





#### 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.

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**David Pickard**Director, BBC Proms





#### B B C Proms

THE BBC PRESENTS THE 129TH SEASON OF HENRY WOOD PROMENADE CONCERTS

# Tonight at the Proms

Tonight the BBC Symphony Orchestra and its Günter Wand Conducting Chair Semyon Bychkov present Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, a monumental orchestral statement whose mighty finale the composer considered 'the most significant movement of my life'.

Heard tonight in its revised version, which is significantly darker than the original, the symphony wasn't performed until 1892, eight years after Bruckner first began sketching his ideas.

This is music of 'blazing calm' and impossible grandeur, in which the shattering terror of the opening finds not just resolution but transcendence in the ecstatic final bars.



Because every Prom is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 ... Please silence your mobile phones, watch alarms and other electronic devices.

Please be considerate to the performers and other audience members, while also recognising that listeners may show a variety of responses to the music.



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 65

MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER • 7.30pm-c9.05pm

Anton Bruckner Symphony No. 8 in C minor (1890 version, ed. Nowak) 84'

BBC Symphony Orchestra Igor Yuzefovich *leader* Semyon Bychkov *conductor* 

There will be no interval



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

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#### **ANTON BRUCKNER** (1824-96)

# Symphony No. 8 in C minor (1884–7, rev. 1889–90, ed. Nowak)

- 1 Allegro moderato
- 2 Scherzo: Allegro moderato Trio: Langsam [Slow]
- 3 Adagio: Feierlich langsam; doch nicht schleppend [Slow and solemn; but not dragging]
- 4 Finale: Feierlich, nicht schnell [Solemn, not fast]

Bruckner's symphonies have been called 'cathedrals in sound'. If so, the Eighth is the grandest of them all. But while there are moments of luminous splendour – not least the ending – they tend to stand out amid darkness, mystery and grim reminders of mortality.

Like many great cathedrals, the Eighth Symphony took some time to reach the form in which we know it today. Bruckner began sketching it out in 1884, the year of the triumphant premiere of Symphony No. 7 in Leipzig. The first version was finished three years later. On the final page, next to the completion date, Bruckner added one significant word – 'Halleluja!' He then sent the score to the conductor Hermann Levi, whom he nicknamed 'My artistic father' (even though Levi was 15 years younger than Bruckner!). 'I simply cannot describe my elation at the thought of its being performed under your masterly direction,' he wrote.

But, however enthusiastic Levi may have been about the Seventh Symphony, the new work baffled, even disturbed him. Anxious, Levi turned to one of Bruckner's pupils, Josef Schalk: 'I am at my wits' end and I must appeal to you for advice and help. To put it bluntly, I am absolutely at sea in Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, and I haven't the courage to put it on ... What can I do? It makes me shudder to think of the effect of such news on our friend!' Bruckner was crushed by Levi's rejection. But then he began to look at the Eighth again. His next letter to Levi is an astonishing piece of self-flagellation: 'I really should be ashamed of myself ... What an idiot! It's already beginning to look quite different ...'

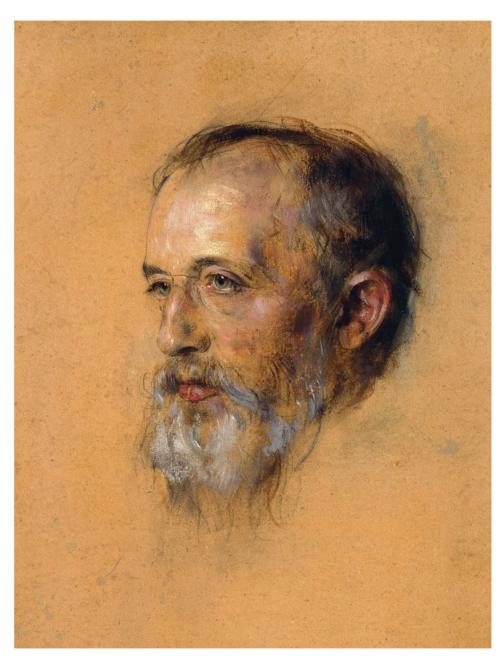
The revision of the Eighth Symphony – the version we hear tonight – was completed in 1890. Bruckner was right: it is 'quite different' from the original. For one thing it is shorter, proportions being adjusted with Bruckner's customary architectural precision. Orchestration and harmony are richer and more refined. But the most striking difference between the two versions is that the 1890 score is significantly darker than the original. The final climax of the first movement takes on a terrifying, black grandeur in the revision. And two important passages in C major – the climax of the Adagio and the fff coda of the first movement – are transposed or simply removed altogether. This means that in the revision there is much less music on the bright, major side of the home key: it's as though the cathedral architect had curtained or bricked up two great windows.

