

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

Welcome to tonight's concert, in which the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is joined by the conductor Gemma New, making her Proms debut. They begin with the European premiere of the BBC co-commissioned Second Symphony by Samy Moussa. He has a special love for the dramatic possibilities of the orchestra, and this work takes as its starting point an ancient battle.

We travel to Russia for the remainder of the concert, and two 20th-century masters. Shostakovich wrote his Second Piano Concerto for his 18-year-old son Maxim; the result is infectiously upbeat, with a slow movement full of aching lyricism. Tonight we're delighted to welcome as soloist Pavel Kolesnikov.

After the interval, an opportunity to hear Stravinsky's complete music for *The Firebird*, his remarkably assured entry into the world of ballet, and the piece that heralded the start of his creative relationship with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.



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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.



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Prom 44

FRIDAY 18 AUGUST • 7.30pm–c9.40pm



Samy Moussa Symphony No. 2 *BBC co-commission: European premiere* 20'

Dmitri Shostakovich Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major 20'

INTERVAL: 20 minutes

Igor Stravinsky The Firebird 45'

Pavel Kolesnikov *piano*

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra Kanako Ito *leader*

Gemma New *conductor*

RADIO 3 SOUNDS

This concert is broadcast live by BBC Radio 3 (repeated on Monday 4 September at 2.00pm) and available on BBC Sounds.

SAMY MOUSSA (born 1984)

Symphony No. 2 (2022)

BBC co-commission: European premiere

In three movements, played without a break

Introducing his work for this year's *BBC Proms Festival Guide*, Samy Moussa pointed to six ideals or principles he had in mind: Austerity, Clarity, the Philosophy of Being, the Sphere, Classicism, and Mythological and Ancient Origins.

For the last of these, he turned to a quote from Xenophon's *Anabasis* – 'At this stage entered musicians blowing upon horns such as they use for signal calls, and trumpeting on trumpets, made of raw oxhide, tunes and airs, like



An illustration from the *Cyclopaedia of Universal History* capturing the chaos of the Battle of Cunaxa fought in 401BC, as recounted by the Greek soldier and writer Xenophon

the music of the double-octave harp.' Though Moussa's vision of this passage is primarily aesthetic rather than metaphorical, we might think we hear such instruments right away, their menace turned to majesty as they become a quartet of regular orchestral horns buttressed by a pair of flugelhorns (which have a warmer, rounder sound than their trumpet cousins), euphonium and tuba. Two of the horns push up through small steps to a major chord and then, with the woodwind now engaged, another. Not so much a theme, this music is more a state of being – effort and arrival, repeated – and it will recur throughout the symphony, usually associated with the brass.

Here immediately, though, it is brought back by the strings, and followed by a grandiloquent descent, in slow triple rhythm. These two types of music are alternated further, until the woodwind carry the first music into the upper air and leave it floating.

A new sort of music arrives: a quick scale pattern descending through four notes. Soon this is snaking everywhere in the woodwind and tuned percussion. The scoring has all the usual keyed instruments – vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel and so on – together with harp and piano, as well as a timpani part that becomes more prominent through this passage. Returning frequently, the original four-note pattern is keyed to grand harmonic modulations as the music grows in power.

Everything the symphony needs is now in place. The harmonic progression reaches a point where the brass can bring back the first music, but this does not happen. Instead the work moves into what is marked in the score as the second movement, though the musical progress is continuous. The symphony remains a play of forces: a whirling pounding and the brass group's first music.

Eventually this music rises to where a breakthrough seems inevitable. Yet this does not occur. Instead the symphony moves into its third movement, but again there is no break, only a shift of tone, a release into airiness. The re-entry of the brass changes this, and a solo flugelhorn announces the end by restoring the grand descent in threefold steps. But the brass seem intent on starting all over again, to the shock of their companions. An F major chord provides the conclusion promised from the unison F of the beginning, but we may sense that in the background the great sphere is still turning, will not be stopped.

