2026/27 season at the Southbank Centre

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Free concert programme

The power of listening



SOUTHBANK CENTRE 75

RESIDENT

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 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
Saturday 28 November 2026 | 6.30pm

Patricia Kopatchinskaja plays Shostakovich

Rachmaninov
Youth Symphony (13 mins)

Shostakovich
Violin Concerto No. 2 (33 mins)

Interval (20 min)

Rachmaninov
Symphony No. 1 (41 mins)

Edward Gardner
conductor
Generously supported by Aud Jebsen

Patricia Kopatchinskaja
violin

Approximate finish time: 8.45pm

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

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SOUTHBANK CENTRE 75 RESIDENT

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Welcome

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

We're the UK's largest centre for the arts, 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.

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LPO news

Behind the scenes with LPO Friends

Earlier today, Friends of the Orchestra enjoyed exclusive behind-the-scenes access to a rehearsal with conductor Edward Gardner and violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja ahead of tonight's concert.

If you'd like to see for yourself what goes into preparing for a concert – plus enjoy a host of other great benefits, like a private bar space and meeting our musicians – join our family of Members today, from just £7 per month.

Interested in finding out more? Scan the QR code or visit **lpo.org.uk/membership**

Inside the Music: our new Sky Arts TV series this autumn

Our 2024 Sky Arts TV series, *Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra*, was nominated for a BAFTA, recognising its compelling storytelling and rare behind-the-scenes insight into orchestral life.

Following this success, Sky Arts commissioned a second series, which began on 10 November and airs weekly each Tuesday at 8pm. *Inside the Music with the London Philharmonic Orchestra* explores five different large-scale orchestral works performed by the LPO, with conductors Edward Gardner, Karina Canellakis and Paavo Järvi guiding viewers through each work. Combining performance footage and insights from musicians, the series reveals how these masterpieces are built.

Inside the Music airs each Tuesday at 8pm until 8 December. Sky Arts is free to view on Freeview channel 36. Sky and NOW Entertainment Members can catch up on demand.

Tonight's programme cover

Artwork by Royal College of Art student Yunqi Peng: 'Heavy brass, lighter mind'. Designed while listening to Stravinsky's *The Firebird* (Finale), performed by the LPO under Vladimir Jurowski. **#thepoweroflistening**

Tonight in 2 minutes

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

The vibe

Patricia Kopatchinskaja plays Shostakovich

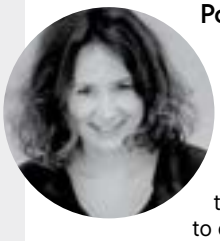
A dramatic programme of Russian music spans two generations of composers. Two works by Serge Rachmaninov, open and close the concert: to begin, a rarely performed piece from his student days, and to end, his turbulent First Symphony. In between comes a violin concerto by Shostakovich: a deeply personal work that moves between intimacy and intensity.

Who's on stage?



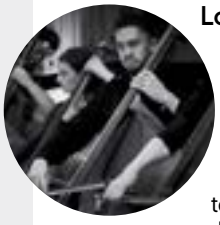
Edward Gardner: conductor

One of the leading British conductors of his generation, Edward Gardner is our Principal Conductor and works closely with the Orchestra all year round, so our musicians know him well and enjoy a special connection and rapport with him.



Patricia Kopatchinskaja: violin

Violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, affectionately known to her fans as 'PatKop', has built a reputation for performances that are anything but predictable. With her infectious energy and fearless approach to the music, she's an artist who likes to challenge expectations and keep audiences on their toes.



London Philharmonic Orchestra

Tonight there are nearly 90 London Philharmonic Orchestra musicians on stage. Our talented members represent over 14 different nationalities, and many of them enjoy busy solo, chamber and teaching careers alongside their orchestral roles.

Turn to page 7 for tonight's player list.

What to expect

Take your seats...
The players tune up their instruments, then the conductor, Ed, will come on stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...

1 movement

13 mins

Serge Rachmaninov
Youth Symphony
Rachmaninov would go on to become one of Russia's most celebrated composers, known for his sweeping melodies and richly expressive music. This early work, however, takes us back to the beginning of his career when he was just 17. It was intended as a full symphony, but he only completed one movement.

3 movements

33 mins

Dmitri Shostakovich
Violin Concerto No. 2
Shostakovich was one of the leading Russian composers of the 20th century, whose life and work were shaped by the political pressures of the Soviet regime. He wrote this Concerto in 1967, dedicating it to a violinist friend. It moves between haunting melodies and bursts of restless energy.

