

## Welcome to the 2023 BBC Proms



A very warm welcome to the 2023 BBC Proms. It's thrilling to be sharing in an experience in which tradition and innovation sit side by side, and I hope these concerts continue to delight you with familiar favourites and entice you to discover new composers and artists.

Our composer celebrations reflect both sides of that coin, from the works of Sergey Rachmaninov (born 150 years ago) – whose music has featured regularly at the Proms since 1900 – to the less familiar worlds of Dora Pejačević and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. This summer's extensive opera and choral programme brings you landmark operas by Berlioz and Poulenc alongside the UK premiere of György Kurtág's Beckett-inspired *Endgame* and the first complete performance at the Proms of Schumann's ravishing *Das Paradies und die Peri*. Opera also forms part of our family offering this year, with the *Horrible Histories* team taking an irreverent look at the art form, while a bank holiday concert delves into fantasy, myths and legends from TV, film and video games. And, following our series last year of 'Proms at' chamber music Proms around the UK, this year there are performances by leading soloists, ensembles and chamber choirs in Aberystwyth, Dewsbury, Gateshead, Perth and Truro.

The Proms celebrates genres and artists from around the world. This year we bring Portuguese fado and Northern Soul to the Proms for the first time, as well as a tribute to Bollywood playback singer Lata Mangeshkar. We also welcome four very individual artists in special orchestral collaborations – Rufus Wainwright with the BBC Concert Orchestra, Cory Henry with the Jules Buckley Orchestra, Jon Hopkins with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and – as part of our weekend at Sage Gateshead – Self Esteem with the Royal Northern Sinfonia. Visitors from further afield include orchestras from Berlin, Budapest and Boston. The Proms continues to redefine the boundaries of a classical music festival but one thing remains constant – we seek out and showcase the very best.

Every Prom here at the Royal Albert Hall and in our 'Proms at' series is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, where the station's expert engineers and presenters bring you the live experience wherever you are – and you can listen again on BBC Sounds. You can also enjoy 24 Proms on BBC TV, all available for 12 months on BBC iPlayer.

**David Pickard**  
Director, BBC Proms

## Tonight *at the* Proms

Moscow-born Vladimir Jurowski is familiar to Proms audiences from his performances here while at the helm of Glyndebourne and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Tonight he conducts the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra), of which he became Artistic Director in 2017) in its Proms debut, bringing a programme that reflects both his native Russia and his new musical home city.

Rachmaninov's Third concludes our Proms cycle of the Russian composer's symphonies in the 150th-anniversary year of his birth. Written at his Swiss villa over 30 years after his Second Symphony, it is leaner than its predecessor, yet distinctly Russian in flavour.

Weill's *Little Threepenny Music* takes us to the Berlin cabaret clubs of the 1920s and 1930s, drawing on jazz and dance-music styles, and featuring the famous tune later to be better known as 'Mack the Knife'.

Thomas Adès in a sense follows the line of virtuoso composer-pianists continued by Rachmaninov but in his colourful Piano Concerto, written specially for tonight's soloist Kirill Gerstein, he also shares Weill's fondness for dry wit and clever subversion.



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### Royal Albert Hall

If you leave the auditorium during the performance, you will only be readmitted when there is a suitable break in the music.



Please do not take photos, or record any audio or video during the performance

# Prom 60

THURSDAY 31 AUGUST • 7.30pm–c9.45pm



**Kurt Weill** Little Threepenny Music 20'

**Thomas Adès** Piano Concerto 22'

*first performance at the Proms*

INTERVAL: 20 minutes

**Sergey Rachmaninov** Symphony No. 3 in A minor 39'

**Kirill Gerstein** *piano*

**Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin** Erez Ofer *leader*

**Vladimir Jurowski** *conductor*

**RADIO 3 SOUNDS**

This concert is broadcast live by BBC Radio 3 and available on BBC Sounds.

**KURT WEILL** (1900–50)

## Little Threepenny Music (1928, arr. 1929)

- 1 Overture (Maestoso)
- 2 The Ballad of Mack the Knife (Moderato assai)
- 3 'Instead of That' Song (Moderato)
- 4 The Ballad of the Pleasant Life (Foxtrot)
- 5 Polly's Song (Andante con moto)
- 6 Tango Ballad
- 7 Cannon Song (Charleston tempo)
- 8 Threepenny Finale

On 31 August 1928 the audience at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, Berlin, witnessed history in the making. *Die Dreigroschenoper* ('The Threepenny Opera') by the composer Kurt Weill and playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) propelled this pair of angry young men to stardom, capturing the mood of the Weimar Republic with all its cynicism and corruption.

Weill and Brecht had first collaborated the year before on the *Mahagonny-Songspiel*. That work made a powerful impression on the impresario Ernst Aufricht, who then commissioned them to adapt *The Beggar's Opera*, a 1728 'ballad-opera' by John Gay, set in the London underworld.



German Expressionism meets Weimar-era cabaret in Robert Wilson's 2007 Berlin production of *Der Dreigroschenoper* ('The Threepenny Opera'); Weill drew on numbers from the opera to create the *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* ('Little Threepenny Music')

The pair promptly requisitioned the story and concept, then stuffed it with their new equivalents of its ballads: café songs, American dance-band music and more rubbed shoulders with send-ups of Lutheran chorale settings and a *concerto grosso*, mingled with furious social and political satire. The result was so successful that, after five years, it had been performed more than 10,000 times in 18 languages. Several months after the premiere, Weill turned eight extracts into an instrumental work, titled *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* ('Little Threepenny Music'), for the same forces as its original pit band.

On 5 February 1929 Weill wrote to Universal Edition: 'I heard the *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (I deliberately avoided using the word "suite") yesterday at rehearsal; I am very content with it ... I believe the piece can be played an awful lot, since it is precisely what every conductor wants: a snappy piece to end with.'