Programme note © Paul Griffiths

A critic for over 30 years, including for *The Times* and *The New Yorker*, Paul Griffiths is an authority on 20th- and 21st-century music. Among his books are studies of Boulez, Cage and Stravinsky, as well as *Modern Music and After* and *A Concise History of Western Music*. His novels *let me tell you* and *Let Me Go On* were published last month.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

The music of Samy Moussa arrived at the Proms in 2021 with the UK premiere of *A Globe Itself Infolding* for organ and orchestra. This was the closing item in an evening exploring the fringes of ambient noise, minimalism and meditation, from Rautavaara's *Cantus arcticus* composed half a century ago to the music of our own time. Anna-Maria Helsing, another Proms newcomer, conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra. The organist, also featured in solo works by Glass and Messiaen, was James McVinnie.

© 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.

SAMY MOUSSA



Samy Moussa was born and brought up in Montreal, and studied there with José Evangelista, before completing his training in Munich with Matthias Pintscher and Pascal Dusapin. He remained in Europe, establishing a career as both composer

and conductor. In the latter capacity, he formed the INDEX Ensemble of Munich in 2010.

His early compositions include a string quartet and other chamber pieces, but the orchestra was always in first place, allowing him to display a keen ear for sonority and a corporeal sense of rhythm. Emphatic evidence of both came in his *Kammerkonzert* (2006) and four *Études* (2008–9). In 2013 he received one of the young composer prizes awarded by the Ernst von Siemens Foundation, and a year later his first full-length opera, *Vastation*, to a libretto by Toby Litt, had its premiere in Regensburg.

An association with conductor Kent Nagano led to a series of commissions for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra: *A Globe Itself Infolding* for organ and orchestra (2014), *Nocturne* (also 2014), Moussa's First Symphony (2016–17), subtitled 'Concordia', and his Violin Concerto (2019), which takes its subtitle, 'Adrano', from the name of an ancient Sicilian fire god. Nagano recorded the first and last of these scores, each of which has received numerous further performances. *A Globe Itself Infolding* was played at the Proms two years ago, and the Violin Concerto will be presented for the first time in this

country by Maya Iwabuchi and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in Hamilton two months from now, the composer conducting.

Alongside the Nagano commissions, Moussa composed an orchestral piece, *Crimson*, for the 2015 Lucerne Festival, a chamber-scale piano concerto, *Orpheus* (2017), and a Concerto for string quartet and orchestra (2018).

Among his recent works are *Elysium* (2021), which he wrote for the Vienna Philharmonic under Christian Thielemann to play in the Basílica de la Sagrada Familia, Barcelona, and *Euphoria* for countertenor and choir (also 2021), a collaboration with the German film-maker Julian Rosefeldt. *Antigone*, a staged oratorio for women's choir and orchestra, will be given its first performance by the Dutch National Opera next March, followed the next month by a new work for the Pittsburgh Orchestra.

Profile © Paul Griffiths

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–75)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major, Op. 102 (1956–7)

- 1 **Allegro**
- 2 **Andante –**
- 3 **Allegro**

Pavel Kolesnikov *piano*

All of Shostakovich's concertos were written with a particular player in mind, but the Second Piano Concerto was very much a family affair: written for the composer's son Maxim, then aged 18 and entering his final year at Moscow's Central Music School. Although Maxim gave the premiere in May 1957 on his 19th birthday, it was Shostakovich senior who ended up performing the concerto the most often, and who even went on to record it. Now one of his best-loved works, it is full of confidence, charm and energy.

At the time he wrote the concerto, Shostakovich must have been feeling brighter in spirits than he had done for a long time. The period 1948 to 1955 had been particularly bleak, culminating in the deaths of his wife Nina and then his mother. The death of Stalin in March 1953 did little to alleviate Shostakovich's sadness at these personal losses, but by 1956 it was becoming clearer that life under the new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev might be a substantial improvement. In a newly relaxed atmosphere, Shostakovich was able to hear the premieres of two works he hadn't been able



Marianela Núñez and Rupert Pennefather in the Royal Ballet's 2010 revival of *Concerto*, a ballet originally created by Kenneth MacMillan in 1966 from Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto

to release during Stalin's lifetime: the First Violin Concerto and his *Songs from Jewish Folk Poetry*, both dating from 1948. Creatively, the period from 1956 began to feel freer and more hopeful.

