also return to Z+ Festival in Shanghai, Dresden Music Festival, Cambridge Music Festival, Beirut Festival and the Madrid Juan March Foundation. This season, he also holds the title of Artist-in-Residence for the Chengdu Symphony Orchestra.

In recent seasons, Ning Feng has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, National Symphony and Minnesota orchestras in the US, and in Europe with the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Helsinki Philharmonic, Berlin

Konzerthaus Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Vienna Radio Symphony, National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also performed numerous times with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, with whom he has toured Asia, Europe and Australia under conductor Jaap van Zweden.

In his native China, Ning is held in the highest regard, appearing with all the major Chinese orchestras, in recital, and with visiting orchestras such as the Budapest Festival Orchestra under Iván Fischer. In 2020/21 he was Artist-in-Residence with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and in 2023/24 he was Artist-in-Residence at the NCPA Beijing, where he performed Mozart's five Violin Concertos and Bach's complete solo Sonatas and Partitas. Through his chamber work, Ning has collaborated with many other highly-regarded artists including Yang Xuefei, Daniel Müller-Schott, Nicholas Angelich, Igor Levit, and in trio concerts with Nelson Goerner and Edgar Moreau.

Ning records for Channel Classics. His recording of Bach's complete solo violin works was hailed by *Gramophone* as 'unlike anyone else's ... it's the illusion of a freewheeling conversation projected from within.' His discography also includes concertos by Elgar and Tchaikovsky; works for violin and orchestra by Bruch, Sarasate, Lalo, Ravel and others; the 24 Paganini *Caprices* and the complete Brahms Sonatas with pianist Zee Zee; and Brahms and Goldmark Violin Concertos with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin under Antony Hermus. Most recently, he recorded the complete Mozart Violin Concertos, play/directing the Kammerakademie Potsdam with his own cadenzas, released on a double-CD album in June 2026.

Born in Chengdu, China, Ning Feng studied at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music with Weimin Hu, the Hanns Eisler School of Music in Berlin with Antje Weithaas, and London's Royal Academy of Music with Hu Kun. He won First Prizes at both the 2005 Michael Hill International Violin Competition (New Zealand) and the 2006 International Paganini Competition.

Ning Feng plays the 1710 Stradivari violin known as the 'Vieuxtemps Hauser', by kind arrangement with Premiere Performances of Hong Kong, and plays on strings by Thomastik-Infeld, Vienna. He lives in Berlin, where he is Professor of Violin at the Hanns Eisler Hochschule. He is also International Chair of Violin at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Academy at Zhejiang Conservatory of Music, and Vice-Dean of the Violin Institute at Sichuan Conservatory of Music.

Programme notes

Mikhail Glinka

1804–57

Overture, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*

1842

Pushed by his father into a 'sensible' career in the Russian civil service, music was little more than a pastime for Mikhail Glinka until the mid-1830s, when, while on holiday in Italy, he fell in love with opera. Glinka had composed sporadically and informally since his late teenage years, but his trip to Italy signalled the start of a lifelong love affair with composition. His first opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, was premiered in 1836 and catapulted Glinka to immediate fame. The Tsar himself rewarded Glinka with expensive jewellery and a new position as director of the Imperial Chapel Choir.

Work on his second opera, based on Alexander Pushkin's 1820 poem *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, began the following year, but progress soon ground to a halt and it would be another five years before it was finally completed. In the tumultuous intervening years, Glinka resigned from his post at the Imperial Chapel, divorced his wife and came close to financial ruin. When his second opera eventually premiered, it – perhaps unsurprisingly – was not the success for which he had hoped.

The drama has all the right ingredients, its tale a heroic one of thwarted love and derring-do, sprinkled with a healthy dose of sorcery, that eventually finds a peaceful conclusion. But the libretto, which was cobbled together by at least four contemporary Russian writers, failed to live up to the vibrancy of Pushkin's original. And where *A Life for the Tsar* had been pioneering in its use of folk music as the basis of a distinctive new Russian style, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* explores more elevated, 'classical' language, which was far from popular with the Russian public.

