

TONIGHT'S CONCERT

Schumann and Mahler 7

Sunday 2 February 2025
Barbican

7pm

Robert Schumann
Piano Concerto

Interval

Gustav Mahler
Symphony No 7

Daniel Harding conductor
Daniil Trifonov piano
London Symphony Orchestra

Concert finishes at approximately 9.40pm

Welcome



Tonight's LSO concert is conducted by Daniel Harding, who was LSO Principal Guest Conductor from 2007 to 2017, and with whom we have had the pleasure of working regularly since, including most recently in March of last year.

We are delighted to welcome Daniil Trifonov, the US-based Russian concert pianist, with whom we have enjoyed many rewarding collaborations in recent years. Tonight he performs Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto. After the interval, we hear Gustav Mahler's Symphony No 7, a work which Daniel Harding has wanted to conduct with the LSO for some time.

I hope you enjoy this concert and that you will be able to join us again soon. This week, Chief Conductor Sir Antonio Pappano returns to the Barbican for a series of concerts, continuing his cycle of Vaughan Williams' symphonies with *A Sea Symphony*, alongside William Walton's First Symphony and Cello Concerto, featuring LSO Principal Cello, Rebecca Gilliver. Looking ahead to March, we welcome back singer and conductor Barbara Hannigan, LSO Associate Artist, for a series of concerts showcasing music from Joseph Haydn to Claude Vivier. We look forward to seeing you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn McDowell". The signature is written in a fluid, cursive style.

Dame Kathryn McDowell DBE DL
Managing Director

Coming Up

Thursday 6 February
Barbican

7pm

Walker, Bernstein and Walton 1

Sir Antonio Pappano conducts Walton's turbulent First Symphony, and a pair of passionate statements of love and outrage from two American greats: George Walker and Leonard Bernstein.

Sunday 9 February
Barbican

7pm

Maconchy, Walton and Vaughan Williams 1

Evocative portraits of night and the sea in an all-British programme: enigmatic Maconchy, meditative Walton, and awe-inspiring Vaughan Williams.

Welcome to tonight's group bookers

Ms Adele Friedland & Friends
Chris O'Reilly

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**Please switch off all phones.
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is not permitted during the performance.**

Details correct at time of going to print.

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Visit iso.co.uk/survey or scan the QR code to complete a short survey about tonight's concert.



Piano Concerto in A minor Op 54

Robert Schumann

Daniil Trifonov

piano

- 1 Allegro
affettuoso**
- 2 Intermezzo:
Andantino
grazioso**
- 3 Allegro vivace**



1841–45



31 minutes

Programme note by

Stephen Johnson

One of the most impressive features of Robert Schumann's only Piano Concerto is its remarkable organic unity. So many ideas in this richly imaginative work stem in one way or another from the lovely first-movement melody (wind, then solo piano) that follows the Concerto's arresting opening. So it comes as quite a surprise to discover that the Concerto was actually written in two separate instalments, and at two very different times in Schumann's life. The first movement was originally written as a self-sufficient *Fantasie for Piano and Orchestra* in 1841 – the year that also saw the composition of the *First Symphony*, the original version of the *Fourth*, and the orchestral *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*. Schumann's long-thwarted marriage to the brilliant concert pianist Clara Wieck the previous year had released a torrent of creativity: the first years of their life together saw the production of some of his finest pieces, often composed at breathtaking speed.

Then, in 1844, after Robert and Clara had returned from a concert tour of Russia, Schumann experienced a crippling mental breakdown, followed by a terrible plunge into depression. At the end of the year, he and Clara moved to Dresden with their two children, where gradually Schumann's spirits began to recover. For a long time, he was unable to compose, but by the end of 1845, he completed his *Second Symphony*, a work which bears powerful witness to his struggles to regain health and stability. And before he started it, Schumann added two more movements to the *Fantasie*, thus creating his *Piano Concerto*.