This 'not-a-suite' was first performed at the Berlin Opera Ball on 7 February 1929. The adaptation itself is virtually a satire on an 18th-century tradition: woodwind serenades based on successful operas were popular in Mozart's day. Unfortunately for Weill, however, concert life in the late 1920s failed to embrace a format originally designed – ironically enough – aristocratic entertainment.

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The overture is a mock 18th-century *concerto grosso*, setting groups of solo instruments between larger *tuttis*. 'Die Moritat von Mackie Messer' (The Ballad of Mack the Knife), perhaps Weill's best-known song, tells the story of a murder; next comes 'Anstatt-dass Song' ('Instead of That' Song), a terse, cynical bargaining duet. 'Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben' (The Ballad of the Pleasant Life) is a catchy foxtrot and 'Pollys Lied' (Polly's Song) a rare moment of tenderness before the 'Tango Ballad' again

exemplifies Weill's melodic flair, irresistible rhythm and twists of the harmonic dagger. After the acerbic 'Kanonen-Song' (Cannon Song), the 'Threepenny Finale' closes the selection with a grand spoof chorale.

*Programme note* © Jessica Duchen

Jessica Duchen is a music critic, author and librettist. Her output includes seven novels, three plays, biographies of Fauré and Korngold and the librettos for Roxanna Panufnik's operas *Silver Birch* and *Dalia* (commissioned by Garsington). Her journalism appears in *The Sunday Times*, the *i* and *BBC Music Magazine*.

## PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

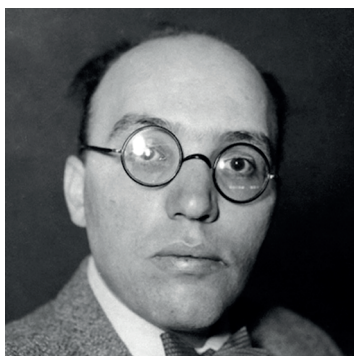
Vocal highlights from *Die Dreigroschenoper* surfaced here just before Weill's wind-based suite was programmed for the first time at the Proms. Ahead by a nose was Roswitha Trexler, the (East) German soprano, whose selection, part of a jazz-tinged 1975 Nash Ensemble Prom, unsurprisingly included 'The Ballad of Mack the Knife': that ubiquitous number has since been sung in Xhosa by Cape Town-born Pauline Malefane (2006). *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* itself was introduced by the London Sinfonietta, responsible for performances under Lothar Zagrosek in 1983, David Atherton in 1985 and Diego Masson in 2005. On the third occasion it was rather overshadowed by Berio's large-scale vocal and instrumental composition *Coro*. Since then we have only had an arrangement of Weill's arrangement by Jarle Storlækken. Norwegian trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth's all-female brass ensemble, tenThing, included this transcription of *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* in a Proms Chamber Music matinee at Cadogan Hall in 2013.

© David Gutman

David Gutman is a writer and critic who since 1996 has contributed extensively to the BBC Proms programmes. His books cover subjects as wide-ranging as Prokofiev and David Bowie, and he reviews for *Gramophone* and *Classical Source*.

Delve into Proms history for yourself by searching the online database of all Proms performances at [bbc.co.uk/proms/archive](http://bbc.co.uk/proms/archive).

## KURT WEILL



Kurt Weill first rose to prominence as a powerful voice among the German avant-garde of the 1920s. Born on 2 March 1900, the son of a synagogue cantor in Dessau, he had composition lessons in his teens with Albert Bing before joining the Berlin Hochschule für Musik,

where his teachers included Engelbert Humperdinck, composer of *Hansel and Gretel*. Later he studied with Ferruccio Busoni. Modernist, Romantic, free-thinking, jazz and cabaret strands in due course all fed into his unique musical language.

After the First World War, Weill earned a living as a jobbing musician, playing the piano in a Leipzig bierkeller and later teaching music theory (his students included Claudio Arrau, Maurice Abravanel and Nikos Skalkottas). Through his association with the leftist Novembergruppe artists he met the singer Lotte Lenya, whom he married in 1926, divorced in 1933, then remarried four years later.

Aged 27, Weill began to work with the dramatist Bertolt Brecht, collaborating on *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), *Happy End* (1927–9) and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (1930), among other creations. The partnership powered both figures to new heights of achievement and fame, although Brecht's trenchant political stance and acerbic character led to recurrent fallouts.

After Hitler came to power in January 1933, and the subsequent arson attack on the Reichstag, Weill, who

was Jewish, and Brecht, a Marxist, read the runes. Within a few weeks, Weill, with Lenya, fled Germany, going first to Paris – soon summoning Brecht to join him there to work on *The Seven Deadly Sins* – then in 1935 to New York, having been invited to the city to help produce the premiere of his dramatic oratorio *The Eternal Road*.

Weill and Lenya did not return to Europe. Instead, they embraced their new environment wholeheartedly. Weill involved himself in political action in favour of the USA joining the Second World War and embarked upon studies of American stage musicals and popular songs. In a 1943 radio interview, he declared that he had 'never felt as much at home in my native land as I have from the first moment in the United States'.

Weill duly reinvented himself as a composer of Broadway musicals, including *Lady in the Dark* (1940) and *One Touch of Venus* (1943), as well as a superb hybrid of opera and musical, *Street Scene* (1946), with playwright Elmer Rice and poet Langston Hughes. Weill died in New York of a heart attack shortly after his 50th birthday.

