



**Free concert  
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# London Philharmonic Orchestra



**2025/26 season  
at the  
Southbank Centre**



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# 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

## Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Wednesday 4 March 2026 | 7.30pm

## Tchaikovsky & Sibelius

### Tchaikovsky

Piano Concerto No. 2 (49')

*Interval (20')*

### Sibelius

Symphony No. 2 (45')

**Paavo Järvi**  
conductor

**Alexandre Kantorow**  
piano

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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

### *Tchaikovsky & Sibelius*

Tonight's concert brings together two big musical works composed either side of 1900. The first is a piano concerto – for a soloist and orchestra – by Russian composer Tchaikovsky, built around virtuosity and drama. After the interval comes a symphony by Finnish composer Sibelius, infused with a sense of atmosphere and landscape, and driven by a strong feeling of building momentum and forward motion.

## Who's on stage?



### Paavo Järvi – conductor

Paavo Järvi is tonight's guest conductor. He is Music Director of the Tonhalle Orchestra in Zürich (Switzerland), and is regularly invited to conduct other prestigious orchestras around the world. Later this week, he and the Orchestra will repeat the same programme on tour in Budapest and Athens. Music runs in Paavo's family – his father, Neeme Järvi, is also an esteemed conductor, and his siblings Kristjan and Maarika are both professional musicians too.



### Alexandre Kantorow – piano

Described by *Gramophone* magazine as 'the real deal; a fire-breathing virtuoso', French pianist Alexandre is still in his 20s, but has already won several major international prizes, marking him out as one of the world's leading young pianists. Tonight is his first performance with the LPO – an exciting occasion! He joins the stage for the first piece in the concert, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2.



### 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, Paavo, enters the stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...



49 min

### Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2 with soloist Alexandre Kantorow

A concerto is a showpiece for a solo instrument accompanied by the orchestra. During the three movements, we'll hear the piano unfold long, sweeping melodies, sparkle through playful dance-like passages, and then surge into a bold, exhilarating finale. It's a dazzling showpiece that pairs technical fireworks with a warm, romantic feel.

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



45 min

### Jean Sibelius Symphony No. 2

Written by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, this music carries a strong sense of the North – open landscapes, cool air, and a feeling of quiet strength. Across the 45-minute span of its four movements, we'll hear ideas grow and gather momentum. The gentle, pastoral opening is followed by a brooding, windswept slow movement. The exhilarating third movement leads without a break into the triumphant finale, as the whole Orchestra surges forward together.

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

Want to read more? Turn to page 11 for a deeper dive into this evening's pieces.

## Welcome

## LPO news

### 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](mailto: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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### After Dark with the LPO

Our 'After Dark' series is back at the Southbank Centre this spring, bringing relaxed late-night performances to the Queen Elizabeth foyer after selected concerts. Our 'After Dark' performances are free for main concert ticket-holders, or just £10 if you're joining the fun on its own.



Our **Saturday 21 March** 6.30pm concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, 'Four Seasons of Buenos Aires', features BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* dancers Lauren Oakley and

Kai Widdrington. 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.

On **Wednesday 15 April**, following Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals* in our main 7.30pm concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, we celebrate ZSL's 200th anniversary with a lively 'After Dark' performance by the Orchestra's brass and percussion players. It opens with William Walton's *Roaring Fanfare*, written 50 years ago for ZSL's 150th anniversary. The players then embark on a lively sonic safari through Chris Hazell's *The Cats Suite*, before raising a festive final toast with Goff Richards's *Homage to the Noble Grape*.

Book now via [lpo.org.uk/whatson](http://lpo.org.uk/whatson)

### Behind the scenes with LPO Friends

Earlier today, LPO Friends enjoyed exclusive, behind-the-scenes access to a Private Members' Rehearsal with the Orchestra, conductor Paavo Järvi and pianist Alexandre Kantorow ahead of tonight's concert.



If you'd like to see for yourself what goes into putting on an LPO concert – plus enjoy a host of other amazing benefits, like a private bar space and meeting our musicians – join our family of LPO Friends today, from just £6 per month!

Scan the QR code or visit [lpo.org.uk/friends](http://lpo.org.uk/friends) to find out more.