The opera's saving grace is its Overture, which has stood the test of time to become one of Glinka's best-known works. Just a few minutes long, this whistlestop curtain-raiser showcases Glinka's skills as an orchestrator. From its bright brass, through scurrying strings, to the soaring melody for the cellos, Glinka's

Overture packs a huge amount of detail into its compact score. The *coup de théâtre*, however, comes in its closing bars where, for the first time, Glinka inserts an ominous descending whole-tone scale against the swathe of shimmering strings. Employed here as an emblem of the wicked dwarf Chernomor, Glinka's pioneering harmonic device was decades ahead of its time, becoming one of the cornerstones of impressionist harmonies in the early 20th century.

Programme note © Jo Kirkbride



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

Programme notes

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1840–93

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35

1878

Ning Feng violin

1. Allegro moderato

2. Canzonetta: Andante

3. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

In June 1877, Tchaikovsky made one of the rashest decisions of his life: he proposed to Antonia Miliukova, a woman with whom he admitted he was 'not the least in love'. Their marriage was unsurprisingly short-lived and, just a few weeks later, Tchaikovsky left. Keen to make a clean break with his disastrous attempt at traditional domesticity, he set off for Europe, where he spent most of the next year travelling and composing, all the while receiving the support of his patron and confidante, Nadezhda von Meck. 'My heart is full', he wrote to her, 'it thirsts to pour itself out in music.'

Tchaikovsky was true to his word: his Fourth Symphony was completed in January, his opera *Eugene Onegin* a month later. By March he had settled in Clarens, on the banks of Lake Geneva, where he was visited by one of his former pupils, the violinist Joseph Kotek. Although Tchaikovsky was at pains to hide his homosexuality from the public – one of the reasons, it seems, behind his abrupt decision to marry – his letters do little to hide the extent of his feelings towards Kotek. 'I love him very, very much', he wrote to his brother, Anatoly. 'He has the kindest and most tender of hearts.' So it was, with the dark cloud of his marriage beginning to lift, that Tchaikovsky composed his Violin Concerto.

While Kotek was integral to the Concerto's composition ('It goes without saying that I would have been able to do nothing without him', he confided to Anatoly), he was not the work's dedicatee. That honour went to Leopold

Programme notes

Auer, who – in a move that scarred Tchaikovsky for many years – refused to give the Concerto its premiere, claiming that it was ‘unplayable’. It would be another three years before, in 1878, the work was finally premiered in Vienna with Adolph Brodsky as the soloist. The reviews were less than favourable: Eduard Hanslick called it ‘long and pretentious’, adding that ‘the violin is no longer played, but rent asunder, beaten black and blue’.

The features that Hanslick found so distasteful – its longwinded lyricism and fiery virtuosity – are precisely what has made the Concerto so popular with audiences and cemented its place in the repertoire over the past 150 years. Most of the acrobatics are packed into the dazzling first movement, its form cleaved in two by an

expansive cadenza that leads to even more challenging, stratospheric writing in the second half – passages that can easily be overplayed if not treated with caution.

The *Canzonetta* was Tchaikovsky's second attempt at a slow movement (his first was published separately as the *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*), its wistful and melancholic melodic writing so clearly heartfelt that it almost won Hanslick over. But his objections were reaffirmed by the wild drama of the finale, an adrenaline-fuelled *Allegro* packed with Russian folk themes that culminates in a thrilling double-stopped exchange between soloist and orchestra. Auer, for his part, later conceded that the Concerto was not ‘unplayable’, just ‘difficult’, adding ‘it is impossible to please everybody.’

Programme note © Jo Kirkbride

Interval – 20 minutes

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

New episodes of our LPO podcast – out now

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Programme notes

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

1844–1908

Scheherazade, Op. 35

1888

The Sea and Sinbad's Ship

The Tale of the Kalender Prince

The Young Prince and the Young Princess

*Festival in Baghdad – The Sea – The Ship goes to pieces on a rock surmounted
by a Bronze Warrior – Conclusion*



Orientalism was big business during the final decades of the 19th century. World fairs introduced new clothes and customs to culturally voracious 'Westerners' and, as shipping lines opened – not least the Suez Canal in 1869 – access to the 'East' increased. Following suit, the Russians also created a brand of Orientalism, though even they admitted that an empire straddling both Europe and Asia could not entirely consider the Middle and Far East as 'other'. Nonetheless, there are numerous examples of 'exotic' tropes in the music of the time, such as Borodin's *In Central Asia*, the 'Arabian Dance' in Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*.