Quite suddenly, in the summer of 1956, Shostakovich remarried. His new wife, Margarita Kainova, was almost 20 years younger than him and a very odd match: a political activist working in the Communist youth organisation, the Komsomol. Despite the bafflement of Shostakovich's friends and family (and the fact that their marriage lasted only three years), at least initially the companionship seemed to bring Shostakovich some happiness. In the first year of his marriage to Margarita he composed some of his most cheerful music: the Sixth String Quartet, the Second Piano Concerto and his comic operetta, *Moscow, Cheryomushki*.

...

The Second Piano Concerto begins genially, with a sparkling opening theme. Compared with other 20th-century concertos, this one unfolds in a strikingly conventional way, as though Shostakovich was poking fun at the textbook sonata-form first movement. The second theme is obligingly in the relative minor (standard practice in the 18th century), while the start of the development section is humorously unsubtle, as if to remind us (or perhaps his son Maxim) what a sonata-form structure ought to sound like. The Classical-period reference continues with the slow movement: its wistful, almost prayerful opening for strings and piano entry vividly recalls the slow movement of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, with its gentle arpeggiated left hand and tender melodic descent. Finally back to the home key (F major) for the finale, the concerto concludes with a bright, cheeky march. This is a side of Shostakovich that did not surface often, and it was especially rare in his

later years; the Second Piano Concerto reminds us that a keen sense of humour was one of his most important character traits. When his third wife Irina Shostakovich was asked by a journalist in 1996 what people still didn't know about Shostakovich, she replied 'how he laughed'.

Programme note © Pauline Fairclough

Pauline Fairclough is a Professor of Music at the University of Bristol, and a specialist in Shostakovich and Soviet musical culture.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Both Shostakovich piano concertos were given UK concert premieres at the Proms. Eileen Joyce introduced the First at a Winter Prom in 1936 under that most indefatigable of Proms conductors, Henry Wood, and the Second in the main 1958 season under Malcolm Sargent. John Ogdon was responsible for a revival of the latter in 1961. Clive Lythgoe (purportedly the first concert pianist to perform in a polo shirt) followed suit in 1965 but it was in the 1980s that the work began to be played more frequently. It has accrued 13 renditions to date. The Last Night of 1992 featured a valedictory account from Tatiana Nikolayeva, the Soviet-era veteran who enjoyed a long working association with Shostakovich. Since then the concerto has been championed by Cristina Ortiz (1994), Steven Osborne (1998), Boris Berezovsky (2000), Alexander Melnikov (2013), Benjamin Grosvenor on another Last Night (2015) and by Denis Kozhukhin (2018).

© David Gutman

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH



Perhaps no other composer in history has been so beset by political debate as Dmitry Shostakovich. Within his homeland, his stature was quickly established and, at least after the monumental successes of his Fifth and Seventh symphonies (1937 and

1941), his pre-eminence as the foremost Soviet composer was never seriously questioned. Yet, along with several distinguished contemporaries, he endured periods of official disgrace and public humiliation in 1936 and 1948, as the pendulum of Stalinist cultural values swung in new, unpredictable directions. Certainly, after the harsh official criticism of his second opera, *The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, in 1936, he never completed another, becoming instead one of the 20th century's leading symphonists.