How long the ideas for these two movements had been incubating in his mind is impossible to say, but it is certain that the act of putting them to paper was a major step forward on his road to psychological recovery. The result was one of Schumann's most daring and romantically delightful works. It is easy to single out innovative elements: the piano's striking, downward-plunging opening gesture – after a single incisive chord from the full orchestra – is unlike the beginning of any concerto before. It clearly left a strong impression on the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, who began his famous *Piano Concerto* (also in A minor) with a strikingly similar gesture. And although Schumann's first movement appears to be full of melodic ideas, most of these derive directly from the original wind-piano tune – so much so that the movement has been described as 'monothematic', also very unusual for an early 19th-century concerto.

But it is the dreamlike quality Schumann brings to this kind of intricate thematic development that is most original. The piano writing may be challenging, but the real challenge is to the player's poetic imagination rather than to their virtuosity. Even the first movement's solo cadenza is more like a meditation than a bravura display. In general, the relationship between the piano and the orchestra is neither as one-sided nor as competitive as in most Romantic concertos. Tender intimacy is much more typical. A couple of years before he began the first movement, Schumann had written of his hope that a

Robert Schumann

1810 to 1856 (Germany)

new kind of 'genius' might soon emerge: one 'who will show us in a newer and more brilliant way how orchestra and piano may be combined, how the soloist, dominant at the keyboard, may unfold the wealth of his instrument and his art, while the orchestra, no longer a mere spectator, may interweave its manifold facets into the scene'. In the Piano Concerto, he fulfilled his own prophecy.

The chamber music-like intimacy continues through the gentle Intermezzo Schumann placed as the Concerto's second movement, and again the way in which one motif seems to unfold from another is achieved with great subtlety and ingenuity. Just before the end of the movement comes a wonderful inspiration. Clarinets and bassoons recall the seminal first phrase of the first movement's original melody – first in the major key, then in the minor – while the piano adds magical liquid figurations (as though dreamily recalling the Concerto's arresting opening). Then the finale launches suddenly into an exhilarating, seemingly unstoppable waltz momentum. It is hard to believe that the man who wrote this gloriously alive dance music was at the time emerging from chronic depression. The ending in particular sounds like an outpouring of the purest joy.



Interval – 20 minutes

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Robert Schumann was born in Zwickau, Germany, into a literary family. In 1829, he travelled to Leipzig to study law, but quickly took instead to piano studies with Friedrich Wieck – whose daughter Clara soon became famous as a virtuoso prodigy throughout Europe.

By the time Clara was 16, she and Schumann were deeply in love and wished to become engaged. Such was Wieck's virulent opposition that after four hopeless years the young couple sued him for the right to marry – and won. During this turbulent time, Schumann wrote Clara a flood of piano music, often filled with musical messages. Their eventual marriage inspired his famous 1840 'Year of Song', when he wrote many of his greatest Lieder. The couple had seven surviving children. Clara, a celebrated pianist, remained the family's chief breadwinner.

Schumann approached composition with obsessive energy. However, when depressed, he found it impossible to write at all. Starting out as an original, radical figure, he leaned towards experimental forms and groundbreaking expressive devices. He worked extremely fast, often devoting himself to creating works in one medium for a year or more. His output includes symphonies, chamber music, choral works, an opera and many piano pieces and songs.

In 1854, Schumann's mental health declined. Thereafter, he entered a mental hospital at Endenich, where he died in July 1856, aged 46.