The effect of the cut at the end of the first movement is remarkable. Where the original version ended in loud affirmation, the revision ebbs bleakly away into silence. In place of Death and Transfiguration, we now have only Death. Another of Bruckner's pupils, Friedrich Eckstein, described hearing Bruckner play this ending on the piano: 'As he played, he bent towards me and said, almost inaudibly: "This is Death's Clock, that ticks for everyone, and never stops ticking till all is past!"

As so often, Bruckner casts his first movement in an expanded version of Classical sonata form, with three leading themes: the first (cellos and basses) darkly probing; the second (full strings, with the characteristic 'Bruckner rhythm', one-two, onetwo-three) more consoling; the third (horns and pizzicato strings) full of foreboding. Where many Bruckner first movements move at a leisurely pace, this Allegro moderato has an underlying urgency, even if the pulse is not really fast. It underlines the inevitability of the final vision: 'Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return.'

The second movement, the Scherzo, shares the key and the tempo marking of the first movement which only makes the contrast all the more striking. The music drives forwards like an elemental engine, building to two exhilarating climaxes with pounding timpani and chiming brass. At the centre of the movement is a gentler, more introspective Trio with hints of Schubert in its song-like main theme. Here too the harps appear for the first time - a wonderful touch of colour. Then the Scherzo is heard once again.

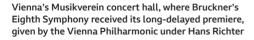
Eckstein told another interesting story about the use of the harps in the Adagio – unique in a Bruckner



Hermann Levi (1839–1900), the German conductor whom Bruckner hoped – in vain – would premiere his Eighth Symphony: portrait by Franz von Lenbach (1836–1904)









symphony. 'All the time that I had known him, I had heard him declare repeatedly that there was no place for the harp in a true symphony.' Visiting Bruckner while he was working on the Adagio, Eckstein became aware that the composer had reached an impasse. 'Then one day I arrived at my lesson to find the Master in unusually high spirits. I was scarcely in the hallway when he cried: "I've put harps in the Adagio! I just had to, there was no other way!"' Bruckner then played the Adagio to Eckstein. 'I listened, deeply moved, to the solemn entry of the harps and, as they spread their magical sounds over the stately chorus of string voices, they seemed to lift the movement above all earthly things.'

But the Adagio is not without suggestions of 'earthly things'. The opening theme (violins above pulsating strings) is full of painful longing. It resembles the famous melancholic motif from Schubert's song 'Der Wanderer' ('The Wanderer'), where the singer tells that 'the sun is cold to me ... I am a stranger everywhere'. Meanwhile the pulsating strings underneath strongly recall the accompaniment to the duet 'O sink hernieder, Nacht der Liebe' (Sink upon us, night of love) from Act 2 of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. Bruckner once claimed that this music came to him 'when I looked into a girl's eyes'. Loneliness and sexual unfulfilment were lifelong problems for Bruckner.

After this the Finale resembles a vast battleground, though, despite the thrilling call to action at the beginning, most of it unfolds very slowly. Some listeners find the pace frustrating; but patience is ultimately rewarded. As in the first movement, three distinct themes are presented. A spacious development follows, then comes a recapitulation and coda; but, as the movement progresses, the listener is more likely to be aware of a succession of massive upheavals, alternating with passages where the music pauses to reflect or draw

breath. Eventually, quiet drum taps introduce the coda: a slow, awe-inspiring crescendo, dark at first but emerging into blazing C major at its height. Finally, the themes of all four movements are fused in contrapuntal ecstasy. Transfiguration has been achieved at last.

#### Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Stephen Johnson is the author of books on Bruckner, Wagner, Mahler and Shostakovich, and a regular contributor to *BBC Music Magazine*. For 14 years he was a presenter of BBC Radio 3's *Discovering Music*. He now works both as a freelance writer and as a composer.

66 Do not lose heart, take up your work once more, confer with your friends, with Schalk; perhaps a lot can be achieved through revision ... Regard me as a fool, it does not matter to me; but don't think that my feelings towards you have changed or will ever change.

Conductor Hermann Levi in his rejection letter to Bruckner, after having studied the score for the Eighth Symphony

#### PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Bruckner's Eighth Symphony was introduced here by Rudolf Kempe and the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1965, contextualised at the very highest level with renditions of the Prelude to Act 1 of Wagner's Parsifal and the string orchestra version of Beethoven's Grosse Fuge. It must have been an intensely emotive occasion for admirers of a composer about to come into his own as a Proms fixture but conspicuous by his virtual absence until the 1960s. Henry Wood, the first and for many years essentially the only conductor of these concerts, had attempted the Seventh during the 1903 season, but it was his first and last such reading. As he wrote in his autobiography some 35 years later: 'The public would not have it then; neither will they now.' By 1970 the Eighth was making up for lost time: its third performance, given by Jascha Horenstein and the LSO, proved notably compelling. In the first half of the concert Gervase de Peyer directed a Mozart Serenade with a wind ensemble drawn from the orchestral ranks. There have been subsequent one-off renderings from Michael Gielen (1978), Daniel Barenboim (1996), Christoph Eschenbach (2005) and Lorin Maazel (2013), the latter two at the helm of the Vienna Philharmonic, plus most recently one from Andris Nelsons (2019) with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. That said, three Brucknerians have dominated the lists, returning to the piece again and again in what has come to seem an ideal venue for this score. Bernard Haitink directed it four times (1972, 1973, 1989 and 2007), Zubin Mehta three (1974, 1987 and 1999). Similarly Günter Wand (1985, 1992 and 1995). Contracted to conduct Mozart and Tchaikovsky on the last of those dates, Wand refused to turn up unless he was permitted to deliver his Bruckner interpretation again!

#### © David Gutman

bbc.co.uk/proms

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.

#### **ANTON BRUCKNER**



Bruckner's career is a tale of extraordinary social mobility. Born in rural poverty in the Upper-Austrian village of Ansfelden on 4 September 1824, he began his professional life as a village schoolteacher. He entered the service of the monastery of

St Florian in 1845, became cathedral organist in the provincial capital, Linz, in 1856; and moved to Vienna in 1868 to teach at the conservatory. By the time of his death, on 11 October 1896, Bruckner was recognised as a major figure in Viennese musical life. He was appointed to the Order of Franz Joseph in 1886 and spent his declining years inhabiting an apartment in the Belvedere Palace, a privilege bestowed by the Austrian Emperor.

The controversies Bruckner's music has excited starkly contrast with his deferential personality. In Vienna, the disparity between his conservative Catholicism and the intelligentsia's agnostic liberalism was exploited by both supporters and detractors. By the 1930s his nine numbered symphonies had become established in the Austro-German canon, although enthusiasm mutated into extremism during the Nazi period. English-speaking sympathy, however, remained scarce until the 1960s. The symphonies only gained a secure foothold in the British concert hall towards the end of the 20th century; American audiences had to wait until 2017 to hear a complete cycle. Untroubled reception was further impeded by a notoriously tangled editorial situation. Many of the symphonies exist in multiple versions and







editions, disputes over which persist, despite 100 years of scholarly effort. British critics eventually made space for Bruckner by portraying him as a special case. In the 1960s Deryck Cooke and Robert Simpson argued that the symphonies can only be understood apart from the Beethovenian mainstream. Contrasting Beethoven's dynamism, they heard cathedrals in sound: cumulative symphonic experiences that emphasised patient revelation over the dramatisation of conflict.