*Profile* © Jessica Duchon

**THOMAS ADÈS** (born 1971)

## Piano Concerto (2018)

*first performance at the Proms*

- 1 **Allegramente**
- 2 **Andante gravemente**
- 3 **Allegro giojoso**

**Kirill Gerstein** *piano*

The title of Thomas Adès's Piano Concerto (given on the score as 'Concerto for Piano and Orchestra') is unusual, given his usually sparing use of generic designations such as 'symphony' and 'concerto'. Adès was approached in 2012 by the pianist Kirill Gerstein for a new work. Rather than compose a solo piece, the idea of 'a proper piano concerto' took hold. It was subsequently commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Gerstein gave the premiere of the work with the orchestra in 2019, conducted by Adès.

“The concerto opens with a rhythmically supple idea that evokes both Gershwin and Ligeti while remaining quintessentially Adèsian.”

Adès's earlier works in the concerto genre – the *Concerto conciso* (1997), the Violin Concerto 'Concentric Paths' (2005) and *In Seven Days* for piano and orchestra (2008) – are characterised by intricate interactions between

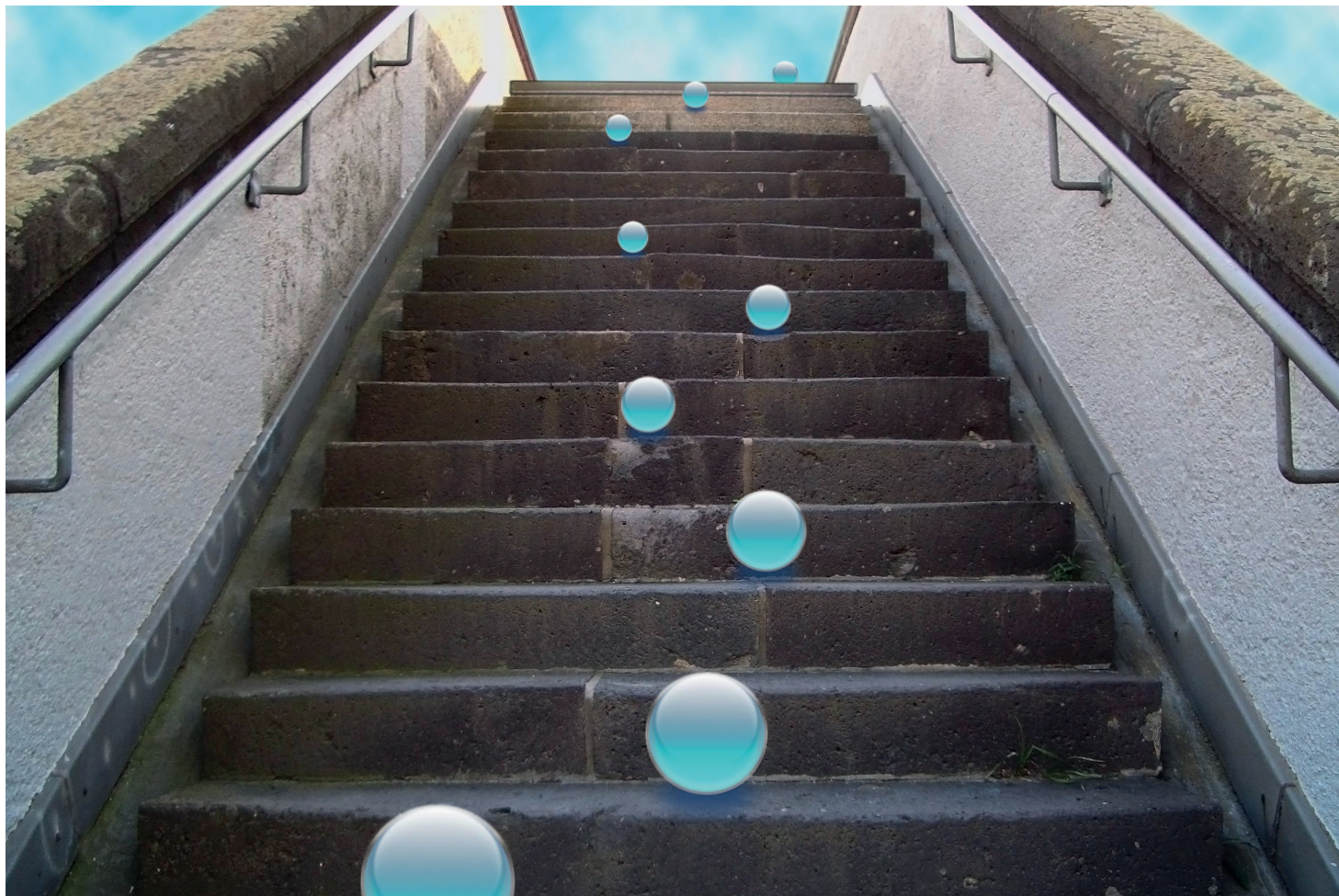
soloist and ensemble and a rigorous ('symphonic') approach to developing musical material. Such properties are amplified in the Piano Concerto. In addition, the associations of its title combine with a riotous invocation of pianistic gestures drawn from across the history of the genre to position the concerto within the tradition of the grand virtuosic showpiece. As is typical of Adès's music, this tradition is treated as a convivial travelling companion rather than a weighty burden.

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The concerto opens with a rhythmically supple idea that evokes both Gershwin and Ligeti while remaining quintessentially Adèsian. The idea returns on three further occasions to initiate large-scale sections; these recall the spirit, though not necessarily the letter, of the first-movement sonata form of the Romantic concerto. Along the way, soloist and orchestra move from increasing extremes of metrical and textural complexity to passages of limpid clarity and lyricism. Lisztian bravura is never far from the surface, most knowingly in a flourish for double octaves that ushers in the third reprise of the opening tune.

