# LSO Artist Portrait – Beethoven and Unsuk Chin

## Thursday 14 March 2024 7–9.10pmBarbican

**Ludwig van Beethoven** Symphony No 2

**Unsuk Chin** Piano Concerto

*Interval*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** Symphony No 8

**François-Xavier Roth** conductor

**Bertrand Chamayou** piano

**London Symphony Orchestra**

# Welcome

Tonight with François-Xavier Roth, Principal Guest Conductor, we continue the ‘Beethoven and Modernism’ series, programming two of Ludwig van Beethoven’s symphonies alongside the music of Unsuk Chin, an incredibly significant figure in modernist music. Our heartfelt congratulations to François-Xavier Roth, who this month received the Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor Award. We are thrilled that our 2000 winner of the Donatella Flick LSO Conducting Competition – who has done so much with LSO Discovery over the years, contributing his great insight and skill to the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme for 20 years, and who now brings such creativity and imagination to the role of Principal Guest Conductor – should win this award.

It is a pleasure to be joined this evening by pianist Bertrand Chamayou for a performance of Unsuk Chin’s Piano Concerto, a work he has very much made his own. This concert is part of his Artist Portrait series with the LSO, which also sees him curate a complementary chamber music series at LSO St Luke’s, in partnership with BBC Radio 3. In his chamber series we have already heard music by Unsuk Chin and Maurice Ravel, as we hear in his Barbican series. Next month at LSO St Luke’s he performs chamber music by Johannes Brahms, John Cage and Erik Satie.

Tonight’s concert opens with Beethoven’s Symphony No 2, a piece from his early period, featuring a humorous Scherzo. After the interval, we hear his jovial Symphony No 8.

This concert is being recorded for future broadcast by our partner Marquee TV, available from 4 April, and by BBC Radio 3, available from 15 April.

This evening, we celebrate all those who support the LSO as Patrons and Friends, through annual donations, corporate sponsorships, trusts and foundations, and public funders. Our work, both on the concert platform and in the community, through LSO Discovery, would not be possible without these groups and we are very grateful for their support. To find out about opportunities to be part of our family of supporters, please visit our website.

We hope you enjoy this performance and that you can join us again soon. At the beginning of April, François-Xavier Roth returns to conduct our annual LSO Futures concert, a celebratory evening showcasing composers of our time, with world premieres commissioned through the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme, the UK premiere of Donghoon Shin’s Cello Concerto performed by LSO Principal Cello, Rebecca Gilliver, plus music by Unsuk Chin and Béla Bartók. On 18 April, Bertrand Chamayou concludes his Artist Portrait at the Barbican with Maurice Ravel’s glistening Piano Concerto in G, with Sir Antonio Pappano, Chief Conductor Designate, at the podium. We hope to see you there.

**Dame Kathryn McDowell DBE DL
Managing Director**

# Symphony No 2 in D major Op 36

## Ludwig van Beethoven

1. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio
2. Larghetto
3. Scherzo: Allegro
4. Allegro molto

1801–02

35 minutes

Programme note by Andrew Mellor

Ludwig van Beethoven was in his late twenties when France overthrew its monarchy and a wave of rebellion swept east through Europe. Beethoven, a passionate republican living in Vienna, was acutely aware of the huge implications of these events. He saw an opportunity to change not only music, but also the standing of the artist in society.

He seized the moment, and the transformation of the profession of ‘composer’ from feudal servant to autonomous artist began in earnest. What sounds so insistent, powerful and liberated in so much of Beethoven’s music is, almost literally, the sound of the composer wresting musical expression from the grip of the aristocracy – reflecting the new social impulses that were surging through Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

We know Beethoven’s Symphony No 3 as his ‘Heroic’ Symphony. But when we listen to the composer’s Symphony No 2, it’s clear that the impulses felt in the Third were first explored in its predecessor. The Second was written in 1802, getting its first performance at an epic concert in Vienna on 5 April the following year. The event also included the first performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No 3 and of his oratorio Christ on the Mount of Olives (just in case anyone felt short-changed, the composer’s Symphony No 1 was also revived).