Contemporaries

Felix Mendelssohn,
Heinrich Heine

Key events

1840: 'Year of Song', during which he writes more than 100 Lieder and marries Clara Wieck

1842: 'Year of Chamber Music', during which he writes most of his greatest chamber works

1845: Completes his Second Symphony and Piano Concerto

1850: Completes his Third Symphony. Premiere of his only opera, *Genoveva*

Listen to

Symphonies Nos 2 and 4 on LSO Live
[Isolive.co.uk](#)

Composer profile by
Jessica Duchon

Symphony No 7

Gustav Mahler

- 1 **Langsam – Allegro risoluto, ma non troppo**
- 2 **Nachtmusik I: Allegro moderato**
- 3 **Scherzo: Schattenhaft** (shadowy)
- 4 **Nachtmusik II: Andante amoroso**
- 5 **Rondo-Finale**



1904–05,
rev 1905–08



80 minutes

Programme note
by **Michael White**

Leonard Bernstein called it ‘rhetoric, camp and shadows’ – which may not be the most scholarly description of Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No 7, but is a useful starting point. For many, this is Mahler’s ‘problem’ symphony: too randomly constructed, with five movements that don’t gel, and a finale of excessive, maybe unconvincing bombast. But another view is that it ranks among his most ingeniously forward-looking and magical. And although perhaps the least often performed, it brought him to the attention of a whole generation of listeners – thanks to a famous 1980s TV commercial that used the echoing horn calls of the second movement to sell Castrol Oil.

Mahler certainly found it a problem to compose. He started work in 1904, completing the draft score in 1905. However, the first performance didn’t take place until 1908, delayed partly by a complicated life that, in the intervening years, saw him leave his conducting post in Vienna and relocate to New York, and it was equally delayed by three years of meticulous revisions.

He knew the Seventh Symphony would puzzle people, and it did. But if there’s a unifying theme to all that Mahler crammed into this 80-minute-long work, it’s the idea of walking through a dark night

into morning. Early 20th-century promoters tried to pin a name to the piece and came up with *Song of the Night* – which didn’t stick, but was appropriate for a score that describes a sequence of nocturnal experiences: some romantic, some portentous, some disturbing. The second and fourth movements both bear the title ‘Nachtmusik’ or ‘Night Music’. And as they were the first to be written, the Symphony was effectively composed from the inside outwards – building into a symmetrical, arch-like structure with two big movements (two and four) bookending three smaller ones, and the whole thing turning around a central Scherzo, whose sense of the fantastical and grotesque stands in every way at the music’s heart.

The first movement sets the scene, suggesting what Mahler called a ‘tragic night, without stars’. Settling into the Symphony’s titular key of E-minor, it begins with a B-minor introduction whose uneven rhythms supposedly reflect those of an oarsman rowing Mahler across Lake Wörthersee in Austria, where the composer had his summer home. The mood is anxious, restless, passing through a mosaic of ideas that define Mahler’s compositional style – relying more on contrast than coherence, clarity than blend, and using a large orchestra in a soloistic way that focuses

on specific instruments rather than uses the whole ensemble together. Distant trumpet fanfares are answered by hushed string chords. And then, in a truly magical gesture, harp glissandi herald an ecstatic, visionary climax in which (it seems) the stars eventually come out – though only for a moment, because darkness soon returns before the resolution of an epic coda ending to the movement.

The second movement is the first of the specifically designated 'Nachtmusik' sections – closer to a nightmare than sweet dreams, though possessed of poise and elegance. Echoing horn calls summon up a fairy woodland (and for children of the 1980s, the slow drip of Castrol Oil) before a trudging march sets off as though on patrol, with instrumental effects like brushstrokes on drums and the sharp slap of bows on strings to suggest the sound of crunching undergrowth.

With the third movement, we reach the heart of the piece: a D-minor scherzo that doesn't deliver the joke the word scherzo implies, but instead takes you deep into the world of German Romanticism. Mahler marks it 'Schattenhaft' (shadowy), and what you hear is unequivocally eerie, brushing against cobwebs – although tempered by an element of entertainment, its potential

softened by lullaby riffs and the ghost of a Viennese waltz before a concluding *Danse macabre*.

The fourth movement brings the second designated 'Nachtmusik', this time in the more romantic guise of a serenade with solo writing for mandolin and guitar. The night has evidently turned into a night of love – which Mahler marks 'Andante amoroso'.