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 mins*

4 movements

41 mins

Serge Rachmaninov
Symphony No. 1
Rachmaninov's first full symphony was written when he was still just 22. Bold and restless, its four movements take us from a dramatic opening to a lively, dance-like second movement, a lyrical slow movement and an energetic finale.

At the end of the concert, we applaud the performers. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Pieter, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause. You're welcome to take photos during the applause!

Want to read more? Turn to page 10 for a deeper dive into tonight's works.

About us: London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

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 here 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 with the LPO*, is currently airing on Tuesday evenings at 8pm on Sky Arts.

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 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's concerts include Britten's *War Requiem*, Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, and Composer-in-Residence George Benjamin's opera *Lessons in Love and Violence*. We 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.

lpo.org.uk

Pieter Schoeman

Leader



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.

As well as at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, Pieter has performed worldwide as a soloist and recitalist at famous venues including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Moscow's Rachmaninoff Hall, Capella Hall in St Petersburg, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin and Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. He has also appeared as Guest Leader with many leading 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 London Philharmonic Orchestra. Highlights have included 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 London Philharmonic Orchestra is generously supported by Neil Westreich.

Video series: 'Humans of the Orchestra'

Scan the QR code to watch our interview with Pieter



David Burke

At the end of 2026, David Burke steps down as Chief Executive of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Chair of the Orchestra's Board of Directors, Catherine Høgel, pays tribute to David's years of dedicated service and the lasting mark he has made on the Orchestra and its people.



© Will Ireland

Having worked alongside David at the London Philharmonic Orchestra for nearly two decades, I write with enduring gratitude for his extraordinary commitment to the organisation, its people and its artistic mission.

Following eleven years as General Manager & Finance Director, in 2020 David took the reins as Chief Executive, bringing with him an exceptional understanding of the Orchestra's operations, its musicians and its audiences. His leadership was tested almost immediately by one of the most challenging periods in our history. The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented uncertainty to the performing arts, and David navigated these difficult years with calm judgement, diligence and determination. His tireless work to safeguard the Orchestra and its players ensured that we emerged in the strongest possible position, from which we have continued to build. In the intervening years he has continued to strengthen our financial foundations, build important external relationships, and champion the LPO's standing and contribution within the sector.

But David's legacy is about much more than the organisation's resilience and achievements. He has cared deeply about the culture of the Orchestra, the experience of those who make it what it is, and the people and communities we serve. He has led with kindness and integrity, earning the trust and respect of colleagues, musicians and stakeholders alike. This combination of commitment to both artistry and humanity lies at the heart of the LPO's identity: Artistry on Stage; Humanity Beyond. David has helped to make that more than a statement of intent; it is something we live every day.

He leaves the Orchestra on a strong and secure footing, with an excellent team, a clear sense of ambition and an immensely exciting future ahead as we look towards our centenary in 2032.

On behalf of the Orchestra, and personally, I want to thank David for his remarkable years of service, his dedication and all that he has contributed. He leaves with our heartfelt thanks and, I hope, a deep sense of pride in everything he has helped to build. We wish him every happiness in his next chapter, and look forward to seeing him often, back at our home in the Royal Festival Hall!

On stage tonight

First Violins
Pieter Schoeman* Leader
Chair supported by Neil Westreich
Alice Ivy-Pemberton Co-Leader
Chair supported by the Hodson family
Vesselin Gellev Sub-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
Yang Zhang
Megan Yang
Martin Höhmann
Chair supported by Hans-Wilhelm & Evelyn Jenckel
Katalin Varnagy
Nilufar Alimaksumova
Amanda Smith
Ricky Gore
Will Hillman
Thomas Eisner
Alison Strange

Second Violins
Tania Mazzetti Principal
Chair supported by The Candide Trust
Emma Oldfield Co-Principal
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews
Chair supported by anonymous donors
Sophie Phillips
Marie-Anne Mairesse
Joseph Maher
Ashley Stevens
Nynke Hijlkema
Kate Birchall
Fiona Higham
Sioni Williams
Maria Oguren
Kate Cole
Anna Croad

Violas
Rebecca Chambers Guest Principal
Alexander McFarlane
Martin Wray
Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden
Katharine Leek
Benedetto Pollani
Shiry Rashkovsky
Alistair Scahill
Michelle Bruil
Raquel López Bolívar
Kate De Campos
Laura Vallejo
Jenny Poyser
Lucia Ortiz Sauco