Such exuberance is dispelled at the start of the second movement by a sombre cortège for wind and brass. The ritual atmosphere continues with a stately melody for the soloist, coloured by gongs. Filigree embellishments add expressive grace, but the melancholy intensifies as the piano descends to its lowest notes. The stately melody returns, the soloist clinging obsessively to a three-note figure to bring the music to a climax. A reprise of the remaining ideas of the movement fails to alleviate the mood.

The madcap opening of the third movement presents a kaleidoscopic succession of ideas that continuously trip over each other. Restoration of order is attempted with



Orbs in freefall: as part of its irregular tumbling movement, the finale of Thomas Adès's Piano Concerto features a theme that the composer has described as 'in the style of a ball bouncing down stairs'



what sounds like scales practice for the pianist, but ‘in the style of a ball bouncing down stairs’. Simultaneously, the orchestra embarks on an increasingly high-pitched chorale as if parodying the austerity of the slow movement. The music collapses in on itself and a new, slow theme, more directly recalling the darkness of the previous movement, threatens to prevail. A return of the opening material provides the necessary revival. As the work hurtles towards its close, the practice scales return, transformed into heroically thunderous double octaves and accompanied by a version of the chorale for the entire orchestra – a suitably proper ending for ‘a proper piano concerto’, delivered with panache and wit.

*Programme note © Edward Venn*

Edward Venn is Professor of Music at the University of Leeds. He is the author of a monograph on Thomas Adès's *Asyla* (Taylor & Francis, 2017) and co-edited *Thomas Adès Studies* (CUP, 2022) with Philip Stoecker. In addition to his work on Adès, he has written widely on 20th-century and contemporary British music.

## PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Thomas Adès made his first Proms debut as composer, his second as executant and his third as conductor. It was in 1995 that Kent Nagano and the Hallé gave the London premiere of ... *but all shall be well*. In 1997 Adès the pianist played alongside Rolf Hind and the Orchestra of St John's, Smith Square, in John Lubbock's Late Night Prom performance of Colin McPhee's *Tabuh-tabuhan* (for two pianos and orchestra). Having directed his own *Concerto conciso* from the keyboard at a late-nighter with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group in 1998, Adès made his podium debut proper in 1999, steering the BCMG through music by Ives and Nancarrow; Sir Simon Rattle took over after the interval for Leonard Bernstein's Broadway musical *Wonderful Town*. The 2021 season saw the first London performance of *The Exterminating Angel Symphony* courtesy of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, 2022 the UK premiere of *Märchentänze* as recast for violin and orchestra. Pekka Kuusisto was the soloist, joining Nicholas Collon's Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

© David Gutman

“As Kirill Gerstein and the London Philharmonic sprinted to the end of the zany cartoonish finale, I heard amazed gasps and even a shout of ‘Wow!’ The last time I witnessed that sort of instantaneous rave response to piano music in the Festival Hall was when Vladimir Horowitz played Chopin ... I think it's more a statement of enormous confidence in the ability of 21st-century music to inhabit the same contours as the great concertos of the past, yet still draw us into fresh and surprising vistas.”

Richard Morrison in *The Times* on the UK premiere of Thomas Adès's Piano Concerto

## THOMAS ADÈS



Following study at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and King's College, Cambridge, Thomas Adès first came to national attention as a pianist and composer in his 1993 Park Lane Group Recital at the Purcell Room. By the decade's end his music

had been featured in international festivals, his first overseas commission, *America: A Prophecy* (1999), had been premiered by the New York Philharmonic and he had received the 2000 Grawemeyer Award for his 1997 orchestral work *Asyla*. Notable recent honours include the Léonie Sonning Music Prize (2015), the Leoš Janáček Award and a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours (both 2018). As Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival (1999–2008) and Artistic Partner with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (2016–21), Adès cemented his reputation as a distinguished champion (as pianist and conductor) of a wide range of music.

For all its acclaim, Adès's music stubbornly eludes definition. His desire, with reference to Wallace Stevens, to create a 'sceptical music' – one that embraces the contradictions and tensions of a culture while resisting ideological orthodoxies and commitments – is perhaps as close a description of his art as we might get.

This sensibility informs his *Five Eliot Landscapes*, Op. 1 (1990) for soprano and piano, a work that demonstrates a keen ear for arresting sonority and an imaginative rethinking of traditional musical formulas and generic

expectations. These qualities, married to an increasingly sophisticated compositional technique, sensitivity to dramatic context and playful use of quotation, characterise his opera *Powder Her Face* (1995), based on the life of Margaret, Duchess of Argyll.

Adès's second opera, *The Tempest* (2004), to a libretto by Meredith Oakes, was a beguiling reworking of Shakespeare's play. While no less complex than his earlier works, the opera had a newfound emotional directness – as too did the orchestral *Tevot* (2007) and *In Seven Days* (2008), a piano concerto 'with moving image' (optional video accompaniment).

Adès's recent music refracts and intensifies his multifaceted compositional concerns. Works such as *Dawn* (premiered at the 2020 Proms) and his music for the film *Colette* (2018) offer refined, deceptive simplicity. Magical transformations of music from the past (the clarinet quintet *Alchymia*, 2021) sit alongside playful dialogues with tradition (Piano Concerto, 2018). The expressive urgency and telling dramatic impact of Adès's third opera, *The Exterminating Angel* (2016), and *Dante*, his three-part ballet for orchestra, pre-recorded voices and female choir (2019–20), reveal his mastery on the grandest scale.

Profile © Edward Venn

## INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

Now playing on BBC Radio 3...

Tonight's pianist Kirill Gerstein joins Radio 3's Martin Handley to discuss the life and music of Sergey Rachmaninov.