But more drastic transformation comes in the final movement when, with a sense of shock, we seem to have emerged from night into a dazzling, sunlit morning. Presented as a rondo-finale that alternates repeated material with variations, in a blazing C major, the bravado of this movement with its rapid turnover of rustic dances, fanfares, pageantry and parody (including quotes from unlikely bedfellows: Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow*) attracts different readings. For some listeners, its jubilation is jarring and vacuous. For others, it can only work as irony. But with an open mind, it's surely possible to take this music at face value: as a radiantly sunny destination reached after that long haul through the night. If nothing else, the clattering cowbells thrown into the texture raise a smile. Pure, childlike innocence, and utterly Mahlerian.

Gustav Mahler

1860 (Bohemia) to 1911 (Austria)



Contemporaries

Richard Strauss,
Gustav Klimt

Key events

1895: Premiere of Symphony No 2, Mahler's first major success

1897: Becomes director of the Vienna Court (now State) Opera

Listen to

Symphony No 3
[isolive.co.uk](https://www.isolive.co.uk)

With the LSO

First London performance of the cantata *Das klagende Lied*, conducted by Walter Goehr

Composer profile by
Stephen Johnson

Gustav Mahler's sense of being an outsider, coupled with a penetrating, restless intelligence, made him an acutely self-conscious searcher after truth. For Mahler, the purpose of art was, in Shakespeare's famous phrase, to 'hold the mirror up to nature' in all its bewildering richness. The symphony, he told Jean Sibelius, 'must be like the world. It must embrace everything'. Mahler's symphonies can seem almost over-full of intense emotions and ideas: love and hate, joy in life and terror of death, the beauty of nature, innocence and bitter experience. Similar themes can also be found in his marvellous songs and song cycles, though there the intensity is, if anything, still more sharply focused.

Gustav Mahler was born the second of 14 children. His parents were apparently ill-matched (Mahler remembered violent scenes), and young Gustav grew dreamy and introspective, seeking comfort in nature rather than human company. Death was a presence from early on: six of Mahler's siblings died in infancy. This no doubt partly explains the obsession with mortality in Mahler's music. Few of his major works do not feature a funeral march: in fact, his first composition (at age ten) was a Funeral March with Polka – exactly the kind of extreme juxtaposition one finds in his mature works.

For most of his life, Mahler supported himself by conducting, but this was no mere means to an end. Indeed, his evident talent and energetic, disciplined commitment led to successive appointments in Prague, Leipzig, Budapest, Hamburg and, climactically, in 1897, at the Vienna Court Opera. In the midst of this hugely demanding schedule, Mahler composed whenever he could, usually during his summer holidays. The rate at which he composed during these brief periods is astonishing. The workload in no way decreased after his marriage to the charismatic and highly intelligent Alma Schindler in 1902.

Nevertheless, many today have good cause to be grateful to Mahler for his single-minded devotion to his art. T S Eliot – another artist caught between the search for faith and the horror of meaninglessness – wrote that 'humankind cannot bear very much reality'. But Mahler's music suggests another possibility. He can take us to the edge of the abyss, then sing us the sweetest songs of consolation. If we allow ourselves to make this journey with him, we may find that we, too, are the better for it.

COMING UP IN 2025

Season Highlights

Sunday 9 February 2025 7pm

Walton Cello Concerto

Maconchy and Vaughan Williams

Sir Antonio Pappano and Rebecca Gilliver

Thursday 20 March 2025 7pm

Haydn Symphony No 39

Debussy, Sibelius and Bartók

Barbara Hannigan

Thursday 10 April 2025 7pm

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 1

Schubert and Prokofiev

Gianandrea Noseda and Alice Sara Ott

Sunday 25 May 2025 7pm

Mozart Violin Concerto No 5

Strauss Ein Heldenleben

Sir Antonio Pappano and Lisa Batiashvili

Daniel Harding

conductor



Daniel Harding is the Music and Artistic Director of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra (until the end of the 2024/25 season). He was Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris from 2016–19 and Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra 2007–17. He is honoured with the lifetime title of Conductor Laureate of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, with whom he has worked for over 20 years. In 2024, he took up the position of Music Director of the Youth Music Culture, The Greater Bay Area (YMCG) for five years, and also took up the position of Music Director of the Orchestra and Chorus of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