Cellos
Kristina Blaumane Principal
Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden
Henry Shapard Co-Principal
Waynne Kwon
David Lale
Francis Bucknall
Heeyeon Cho
Leo Melvin
Tom Roff
Helen Thomas
Iain Ward
Marion Portelance

Double Basses
Kevin Rundell* Principal
Sebastian Pennar* Co-Principal
George Peniston
Laura Murphy
Charlotte Kerbegian
Ben Havinden-Williams
Lowri Estell
Yijia Cui

Flutes
Juliette Bausor Principal
Chair supported by Malcolm & Alison Thwaites
Hannah Grayson
Stewart McIlwham*

Piccolo
Stewart McIlwham* Principal
Chair supported by The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

Oboes
Ian Hardwick* Principal
Jack Tostevin-Hall

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
Benjamin Hudson Guest Principal
Helen Storey*
Chair supported by Louise Worthington

Contrabassoon
Simon Estell* Principal

Horns
John Ryan* Principal
David Pyatt*
Mark Vines Co-Principal
Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra
Paul Cott
Jonathan Quaintrell-Evans

Trumpets
Paul Beniston* Principal
Chair supported by the Williams family in memory of Grenville Williams
Tom Nielsen* Principal
Anne McAneney*
Chair supported by anonymous donors

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
Simon Carrington* Principal
Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE

Percussion
Andrew Barclay* Principal
Chair supported by Gill & Garf Collins
Karen Hutt Co-Principal
Chair supported by Joe Topley & Tracey Countryman
Oliver Yates
Chair supported by an anonymous donor
Jeremy Cornes
Tom Plumridge

**Professor at a London conservatoire*

Assistant Conductor
Enyi Okpara

The LPO also acknowledges the following chair supporters whose players are not present at this concert:
David & Yi Buckley
Dr Barry Grimaldi
Sir Simon Robey
Jenny Watson CBE

Edward Gardner

Principal Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

'A conducting force to be reckoned with' (*The New York Times*), leading British conductor Edward Gardner is now in his sixth season as Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and his third as Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet. He also serves as Honorary Conductor of Norway's Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, after an outstanding nine years as its Chief Conductor.

Highlights to come with the London Philharmonic Orchestra this season include Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri* and a world premiere by Judith Weir. Last month, Edward led the Orchestra on tours to China and Spain, with further tours of Germany and the Netherlands to come.

Elsewhere this season, he launches his first complete Wagner *Ring* Cycle with a new production of *Das Rheingold* at the Norwegian Opera; makes his San Diego Symphony and Detroit Symphony debuts; and conducts a new production of Britten's *Death in Venice* at the Bavarian State Opera.

Edward has previously led distinguished orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Danish National Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony and Staatskapelle Berlin. He enjoys longstanding relationships with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, where he was formerly Principal Guest Conductor, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which he has conducted at the First and Last Nights of the BBC Proms.

A major figure in the opera world, Edward previously served as Music Director of English National Opera, and has led productions at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne Festival, Opéra National de Paris, Bavarian State Opera, and La Scala.

Edward's extensive and wide-ranging discography features multiple Grammy nominees, International Classical Music Award nominees and Gramophone Award winners, including Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra – winner of a 2023 Gramophone Award – and Britten's *Peter Grimes* with the Bergen Philharmonic, named *Gramophone*'s 2021 Recording of the Year.

His latest album on the LPO Label is a pairing of Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin Suite* and *The Wooden Prince*, released last month (LPO-0141: see page 13). Other LPO Label recordings include Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, Piano Concerto and Symphony No. 2; Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*; Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*; Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony* and *Metamorphosen*; and works by Bartók, Rachmaninov, Dvořák, Schumann, Britten, Brett Dean and Tania León. In 2024, he and the Orchestra featured in a BAFTA-nominated Sky Arts TV series: *Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra*, and a second series, *Inside the Music with the LPO*, is currently airing on Tuesday evenings at 8pm on Sky Arts.

The founder of Manchester's Hallé Youth Orchestra, Edward maintains close relationships with The Juilliard School and London's Royal Academy of Music, where he is the inaugural Sir Charles Mackerras Conducting Chair. His accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society's Conductor of the Year Award, an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, the Sibelius Prize, and an OBE for Services to Music.

Edward Gardner's position with the London Philharmonic Orchestra is generously supported by Aud Jebsen.

