

## 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

Tonight Isata Kanneh-Mason makes her solo debut at the Proms performing Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and its Principal Conductor Ryan Bancroft. The best-known of Prokofiev's piano concertos, the Third was written partly as a calling card for the composer's burgeoning pianistic career and, as such, contains all the dazzling fireworks and idiosyncratic agility that we have come to associate with the Russian master's piano music.

Tchaikovsky's mighty Symphony No. 5 is a work that wrestles with its ominous 'Fate' motif before a seemingly triumphant Finale. But are the dramatic conflicts of the first three movements truly resolved? This fascinating symphony simultaneously looks back to the darkness-to-light narrative championed by Beethoven and forwards to the modernist ambiguities of Mahler and Shostakovich, both of whom knew and admired the work.



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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 22

TUESDAY 1 AUGUST • 7.00pm–c8.40pm



**Sergey Prokofiev** Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major 27'

**Pyotr Tchaikovsky** Symphony No. 5 in E minor 45'

**Isata Kanneh-Mason** *piano*

**BBC National Orchestra of Wales** Lesley Hatfield *leader*

**Ryan Bancroft** *conductor*

*There will be no interval*

**RADIO 3** **FOUR** **SOUNDS** **iPLAYER**

This concert is broadcast live by BBC Radio 3 (repeated next Wednesday at 2.00pm) and shown on BBC Four on Sunday at 8.00pm. You can listen on BBC Sounds, and watch on BBC iPlayer for 30 days.

**SERGEY PROKOFIEV** (1891–1953)

# Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major, Op. 26 (1917–21)

- 1 **Andante – Allegro**
- 2 **Tema con variazioni**
- 3 **Allegro ma non troppo**

**Isata Kanneh-Mason** *piano*

Prokofiev's five piano concertos, of which the Third is by far the most often heard, were all composed with his own phenomenal but idiosyncratic pianistic agility – plus his psychological need to startle and delight – in mind. The First provided him with both success and notoriety, winning him the Anton Rubinstein Prize at the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1914 against the wishes of Alexander Glazunov, who had to announce the result through clenched teeth. And the gargantuan Second seemed determined to trump that kind of impact, at the same time as outbidding Rachmaninov's apparently unsurpassably colossal Third.



Like those works, Prokofiev's Third Concerto was designed partly as a calling card for his burgeoning career as a pianist. Not untypically, its thematic ideas accumulated over a number of years, rather than emerging as part of an organic process of inter-relationship, derivation and synthesis. The main tune for the second movement, for example, was jotted down in 1913, while two of its variations and the opening of the first movement date from 1916–17; and two of the finale's principal ideas come from a 'white-key' string quartet that was sketched in 1918 but never completed.

Only three years after leaving Russia in early 1918, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, did Prokofiev sit down to complete the work; this he did on holiday at Saint-Brevin-les-Pins in Brittany, just after the successful premieres of his Diaghilev ballet *Chout* ('The Buffoon') and his farcical fairy-tale opera *The Love for Three Oranges*. Prokofiev himself gave the premiere of the concerto on 16 December that year, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Frederick Stock. The music immediately found favour and he performed the piece on numerous occasions thereafter, including on his first return visit to Russia, with the famous conductorless orchestra 'Persimfans' on 24 January 1927, and in his only concerto recording, made with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1933.

...

After its dreamy opening gambit, the first movement has an extrovert, stagy quality, suggestive of the deliberately artificial, circus-like theatre productions

Australian pianist Eileen Joyce (1908–91), who made her Proms debut at the Queen's Hall in 1930 performing Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3; Joyce would return to perform at the festival many times in the following three decades

of Vsevolod Meyerhold (Russia's modernist equivalent of Bertolt Brecht), who had been instrumental in the concept of *The Love for Three Oranges*, as opposed to the psychological realism of his rival Konstantin Stanislavsky (equally important historically, but as the prophet of Method acting). In this movement, four apparently unrelated ideas are juxtaposed, maximalised, then artfully knitted together: these being the deliciously stretching initial clarinet theme, the immediately following aerobic exercises for strings and piano, a fantastical gavotte and an aggressive tarantella.

Although beginning in a gracious and languid gavotte style, the second movement soon unfolds as a devilishly challenging set of variations, in which the pianist masquerades in turn as lover, acrobat, athlete, nocturnal poet and gymnast. Each variation poses its own severe pianistic problems, but the most important challenge of all is to give the impression that no such problems exist.