Drawing on *One Thousand and One Nights*, the collection of West and South Asian folk tales compiled in Arabic during the Middle Ages, this symphonic poem was composed in 1888, shortly after Rimsky-Korsakov had finished work on the completion and orchestration of Borodin's mammoth opera *Prince Igor*. Rimsky-Korsakov decided that his new work, *Scheherazade*, would recall, rather than directly refer to, events from *One Thousand and One Nights*. 'All I desired', he wrote in his autobiography, 'was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an Oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairytale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on the basis of themes common to all the four movements'.

Programme notes

The work begins with a fanfare, describing Sultan Schariar. Rimsky-Korsakov wrote that the Sultan 'vowed to put to death each of his wives after the first nuptial night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her life by entertaining her lord with fascinating tales.' After a passage that is clearly indebted to Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we hear Scheherazade's own beguiling motif, played by a solo violin and harp. There follows a steady but sweeping barcarolle, a gently rocking boat-song evoking the sea and Sinbad's ship. Its melody, full of chromatic inflections, develops freely over the course of the ensuing sections, in which Scheherazade's storytelling theme is also prominent.

The second movement brings with it another story, introduced once more by the Sultana. She recites the tale of a young prince who dresses up as a wandering pauper and endures hardship in his search for wisdom. Various instruments pick up his travelling tune before they are interrupted by more ominous forces (with premonitions of the evil Kashchei from Stravinsky's *The Firebird*). The third movement, on the other hand, is a heartfelt romance, evoking a prince, represented by a string melody, and his love for a princess, who is described in the dancing middle section. Although the two are initially separated, they eventually come together, as the movement closes contentedly with both themes.

Tracking the scheme of many four-movement symphonies, the Finale offers a grand summation of the preceding descriptions. Particularly prominent is the juxtaposition of the Sultan's booming bass motif and Scheherazade's storytelling theme. To save her life, she offers a dazzling conflation of three episodes from *One Thousand and One Nights*, featuring the humming bazaars of Baghdad and a particularly violent seascape. Ultimately, Scheherazade's charms overwhelm the Sultan's murderous intentions and the work closes with her theme and a final iteration of those Mendelssohn-like chords.

Programme note © Gavin Plumley

'I meant these hints to slightly direct the hearer's fancy on the path which my own fancy had travelled, and to leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each.'

– Rimsky-Korsakov on Scheherazade, in his autobiography *My Musical Life*

We'd love to hear from you

We hope you enjoy today's concert. Could you spare a few moments afterwards to complete a short survey about your experience? Your feedback will help to shape our future plans.

Just scan the QR code to begin the survey. Thank you!



London Philharmonic Orchestra

The power of listening

This season at Eastbourne's Congress Theatre

All concerts start at 3.00pm

Brahms's Second

Sunday 22 November 2026

Beethoven Overture,
Leonore No. 3
Neruda Trumpet Concerto
Brahms Symphony No. 2

Adam Hickox conductor
Tom Nielsen trumpet

Sibelius's Fifth

Sunday 24 January 2027

Copland Appalachian Spring: Suite
Errollyn Wallen Cello Concerto
Liadov The Enchanted Lake
Sibelius Symphony No. 5

Enyi Okpara conductor
Laura van der Heijden cello

Mendelssohn's Scottish Symphony

Sunday 14 February 2027

Fanny Mendelssohn Overture
Spohr Clarinet Concerto No. 4
Felix Mendelssohn Symphony
No. 3 (Scottish)

Shira Samuels-Shragg conductor
Benjamin Mellefont clarinet

Alpesh Chauhan conducts Schumann

Sunday 7 March 2027

Felix Mendelssohn
Overture, Ruy Blas
Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto No. 2
R Schumann Symphony No. 3

Alpesh Chauhan conductor
Sophia Liu piano

Tchaikovsky's Fifth

Sunday 4 April 2027

Bacewicz Overture
R Strauss Horn Concerto No. 1
Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5

Delyana Lazarova conductor
Felix Klieser horn

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