Patricia Kopatchinskaja

violin



© Marco Borggreve

Described by the *New York Times* as 'a player of rare expressive energy', Patricia Kopatchinskaja brings an inimitable sense of theatrics to her performances, whether in violin repertoire classics or original staged projects crossing musical, theatrical and interdisciplinary boundaries. Her focus is to get to the heart of the music, its meaning for us – here and now. She works with leading orchestras and conductors worldwide, and has forged artistic partnerships with composers such as György Kurtág, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Luca Francesconi, resulting in numerous world premieres.

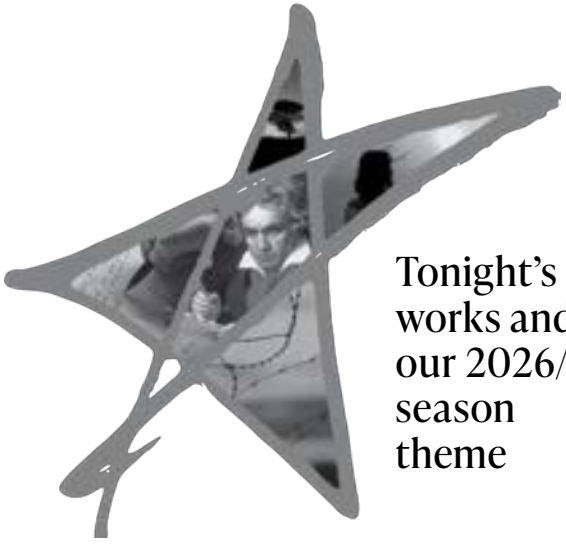
Patricia's artistic projects extend far beyond performing. Her signature projects include *Dies Irae*, *Les Adieux*, *Bye Bye Beethoven* and *The Peace Project*, as well as her longstanding artistic partnership with the SWR Symphonieorchester. She also created the signature film project *Ursonate* and regularly performs Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* as *Sprechgesang* (spoken singing), further exploring the boundaries between instrumental performance, voice and theatre.

Her discography spans over 30 recordings, many of them with Alpha Classics, including the Grammy Award-winning *Death and the Maiden* with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Ever since her studies in Vienna, composition has been an integral part of Patricia's artistic identity. Under the name 'PatKop', she has created a growing body of works including the concerto *Five Dreams* for violin, cello and orchestra; the melodrama *Sedna* for piano quintet, based on an Inuit legend; the collection *Ghiribizzi* for various instrumental combinations; and the piano trio *RohRau*.

A regular partner of the London Philharmonic Orchestra for over a decade, in 2024 they embarked on an extensive US tour together spanning from West to East Coasts, and culminating in a concert at New York's Carnegie Hall. Following tonight's concert, she will join the Orchestra and Edward Gardner on tour in Germany, reprising Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 2.

In Search of Purpose



Tonight's works and our 2026/27 season theme

At a moment of deep personal crisis in 1802, Ludwig van Beethoven confronted his hearing loss and questioned whether he could go on. In music, he found a way forward – and in doing so, transformed it into a powerful vehicle for human expression and resilience. From this journey, our 2026/27 season takes its title: 'In Search of Purpose'.

Throughout the season we'll trace Beethoven's path from despair to hope in his Fifth Symphony and a cycle of his piano concertos, and explore his ongoing legacy. And we hear from composers finding their purpose in the face of conflict, grief, and life's biggest questions.

Tonight's programme explores purpose in resistance. Rachmaninov's First Symphony became a turning point in his career after its disastrous premiere and the devastating criticism that followed. And before it, we hear Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 2, written during years of political oppression in the Soviet Union. Together, these works explore the fragile relationship between artistic identity and external judgement, showing how composers continue creating through fear, disappointment and scrutiny.

Check out the full season:
lpo.org.uk/purpose

Jesús Herrera on Purpose

Our Artistic Director on why he chose this season's theme, and why context matters



'While it's true that many of the iconic works we are so fortunate to perform were written decades or often centuries ago, they all emerged from artists who were driven to express something fundamentally human. This means the inspiration within these compositions can reflect experiences just as close to anyone in today's audience, regardless of their previous exposure to an orchestra.

As custodians of this incredible legacy, I believe it is a beautiful duty not just to present this repertoire because it is fantastic, but to be as generous as we can in how we provide that context. Exploring themes that amplify the depth of the music and connect listeners to its essence is a challenge, in my opinion, undoubtedly worth taking on.'