In the finale the soloist enters in yet another guise: as charlatan-magician, as though in a puff of smoke and with tricks galore up his sleeve. A slower central section, at first romantic in tone, then more questioning in its tick-tock oscillations, helps to give balance to the overall tempo scheme of the concerto's manifold contrasts, and the last pages make for a dazzlingly acrobatic and ultimately clangorous race to the finishing line.

*Programme note* © David Fanning

David Fanning is a Professor of Music at the University of Manchester, the author of books on Nielsen, Shostakovich and Weinberg and a critic for *Gramophone* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

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## PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Like Beethoven, Prokofiev completed five concertos for his own instrument, losing interest once he was no longer playing much in public. Then again, not all his piano concertos have entered the standard orchestral repertoire, the Fourth and Fifth being heard here for the first time as recently as 2015, when Valery Gergiev conducted every single one in a three-hour-plus Prokofiev marathon. In 1923 *The Musical Times* wrote off the existing scores: 'None but the composer has yet been known to play one. In a way it is infantile. You think of a singularly ugly baby solemnly shaking a rattle. But no; it is not so human as that ...' The composer himself performed his Third Piano Concerto more than once in the old Queen's Hall, home of these concerts until the building's destruction during the Blitz, though never at an actual Prom. Eileen Joyce was at the keyboard for the work's Proms debut under the stalwart Henry Wood in 1930. Thereafter, despite being rested between 1966 and 1984 and again from 2003 until 2013, it has achieved hit status as the most ubiquitous of the cycle. In modern times two names stand out: Martha Argerich, single-minded advocate of the Third in 1966, 1992 and 2001, and Alexander Toradze, who gave the First (2010), Second (1996, 2007) and Third (2002) here. Its most recent champion, in 2022, was Benjamin Grosvenor with Marin Alsop and her Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.

© *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).

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“Prokofiev! Music and youth  
in bloom,  
In you, the orchestra yearns for  
forgotten summer sounds,  
And the invincible Scythian  
beats on the tambourine  
of the sun.”

The poetic response of Russian poet Konstantin  
Balmont after hearing Prokofiev play excerpts  
from his Third Piano Concerto

## PROMS Q&A

# Isata Kanneh-Mason

## piano

### **When did you first get to know Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto, and what's been your relationship with it since?**

I first got to know the concerto when I was 18, and I heard it during a time when I wasn't feeling all that motivated to practise. I found it incredibly exciting, and it was unlike any concerto I'd heard at that time. I remember thinking the first movement had such a continuous, joyous energy, with great interactions between piano and orchestra. The piece is very rhythmically exhilarating, and quite percussive in some parts – I think I found that really attractive.

Hearing it replanted the seed of inspiration in my mind, and I've been wanting to perform it ever since. I didn't learn it for about five years after first hearing it, but during that time I listened to many performances so, by the time I came to it, I felt like I knew it really well – the greatest challenge was learning the notes! I still feel the same excitement about the piece now as when I first heard it – performing it just requires a bit more focus than listening ...

### **It is indeed a notoriously challenging piece – how would you describe its technical demands on the solo pianist?**

It's actually most challenging when you first start learning the notes, simply because there are so many to get around and to establish in your muscle memory. It's written very intricately, so I spent a lot of time practising very slowly in lots of minute detail. Once it's under the fingers, though, it seems to flow very naturally – thank goodness!

But I think the technical challenges are part of the joy of the piece, and they can't be separated from the music. When you're first learning the concerto, it's not immediately obvious what Prokofiev is trying to convey and you do really have to go into the detail of the score, but as time goes by you discover what the music is saying.



### **Prokofiev premiered the concerto himself. Does that mean his piano writing is particularly idiomatic, or does he set challenges for his pianist?**

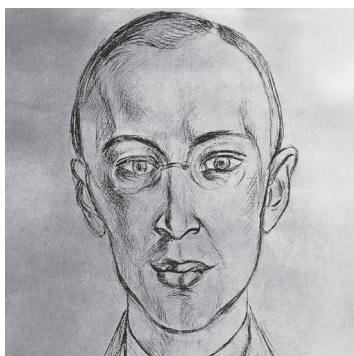
It's a combination of both – it's definitely challenging pianistically, but once you get past those challenges, the music fits under the hands very well.