He paid a high price for his greatness: his visibility and stature within Soviet culture placed him in a position that could bring destruction just as easily as reward. From around 1936 – the year when the Stalinist purges began and he was first publicly attacked – to Stalin's death in 1953, he lived his career on a knife-edge that was unquestionably the source of the dark, often anguished tone of his music. But, miraculously, the sense of humour that had been a hallmark of his earlier style never wholly left him, and even right at the end of his life he could still write funny music. Alongside his 15 symphonies and 15 string quartets – all 'serious' works – there is a body of lighter music: ballets, incidental music, an operetta

(*Moscow, Cheryomushki*), film scores, a jazz suite and popular songs. He was a brilliant satirist, able to turn his gift for musical sarcasm as easily to hilarious effect as to tragedy. Sometimes he combined both extremes within a single work: the Sixth Symphony (1939), with its lamenting first movement and capering circus finale, is perhaps the clearest example of this in his orchestral music, while *The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* has few, if any, operatic rivals for its handling of tragi-comedy.

Although it is as chronicler of one of the cruellest dictatorships of the 20th century that Shostakovich is still most clearly remembered, it does him a disservice to focus exclusively on that part of his career. He lived for another 22 years beyond Stalin's death, during which time some of his best music was written: the majority of his string quartets, his last five symphonies and his masterly late song-cycles. Shostakovich wrote his last work, the Viola Sonata, as he lay dying in hospital; it was the only one of his mature compositions that he never heard performed.

Profile © Pauline Fairclough

MORE SHOSTAKOVICH AT THE PROMS

SUNDAY 3 SEPTEMBER, 2.00pm • PROMS AT PERTH*
Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57

*at Perth Concert Hall, as part of the 'Proms at' Chamber Concerts
For full Proms listings, and to book tickets, visit bbc.co.uk/proms.

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

Now playing on BBC Radio 3 ...

Backstage Pass Continuing her series, violinist Tasmin Little meets tonight's soloist, Pavel Kolesnikov.
Available on BBC Sounds



IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

The Firebird – fairy-tale ballet in two scenes (1909–10)

Introduction

Scene 1

Kashchey's enchanted garden – Appearance of the Firebird, pursued by Ivan Tsarevich – Dance of the Firebird – Ivan Tsarevich captures the Firebird – Supplication of the Firebird – Appearance of the 13 enchanted princesses – Game of the princesses with the golden apples (Scherzo) – Sudden appearance of Ivan Tsarevich – Khorovod (Round Dance) of the princesses – Daybreak – Magic carillon, appearance of Kashchey's monster-guardians and capture of Ivan Tsarevich – Arrival of Kashchey the Immortal – Kashchey's dialogue with Ivan Tsarevich – Intercession of the princesses – Appearance of the Firebird – Dance of Kashchey's entourage under the Firebird's spell – Infernal dance of all Kashchey's subjects – Lullaby (The Firebird) – Kashchey awakes – Death of Kashchey – Profound darkness

Scene 2

Kashchey's palace and spells vanish, return to life of the stone knights, general rejoicing

Stravinsky was 27, and unknown outside Russia, when Diaghilev commissioned him to write a ballet on the legend of the Firebird for his Russian ballet season in Paris in 1910. The only music by Stravinsky that had

previously been heard outside Russia was a pair of Chopin arrangements that he had made for *Les sylphides* in Diaghilev's 1909 season. These in turn had been a speculative commission by Diaghilev on the strength of a single hearing of Stravinsky's *Scherzo fantastique* at a St Petersburg concert in January 1909. Nor was Stravinsky Diaghilev's first choice for the *Firebird* project. Even though the Paris press had found fault with the 1909 season for the mediocre quality of its music as compared with the brilliantly innovative dance and design, Diaghilev's first instinct was still to shuffle the old Russian musical pack: he approached Lyadov and Tcherépnin (whose music had already been denigrated by the Paris critics), and considered asking Glazunov, among other orthodox Rimsky-Korsakov pupils, before finally taking the plunge with this largely untried son of a leading bass-baritone at the Mariinsky Opera.