Beethoven wrote much of the Second Symphony in the village of Heiligenstadt, where he had been sent by his doctors. Many at its premiere concluded that Beethoven was trying to innovate for innovation’s sake. When we put the score in context, we hear music bound up in both the development of Beethoven’s language and the realisation of his mission.

We also hear music with clear predecessors as well as successors. Regarding the former, we might be talking about those symphonies of Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (particularly the latter’s ‘Prague’ Symphony) that grow from brooding, majestic, slow introductions, as Beethoven’s does. But in Beethoven’s hands, that very gesture is notably forward-looking. This Symphony’s opening is possessed of a new breadth of both sonority and harmony, foreshadowing the opening pages of the composer’s Fourth and Seventh symphonies but also the declamation of his Ninth (you might notice the orchestra’s unison chords in D minor are instructed to be played ‘very loud’). This pregnant opening twists itself up through various remote keys to that angst-ridden D minor stalemate, before birthing music of high-spirited ferocity that prompts wild snaps and blows from the orchestra.

The sweet, slow Larghetto (meaning fairly slowly) that follows reveals, for the first time, the sort of rich, lyrical woodwind ideas and hymn-like melodies that Beethoven would develop fully in the most exalted moments of his late symphonies and string quartets. Surely, this is music influenced by the idyllic surroundings at Heiligenstadt.

Next comes the first symphonic movement Beethoven allowed himself to call ‘Scherzo’ – implying lighthearted fun and vigour. The joke here is in the three-note fragment tossed merrily between instrumental groups. Listen, in particular, for the misplaced accents in the violins – another emerging Beethoven hallmark.

In the last movement, we feel the full force of Beethoven’s symphonic imagination. It opens with the sassiest of gestures: a little theme picked up and thrown away by high instruments and greeted gruffly by lower ones. This jagged, eccentric theme is driven towards what could easily have been the movement’s ending. Instead of stopping there, Beethoven releases a genie from the bottle: he combines a subdued, lyrical tune that passed almost unnoticed earlier in the movement with the jagged theme to create a massive cranking-up of symphonic momentum that could only lead to a wild, dramatic ending.

# Ludwig van Beethoven

## 1770 (Germany) to 1827 (Austria)

Composer profile by Andrew Mellor

When Ludwig van Beethoven was a young man, France overthrew its monarchy and rebellion spread through Europe. Riding the crest of a wave of social change, Beethoven changed not just the sound of music but the standing of the artist in society. He introduced the concept of the ‘artist-hero’, paving the way for Romanticism and even popular culture.

Beethoven was born in a faraway corner of what is now Germany, to an alcoholic and abusive father. He chanced his way to Europe’s cultural capital, Vienna, where he studied with Joseph Haydn and probably associated with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

From musical foundations steadied by those two figures, Beethoven led music into the first-person passions of Romanticism. He wrote in every genre, and with the possible exception of opera, transformed each of them. He reimagined the scale and scope of the symphony and invested the string quartet with a level of psychological depth that dumbfounded his peers. Beethoven used rhythm like no other composer before him and pushed harmony to the boundaries of tangibility. He exploited the piano’s technological transformation to mine entirely new expressions from the instrument.

Writing for himself and not to deadlines, Beethoven was able to be more deliberate and considered in his compositions than many of his contemporaries were. But the story of his career is one of the constant overcoming of colossal obstacles. From the age of 26, the composer knew he had serious problems with his hearing, and for the last seven years of his life, he could hear almost nothing. That made him irritable, sensitive and withdrawn. But Beethoven always remained sure of himself, and consistently creative.