### **You've performed with tonight's conductor Ryan Bancroft before. How important is it to have a personal connection with your collaborators?**

I'm very excited to be working with Ryan again – we got on very well last time, and we even had time for a coffee outside of the concert. Feeling comfortable with the person you're working with makes a massive difference – the whole experience becomes much easier and more fulfilling. If you feel comfortable with a conductor on a personal level, you're more able to share your opinions and discuss the music, as well as responding to each other on stage. It makes for a wonderful musical dialogue.

*Interview by David Kettle*

## SERGEY PROKOFIEV



Prokofiev spent his youth in Imperial Russia as a student at the St Petersburg Conservatory, but following the 1917 October Revolution he relocated to the West, travelling through the USA, France and Germany. He carved out a space for himself

as a modernist rabble-rouser, resisting the conservative dictates of his teachers (Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tcherepnin) and competing with Stravinsky for critical attention as well as commissions. Prokofiev himself recognised that he was composing as a riposte, proving his command of traditional idioms while also blazing a path forwards to the new. His popular 'Classical' Symphony (No. 1, 1916–17) thus stands in marked contrast to his early songs and the raw primitivism of his cantata *Seven, They Are Seven* (1917–18, rev. 1933).

He built up an international career. For the Chicago Opera Association he composed *The Love for Three Oranges* (1919), a work indebted to the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition that gained a toehold in the repertoire despite baffling the critics. Between 1915 and 1929 he wrote three ballets for the Paris-based Ballets Russes: the neo-primitivist *Chout* ('The Buffoon'), the constructivist *Le pas d'acier* ('The Steel Step') and the neo-Classical *Le fils prodigue* ('The Prodigal Son'). Yet he grew tired of peripatetic concert life and, in 1936, after years on the road and several frustrated efforts to organise a production of his supernatural opera *The Fiery Angel* (1919–23, rev. 1926–7) in the West, he resettled in Russia.

The brutality of the Stalin regime ruined the lives of Prokofiev's first wife Lina and their two sons and compromised the composer's own health. There were creative successes – the pedagogical children's parable *Peter and the Wolf* (1936), the scores to the films *Lieutenant Kijé* (1933), *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1942–5), and the Soviet court ballet *Cinderella* (1940–44) – but Prokofiev's music was routinely censored and at times its performance prohibited. The cool formalism of his Third Piano Concerto (1917–21) was deemed part of the past, along with the sarcastic elements of his early style and anything evidencing his spiritual outlook as a Christian Scientist. The original 'happy ending' of his balletic masterpiece *Romeo and Juliet* (1935–6) was rejected by Soviet defenders of the classics; his *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* (1936–7) – a massive score that undercut (in the opinion of the censors) Communist ideals as articulated by Marx, Lenin and Stalin – was not performed during his lifetime; and his monumental opera *War and Peace* suffered through four revisions between 1942 and 1952.

Prokofiev's musical language simplified over time and he produced agitprop on command. But he could also, during the worst of times, produce extraordinarily potent scores. His Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Piano Sonatas (1939–44) are cases in point: the music has no specific meaning but, as such, means different things – referring, perhaps, to the tragedy of the Second World War as well as the turmoil of Prokofiev's life. Stress and disappointments took their toll. Prokofiev died on 5 March 1953 – the same day, as fate would have it, as Stalin.

*Profile* © Simon Morrison

Simon Morrison is Professor of Music and Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton University. His books include *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*, *Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement* and *Bolshoi Confidential*.



**MORE PROKOFIEV AT THE PROMS**

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST, 6.30pm • PROM 52

**Symphony No. 5 in B flat major**

SATURDAY 26 AUGUST, 2.00pm • PROM 54

**Romeo and Juliet – excerpts (transcr. Demers)***For full Proms listings, and to book tickets, visit [bbc.co.uk/proms](http://bbc.co.uk/proms).*

“This fair-haired man, with lively eyes and remarkable hands, with a passion for bridge and children’s toys, was an *enfant terrible*. Uniquely gifted, stubborn and quick to anger, he was profoundly musical. His whole being was musical: perhaps more in his sense of rhythm and dynamism than in expressiveness, but he was an exceptional character.”