Jesús's full interview appeared in the latest issue of the LPO magazine, Tune In. *Read it online here:*



Programme notes

Serge Rachmaninov
1873–1943

Symphony in D minor ('Youth Symphony')
1891



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

While at least two Russian composers, Glazunov and Shostakovich, produced significant and finished symphonies before the age of 20, Rachmaninov was not so successful with his first attempt at symphonic writing, the first-movement torso that is the work known as his 'Youth Symphony'. Composed in the summer of 1891, when he was 18, it had been preceded in his orchestral output by a few short pieces, the First Piano Concerto, and at least part of a work inspired by Byron's *Manfred* (or perhaps more properly by Tchaikovsky's symphonic treatment of it). Of the Symphony, however, he only got as far as composing the opening movement before abandoning the project, and the score remained unpublished until two years after his death. His breakthrough as a composer came instead the following year with the immensely popular Prelude in C sharp minor for piano, and the accomplished opera that he wrote as his graduation piece for the Moscow Conservatory, *Aleko*.

The influence of Tchaikovsky – Russia's most prominent composer by far, and at that time between his own Fifth and Sixth symphonies – is as clear as can be in the 'Youth Symphony'. Both the dancing string melody that follows on from the lugubrious but sinuously lyrical opening, and the folksy woodwind theme that then introduces itself before becoming overcome by romantic string textures, are strongly reminiscent of moments in the older composer's music. The central development section stirs up some more ominous drama, such that even a peaceful return of the woodwind tune cannot protect us from a severe brass intervention, after which the music hurries to an abrupt finish. A young man's work this may be, derivative and unpolished compared to what was to come, but there is no denying its promise and power.

Programme note © Lindsay Kemp

Programme notes

Dmitri Shostakovich
1906–75

Violin Concerto No. 2 in C sharp minor, Op. 129
1967

Patricia Kopatchinskaja violin

1. Moderato
2. Adagio
3. Adagio – Allegro



Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto (1947–48) has established itself firmly as one of the classics of the 20th-century violin repertoire. Its successor, composed two decades later in 1967, still has a lot of catching up to do, but in recent decades more and more soloists have begun to respond to its unique challenges. The Second Violin Concerto may not be as easy to grasp on first hearing as No. 1, but as with so many of Shostakovich's later works, the sparseness of the textures and the enigmatic twists and turns in the argument mask great expressive subtleties.

Shostakovich wrote the Second Violin Concerto for the great Soviet virtuoso David Oistrakh, who had given the triumphant premiere of the First Concerto in 1955. At first, Oistrakh was astonished by some of the things Shostakovich expected of him. For a start, C sharp minor is an awkward key for a string player; but it was Shostakovich's frequent use of double-, triple- and even quadruple-stopping (bowed chords on multiple strings) that really took his breath away – surely some of it was unplayable? As he set to work on the Concerto, however, Oistrakh began to realise that Shostakovich knew perfectly well what he was doing. When the Concerto had its performance in September 1967, Oistrakh was able to meet all the challenges Shostakovich threw at him with his usual regal assurance.

Programme notes

The opening of the Concerto is typical of Shostakovich's 'late' manner: above mysterious fragments of motifs in cellos and basses, the violin sings out a darkly eloquent melodic line. The six-note rising-falling phrase with which the soloist begins is a clear thematic seed from which many later ideas grow. The mood of the first section is unmistakably elegiac; so it's a little disconcerting when piccolo, flute and oboe pick out a perky *staccato* (short and detached) motif in a slightly faster tempo – Shostakovich's poker-faced sense of humour can emerge in strange places in his later works. The speed increases again, into a kind of skeletal waltz tempo, contrabassoon and tom-tom drum (both entering for the first time) adding to the grotesque effect. Eventually calm is restored by the soloist in an unaccompanied cadenza (solo passage), leading to a return of the opening 'seed' motif on solo horn. The movement ends with weird, broken rhythmic exchanges for violin and tom-tom – humour again, but unmistakably of the blackest hue. It may be relevant that in the slightly later Fourteenth Symphony (1969), tom-toms accompany a grim little song about a woman revelling in her own beauty as her soldier lover faces death.

