



LSO

HALF SIX FIX

Wednesday 6 December 2023

barbican

Resident
Orchestra

London Symphony Orchestra

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YOUR NEXT HALF SIX FIX

Wednesday 28 February 6.30pm

SHOSTAKOVICH'S FOURTH
with Sir Simon Rattle

Wednesday 10 April 6.30pm

RAVEL'S DAPHNIS AND CHLOÉ
with Sir Antonio Pappano

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Programme Notes Edward Bhesania. Edward Bhesania is a music journalist and editor who writes for *The Stage*, *The Strad* and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

LSO Visual Identity & Concept Design Bridge & Partners

Details correct at time of going to press



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: Votkinsk, Russia, 1840

Died: St Petersburg, Russia, 1893

'Tchaikovsky's talent was the greatest of any Russian musician. His virtues ... were his elegance and his wit.'

Igor Stravinsky, composer

When Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky visited New York in 1891 to conduct at the opening of Carnegie Hall, he was feted in the American press as one of the world's three greatest living composers. But although he was the first Russian composer to gain an international profile, back in Moscow his adoption of European models marked a contrast with the St Petersburg-based Russian nationalists – among them Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Alexander Borodin and Mily Balakirev – of the group known as 'The Five' or 'The Mighty Handful'.

Tchaikovsky lived during the Populist and Socialist Revolutionaries movements, who sought freedom from the Tsarist regime. The second half of the 19th century in Russia was also the time of the famed writers Fyodor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov and Leo Tolstoy. Tchaikovsky met Tolstoy on several occasions, and took pride in the fact that the writer had been moved to tears by the slow movement in a performance of his String Quartet No 1.

Tchaikovsky's unique gift for spinning long, lyrical melodies, his dramatic sense and his heart-on-sleeve expression have led him to be dismissed for not being radical enough. But these features remain among the most loved qualities of his work. In addition to six symphonies, his ballets – particularly *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker* – imbued ballet music with a new dramatic sweep and imagination. The first of his three Piano Concertos and his Violin Concerto remain among the most performed of their type.

Symphony No 6 in B minor Op 74, 'Pathétique' 1893

WHAT'S THE STORY?

On 28 October 1893 Tchaikovsky conducted the premiere of his Sixth Symphony in St Petersburg. Nine days later, he was dead. Soon, rumours were circulating that he had foreseen his own demise. After all, the Symphony's finale was not the usual upbeat conclusion but instead an Adagio (slow movement) marked 'Lamentoso' (mournfully); and the first movement quoted a funeral chant from the Russian Orthodox Requiem. Tchaikovsky most likely died of cholera – there was an epidemic at the time – but some have suggested he contracted the disease deliberately by drinking unboiled water. What's for sure is that he reached a new expressive peak with this Symphony, which he thought 'the best, and in particular, the most sincere of all my creations'.

'I love [the Sixth] as I have never loved any of my other musical offspring.'

WHY IS THIS PIECE SO ICONIC?

The nickname 'Pathétique' is a garbling into French of the Russian word 'Pateticheskaya', meaning 'passionate' or 'full of pathos', so it's no surprise that the Sixth Symphony carries a level of emotional turmoil and expressive extreme rarely heard before in a symphony. Tchaikovsky himself revealed in a letter to his nephew Vladimir 'Bob' Davydov that the Symphony had an underlying theme or narrative – but one, he said, 'that will remain an enigma to everyone – let them guess'. While composing it, he 'wept terribly'.

Tchaikovsky's symphonies have been criticised for falling short of the intellectual rigour of the likes of Ludwig van Beethoven or Johannes Brahms. But Leonard Bernstein (the American conductor and longtime LSO collaborator) disagreed. Drawn to their 'shattering contrasts' and 'striking opposites', Bernstein believed these symphonies had a 'place in history at the peak of 19th-century Romanticism'.

WHAT IS THE MUSIC LIKE?

The opening – a mournful bassoon solo – is hardly a sizzling curtain-raiser. The following music brings lightness but the tension soon builds. Out of this comes one of Tchaikovsky's most yearning melodies, in the strings. Later (spoiler alert!) the music suddenly explodes and then burns with alarm and despair before brewing up a massive climax, which erupts in a slow, desperate, falling line in the strings (marked 'as loudly as possible') with answering brass and shuddering timpani.

The second movement is a kind of 'broken' waltz, with five beats to the bar instead of three. The darker middle section is underpinned by pulsing timpani. Ingeniously, this leads seamlessly back to a return of the strangely swaying waltz.