**Conductor Piero Coppola, who recorded the Third Piano Concerto with the LSO and Prokofiev as soloist in 1932**

**PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY** (1840–93)

## Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 (1888)

- 1 **Andante – Allegro con anima**
- 2 **Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza**
- 3 **Waltz: Allegro moderato**
- 4 **Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace**

The concert season of 1887–8 was very busy for Tchaikovsky as a conductor of his own works. He premiered his new opera, *The Enchantress*, in St Petersburg, gave symphony concerts in Moscow and performed across Europe on a long tour. When he was not rehearsing or performing, there were social events in his honour to attend. But he was also quietly planning his Fifth Symphony, and in spring 1888 he summarised his early ideas in a notebook alongside the first sketches for the work:

Introduction. The fullest possible submission to Fate, or to the inscrutable design of Providence (which is the same). Allegro 1) Murmurs, doubts, complaints, reproaches towards XXX [*sic*]. 2) To throw oneself into the embrace of faith?

The serious work of composition could only begin when Tchaikovsky retired to the quiet country estate of Frolovskoye, around 50 miles north-west of Moscow, for the summer. He was beset by doubts, and although he had nothing to prove against any composer of the time, he knew he would be judged by the standards of his own Fourth Symphony, completed a decade earlier, which had already explored the concept of Fate. The Fate theme

of the Fourth was unmistakable, a strident trumpet fanfare blaring. In the Fifth, the new Fate theme, which also appears at the start, is a sombre march-cum-soliloquy presented in subdued tones by clarinets, almost hidden within the harmonies.

The Fate theme, or ‘motto’, then embarks on a journey through all four movements. The first Allegro theme emerges seamlessly from the Introduction, a quicker, lighter march with varied melodic development (‘doubts ... reproaches’), but unable to dispel the gloom of the motto. The mood gradually brightens, the march rhythms dissipate and we reach a warm lyrical theme on strings. But this gives way to a storm of emotions, reaching a great climax. The first Allegro theme returns, unusually on a solo bassoon, reluctantly but helplessly submitting to the march of Fate.

“In the Fifth, the new Fate theme is a sombre march-cum-soliloquy presented in subdued tones, almost hidden within the harmonies.”

The slow movement, *Andante cantabile*, opens with a chorale (‘the embrace of faith?’), but this vaguely religious sentiment is left behind by a noble theme – one of Tchaikovsky’s most beautiful melodies – in the solo horn. This is developed into a breathless, swooning love scene. Similarly now to the Fourth, the motto theme brutally interrupts this love scene twice. Having recovered from the first blow, we await the ending of the phrase that should close the scene with a blissful sigh, but there is another blow, this time destroying everything.



André Masson's sketch for the background curtain of *Les présages* ('The Omens'), a 1933 ballet choreographed by Leonid Massine (1896–1979) to the music of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony

The third-movement Waltz seems to offer relief from the grim motto, but in the coda lurks a ghostly version of the theme (heard in the clarinets and bassoons). This is a fine moment of suspense, giving us notice that Tchaikovsky will ride into battle with Fate once again in the Finale.

But the Finale opens with a strange surprise: though the motto theme does indeed appear in the Andante introduction, it is now in a brighter-sounding major key, solemnly intoned by the full string section in chorus. Has the battle already been fought and won? Wasn't Fate supposed to be cruel rather than benign? The vortex of the Allegro section brings us to a majestic and glorious coda, where the motto theme is taken up in a heroic triumphal march.

Tchaikovsky is known as a great composer of musical narratives in his symphonies and symphonic poems, but if the Fifth has an overall narrative then the Finale complicates it. Are we supposed to feel encouraged that the grim destroyer of the slow movement is now, seemingly, a hero whose triumph is to be celebrated? The critics did not sweep the problem under the carpet, but no consensus has ever emerged and conductors have to make their own decisions, sometimes trying to make the Finale sound convincingly positive in its own right, sometimes trying to draw out potentially disturbing elements.

Tchaikovsky continued to have concerns about the Fifth, even after it was received with public acclaim at its premiere. He referred to the symphony as 'too heterogeneous, too weighty and insincere, over-extended and rather unprepossessing'. Eventually he warmed to the piece after it had firmly embedded itself in the repertoire. We think of Tchaikovsky as a confessional composer, and utterly sincere, but he characterised this symphony as 'insincere'. He did not provide details, but he was surely referring to the Finale's failure to resolve

the dramatic conflict of the earlier movements. Whatever Tchaikovsky thought, we feel driven to find a solution, and perhaps this is best reached by turning aside from the obvious influence of Beethoven – the darkness-to-light journey – and looking instead at the modernist ambiguities and ironies of Mahler or Shostakovich, who had been influenced by Tchaikovsky and knew his Fifth well. In that context, we can understand the Finale's triumph as hollow.

*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 *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (2016) and *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin* (2018; both Yale UP).