# Piano Concerto

## Unsuk Chin

1. First movement
2. Second movement
3. Third movement
4. Fourth movement

1996–97

25 minutes

Programme note by Unsuk Chin

Following my first three piano études, this is my second major work for piano – an instrument which has fascinated me since the age of four. This composition reflects the influences of every epoch in piano literature – from Domenico Scarlatti to the present. I wanted to emphasise particularly the vitality, kinetic and virtuoso aspects – in short, the playful side – of the piano. The solo part shows no evidence of the Romantic tradition where the brilliant solo line is merely accompanied by the orchestra. Here every orchestral part has an important function.

The four movements each have a very distinctive character. A common feature, however, is that none has a predetermined structure. Each movement develops spontaneously from a common cell, where simple rules produce highly complex, unpredictable results.

First movement: a prelude to the work. At the beginning there are four motifs based on a triad, which – like a puzzle – are put together geometrically. These passages are interrupted by far-away sounds, which gradually increase in volume and importance. These varying layers of sound also have varying rhythmic patterns. At the end of the movement, a rhythmic motif previously introduced in the percussion section is taken over by the piano and transformed into a virtuoso display by the soloist, exploring all the sonorities of the instrument. The conclusion consists of a metamorphosis of the beginning of the movement.

The second movement is a tone painting with a virtuoso interlude, which divides the movement into two segments. In the first section numerous layers of sound are introduced, complementing and opposing one another. The interlude presents a marked contrast to the static sonorities at the opening and closing of the movement.

In the third movement, 30 markedly differing motifs are introduced in mosaic fashion and two constantly recurring tutti chords act as pillars, holding the entire movement together.

In the concluding fourth movement, an approximately two-minute-long sustained F provides the pedal point for a gradual build-up. The piano has passages that sound improvisatory, with accompanying ostinato. Gradually, a rhythmic pattern develops in the strings, eventually veering away from the central pitch of F and changing into short and interlocking motifs. The movement concludes with a quasi-improvised cadenza for piano, brass and percussion, followed by a typically classical coda.

# Unsuk Chin

## b 1961 (South Korea)

Composer profile by Jo Kirkbride

There are musical chameleons and then there is Unsuk Chin. ‘In every piece, I try to do something new,’ she says. ‘There’s always a higher, more difficult mountain to climb.’ Chin was born in South Korea but has lived in Germany since 1985, when she moved to Hamburg to study with György Ligeti. ‘He was the harshest critic you could ever imagine … he demanded complete originality.’ She remembers the ‘unconventionality’ of his classes, where they studied anything but the mainstream, taking in jazz, literature and even natural sciences along the way.

As a result, Chin’s music is extraordinarily wide-ranging. She has worked with Balinese gamelan, notably in Akrostichon–Wortspiel (1991–93) for solo soprano and ensemble, which marked her international breakthrough. And she is renowned for her work with electronics, including the awardwinning Xi (1999) for ensemble, and her concerto for violin and live electronics, Double Bind? (2007). There is a distinct playfulness, too, as exhibited in her first (and to date only) opera, Alice in Wonderland (2007), which was named ‘Premiere of the Year’ by the internationally renowned Opernwelt magazine.

In 2017, she added the Sibelius Prize to her increasingly long list of accolades, following in the footsteps of luminaries such as Igor Stravinsky, Benjamin Britten, Olivier Messiaen, Witold Lutoslawski, Paul Hindemith, and even her former mentor, Ligeti. ‘I couldn’t believe it,’ she says, ‘but I don’t judge the success of my career by prizes.’ She prefers instead to measure her success by the quality of each and every piece that she writes, while acknowledging that this is not without its struggles: ‘You can sit in front of the blank staff paper for weeks,’ she says, and at the moment when you have just about had enough, ‘the knot gets untied’.

# Welcome to Our New Member

## Chaemun Im, Double Bass

This month we welcome our newest Member, to the Orchestra, Chaemun Im, who joins the Double Bass section.