Available on BBC Sounds



**SERGEY RACHMANINOV** (1873–1943)

## Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44 (1935–6, rev. 1938)

- 1 **Lento – Allegro moderato**
- 2 **Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro vivace – Tempo come prima**
- 3 **Allegro**

Rachmaninov composed his Third Symphony during two summers on his Swiss estate, where he had tried to recreate the stable and peaceful surroundings of his pre-Revolutionary life in Russia but with modern comforts. At first glance, the symphony is a nostalgic piece brimming with echoes of Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Rachmaninov's own younger self – a 'truly Russian' symphony. Yet this familiar idiom has been subtly modernised: there are ruptured textures and surprising turns, and deceptive paths that seem to lead nowhere. Rachmaninov's writing for the orchestra, taking a cue from Richard Strauss, becomes highly individualised, and its lushness often takes on a hard edge.

The very first notes make us scour the orchestra for their source: what is making this beautiful sound? Perhaps a saxophone? In fact it is a unique mix of clarinet, muted horn and muted cello – a voice of divine beauty. The melody sounds as if it might be a Russian Orthodox chant but, if it is, the source has yet to be found. This 'chant' will become a motto, appearing at crucial junctures and also insinuating itself into seemingly unrelated themes. Then we hear more of the trademark Rachmaninov: huge curtain-raising chords and a resolute



Colourised photo of Rachmaninov in the grounds of his Swiss villa Senar, by Lake Lucerne, to which he retreated in the summers of 1935 and 1936 to compose his Third Symphony

march-like theme. It is as if the composer were gathering together his most recognisable traits, but only in order to redirect them towards new goals.

Rachmaninov said that he had always had a programme in mind, a story or at least an image behind the music, but he rarely made these public. It is, admittedly, not easy to 'read' the Third Symphony, to find the key to its narrative. Many years earlier, Rachmaninov had concealed a Faustian design in his Piano Sonata No. 1 (1907–8): the movements represented, in turn, Faust, Gretchen and Mephistopheles. We might sense that something similar underpins the Third Symphony, but transplanted into Russian soil.

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The first movement flows from Rachmaninov's lyricism: a gloomy and nostalgic stream initiated by the clarinets, then a warm and hopeful stream in the cellos. There is an ecstatic and heroic climax before the themes are developed with longing, anxiety and high drama, which is reined in by the return of the motto.

Next comes an Adagio-cum-Scherzo. The motto is now an epic song, and the achingly beautiful solo violin evokes Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* – or perhaps Gretchen? Out of the orchestral whirlwind emerges an odd triple-time 'march', a sinister portent.

The jolly Russian dance at the beginning of the finale promises an easy ride but it is deceptive. A tone of subtle mockery undermines it and there are questions and hesitations, as if asking 'What's next?' There is a fugue, then a passage full of oriental languor, but these are red herrings. What was hidden then reveals itself as the *Dies irae* ('Day of Wrath') motif, the chant from the Requiem Mass that became a Romantic symbol of death, now

swept up into a *danse macabre*. But the Russian motto is given a competing dance of its own. Which will have the last word?

*Programme note* © Marina Frolova Walker

Marina Frolova-Walker is Professor of Music History at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. She is the author of *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* and *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics*.

## PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Rachmaninov himself never appeared at the Proms, although he did play his own Second Piano Concerto at Proms founder-conductor Henry Wood's Jubilee concert in the Royal Albert Hall, just days after the end of the 1938 season, during which the conductor had introduced the Third Symphony to Proms audiences. (The Queen's Hall in Langham Place was the festival's regular venue until the building's destruction during a bombing raid at the height of the Blitz.) Wood had already directed several performances of the score, prompting the composer to note that only three people really liked it: Wood, the violinist Adolf Busch and Rachmaninov himself. In the post-war period the Symphony has accumulated a respectable tally of 10 further Proms outings without being scheduled at all between 1955 and 1985 or 1999 and 2016, the year of its most recent airing by Vasily Petrenko's Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. While remaining less ubiquitous than the Second Symphony and *Symphonic Dances*, it too would seem to have emerged from the critical disfavour that once sidelined Rachmaninov's purely orchestral output.

© David Gutman

## SERGEY RACHMANINOV



Born in the environs of Novgorod on 1 April 1873, Rachmaninov had piano lessons locally before entering the St Petersburg Conservatory. In 1885 he came under the wing of the celebrated teacher Nikolay Zverev in Moscow, while also studying counterpoint

with Taneyev and harmony with Arensky. He graduated in piano from the Moscow Conservatory with highest honours in 1891, and in the following year excelled in his composition finals with his one-act opera *Aleko*, given its premiere at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1893 – an occasion on which Tchaikovsky, the most potent influence on Rachmaninov's early music, applauded heartily.

The disastrous 1897 premiere of the First Symphony, however, severely undermined his confidence. With composition at a low ebb, Rachmaninov consulted Dr Nikolay Dahl, who had been experimenting with forms of hypnosis. This has led to wildly exotic speculation as to what his treatment involved, but it seems likely that Dahl, as a cultured man and skilled musician, simply had a series of morale-boosting conversations with the composer, the outcome being that ideas formed for Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto, the work that fully released his personal creative voice. The next two decades saw a steady stream of major scores, including the piano Preludes and *Études-tableaux*, the mature songs, the Second Symphony (1906–7) and Third Piano Concerto (1909), together with two more operas, *Francesca da Rimini* (1900, 1904–5)

and *The Miserly Knight* (1903–5), and key choral works including the Edgar Allan Poe-inspired *The Bells* (1912–13) and the Russian Orthodox *All-Night Vigil* (1915).