# London Philharmonic Orchestra

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© Jason Bell

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. We're the most followed UK orchestra on Instagram, the most followed orchestra globally on TikTok, and overall the third most followed globally across all social platforms. 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 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. 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 Thorvaldsdottir, 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 Lalovega

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  
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

## Thomas Eisner

Chair supported by Ryze Power

## Katalin Varnagy

## Yang Zhang

## Nilufar Alimaksumova

## Rasa Zukauskaite

## Alison Strange

## Daniel Pukach

## Caroline Heard

## Victoria Gill

## Camille Buitenhuis

## Second Violins

## Tania Mazzetti Principal

Chair supported by The Candide Trust

## Emma Oldfield Co-Principal

## Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

## Coco Inman

## Kate Birchall

## Nancy Elan

## Nynke Hijlkema

## Joseph Maher

## Sophie Phillips

Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra

## Ashley Stevens

## Sioni Williams

## Ricky Gore

## Emma Crossley

## Eriko Nagayama

## Violas

## Nathan Braude

Guest Principal

## Samuel Burstin

## Laura Vallejo

## Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden

## James Heron

## Shiry Rashkovsky

## Jisu Song

## Kate De Campos

## Raquel López Bolívar

## Toby Warr

## Jill Valentine

## Abby Bowen

## Cellos

## Kristina Blaumane Principal

Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden

## Henry Shapard Co-Principal

## Wayne Kwon

Chair supported by an anonymous donor

## David Lale

## Leo Melvin

## Iain Ward

## Colin Alexander

## Hee Yeon Cho

## Rasmus Støier Andersen

## Deni Teo

## Double Basses

## Kevin Rundell\* Principal

## Hugh Kluger

## George Peniston

## Laura Murphy

Chair supported by Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter

## Lowri Estell

## Ben Havinden-Williams

## Catherine Ricketts

## Siret Lust

## Flutes

## Juliette Bausor Principal

Chair supported by Malcolm & Alison Thwaites

## Stewart McIlwham\*

## Oboes

## Ian Hardwick\* Principal

## Alice Munday

Chair supported by David & Yi Buckley

## Clarinets

## Benjamin Mellefont\*

## Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

## Thomas Watmough

Chair supported by Roger Greenwood

## Bassoons

## Jonathan Davies\* Principal

Chair supported by Sir Simon Robey

## Helen Storey\*

## Horns

## Annemarie Federle

## Principal

Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE

## Martin Hobbs

## Mark Vines Co-Principal

## Gareth Mollison

## Elise Cambell

## Trumpets

## Paul Beniston\* Principal

Chair supported by the Williams family in memory of Grenville Williams

## Tom Nielsen\* Principal

## Anne McAneney\*

## 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

\*Professor at a London conservatoire

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

Gill & Garf Collins  
Dr Barry Grimaldi  
Joe Topley & Tracey Countryman

## Video series: Humans of the Orchestra

Have you seen our new video series? 'Humans of the Orchestra' gives LPO audiences and fans a chance to get to know the people behind the music – the personalities, stories and passions of our players.

So far, we've featured Leader Pieter Schoeman, Principal Cello Kristina Blaumane, Principal Trumpet Paul Beniston, Principal Tuba Lee Tsarmaklis and Principal Bass Trombone Lyndon Meredith – with more to come very soon!

Watch on our YouTube channel by scanning the QR code, or visit [youtube.com/londonphilharmonicorchestra](https://www.youtube.com/londonphilharmonicorchestra)



# Paavo Järvi

conductor

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© Kaupo Kikkas

Estonian Grammy Award-winning conductor Paavo Järvi is widely recognised as one of today's most eminent conductors, enjoying close partnerships with the finest orchestras around the world. He serves as Music Director of the Tonhalle Orchester-Zürich, as Artistic Director of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, and as both the founder and Artistic Director of the Estonian Festival Orchestra.

Paavo Järvi first conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1998. Most recently, he led the Orchestra on tour in 2023, in London the following year, and on a tour of China in 2025. Following this evening's concert, he and the Orchestra will repeat the programme in Budapest and Athens.