Nobody knew what kind of music might correspond to the dazzling stage pictures of Bakst and Benois, or the intensely exciting and expressive choreography of Fokine. Even today, if we want to re-experience the frisson that ran through Proust's Paris when *The Firebird* finally had its premiere at the Opéra in June 1910, we have to put ourselves in the position of an audience who knew no orchestral music by Scriabin, little by Borodin or Rimsky-Korsakov and still less by Glinka or Glazunov. Stravinsky's music alludes, more or less directly, to these and others. It is, indeed, a highly derivative score, in quite a different sense from the later, neo-Classical works, which refer consciously to outside idioms in a complicated, perhaps partly ironic way. *The Firebird* has the simple derivativeness of inexperience.

The music's debt to Rimsky-Korsakov is instantly apparent to anyone who knows the late operas of that composer. The idea of representing the oppositions of good/evil and normal/magical through diatonic/



Photo 12/Alamy/Stock Photo

A portrait by Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861–1942) of the legendary Russian dancer Tamara Karsavina as the Firebird, a role she created in 1910; Anna Pavlova had been offered the part, but turned it down, finding Stravinsky's music too modern

chromatic harmony comes directly from *The Golden Cockerel*, but is in any case a commonplace of Russian 19th-century opera from Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* onwards. The folk-song manner of the princesses' round dance ('Khorovod') and the finale is pure *kuchkism*, derived from the colour variation technique of the Russian nationalists (the so-called *Moguchaya kuchka*, or 'Mighty Handful'), of whom Rimsky-Korsakov had been a leading member; indeed, the actual tunes of these two scenes were taken from Rimsky's own published collection of *100 Russian folk tunes*. But the score also draws on the very different style of Scriabin, whose work Stravinsky at the time still admired (later he was invariably rude about it). The 'Dance of the Firebird' is plainly indebted to the gasping, highly eroticised manner of *The Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus*, subsequently described by Stravinsky as 'those severe cases of musical emphysema'. And yet, in a good performance, the music's brilliance and assurance as a whole are still enough in themselves to take one's breath away. Combined with Fokine's choreography, his and Karsavina's dancing, and Golovine's and Bakst's intensely atmospheric designs, it had Paris at Stravinsky's feet overnight.

In later life Stravinsky turned against *The Firebird*, partly because he came to resent its popularity and the regularity with which he was invited to conduct it in preference to his more recent music, but partly also because of old-fashioned elements in the work's style and structure (for instance, the prominence of what he called 'pantomime' – action music of the kind he tended to cut out of his later ballets and particularly noticeable in a concert performance such as this of the complete ballet). At the time of the Paris premiere, though, the critics were more struck by the integration of music, dance and design – something to which Diaghilev had always aspired. Henri Ghéon thought the work 'the most exquisite marvel of equilibrium that we have ever

imagined between sounds, movements and forms'. And Stravinsky was immediately recognised as the equal of the great dancers and designers the press had so gushingly praised in 1909. For Michel Calvocoressi he was 'the only composer who has achieved more than mere attempts at promoting Russia's true musical spirit and style'. But even Calvocoressi can have had little inkling of what would soon become of this musical spirit and style.

The story is a standard-issue 19th-century Russian fairy tale. We are in the enchanted garden of Kashchey the Immortal, who turns people (especially princesses and knightly warriors) to stone. The Firebird appears, pursued by Prince Ivan, and tries to pick golden apples from the magic tree ('Dance of the Firebird'), but Ivan catches her and, despite her supplications, will only release her in return for a magic feather. The Firebird flies away, and at once 13 princesses emerge from Kashchey's castle ('Game of the princesses with the golden apples'). Prince Ivan confronts them (solo horn) and exchanges glances with the most beautiful one; the girls dance a round dance ('Khorovod of the princesses' – oboe solo). Ivan and the beautiful princess kiss. But dawn is breaking and the girls must return to the castle. Ivan tries to follow, but at once Kashchey's monstrous retinue spill out of the castle and seize him ('Magic carillon, appearance of Kashchey's monster-guardians and capture of Ivan Tsarevich').