The song-like *Adagio* poses fewer riddles. For most of the time, it is easy to let the ear be carried along by the soaring, if often anguished melodic writing. But at the climax of the movement comes a harsh, angular solo cadenza, introduced by a quiet timpani roll: lyrical meditation, it seems, cannot resolve the tensions at the heart of this Concerto. Then, after a short introduction with caustic exchanges between soloist and muted horns, the finale begins. Here the tension between the great Soviet composer's smiling public mask and his truer painful feelings is palpable: the main theme is superficially bouncy and boisterous, but it is constantly being thrown off balance by shrill woodwind, serrated violin double-stopping, and later that bleakly mischievous tom-tom. The Concerto ends with a flourish in the home major key, but the sardonic undertone is unmissable.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Interval – 20 minutes

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



Programme notes

Serge Rachmaninov
1873–1943

Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13
1895

1. Grave – Allegro non troppo
2. Allegro animato
3. Larghetto
4. Allegro con fuoco

It is one of music history's most famous fiascos. 27 March 1897, and Rachmaninov – now established among the most promising of young Russian composers – delivers his first full-scale symphony to almost unanimous derision. The images of him lurking on an iron spiral staircase in the wings of the St Petersburg Philharmonic Hall while the most important premiere of his career heads for spectacular failure, and then hurrying out of the building by a back exit without taking a bow or speaking to anyone, are vivid and distressing. One can well imagine that many other composers of his age would have found it an ordeal from which there was no recovery.

For Rachmaninov, the well-known end to the story is that he locked the score away before enduring a three-year crisis of confidence that only a course of hypnosis eventually dispelled, freeing him to achieve a resounding comeback success with the Second Piano Concerto. Yet there are signs that his mental turmoil was mixed with a measure of clear-eyed detachment; only two months after that premiere he was writing to a friend: 'I am not at all affected by its lack of success, nor am I disturbed by the newspapers' abuse; but I am deeply upset and heavily depressed by the fact that my Symphony, though I loved it very much, and love it now, did not please me at all after its first rehearsal.' Having gone on to assign some of the blame (apparently with some justification) to the inept conducting of Alexander Glazunov, he concludes 'I will not reject this Symphony, and after leaving it alone for six months I'll look at it, perhaps correct it, and perhaps publish it, but perhaps by then my partiality for it will have passed. Then I'll tear it up.'

Maybe he did, eventually. Although he talked briefly of revising the work in 1908 and mentioned its existence again in a letter of 1917, his own score has never been found. In 1945, however, two years after his death, the original orchestral parts were discovered, enabling the Symphony to receive a second performance, this time in Moscow. A full score reassembled from these parts was published in 1947, since when this bright, youthful and in places exhilarating work has slowly but surely made its way into the repertoire.

Listening to the Symphony today, it is hard to see quite how it could have stirred up such intemperate reviews as that of the composer César Cui, whose description of it as a grotesque amalgam of Wagner, Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov was only the most polite of his assessments. Rachmaninov later admitted that the work contained 'much that is weak, childish, strained and bombastic', but maintained nevertheless that it had 'some good music'. Probably few would deny that now, and if there are places where it can seem to lose its way, and others which may have sounded brash and disjointed to the ears of the 1890s, it is certainly true that this is a work whose striking personality is easily recognisable as that of Rachmaninov.

It is also a work of considerable motivic economy. Within a minute of the start we have heard most of the melodic fragments that will audibly dominate all four movements

Programme notes

– the tight little curl of the first four woodwind notes, the five-note figure that follows immediately in the strings, a rippling semiquaver response first heard in the lower strings. Later, a longer undulating theme announced by a solo oboe after a winding, rhapsodic lead-in from the violins, is also significant. The central development is inaugurated by an orchestral 'crash' (based on the curling figure) and a vigorous fugue, and the main themes are then recapitulated with changed scoring, before another crash kicks off the long coda.

The curling figure returns to open the second movement, as it will do the third and fourth. In this case, what follows is a *scherzo* with the characteristic light touch recognisable to anyone familiar with Rachmaninov's later music. If there is a feeling that the gloomy middle section of the slow third movement flags a little, surely few could find anything to criticise in the long-breathed, oriental-tinged woodwind melodies of its outer sections. The finale contains one of the Symphony's most exciting and inspired passages in the fanfare-laden, martial extension of the first movement's five-note theme, and Rachmaninoff shows considerable restraint in not bringing it back. Instead, he opts to alternate rhythmic drive with a broadly yearning Romantic melody, surging to a crashing tam-tam climax which clears the way for a slow but massively intense coda.

Programme note © Lindsay Kemp

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