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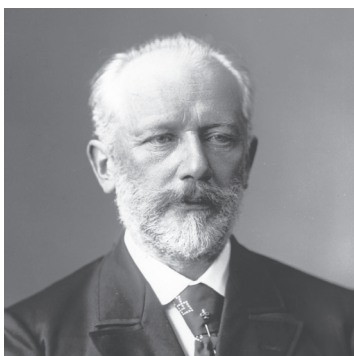
## PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Proms founder-conductor Henry Wood enjoyed a particular association with Russian music and introduced many significant works by Tchaikovsky to the UK, including the opera *Eugene Onegin*, suites from *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, the Third and Fourth Orchestral Suites and the *Manfred* Symphony. He presented the Fifth Symphony to Proms audiences from 1897 and directed it for the last time in 1942, having been responsible for fully half of the 90-odd performances the work has received to date. After conducting it during the 1898 season he received a congratulatory letter from Arthur Sullivan, assuring him that 'I have never heard a finer performance in England than that of the Tchaikovsky symphony under your direction last Wednesday ... Forgive me this little outburst of honest admiration.' In our own century the piece continues to be regularly championed. In 2000 and 2018 we welcomed different incarnations of the European Union Youth Orchestra under Vladimir Ashkenazy and Gianandrea Noseda respectively. The lists include one Russian orchestra, the St Petersburg Philharmonic under Yuri Temirkanov in 2004, and three visiting American ensembles, in 2006, 2011 and 2017. In 2014 its advocates were the Qatar Philharmonic, whose then chief, Han-Na Chang, resigned the very next day, citing irreconcilable differences with orchestral management!

© David Gutman

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## PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY



Tchaikovsky won international renown not for any startling innovations but through his strikingly expressive handling of the existing musical language. His works are recognisable for their haunting melodies, sweeping climaxes and glistening orchestration. This, combined with a mastery of psychology and narrative, draws listeners in, enabling them to experience life's triumphs and devastations through his highly charged music.

He was born into the family of a prominent engineer working in the Urals but was sent to a boarding school in distant St Petersburg – a distressing period in his life, as he later recalled. But the move proved fortunate, since Russia's first conservatory was established in the city in 1862, just in time to receive the young Tchaikovsky when he sought to pursue his musical interests. He emerged from the institution as a consummate professional, with great technical facility and a compulsion to work hard.

But Tchaikovsky still had to win over the public and critics, and his career initially proceeded fitfully, with frustrations leading him to consign several scores to the flames (including his opera *Undine*). The premiere of his First Symphony, in 1868, was a success, but several of his best-loved concert works, including the First Piano Concerto (1874–5), were received with indifference or, sometimes, harsh criticism. His career in the opera house was also a struggle and it wasn't until his fifth

opera, *Eugene Onegin* (1877–8), that he found major success. Once he was established, he rose to become an international figure, conducting his works in the most prestigious venues, from St Petersburg to Paris and London, and even across the Atlantic, where he was invited to inaugurate the newly built Carnegie Hall. One of Tchaikovsky's admirers in Russia was Tsar Alexander III, who greatly enjoyed his late operas *The Queen of Spades* (1890) and *Iolanta* (1891), and his ballets *The Sleeping Beauty* (1888–9) and *The Nutcracker* (1891–2), which he was able to see at the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre.

As a composer and touring performer, Tchaikovsky led, in the end, a rich and fulfilling life, but his personal affairs were often deeply troubled: he was a sensitive type, easily swept away by infatuation and prone to fits of despair and self-loathing. To spare his family from rumours about his sexuality, he tried to meet society's requirements by entering into marriage, but he was unable to maintain the façade, and the collapse of the relationship only brought greater scandal upon him. His death from cholera, just nine days the premiere of the dark, funereal Sixth Symphony, gave rise to a suicide mythology that has refused to yield to sober refutations. Although it is tempting to hear Tchaikovsky's music as the outpourings of a tortured soul, this prevents us from appreciating the high artistry of his work.

*Profile* © Marina Frolova-Walker

### MORE TCHAIKOVSKY AT THE PROMS

WEDNESDAY 30 AUGUST, 7.30pm • PROM 59  
Violin Concerto in D major

*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 3 Concertos: All for One and One for All?

It's not called the 'Bull Run' for nothing: that short curving corridor that connects backstage at the Royal Albert Hall with the auditorium. It's not only an architectural reference – although the Hall's rotunda shape really is part bull-fighting arena, part gladiatorial colosseum – it also gives a clue to what it feels like to be back there before a concert.