Highlights of Paavo Järvi's seventh season as Music Director of the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich include the continuation of their Mahler symphony cycle, and a tribute to Swiss-French composer Arthur Honegger on the 70th anniversary of his death. Additional spotlights include performances with cellist Sol Gabetta and pianist Kirill Gerstein, as well as a year-long exploration of the music of Thomas Adès, this year's Creative Chair. Alpha Classics released Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in autumn 2025, coinciding with the start of a three-year guest residency at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and a Mahler tour which took them to the Vienna Musikverein and the Cologne and Paris Philharmonies. Further tours include appearances at the Gstaad Menuhin Festival and the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest, a guest performance at La Scala, Milan, and an extensive tour to Japan and South Korea in May 2026.

Now in his third decade as Artistic Director of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Paavo Järvi has performed and recorded benchmark performances of the complete orchestral works of Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms with them on the RCA Red Seal label. Highlights in the 2025/26 season include the final release of Haydn's 'London' symphonies, as well as recordings and performances of Schubert's symphonies at home in Bremen and on tour across Europe.

In addition to his permanent positions, Paavo is much in demand as a guest conductor, regularly appearing with the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and New York Philharmonic. This season, he also conducts the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Toronto Symphony, Gewandhaus Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Philharmonia Orchestra, Luxembourg Philharmonic and Verbier Festival Orchestra. He also continues to enjoy close relationships with many of the orchestras of which he was previously Music Director, including the Orchestre de Paris, Frankfurt Radio Symphony and NHK Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo.

Recent accolades include Germany's 2025 Opus Klassik 'Composer of the Year' Award for the Estonian Festival Orchestra's recording of Jüri Reinvere's *Ship of Fools*, and an International Classical Music Award for his recording of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8 with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, both on Alpha Classics. With the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, he won the 2024 Opus Klassik and 2023 Gramophone 'Orchestra of the Year' awards, as well as the 2019 Rheingau Music Prize and Opus Klassik 'Conductor of the Year'. Other prizes and honours include a Grammy Award for his recording of Sibelius's Cantatas with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, and the Commandeur de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, awarded by the French Ministry of Culture. In 2015, he was also presented with the Sibelius Medal in recognition of his work in bringing the Finnish composer's music to a wider public and, in 2012, he received the Hindemith Prize for Art and Humanity. As a dedicated supporter of Estonian culture, Paavo Järvi was awarded the Order of the White Star by the President of Estonia in 2013.

# Alexandre Kantorow

piano

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© Sasha Gusev

In 2019, aged 22, Alexandre Kantorow became the first French pianist to win the Gold Medal at the International Tchaikovsky Competition, along with the rarely-awarded Grand Prix, granted only three times in the competition's history. In 2024, he was recognised once again when he received the esteemed Gilmore Artist Award, solidifying his place as one of the world's leading pianists. *Gramophone* magazine has described him as 'the real deal, a fire-breathing virtuoso with a poetic charm and innate stylistic mastery'. He is in demand at the highest level across the globe, performing in the world's finest halls both in recital and with the most renowned orchestras and conductors.

Tonight is his debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and later this week he will join them and conductor Paavo Järvi on tour, performing the same programme in Budapest and Athens.

Other highlights of Alexandre's 2025/26 season include a tour of Japan with the Concertgebouw Orchestra and Klaus Mäkelä, a European tour with the Filarmonica della Scala and Riccardo Chailly, a tour of Asia with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and Jaap van Zweden, and a tour to the US with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Marin Alsop, including a performance at Carnegie Hall. He will also embark on a major recital tour of North America, make his debut with the San Francisco Symphony, and return to the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Bavarian Radio Symphony orchestras.

In recent seasons, Alexandre has performed with many of the world's finest orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, LA Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic and Budapest Festival orchestras, and with conductors including Esa-

Pekka Salonen, Manfred Honeck, Iván Fischer, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Sir Antonio Pappano.