He is a regular visitor to the world's foremost orchestras, including the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, London Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala. In the US, he has appeared with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony. He has performed at opera houses including La Scala, Milan; the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; the Bavarian State Opera; the Vienna State Opera and the Berlin State Opera, and conducted operas for the Salzburg Festival and the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.

His recordings of Mahler's Tenth Symphony with the Vienna Philharmonic and Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra for Deutsche Grammophon received widespread critical acclaim. For Virgin/EMI, he has recorded Brahms' Symphonies Nos 3 and 4 with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, *Billy Budd* with the London Symphony Orchestra (winner of a Grammy Award), Mahler's Symphony No 4, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (awarded the Choc de l'Année 2002, the Grand Prix de l'Académie Charles Cros and a Gramophone award) with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra; works by Lutosławski with Solveig Kringelborn and the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra; and works by Britten with Ian Bostridge and the Britten Sinfonia (awarded the Choc de l'Année 1998). A regular collaborator with Harmonia Mundi, his latest recordings with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra include *The Wagner Project* with Matthias Goerne; Mahler's Symphonies Nos 5 and 9, Brahms' *A German Requiem* and a Britten disc. He has also recorded for BR Klassik and the Berliner Philharmoniker label, including works by Mahler, Schumann and Holst.

Engagements in the 2024/25 season include concerts with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, a European tour with the Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and a tour of Spain with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. He will also conduct a concert performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Stockholm.

In 2002, Harding was awarded the title Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government and in 2017, he was nominated to the position Officier des Arts et des Lettres. In 2012, he was elected a member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Music. In 2021, he was awarded a CBE in the New Year Honours. He is a qualified airline pilot.

Daniil Trifonov

piano



Grammy Award-winning pianist Daniil Trifonov is a solo artist, champion of the concerto repertoire, chamber and vocal collaborator and composer. Combining consummate technique with rare sensitivity and depth, his performances are a perpetual source of wonder to audiences and critics alike. He won the Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Solo Album of 2018 with *Transcendental*, the Liszt collection that marked his third title as an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist.

In 2024/25, Trifonov undertakes season-long artistic residencies with both the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Czech Philharmonic. A highlight of his Chicago residency is Brahms' Second Piano Concerto with incoming music director Klaus Mäkelä, and his Czech tenure featured Dvořák's Piano Concerto with Semyon Bychkov at season opening concerts in Prague, Toronto, and at New York's Carnegie Hall. Trifonov also opens the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra's season with Mozart's Piano Concerto No 25 under Andris Nelsons; performs Prokofiev's Symphony No 2 with the San Francisco Symphony and Esa-Pekka Salonen; reprises Dvořák's Piano Concerto for a European tour with Jakub Hrůša and the Bamberg Symphony; plays Ravel's G-major Concerto with Hamburg's NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra and Alan Gilbert; and joins Rafael Payare and the Montreal Symphony for concertos by Schumann and Beethoven on a major eight-city European tour.

In recital, Trifonov appears twice more at Carnegie Hall as part of two US tours, with a solo programme and with violinist Leonidas Kavakos. Released in autumn 2024, *My American Story*, the pianist's new Deutsche Grammophon double album, pairs solo pieces with concertos by Gershwin and Mason Bates.