Chaemun Im was born in Ulsan, South Korea, where he started playing the double bass at the age of 15 under the guidance of Hyunmin Jang (Ulsan Philharmonic). He continued his studies with Changho Kim and Insun Shin before joining the Korea National University of Arts under Seungho Chang. Chaemun has played with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Hamburg Staatsoper and Deutsche Radio Philharmonie. and has won numerous prizes in competitions, including the Anton Rubinstein Competition and the Baden-Baden Philharmonie special award from the chief conductor.

**When did you start playing the Double Bass?**

Initially I wanted to play the clarinet in my school orchestra, but due to my height, I ended up playing the double bass. The turning point came when I met my first teacher, Hyunmin Jang, who truly changed my life.

**Do you have any Double Bass heroes?**

Philipp Stubenrauch, who is Principal at the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, has had the most significant impact on my musical and personal growth during my two years at the academy, and even now.

**What advice would you give your younger self as an aspiring musician?**

Love music more and more. Listen to my heart’s story and believe myself rather than others’ opinions.

**If you had to pick, what is your favourite piece of orchestral music?**

**‘**Nimrod’ from Edward Elgar’s Enigma Variations is my favourite. This beautiful melody always gives me warm courage, much like Elgar, who was tired, but trusted Nimrod.

**What piece of orchestral music would you recommend to someone who has never heard an orchestra before?**

The fourth movement from Mahler’s Symphony No 5. It encapsulates various emotions — sadness, joy, happiness, and pain — in a short time. Once you’ve heard this beautiful melody, it touches your heart and is reminiscent of both classical and cinematic experiences.

# Symphony No 8 in F major Op 93

## Ludwig van Beethoven

1. Allegro vivace e con brio
2. Allegretto scherzando
3. Tempo di menuetto
4. Allegro vivace

1812

26 minutes

Programme note by Lindsay Kemp

Beethoven himself called his Eighth Symphony ‘little’, a careless description which, over the years, has hindered its reputation compared to those of its undeniably grander companions. The fact that it also adopts a less overtly radical style than works such as the Third, Fifth and Ninth symphonies has likewise lessened its standing. How can it be a proper Beethoven symphony when it so easy on the ear, so jokey? The suggestion is that this is the composer ‘resting’ after the heroic physical efforts of the Seventh Symphony, ‘relaxing’ (perhaps even ‘lapsing’) into the playful, Haydn-esque musical world of the 18th century.

In truth, the first Viennese audience of Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony was not enormously impressed by it. One reviewer noted, after its premiere in the Grosser Redoutensaal in February 1814, that ‘it did not create a furore’, its effect weakened as a result of being heard straight after a performance of the more powerful Seventh Symphony. But he also declared that ‘if [the Eighth] Symphony should be performed alone hereafter, we have no doubt of its success’. Sure enough, once one remembers to listen to it for what it is, instead of what it is not, it does not take long to realise what a thoroughgoing and compact demonstration of Beethovenian brilliance it is. And a radical one too. The style of the music may be essentially conservative, but structurally the work is bursting with ideas, many of them entirely of a piece with the direction Beethoven’s music was taking at the time, if presented in a more congenial manner. As the 20th-century music writer Hans Keller once put it, ‘when a great composer is complex in one dimension, he tends to be proportionately simple in another, in order to facilitate comprehension. The humorous demeanour of the Eighth Symphony does not alter the fact that it is a highly original composition in which Beethoven tries out a number of the formal procedures and concerns that would surface in his later works.

He composed it in the space of a few months in 1812, immediately after completing the Seventh, and right from the start, it is clear that he is not in a mood to hang around. The first movement begins without preliminaries, launching in with the first theme and striking off confidently for the second. It takes only 30 seconds or so for the music to lose its way and grind to a standstill before the violins present the rising second theme in what, technically speaking, is the ‘wrong’ key, a faux pas which the woodwinds soon rectify. This may seem like a rather academic kind of joke, but its effect can be felt even if not understood, both here and in the numerous other places in this Symphony where comparable coups are made. The central development section is surprisingly stormy and leads to a noisy return of the main theme in which upper strings play tremolando while the theme itself is transferred to the lower instruments. However, it is the theme’s last appearance right at the end of the movement, which is the most delightful and witty.