Alexandre Kantorow performs in recital regularly across the globe, in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vienna Konzerthaus, London's Wigmore Hall, Philharmonie de Paris, Tokyo's Suntory Hall, and at festivals such as Edinburgh, Salzburg, La Roque d'Anthéron, Piano aux Jacobins, Verbier, Rheingau and Klavierfest Ruhr. Chamber music is one of his great pleasures, and he performs regularly with artists such as Janine Jansen, Renaud Capuçon, Gautier Capuçon and Matthias Goerne. With Liya Petrova and Aurélien Pascal, he is co-artistic director of the 'Rencontres Musicales de Nîmes' festival and the Pianopolis festival in Angers.

Alexandre Kantorow records exclusively for the BIS label. His recordings have received the highest critical acclaim worldwide, and most recently he was awarded a Gramophone Award for his Brahms and Schubert recording, featuring Brahms's Piano Sonata No. 1 in C major, Op. 1, Schubert/Liszt song transcriptions, and Schubert's Fantasy in C major. In 2024, he was awarded the title of Chevalier of the National Order of Merit by the French President of the Republic, having previously been made a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by the Minister of Culture. In July 2024, he performed Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* at the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympic Games.

Alexandre Kantorow studied with Pierre-Alain Volondat, Igor Lazko, Frank Braley and Rena Shereshevskaya.

## Programme notes

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### Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1840–93

### Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Op 44

1879–80

Alexandre Kantorow piano

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1. *Allegro brillante*
2. *Andante non troppo*
3. *Allegro con fuoco*



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

As Tchaikovsky approached the end of the 1870s, he was understandably keen to put memories of that turbulent decade behind him. The emotional fallout from his catastrophic attempt at marriage in 1877 had to some extent been worked through in the intense psychodramas of his opera *Eugene Onegin* and the Fourth Symphony (both 1877–78). Now, in the autumn of 1879, he opted for a period of rest and recuperation at his sister's country house at Kamenka, about 350 miles southeast of Moscow.

It was a sound idea, but Tchaikovsky was soon restless and fretful. 'I began to sense in my innermost heart a kind of indefinable dissatisfaction with myself which was beginning to turn into boredom', he wrote. 'I realised that what I lacked was work, and began to apply myself a little. Immediately the boredom went and I felt altogether lighter in spirit.' What was now taking shape was a piano concerto, his second: 'I will work without hurrying, straining or tiring myself in any way.' In other words, composing the Second Piano Concerto was to be very different from the anxious ordeal so many of his earlier major works had demanded of him.

In character and conception, the Second Piano Concerto is a long way from the impassioned, barnstorming First. Where in the First Concerto the models were clearly the devilishly charismatic Franz Liszt, and to a lesser extent the romantic Russian nationalists, here we can see Tchaikovsky turning – as he often did when he felt the need to calm himself –

## Programme notes

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to Mozart. Not only is the orchestra smaller, more classical than in Piano Concerto No. 1 (no trombones), its relationship with the piano is subtler. The kind of dramatic contention developed by Beethoven – the soloist as heroic individual taking the elemental force of the orchestra – is replaced with a more intimate, classical kind of dialogue. Piano and orchestra are more inclined to share the musical ideas than to fight over them – at least until the *tour de force* finale, where the orchestra is largely happy to play a supporting role.

This was quite an unusual approach in a late-romantic piano concerto, and it caused a moment of slight friction with the Second Concerto's dedicatee, the pianist-composer Nikolai Rubinstein. Rubinstein's initially hostile response to the First Concerto had caused Tchaikovsky a lot of pain, though when Rubinstein took it up (shrewdly noting how popular it was becoming) Tchaikovsky graciously forgave him. As with the Concerto No. 1, Rubinstein apparently initially mistook strengths for weaknesses: 'It seemed, at first sight, strange to me that the piano part is so episodic and mostly in dialogue with the orchestra, and not enough in the foreground ... But as I say all this is having scarcely played the concerto once through,

perhaps I am wrong! Tchaikovsky stuck to his guns, and Rubinstein conceded. Alas, Rubinstein died before he had the chance to play it.