Following the 1917 October Revolution, Rachmaninov and his family emigrated from Russia, settling at different times in the USA and Switzerland, where he concentrated more on his concert career than on composition. For the next 25 years he was lionised as one of the finest pianists the world has ever known. If later works such as the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (1934), the Third Symphony (1935–6, rev. 1938) and the *Symphonic Dances* (1940) have more recourse to incisive rhythms, clarity of texture and piquancy of orchestration than earlier ones, his entire *oeuvre* mines deep seams of the Russian character, shot through as it is with a sense of fatalism and with a richness of language that can encompass intense brooding, vigorous energy and passionate sincerity of soul. Rachmaninov died at his home in Beverly Hills on 28 March 1943, shortly before his 70th birthday.

*Profile* © Geoffrey Norris

Geoffrey Norris's study of Rachmaninov (OUP) was last reprinted in 2001. He is on the editorial board of the new Collected Edition of Rachmaninov's works being prepared by Russian Music Publishing/Bärenreiter. From 2011 to 2022 he lectured at the Gnesin Music Academy in Moscow.

### MORE RACHMANINOV AT THE PROMS

FRIDAY 8 SEPTEMBER, 7.30pm • PROM 70  
Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor

For full Proms listings, and to book tickets, visit [bbc.co.uk/proms](http://bbc.co.uk/proms).



# The Proms Listening Service

As Radio 3's *The Listening Service* revisits earlier episodes reflecting some of this summer's Proms programming, presenter **Tom Service** takes a wide-angle view of the common themes in this weekly feature

## Week 7 Playing at Sight and from Memory

I blame Franz Liszt: he performed jaw-dropping piano recitals without a scrap of sheet music in front of him. Everything he performed – not only his own wildly imaginative fantasias on operatic hits of the day, but music by composers from Chopin to Beethoven – seemed to be conjured in a moment of inspiration. Liszt's magical musical memory turned his concerts into seances where his listeners were joined by the spirits of the musical past who were transmitted through him.

But Liszt's breathtaking innovation has become a learning-by-rote expectation for all of us in the audience, so that the magic trick of concerto soloists in telepathic communion with composers is now something we take for granted, at the Proms and elsewhere. In fact, it's more noteworthy when a soloist has the music in front of them rather than when they don't. The cliché is that, unless the musician has learnt their concertos off by heart – like Augustin Hadelich with Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto and Aaron Azunda Akugbo with Haydn's Trumpet Concerto this week – they can't completely identify with the composer or the piece, and we're being short-changed in the audience. After all, if an actor were suddenly to produce the script of *Hamlet* during 'To be or not to be', we'd imagine they'd had a performance-ending memory lapse, or just hadn't learnt their lines.

Yet there's a weird double standard in concert life, when you compare it to the theatre. Orchestral players routinely use sheet music, reading the notes without having to memorise

the whole of Mahler's Ninth Symphony or Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 3 (both also this week). And it's not that these musicians don't know the pieces, it's just that we don't mind that they haven't committed the whole thing to memory.

Unless we're talking about the Aurora Orchestra, that is, whose memorised projects at the Proms – with the whole ensemble playing without sheet music – have taken their musicians and audiences inside the fabric of repertoire from Beethoven to Shostakovich in new ways. This year, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is a definitive challenge for their memorising collective. I can't wait to see their performances, because the freedom of playing from memory – but freighted with the frisson of needing to get every semiquaver in the right place – points to performances that have a special intensity.

Yet that's also possible in performances in which everyone is reading notes in front of them. At so many first performances in the 18th and 19th centuries, the music had only just been written down. It was so new that it couldn't have been memorised beforehand. That's a vitalising energy that musical culture loses at its peril. If everything had to be memorised, music might only keep repeating itself. Like all the best magic, Liszt's innovation is a richly Faustian musical trick, releasing and constraining at the same time.

*The Aurora Orchestra performs Stravinsky's 'The Rite of Spring' from memory (preceded by a musical-dramatic introduction) this week on Saturday 2 September.*

→ Next week: **Mozart's Requiem**

Join Tom Service on his Proms-themed musical odysseys in *The Listening Service* on BBC Radio 3 during the season (Sundays at 5.00pm, repeated Fridays at 4.30pm). You can hear all 220-plus editions of the series on BBC Sounds. Tom's book based on the series was published last year (Faber).



## Vladimir Jurowski *conductor*

Vladimir Jurowski was born in Moscow in 1972 and studied at the Moscow Conservatory. In 1990 he relocated with his family to Germany, continuing his studies in Dresden and Berlin. In 1995 he made his international debut at

the Wexford Festival with Rimsky-Korsakov's *May Night*; that year also saw his debut with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, conducting *Nabucco*.

He became Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra) in 2017 and General Music Director of the Bavarian State Opera, Munich, in 2021, stepping down from his 15-year tenure as Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra to become Conductor Emeritus. He was also a Principal Artist of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (2008–20) and Music Director of Glyndebourne Festival Opera (2001–13).

Engagements this season include his return to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, new productions of *Così fan tutte* and Prokofiev's *War and Peace* and a revival of Brett Dean's *Hamlet* for the Bavarian State Opera, and repertoire with the Berlin RSO and Bavarian State Orchestra ranging from Bach (Mass in B minor), Schubert and Bruckner to Weill, Xenakis, Ustvolskaya and Elena Firsova.

Vladimir Jurowski's recordings include Beethoven's Symphony No. 2, Brett Dean's *Testament*, Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony* and *Also sprach Zarathustra* with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, and Tchaikovsky's ballets and an ongoing series of Prokofiev symphonies with the State Academic Symphony of Russia.



## Kirill Gerstein *piano*

Kirill Gerstein was born in 1979 in Voronezh, the former Soviet Union. Following a chance encounter with jazz musician Gary Burton when he was 14, he became the youngest student to attend the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he studied jazz and classical piano.

He later studied with Solomon Mikowsky at the Manhattan School of Music, Dmitri Bashkirov in Madrid and Ferenc Rados in Budapest. He is now an American citizen based in Berlin and teaches at the Kronberg Academy and the Hanns Eisler Hochschule, Berlin. He is the sixth recipient of the Gilmore Artist Award and winner of the 10th Arthur Rubinstein Competition.