There is no slow movement; instead, we have a scherzo-like Allegretto, whose monotonous repeated notes are said to have been inspired by the recent invention by one of Beethoven’s acquaintances of the metronome. The veracity of this story is questionable – though it is fun to see, in the brusquely scrubbed string interruptions, the impatient winding of the mechanism (Beethoven was reportedly not very skilled at operating the new machine); but perhaps Viennese music lovers in the composer’s day would have found a stronger reminiscence here of the slow movement of Joseph Haydn’s ‘Clock’ Symphony.

The ‘scherzo-in-place-of-theslow-movement’ is followed by a ‘minuet-instead-of-a-scherzo’, an elegantly flowing third movement enriched by touches of graceful counterpoint and, in the middle section, courtly writing for clarinet and horns. The Symphony ends with a scampering, pell-mell finale, groaning with jokes, from the startling ‘wrong note’ which interrupts the main theme to the very sudden, almost accidental, arrival at the serene second theme, to any number of stop-start, whathappens-next moments. Formally, this is the most adventurous movement in the Symphony, a sonata-rondo with two development sections, but it is also such a hoot that the listener can be forgiven for neither noticing nor caring.

# François-Xavier Roth

## Principal Guest Conductor



François-Xavier Roth is one of today’s most imaginative conductors and programmers. He is Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, General Music Director of the City of Cologne and founder of Les Siècles. A born communicator, he is a charismatic and persuasive advocate for classical music of every description.

In Cologne, where he has directed both the Gürzenich Orchestra and the Opera since 2015, his programming is notable for its breadth and depth, including new commissions alongside Baroque and Romantic music. For Cologne Opera he has led new productions of Berlioz’s Benvenuto Cellini and Béatrice et Bénédict, Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni, Wagner’s Tannhäuser, Tristan and Isolde and The Flying Dutchman and Strauss’ Salome.

His sense of musical exploration led him in 2003 to found Les Siècles, which performs contrasting programmes on modern and period instruments, often within the same concert. Together they have toured Europe, China and Japan, appearing at the Berlin Musikfest, BBC Proms, Edinburgh and Enescu festivals. Les Siècles are currently celebrating their 20th anniversary with a series of European tours.

Roth is a champion of new music and has premiered works by Georg Friedrich Haas and Hèctor Parra, and collaborated with composers such as Pierre Boulez, Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann, Helmut Lachenmann and Philippe Manoury. He has a leading role in the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme, mentoring emerging composers.

Engagement with new audiences is an essential part of Roth’s work, whether speaking from the podium or working with young people and amateurs. With the Festival Berlioz and Les Siècles, he founded the Jeune Orchestre Européen Hector Berlioz. In Cologne he has initiated a community orchestra, and his Ohrenauf! youth programme was recipient of a Junge Ohren Produktion Award. His television series Presto! attracted weekly audiences of over three million in France.

Roth’s prolific award-winning discography includes the complete tone poems of Richard Strauss, Stravinsky ballets, Ravel and Berlioz cycles, Bruckner, Mahler and Schumann symphonies, and albums commemorating Debussy’s centenary. He was awarded the German Record Critics’ Honorary Prize 2020, the youngest conductor ever to receive it. For his achievements as musician, conductor, music director and teacher, Roth was made a Chevalier of the Légion d’honneur. Roth was joint winner of the Donatella Flick LSO Conducting Competition in 2000, and has worked with the Orchestra every year since.