The third movement flickers with energy and, before long, a chipper march finds its voice in the clarinets: a tune Tchaikovsky saw as 'solemnly triumphant'. Amid the exuberance and pomp are flashy, joyful displays of pinpoint precision and swirling scales in the orchestra.

Which brings us to the deeply lamenting finale. According to the late conductor Yuri Temirkanov, this shouldn't sound too tearful. He believed, 'Tchaikovsky leads his hero to his terrible end with such dignity. He knows that it's inevitable.'

'Never in my life have I been so pleased with myself, so proud, or felt so fortunate to have created something as good as this.'



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Gianandrea Noseda Principal Guest Conductor

Watch Gianandrea Noseda on stage and there's an unmistakable intensity to his communication. He has held positions with orchestras from Pittsburgh to Rotterdam and from Tel Aviv to Girona. Before joining the LSO family in 2016 as a Principal Guest Conductor he had built a reputation in the UK as Music Director of the BBC Philharmonic for nine years (2002 to 2011). Born in Milan, Noseda was Music Director of the Teatro Regio in Turin for over a decade and before that had spent ten years as Principal Guest Conductor at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. His dual experience in the two great opera traditions of Italy and Russia is unique, and there is a dramatic, storytelling quality to his music-making. As he says, the challenge of a conductor is 'to be able to keep the tension from the first note to the last'.

Your best memory with the LSO?

The first five minutes of my first rehearsal with them

A piece you recommend listening to next?

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5

The London Symphony Orchestra

At the London Symphony Orchestra, we strive to inspire hearts and minds through world-leading music-making. We were established in 1904 as one of the first orchestras shaped by its musicians, and today we're ranked among the world's top orchestras. As Resident Orchestra at the Barbican since the Centre opened in 1982, we perform some 70 concerts here every year. We also perform over 50 concerts a year to audiences throughout the UK and worldwide, and deliver a far-reaching programme of recordings, live-streams and on-demand broadcasts. Through our world-leading learning and community programme, LSO Discovery, we're connecting people from all walks of life to the power of great music. Our musicians are at the heart of this unique programme. In 1999 we formed our own recording label, LSO Live, which has become one of the world's most talked-about classical labels. As a leading orchestra for film, we've entertained millions with classic scores for *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* and many more.

On Stage

Leader

Carmine Lauri

First Violins

Jérôme Benhaim

Clare Duckworth

Ginette Decuyper

Maxine Kwok

William Melvin

Stefano Mengoli

Elizabeth Pigram

Claire Parfitt

Laurent Quénelle

Harriet Rayfield

Morane Cohen-

Lamberger

Julia Rumley

Eleanor Fagg

Grace Lee

Caroline Frenkel

Second Violins

Julián Gil

Rodríguez

Thomas Norris

Sarah Quinn

Miya Väisänen

Matthew Gardner

Naoko Keatley

Alix Lagasse

Belinda McFarlane

Iwona Muszynska

Csilla Pogány

Andrew Pollock

Paul Robson

Anna Takeda

Louise Shackelton

Violas

Eivind Ringstad

Gillianne Haddow

Malcolm Johnston

Matan

Gilitchensky

Anna Bastow

Thomas Beer

Steve Doman

Sofia Silva Sousa

Robert Turner

Michelle Bruil

Clifton Harrison

Alistair Scahill

Cellos

Rebecca Gilliver

Alastair Blayden

Salvador Bolón

Ève-Marie

Caravassilis

Daniel Gardner

Laure Le Dantec

Amanda Truelove

Joanna Twaddle

Judith Fleet

Henry Hargreaves

Double Basses

Lorraine Campet

Patrick Laurence

Thomas Goodman

Joe Melvin

Jani Pensola

Chaemun Im

Simon Oliver

Adam Wynter

Flutes

Gareth Davies

Daniel Shao

Piccolo

Sharon Williams

Oboes

Timothy Rundle

Rosie Jenkins

Clarinets

Nicholas Rodwell

Chi-Yu Mo

Bass Clarinet

Kenny Keppel

Bassoons

Rachel Gough

Joost Bosdijk

Horns

Timothy Jones

Angela Barnes

Daniel Curzon

Jonathan

Maloney

Eleanor Blakeney

Trumpets

James Fountain

Will O'Sullivan

Katie Smith

Trombones

Peter Moore

Jonathan Hollick

Bass Trombone

Paul Milner

Tuba

Ben Thomson

Timpani

Nigel Thomas

Percussion

Neil Percy

David Jackson



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