Today, we should have no problem acknowledging Bruckner as one of his century's most innovative composers. Although all his symphonies retain the classical four-movement scheme and their associated forms, this shell frequently houses music of shocking modernity. Bruckner's mature harmonic style often anticipates atonality and his themes are subject to techniques of sustained intensification, which create a radically new concept of symphonic time. Although Bruckner often makes space for quasi-religious reflection, there are also moments of violent discontinuity. Above all, his symphonies are powerfully goal-directed: they never end tragically but victory is hard-won, and often attained at the very last minute.

#### Profile © Julian Horton

Julian Horton is a Professor of Music at Durham University and has taught at King's College London and University College Dublin. He is the author of *Bruckner's Symphonies: Analysis, Reception and Cultural Politics* (CUP, 2004), editor of *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony* (CUP, 2013) and a contributor to *The Cambridge Companion to Bruckner* (CUP, 2004).









## 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 8 Mozart's 'Requiem'

Mozart's Requiem is restless. It always has been, ever since Mozart's death at the age of only 35 in December 1791. which is the very moment the myths of the Requiem which he didn't live to finish – were born: that the composer was poisoned, that the Freemasons murdered him, that the piece was commissioned by a mysterious messenger for an aristocrat who wanted to pass off Mozart's music as his own.

In fact, that last myth-like story – perhaps the strangest of all – is the only one that's true, and so too is the certainty that Mozart knew he was writing his last music in a delirium of disease, during which he was nonetheless able to transmit his wishes as fully as he could to his friends and pupils, like Franz Xaver Süssmayr, whose completion forms the backbone of Raphaël Pichon's performance this week at the Proms with Pygmalion.

Pichon's performance also includes his own interpolations of a scintillating selection of Mozartiana in between the Requiem's movements. And generations of musicians and listeners have used the incompleteness of the Requiem as a chance to open up its meanings and resonances.

Scholarly debate has raged since Süssmayr's completion was published: did he follow Mozart's instructions closely enough? Can you hear the difference between echt-Mozart and Mozart/Süssmayr - that composite composer who is the real author of every movement of the *Requiem*, apart from the opening Introitus? Performers and musicologists

from Robert Levin to Duncan Druce have made their own completions, including writing an 'Amen' fugue that Mozart probably planned but which Süssmayr didn't dare compose. Most radically and creatively, the British composer Michael Finnissy made a version in 2011 that fills in the gaps of music-historical time, writing in references to Schubert, Busoni and Charles Ives, and leaving 'traces' (as he calls them) of other composers who have had an impact on him.

And that means following Mozart's example, because the Requiem is full of traces of music by other composers whom he loved. The Introitus in particular is clearly made of music inspired by the composer he most admired: Handel. Mozart had already arranged Handel's music, including Messiah, and in the Requiem he recomposes it. He uses tunes and ideas from Handel's Dettingen Te Deum, his Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline and Messiah, transcending them in the new context of the Requiem.

Even if Mozart had completed it, it wouldn't alter the fact that this Requiem isn't a single statement, but a dialogue with music history. Its incompleteness allows us to be as imaginative as we like in our responses to it, so that each set of performers and audiences remakes it in their own image. That's the creative restlessness that Mozart bequeathes to us in the paradoxically complete experience of his unfinished Requiem.

Pygmalion under Raphaël Pichon performs Mozart's 'Requiem' this week on Thursday 7 September.

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







#### Semyon Bychkov conductor

The current season is Semyon Bychkov's fifth as Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and his 11th as the Günter Wand Conducting Chair of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He was born in St Petersburg in 1952, emigrated

to the USA in 1975 and now lives in Europe.

He opened the current season in Prague with the official concert to mark the Czech Republic's Presidency of the EU and conducted concert performances of Dvořák's *Rusalka* at the Prague Festival. In November he marked his 70th birthday with three concerts pairing the Fifth Symphonies of Beethoven and Shostakovich. His recent focus with the Czech PO has been on the music of Mahler, with performances of the symphonies at the Rudolfinum in Prague, on tour and on record: Symphony No. 4 was released last year and No. 5 in April.

He conducts a broad range of symphonic and operatic repertoire worldwide. Recent operatic productions include *Parsifal* at the Bayreuth Festival, *Elektra* in Vienna, *Tristan and Isolde* in Madrid and *Rusalka* with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. He appears regularly with the London Symphony Orchestra and holds an honorary title with the Royal Academy of Music.