If you're a concerto soloist at this year's Proms waiting at the backstage end of the Bull Run, you're a potentially sacrificial musical victim about to go through a fight for your life on one of the biggest stages in the world. You know you're about to do battle against a myriad of forces: against your own instrumental perfectionism, against the audience's expectations of you, as well as trying to live up to the demands of the concerto you're playing. All that, and you've the combined masses of the orchestra and the conductor to deal with, acoustically and expressively. Any concerto performance is literally about you, the soloist, versus everyone else in the hall. Good luck!

Whatever else is true across the fantastic diversity of the concertos you'll hear this week and this Proms season, they're all a version of a staged relationship that pits one – the soloist – against the many in the orchestra. One versus a hundred or so: who wins? We the Proms-goers, collective musical Caesars, decide: giving the approval of our applause as enthusiastically as we choose; inviting the soloist to give us even more after they've played their concerto, if they're

lucky, and we're lucky enough to get an encore; proof of their popularity, proof of their successfully running the gauntlet and beating the Bull Run of the Royal Albert Hall.

Will Seong-Jin Cho do justice to Chopin's supremely lyrical Piano Concerto No. 1? Can Christian Tetzlaff bring off Elgar's big-boned Violin Concerto? Will Annalien Van Wauwe wow us in Copland's Clarinet Concerto? And how will Yuja Wang deal with the virtuosity, romanticism and jazz inflections of Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*?

Spoiler alert: they're going to do just fine. Probably. But what counts is that everything's at stake for every one of them. None of us can play the piano as well as Seong-Jin Cho or Yuja Wang, but the illusion during their performances is that we identify with them as individuals. As opposed to what can feel like the corporate behemoth of the orchestra, soloists allow us to empathise with them, one human being to another, in their dialogues and laments, their ecstasies and virtuosities with and against the orchestra. The magic, for as long as the concerto lasts, is that their super-musicality becomes ours too. Thanks to all of our soloists' bravery and brilliance at this year's Proms, they allow us to feel like musical superheroes, just for one night.

*Six concertos – by Korngold, Copland, Prokofiev, Mozart, Walton and Rachmaninov – feature this week at the Proms, performed respectively by Vadim Gluzman, Annalien Van Wauwe, Felix Klieser, Isata Kanneh-Mason, Yuja Wang and James Ehnes.*

→ Next week: **Transcendence**

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).



## Ryan Bancroft *conductor*

Ryan Bancroft grew up in Los Angeles and studied at the California Institute of the Arts and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, as well as in the Netherlands. He first came to international attention in 2018, when he won both First Prize and Audience Prize at the Malko

Competition for Young Conductors in Copenhagen.

Since September 2021 he has been Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Following his first visit to work with the Tapiola Sinfonietta, he was invited to become its Artist-in-Association from the 2021/22 season. In 2021 he was announced as Chief Conductor Designate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, and he takes up the Chief Conductor position in September.

He has made debuts with leading international orchestras including the Baltimore, BBC, City of Birmingham, Danish National, Gothenburg, Houston, Malmö, Swedish Radio and Toronto Symphony orchestras, London, Rotterdam and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic orchestras, Ensemble Intercontemporain and the Philharmonia. Recent and forthcoming debuts include concerts with the Dallas and Minnesota Symphony orchestras and the Netherlands and New Japan Philharmonic orchestras.

Ryan Bancroft has a passion for contemporary music and has performed with Amsterdam's Nieuw Ensemble, assisted Pierre Boulez in a performance of his *Sur incises* in Los Angeles, premiered works by Sofia Gubaidulina, Cage, Tenney and Anne LeBaron, and worked closely with improvisers Wadada Leo Smith and Charlie Haden.



## Isata Kanneh-Mason *piano*

Isata Kanneh-Mason studied as an Elton John Scholar at the Royal Academy of Music with Hamish Milne and Carole Presland. She was an ECHO Rising Star in 2021–2 and is also recipient of a Leonard Bernstein Award and an Opus Klassik Award for best young artist.