He performs with the major orchestras of Europe and the USA and regularly gives recitals in London, Berlin, Vienna, Paris and New York. Highlights of this season include being Artist-in-Residence with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and a three-part concert series entitled 'Busoni and His World' at London's Wigmore Hall.

Kirill Gerstein's latest recording is of Mozart piano duet sonatas with Ferenc Rados and follows discs including Strauss's *Enoch Arden*, Busoni's Piano Concerto with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo, *The Gershwin Moment* with the St Louis Symphony under David Robertson and guests Gary Burton and Storm Large, and concertos by Scriabin and Tchaikovsky. His live recording of Thomas Adès's Piano Concerto at the concerto's world premiere with the Boston Symphony Orchestra won a 2020 *Gramophone* Award and was nominated for three Grammy Awards.

## Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin

### PROMS DEBUT ENSEMBLE

The history of the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra) goes back to the first musical hour of German radio in October 1923. Principal Conductors and musicians including Otto Urack, Bruno Seidler-Winkler, Eugen Jochum, Sergiu Celibidache, Hermann Abendroth, Rolf Kleinert, Heinz Rögner and Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos in turn shaped an ensemble that endured the vicissitudes of German history in the 20th century.

Marek Janowski (2001–16) was succeeded in 2017 by Vladimir Jurowski, who as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director is guiding the orchestra into its second century by extending his contract until 2027. Karina Canellakis has been Principal Guest Conductor since 2019.

Over the past 100 years, major composers have conducted the orchestra or performed their music as soloists: Berthold Goldschmidt, Paul Hindemith, Heinz Holliger, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Krzysztof Penderecki, Sergey Prokofiev, Arnold Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, Kurt Weill, Alexander Zemlinsky and, more recently, Thomas Adès, Brett Dean and Matthias Pintscher. Last season Elena Firsova was Composer in-Residence.

All concerts given by the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin are broadcast thanks to its close ties to the radio stations Deutschlandfunk and Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg. Four recordings under Vladimir Jurowski since 2015 have opened a new chapter in the orchestra's discography. For over 50 years the orchestra has given regular performances in Japan and South Korea, as well as at German and European festivals and in musical centres worldwide.

#### Chief Conductor

Vladimir Jurowski

#### First Violins

Erez Ofer  
*concertmaster*  
 David Nebel  
 Susanne Herzog  
 Kosuke Yoshikawa  
 Andreas Neufeld  
 Philipp Beckert  
 Franziska Drechsel  
 Karin Kynast  
 Steffen Tast  
 Maria Pflüger  
 Anne Feltz  
 Richard Polle  
 Susanne Behrens  
 Giulia Scilla  
 Cathy Heidt  
 Seika Koike

#### Second Violins

Oleh Kurochkin  
 Maximilian Simon  
 David Drop  
 Sylvia Petzold  
 Anne-Kathrin Seidel  
 Brigitte Draganov  
 Martin Eßmann  
 Maciej Buczkowski  
 Juliane Manyak  
 Neela Hetzel de Fonseca  
 Rodrigo Bauza  
 Juliane Färber-Rambo  
 Anna Bara  
 Enrico Palascino

#### Violas

Alejandro Regueira-Caumel  
 Gernot Adrion  
 Christiane Silber  
 Elizaveta Zolotova  
 Jana Drop  
 Alexey Doubovikov  
 Carolina Montes  
 Lucia Nell  
 Yugo Inoue  
 Hyelim Yoo  
 Isabel Kreuzpointner  
 Daniel Burmeister

#### Cellos

Hans-Jakob Eschenburg  
 Ringela Riemke  
 Jörg Breuning  
 Volkmar Weiche  
 Peter Albrecht  
 Georg Boge  
 Andreas Weigle  
 Christian Bard  
 Andreas Kipp  
 Anna Kalvelage

#### Double Basses

Marvin Wagner  
 Pedro Figueiredo  
 Stefanie Rau  
 Georg Schwärsky  
 Axel Buschmann  
 Iris Ahrens  
 Nhassim Gazale  
 Kaspar Loyal



**Flutes**

Silke Uhlig,  
Rudolf Döbler  
Markus Schreiter

**Oboes**

Mariano Esteban  
Barco  
Florian Grube  
Thomas Herzog

**Clarinets**

Michael Kern  
Ann-Kathrin  
Zacharias  
Christoph Korn

**Saxophones**

Karola Elßner  
Christoph Enzel

**Bassoons**

Sung Kwon You  
Alexander Voigt  
Clemens  
Königstedt

**Horns**

Martin Kühner  
Uwe Holjewilken  
Anne Mentzen

**Trumpets**

Florian Dörpholz  
Simone Gruppe  
Patrik Hofer

**Trombones**

Edgar Manyak  
József Vörös  
Dominik Hauer

**Tuba**

Fabian  
Neckermann

**Timpani**

Arndt Wahlich

**Percussion**

Frank Tackmann  
Konstantin  
Thiersch  
Wolfgang  
Morbitzer  
Hanno Vehling  
Christoph Lindner

**Harps**

Maud Edenwald  
Rosa Diaz Cotan

**Banjo**

Johannes  
Gehlmann

**Accordion**

Christine Paté

**Celesta/  
Keyboard**

Heike Gneiting

*The list of players  
was correct at  
the time of going  
to press*

**General Manager**

Clara Marrero

**Orchestra  
Contractor**

Dorothea Gross

**Artistic Planning**

Thomas Channell

**Head of  
Marketing and  
Communication**

Peter Meisel

**Orchestra  
Inspector**

Christian  
Schwärsky

**Orchestra  
Technicians**

Ulrich Körle  
Bruno Schmidt

# On Radio, TV and Online

## SOUNDS

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# Coming up at the Proms



Olivia Da Costa

AARON AZUNDA AKUGBO



Chris Christodoulou/BBC

NICHOLAS COLLON

## FRIDAY 1 SEPTEMBER

**PROM 61** VALERIE COLEMAN, COLERIDGE-TAYLOR, HAYDN, PERKINSON & BEETHOVEN

7.30pm–c9.45pm • Royal Albert Hall  
The Chineke! Orchestra returns to the Proms with Beethoven's Fourth Symphony and Haydn's Trumpet Concerto with soloist Aaron Azunda Akugbo. Also featured are works by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, his American namesake Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson and Valerie Coleman.

## SATURDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

**PROMS 62 & 63** THE RITE BY HEART  
3.00pm–c4.45pm & 7.30pm–c9.15pm  
Royal Albert Hall

Nicholas Collon and the pioneering Aurora Orchestra dramatise the origins of Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*, reliving the scene of its notorious concert premiere and finally performing the whole thing from memory.



Marco Borrelli

MICHAEL SPYRES



Umberto Nicoletti

SEMYON BYCHKOV

## SATURDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

**PROM 64** BERLIOZ'S THE TROJANS  
4.00pm–c9.25pm • Royal Albert Hall

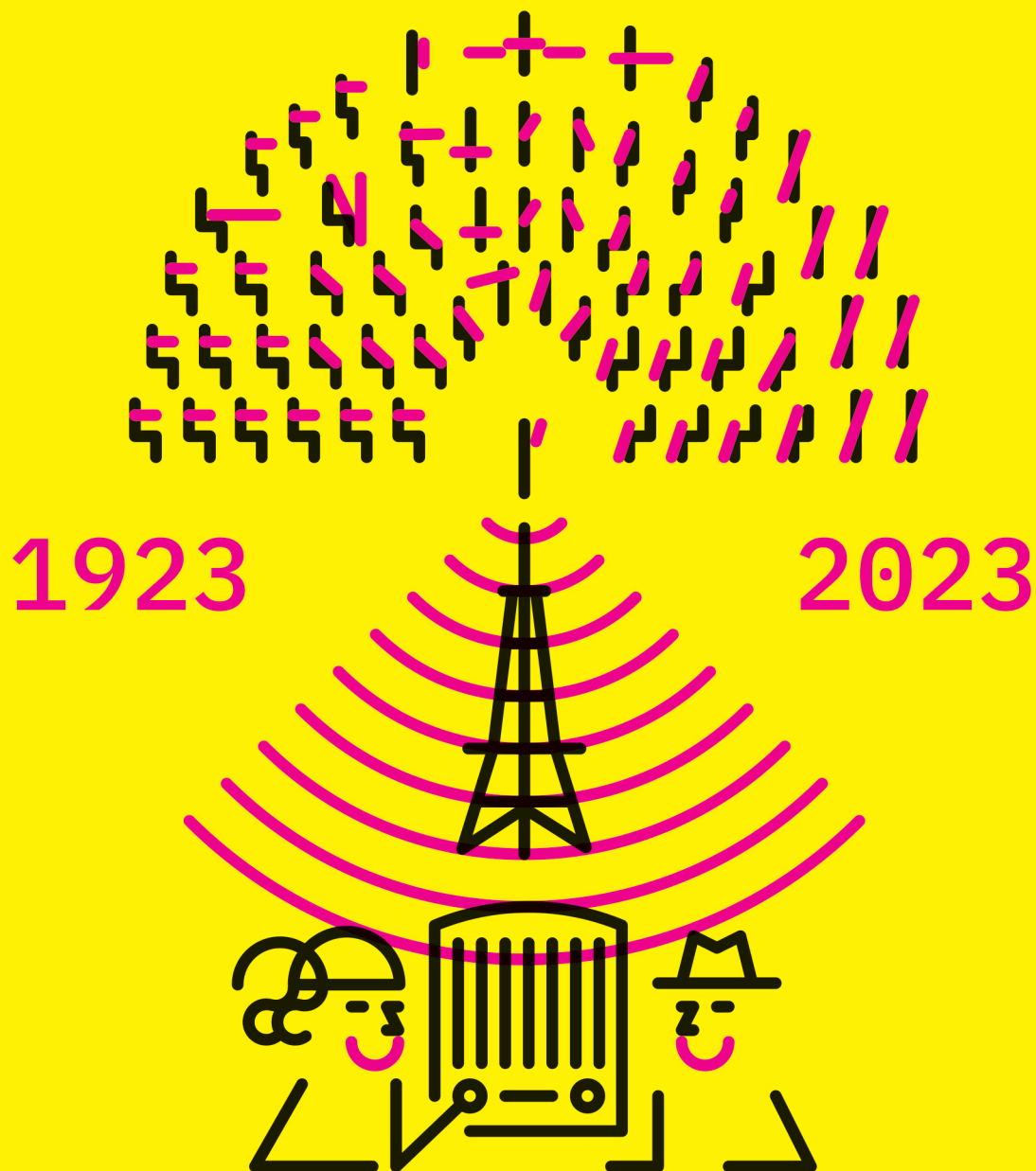
Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique bring Berlioz's five-act grand opera *The Trojans* to life in this concert staging. Joining him onstage is an outstanding cast that includes British mezzo Alice Coote and American tenor Michael Spyres.

## MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER

**PROM 65** BRUCKNER'S EIGHTH SYMPHONY

7.30pm–c9.05pm • Royal Albert Hall  
Russian-born conductor Semyon Bychkov leads the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Bruckner's mighty Eighth Symphony, the last the composer would ever complete.

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