Trifonov's existing Deutsche Grammophon discography includes the Grammy-nominated live recording of his Carnegie recital debut; *Chopin Evocations*; *Silver Age*, for which he received Opus Klassik's Instrumentalist of the Year/Piano award; the best-selling, Grammy-nominated double album *Bach: The Art of Life*; and three volumes of Rachmaninoff works with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, of which two received Grammy nominations and the third won BBC Music's 2019 Concerto Recording of the Year. Named *Gramophone's* 2016 Artist of the Year and *Musical America's* 2019 Artist of the Year, Trifonov was made a 'Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres' by the French government in 2021.

During the 2010/11 season, Trifonov won medals at three of the music world's most prestigious competitions: Third Prize in Warsaw's Chopin Competition, First Prize in Tel Aviv's Rubinstein Competition, and both First Prize and Grand Prix in Moscow's Tchaikovsky Competition. He studied with Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

London Symphony Orchestra

On Stage

Leader

Roman Simovic

First Violins

Benjamin Gilmore

Stefano Mengoli

Laura Dixon

Maxine Kwok

William Melvin

Claire Parfitt

Laurent Quénelle

Harriet Rayfield

Sylvain Vasseur

Julian Azkoul

Morane Cohen-

Lamberger

Caroline Frenkel

Aaron You-Xin Li

Dániel Mészöly

Djumash Poulsen

Julia Rumley

Kynan Walker*

Second Violins

Julián Gil Rodríguez

Sarah Quinn

Miya Väisänen

David Ballesteros

Matthew Gardner

Naoko Keatley

Belinda McFarlane

Iwona Muszynska

Csilla Pogány

Andrew Pollock

Paul Robson

Helena Buckie

Eleanor Fagg

Shoshanah Sievers

Violas

Eivind Ringstad

Gillianne Hadow

Malcolm Johnston

Anna Bastow

Thomas Beer

Robert Turner

Mizuho Ueyama

Michelle Bruil

Fiona Dalglish

Nancy Johnson

Annie-May Page

Alistair Scahill

Cellos

David Cohen

Laure Le Dantec

Alastair Blayden

Ève-Marie Caravassilis

Danushka Edirisinghe

Henry Hargreaves

Miwa Rosso

Daniel Schultz*

Victoria Simonsen

Peteris Sokolovskis

Joanna Twaddle

Double Basses

Rodrigo Moro Martín

Patrick Laurence

Chaemun Im

Joe Melvin

Toby Hughes

Yuhan Ma*

Mark O'Leary

Hugh Sparrow

Evangeline Tang

Flutes

Gareth Davies

Imogen Royce

Jack Welch

Piccolo

Patricia Moynihan

Rebecca Larsen

Oboes

Fergus McCready

Rosie Jenkins

Lauren Weavers

Cor Anglais

Maxwell Spiers

Clarinets

Chris Richards

Chi-Yu Mo

James Gilbert

Sarah Thurlow

Bass Clarinet

Ferran Garcerà Perelló

E-flat Clarinet

Chi-Yu Mo

Bassoons

Rachel Gough

Joost Bosdijk

Emma Harding

Contra Bassoon

Martin Field

Horns

Diego Incertis

Sánchez

Angela Barnes

Sarah Pennington

Jonathan Maloney

Duncan Fuller

Trumpets

James Fountain

Gareth Small

Adam Wright

Toby Street

Trombones

Simon Johnson

Jonathan Hollick

Bass Trombone

Paul Milner

Tuba

Ben Thomson

Timpani

Patrick King

Percussion

Neil Percy

David Jackson

Helen Edordu

Tom Edwards

Jeremy Cornes

Owen Gunnell

Jacob Brown

Harps

Bryn Lewis

Lucy Wakeford

Guitar

Huw Davies

Mandolin

Tom Ellis

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Established in 1992, the Scheme enables young string players at the start of their professional careers to gain work experience by playing in rehearsals and concerts with the LSO. The musicians are treated as professional 'extras', and receive fees in line with LSO section players. Kindly supported by the Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust, the Idlewild Trust and The Thriplow Charitable Trust.