# Bertrand Chamayou

## Piano



Bertrand Chamayou performs regularly at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Lincoln Center, the Herkulessaal Munich and London’s Wigmore Hall. He has appeared at festivals including New York’s Mostly Mozart Festival, the Lucerne Festival, Salzburg Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival and Beethovenfest Bonn.

Engagements during 2024 include recitals both solo and with cellist Sol Gabetta, flautist Emmanuel Pahud and soprano Barbara Hannigan; Grieg’s Piano Concerto with the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine under Emmanuel Villaume; Ravel’s Piano Concerto for the Left Hand with the Filarmonica della Scala under Philippe Jordan; Ravel’s Piano Concerto in G with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Antonio Pappano; Dvořák’s Piano Concerto with the Czech Philharmonic under Semyon Bychkov; Michael Jarrell’s Piano Concerto with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and Scriabin’s Piano Concerto with the Sinfonieorchester Köln under Andris Poga in Cologne.

Chamayou has worked with orchestras including the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Danish National Symphony Orchestra. He has recently made acclaimed debuts with the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Bamberger Symphoniker and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Chamayou has collaborated with conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Leonard Slatkin, Stéphane Denève and Andris Nelsons.

As a chamber musician, he has recently worked with Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Quatuor Ébène, Antoine Tamestit and Sol Gabetta, and appeared in Lincoln Center’s Great Performers Series and at Salzburg Easter Festival, Schleswig Holstein Musik Festival, the Berlin Philharmonie and the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

Chamayou’s many successful recordings include a disc of music by César Franck (Naïve), which was awarded several accolades. For his recording of Camille Saint-Saëns’ Piano Concertos Nos 2 and 5, he was awarded the Gramophone Recording of the Year Award 2019. The only artist to win France’s prestigious Victoires de la Musique on five occasions, he has an exclusive recording contract with Warner/Erato and was awarded the 2016 ECHO Klassik for his recording of Ravel’s complete works for solo piano.

Chamayou was born in Toulouse and studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Jean-François Heisser. He completed his training with Maria Curcio in London.

# London Symphony Orchestra

## On Stage

**Leader**Benjamin Gilmore

**First Violins**Clare Duckworth

Ginette Decuyper

William Melvin

Laura Dixon

Elizabeth Pigram

Laurent Quénelle

Harriet Rayfield

Sylvain Vasseur

Victoria Lewis

Dániel Mészöly

Tanya Sweiry

Second Violins

Phoebe Gardner

Thomas Norris

Sarah Quinn

Matthew Gardner

Alix Lagasse

Belinda McFarlane

Iwona Muszynska

Csilla Pogány

Andrew Pollock

Paul Robson

Olwen Miles

Violas

Joost Keizer

Malcolm Johnston

Anna Bastow

Thomas Beer

Steve Doman

Julia O’Riordan

Robert Turner

Mizuho Ueyama

Hattie Quick

Cellos

Rebecca Gilliver

Laure Le Dantec

Alastair Blayden

Ève-Marie Caravassilis

Daniel Gardner

Amanda Truelove

Double Basses

Rodrigo Moro Martín

Patrick Laurence

Thomas Goodman

Joe Melvin

Chaemun Im

Will Duerden

Flutes

Gareth Davies

Sarah Bennett

Piccolo

Sharon Williams

Oboes

Juliana Koch

Rosie Jenkins

Cor Anglais

Thomas Davey

Clarinets

Chris Richards

Andrew Harper

Bassoons

Daniel Jemison

Martin Field

Horns

Diego Incertis Sánchez

Angela Barnes

Benjamin Jacks

Flora Bain

Trumpets

James Fountain

Adam Wright

Trombone

Jonathan Hollick

Bass Trombone

Paul Milner

Tuba

Stephen Calow

Timpani

Nigel Thomas

Percussion

Neil Percy

David Jackson

Sam Walton

Patrick King

Harp

Bryn Lewis

Celeste

Siwan Rhys

Mandoline

Nigel Woodhouse