In fact, understanding and enjoying the Second Piano Concerto is only a problem if one expects it to be like the First. The long first movement, launched by a bright folksy theme with a Russian courtly swagger, certainly had its dramatic and brilliant moments, but the piano's imposing solo that ends the first section turns, surprisingly, into confidential, tender poetry for the second theme. The contrast between these two kinds of music is compellingly developed, through the substantial solo cadenza and the following recapitulation, right through to the end. The gorgeous slow movement then brings another surprise: here solo violin and cello play such important parts that towards the climax this begins to sound more like a concerto for piano trio and orchestra – concertos with multiple soloists were much more a feature of Mozart's Classical era than in the individualistic 19th century. The finale, however, is a gift for the soloist: a dashing, scintillating display piece, almost a *perpetuum mobile*, culminating in cascading arpeggios.

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Interval – 20 minutes

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

A new series of our LPO podcast – coming soon!

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## Programme notes

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Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

Symphony No. 2

1902

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*1. Allegretto*

*2. Tempo Andante, ma rubato*

*3. Vivacissimo – Lento e suave – Tempo primo – Lento e suave –*

*4. Finale: Allegro moderato*



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

Sibelius once told his fellow composer Gustav Mahler that, for him, writing symphonies was about finding ‘the profound logic that establishes a connection between all the motifs’. True, no 20th-century composer is more profoundly logical than Sibelius at his best: following the development of a whole movement from a tiny thematic ‘germ’ can be like watching a speeded-up film of a plant growing from a seed to full flower. But it’s also clear that there is much more to a work like the Second Symphony than abstract development. In fact the slow second movement began life as a tone-poem about the final struggle between Don Juan and Death – it’s still possible to trace the outlines of the story in the music – while the triumphant emergence of the majestic Finale theme from the stormy ending of the third movement is much more than a clever piece of musical engineering.

For many of Sibelius’s fellow Finns, listening to the Symphony’s first performance in 1902, this passage in particular expressed the nation’s growing hope of independence after a century of Russian domination. In fact the Second Symphony soon came to be known as the ‘Symphony of Liberation’. For his part, Sibelius never completely confirmed or denied this interpretation, but it’s hard to believe that the fate of his oppressed but heroically defiant native country didn’t leave a deep imprint on this music – and especially on its blazingly positive conclusion.

In the first movement, profound logic and mounting optimism work hand in hand. The opening string chords

## Programme notes

outline a three-note rising figure, moving upwards in simple steps. This is the seed from which almost everything in this music grows. But at first the growth is hesitant, broken by pauses and expectant silences. Eventually the pace and excitement mount, but this too seems to run out of steam, and a nervous oboe figure, with murmuring string accompaniment initiates a long, striving build up. At the height of this long *crescendo*, triumphant brass fanfares burst through, culminating in a grand restatement of the opening material, now without its earlier hesitancy. A brief recapitulation leads to a calmer coda, the opening rising string figures now falling to rest.

Eerie *pizzicato* (plucked) figures for basses and cellos, followed by a lugubrious bassoon solo, set a more sombre tone for the slow movement. In his sketches for the original *Don Juan* tone-poem, Sibelius drafted out a programme for this first section: 'Sitting in the twilight in my castle. A stranger comes in. I ask him more than once who he is. Finally he strikes up a song. Then Don Juan sees who it is – Death.' It's not hard to match this closely to the music. The sense of struggle grows darker, more painful, but a warmer, major-key theme for full strings (labelled 'Christus' in the sketches) brings welcome contrast. In this movement it is the darker music – 'Death' according to Sibelius's abandoned programme – that wins.

However that only makes the rushing vitality of the following *Vivacissimo* third movement all the more exhilarating. Twice this music is interrupted by a chant-like theme (led by oboe) in a slower tempo, but the second time this leads into a stormy transition, with scraps of a new theme heard first on bass instruments – Sibelius's model here is clearly the thrilling Scherzo–Finale transition in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Eventually the clouds part, and the scraps fuse into the superbly confident Finale theme, striding forward in three beats to the bar. This movement too has its darker episodes – Sibelius's widow revealed that the plaintive oboe theme (above murmuring low strings) was composed in memory of her sister, who committed suicide – Death in another guise. But eventually the Finale theme returns with renewed vigour. Finally the tempo broadens and trumpets extend the theme into a radiant song of victory.

*Programme notes* © Stephen Johnson

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**Piazzolla** *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires (with live dance)*

**Pablo Rus Broseta** conductor  
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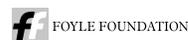
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