Engagements this season include debuts at the Barbican, Queen Elizabeth and Wigmore halls, Perth Concert Hall, the National Concert Hall in Dublin, Berlin Philharmonie and Munich Prinzregententheater. She appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Barcelona, City of Birmingham and New World (Miami) Symphony and Geneva Chamber orchestras, and was Artist-in-Residence with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Highlights of next season include performances with the Philadelphia, Cleveland, Toronto Symphony, Stockholm Philharmonic and National Arts Centre (Ottawa) orchestras, London Mozart Players, Academy of St Martin in the Fields and on tour in the USA and Germany with the RPO. With her cellist brother, Sheku, she appears in recital in Japan, Singapore and South Korea in addition to an extensive European tour. She also gives a series of solo recitals in the USA, Canada and Germany and at the Lucerne Festival and Wigmore Hall.

Isata Kanneh-Mason's debut recording, *Romance: The Piano Music of Clara Schumann*, entered the UK Classical charts at No. 1 and was followed by *Summertime*, featuring 20th-century American repertoire, and, most recently, *Childhood Tales*, including music by Debussy, Dohnányi, Mozart and Schumann.

## BBC National Orchestra of Wales

For over 90 years the BBC National Orchestra of Wales has played an integral part in the cultural landscape of Wales, occupying a distinctive role as both broadcast and national symphony orchestra. It performs a busy schedule of live concerts throughout Wales, the rest of the UK and the world.

The orchestra is an ambassador of Welsh music as well as of contemporary composers and musicians, and its concerts can be heard regularly across the BBC: on Radio 3, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru. BBC NOW works closely with schools and music organisations throughout Wales and regularly undertakes workshops, side-by-side performances and young composer initiatives to inspire and encourage the next generation of performers, composers and arts leaders. Last year alone the orchestra reached over 18,000 young people across Wales through workshops and live performances.

Forthcoming highlights include the launch of a new season of concerts in Wales from October. This will feature a series of concerts dedicated to Welsh composer Grace Williams, to be performed at the orchestra's home, BBC Hoddinott Hall (at Wales Millennium Centre). BBC Hoddinott Hall also acts as a broadcast centre for the orchestra, from where it will continue its live-streamed concerts and prerecorded content as part of its popular Digital Concert Series.

Soundtrack recordings taking place this year include the theme tune to the new *Doctor Who* series and a natural history series with Apple TV. The orchestra has also records an array of albums with labels around the world.

### Principal Conductor

Ryan Bancroft

### Conductor Laureate

Tadaaki Otaka CBE

### Composer-in-Association

Gavin Higgins

### Composer Affiliate

Sarah Lianne Lewis

### First Violins

Lesley Hatfield

*leader*

Nick Whiting

*associate leader*

Martin Gwilym-

Jones

*sub leader*

Cecily Ward

Terry Porteus

Suzanne Casey

Carmel Barber

Emilie Godden

Anna Cleworth

Juan Gonzalez

Ruth Heney

Laura Embrey

Nadine Nigl

Barbara Zdziarska

Patrycja Mynarska

Rebecca Totterdell

### Second Violins

Anna Smith\*

Sheila Smith

Vickie Ringguth

Joseph Williams

Michael Topping

Katherine Miller

Beverley Wescott

Sellena Leony

Lydia Caines

Ilze Abola

Jane Sinclair

Christina Mavron

Anna Szabo

Amy Fletcher

### Violas

Rebecca Jones\*

Tetsuumi Nagata

Peter Taylor

Liam Brolly

Laura Sinnerton

Catherine Palmer

Ania Leadbeater

Robert Gibbons

Daichi Yoshimura

Anna Growns

Carl Hill

Mabon Rhyd

### Cellos

Alice Neary\*

Keith Hewitt‡

Raphael Lang

Sandy Bartai

Alistair Howes

Carolyn Hewitt

Rachel Ford

Kathryn Graham

Katy Cox

Emma Besselaar

### Double Basses

David Stark\*

Alexander Jones‡

Christopher

Wescott

Richard Gibbons

Emma Prince

Antonia Bakewell

Elen Roberts

Thea Sayer

### Flutes

Matthew

Featherstone\*

Lindsey Ellis

### Piccolo

Lindsey Ellis†



**Oboes**

Steven Hudson\*  
Amy McKean†

**Clarinets**

Peter Sparks  
Lenny Sayers

**Bass Clarinet**

Lenny Sayers†

**Bassoons**

Jarostaw  
Augustyniak\*  
Guylaine Eckersley  
Helen Storey

**Horns**

Tim Thorpe\*  
Meilyr Hughes  
Neil Shewan†  
John Davy  
Hugh Seenan

**Trumpets**

Philippe Schartz\*  
Robert Samuel

**Trombones**

Donal Bannister\*  
David Roode

**Bass Trombone**

Darren Smith†

**Tuba**

Daniel Trodden†

**Timpani**

Christina  
Slominska‡

**Percussion**

Mark Walker†  
Phil Girling

\* *Section Principal*  
† *Principal*  
‡ *Guest Principal*  
¥ *Assistant String  
Principal*