Semyon Bychkov has made recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Philharmonia, London Philharmonic and WDR Symphony orchestras and the Orchestre de Paris. *BBC Music Magazine* named his *Lohengrin* 'Recording of the Year' in 2010 and his disc of Schmidt's Second Symphony with the Vienna Philharmonic 'Recording of the Month' in July 2017.

#### в в с Proms

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In line with the BBC's sustainability strategy, the BBC Proms is actively working with partners and suppliers towards being a more sustainable festival







#### **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

For over 90 years the BBC Symphony Orchestra has been a driving force in the musical landscape, championing contemporary music in its performances of newly commissioned works and giving voice to rarely performed and neglected composers. It plays a central role in the BBC Proms, performing regularly throughout each season, including the First and Last Nights.

Highlights of this summer's Proms include the First Night with Principal Guest Conductor Dalia Stasevska, Mahler's Third and Seventh Symphonies with Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo and concerts conducted by Jules Buckley and Semyon Bychkov, as well as the Last Night under Marin Alsop with cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason.

The BBC SO is Associate Orchestra at the Barbican, where its distinctive annual season of concerts includes Total Immersion days devoted to a single composer or theme. Sakari Oramo launches the 2023/24 season with Mahler's Fifth Symphony. Themes of voyage and storytelling run through the season, which includes Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and Ravel's *Shéhérazade*, and world and UK premieres by Detlev Glanert, Tebogo Monnakgotla, Outi Tarkiainen and Lotta Wennäkoski. Most of the orchestra's performances are broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and regular studio concerts are free to attend.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – alongside the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers and BBC Proms – offer innovative education and community activities and take a leading role in the BBC Ten Pieces and BBC Young Composer programmes, including work with schools, young people and families in East London ahead of the BBC SO's move in 2025 to its new home at London's East Bank cultural quarter in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford.

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Principal Guest Conductor Dalia Stasevska

Dalia Stasevska

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## Coming up at the Proms



**ERIN MORLEY** 

#### THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

PROM 69 MOZART'S 'REQUIEM' 7.00pm-c8.30pm • Royal Albert Hall Raphaël Pichon, his exciting ensemble Pygmalion and a solo line-up featuring American soprano Erin Morley present an alternative vision of Mozart's famously unfinished *Requiem*. Tonight's reimagining swells the popular completion by Mozart's pupil Süssmayr with additional pieces to create a compelling alternative sequence.



DOMINGO HINDOYAN

#### FRIDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

PROM 70 HONEGGER, RACHMANINOV, **GABRIELA ORTIZ & BERNSTEIN** 

7.30pm-c9.50pm • Royal Albert Hall Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii returns as soloist in Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 3 alongside the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and its Venezuelan-born Chief Conductor Domingo Hindoyan. Also featured are works by Bernstein, Honegger and Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz.



#### THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

PROM 69A JOANNA MARSH. DANIEL-LESUR & SOUMIK DATTA 10.15pm-c11.30pm • Royal Albert Hall The BBC Singers and Chief Conductor Sofi Jeannin present a late-night Prom of choral works. Two

contemporary pieces – Joanna Marsh's SEEN and Soumik Datta's Awaaz - explore themes of identity, while Daniel-Lesur's masterpiece Cantique des cantiques sets the biblical Song of Songs.



SHEKU KANNEH-MASON

#### SATURDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

PROM 71 LAST NIGHT OF THE **PROMS 2023** 

7.00pm-c10.20pm • Royal Albert Hall Cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason and soprano Lise Davidsen join conductor Marin Alsop, the BBC Singers and BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus for an evening of opera arias, songs, spirituals, choral anthems and world premieres, as well as all the traditional favourites by Arne, Elgar and Parry.





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PRINT Prom 65.indd 15 22/08/2023 12:00





# BBC Proms Merchandise

Proms-themed mugs, T-shirts, magnets and tote bags are available at Doors 6 and 12 and on the Rausing Circle level at Doors 4 and 8.



Proms

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BBC Proms