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

**Director**

Lisa Tregale

**Head of Artistic  
Production**

Matthew Wood

**Artists and  
Projects Manager**

Victoria Massocchi

**Orchestra  
Manager**

Vicky James

**Assistant  
Orchestra  
Manager**

Nicholas Olsen

**Orchestra  
Co-ordinator,  
Operations**

Kevin Myers

**Orchestra  
Administrator**

Eleanor Hall

**Music Librarian**

Eugene Monteith

**Stage and  
Technical Manager**

Steve Brown

**Head of Marketing  
and Audiences**

Sassy Hicks

**Orchestra  
Co-ordinator,  
Marketing**

Amy Campbell

**Social Media  
Co-ordinator**

Harriet Baugh

**Digital Producer**

Yusef Bastawy

**Producer**

Mike Sims

**Broadcast  
Assistant**

Jacob Perkins

**Senior Radio  
Operations  
Supervisors**

Andrew Smillie  
Simon Smith

**Education  
Producer**

Beatrice Carey

**Education  
Producer and  
Chorus Manager**

Rhonwen Jones

**Production**

**Business Manager**  
Lisa Blofeld

**Business  
Co-ordinators**

Christine Holliday  
Caryl Evans

**BBC Early Careers  
Apprentices**

Analese Thomas-  
Strachan  
Jordan Woodley

**RWCMD**

**Placement Student**  
William Forrest

## On Radio, TV and Online

### SOUNDS

Every Prom at the Royal Albert Hall and all 'Proms at' chamber concerts broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and on BBC Sounds

Most Proms repeated in *Afternoon Concert* (weekdays, 2.00pm)

### iPLAYER

BBC TV and iPlayer will broadcast 24 Proms, including the First Night and Last Night, available to watch on iPlayer for 12 months

# Coming up at the Proms



Astrid Ackermann

JOHN WILSON



Nadia F. Romani

SIR ANDRÁS SCHIFF

## SUNDAY 6 AUGUST

**PROM 30** L. BOULANGER,  
RACHMANINOV & WALTON

7.30pm–c9.40pm • Royal Albert Hall  
John Wilson and his Sinfonia of London return to the Proms to perform Rachmaninov's famous Second Piano Concerto with soloist Benjamin Grosvenor. The concert opens with Lili Boulanger's *D'un matin de printemps*, while Walton's First Symphony provides the conclusion.

## SATURDAY 12 AUGUST

**PROM 37** WEBER, SCHUMANN &  
MENDELSSOHN

7.30pm–c9.35pm • Royal Albert Hall  
In the first of its three Proms this season, the Budapest Festival Orchestra and founder-conductor Iván Fischer are joined by Sir András Schiff for Schumann's Piano Concerto. Weber's overture to *Der Freischütz* and Mendelssohn's 'Scottish' Symphony bookend the concert.



Svetlana Tarlova

VASILY PETRENKO



Camilla Greenwell

SANTTU-MATIAS ROUVALI

## TUESDAY 15 AUGUST

**PROM 41** LIGETI, BEETHOVEN &  
SHOSTAKOVICH

7.30pm–c9.55pm • Royal Albert Hall  
Pianist Alexandre Kantorow makes a much-anticipated Proms debut, joining Vasily Petrenko and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra as soloist in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4. Shostakovich's impassioned Symphony No. 10 and Ligeti's *Lontano* complete the programme.

## WEDNESDAY 16 AUGUST

**PROM 42** ELGAR, CHOPIN & STRAUSS

7.30pm–c10.05pm • Royal Albert Hall  
International Chopin Piano Competition-winner Seong-Jin Cho performs Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Philharmonia Orchestra and its Principal Conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali. Meanwhile Italy's summer sunshine suffuses both Elgar's bucolic *In the South* overture and Strauss's tone-poem *Aus Italien*.

BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS OF WALES



BBC

CERDDORFA A CHORWS CENEDLAETHOL CYMREIG Y BBC



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24**

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on Radio 3

champagne  
supernova

on Radio 2

"NA NA"

on Asian Network

THIS IS OUR

B B C