Kashchey himself then appears and, despite the intercession of the princesses, tries to cast a spell on Ivan. But Ivan waves the magic feather and the Firebird reappears, herself lays a spell on the whole retinue and compels them to dance ('Infernal dance of all Kashchey's subjects'). Exhausted, they all fall asleep ('Lullaby'), and the Firebird shows Ivan the egg which contains Kashchey's soul. He dashes it to the ground, Kashchey dies and his captives are released.

In the brief second tableau, Ivan and the beautiful princess are married amid scenes of jubilation ('Kashchey's palace and spells vanish, return to life of the stone knights, general rejoicing').

Programme note © Stephen Walsh

Stephen Walsh is the author of a two-volume biography of Stravinsky, a study of the Russian nationalist composers known as the 'Five', a biography of Debussy and a history of musical Romanticism, *The Beloved Vision*. He is an Emeritus Professor of Cardiff University.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

When in 2016 Pavel Kolesnikov played the unedited text of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.2 here with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland under Ilan Volkov, the second half of the programme consisted of a complete *Firebird*, the last time Stravinsky's most extended ballet score was given in its entirety at a Prom. You could in fact have heard it between 2008 and 2016 in every season bar that of 2012. Fashions change. Until a Pierre Boulez/BBC Symphony Orchestra engagement in 1972 *The Firebird* had only ever been heard in cut-down form at the Proms. The other works on Boulez's typically exploratory all-Stravinsky programme were also novelties: the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* in its 1920 incarnation and *Le rossignol*. More recently, though not that recently, the full-length ballet was one of Valery Gergiev's favourites; he championed it here in 1996 with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and again in 2010 with the LSO, matching Boulez's tally with BBC forces. It was in 1913 that Henry Wood, the original conductor of the series, started the ball rolling with two renderings of Stravinsky's earliest *Firebird* highlights package. Since then performances have been many and disparate. In 1966 Stravinsky's 1919 suite featured in the final Last Night directed by so-called 'Prommers' darling' Malcolm Sargent, while Günter Wand in 1987 was among those opting for the tweaked and lengthier 1945 suite. In 2021 Nicholas Collon and the Aurora Orchestra similarly included several minutes of the pantomimes from the original score while dispensing with the sheet music and (most of) the conventional seating. Pavel Kolesnikov was again the soloist in a first half this time devoted to Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.

© David Gutman

IGOR STRAVINSKY



Son of a principal singer at the Imperial Opera in St Petersburg, Stravinsky had always been surrounded by music. He embarked on a law degree, ensuring fast-track entry into a civil service career, but his heart lay elsewhere. The great Russian composer

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov was intrigued enough by the young Stravinsky to take him on as a pupil, encouraging the writing of his First Symphony and giving him orchestration tasks based on his own operas. The breakthrough came with impresario Sergey Diaghilev's *Firebird* project, produced to satisfy the near-hysterical Parisian taste for all things Russian. Stravinsky was the last-minute choice to write the music after more senior composers had refused. The premiere at the Paris Opéra in 1910 was an unimaginable triumph and Stravinsky was thrust instantly into the international limelight.

Hungry to capitalise on this success, Diaghilev immediately commissioned further ballet scores from his newfound talent. *Petrushka* followed, representing a huge advance in the composer's musical language away from the shadow of his teacher. Then, in 1913, *The Rite of Spring* burst onto the stage. The work defines a high point in musical modernism: its reworking of ancient Russian melodies as a mechanical music spoke disturbingly of the turbulent age in which it was written. As ballet or concert piece, it can still challenge and unsettle listeners more than a century after its premiere.

The war years were spent in exile in Switzerland. Stravinsky began to simplify his musical language, while at the same time, cut off from his homeland, he produced some of his most 'Russian' works – *Renard* and *Les noces* ('The Wedding') among them. Paris after the war was a changed place, simultaneously melancholic and hedonistic. It turned its back on German Romanticism and, guided by the likes of Jean Cocteau, looked towards a chic kind of Classicism. Stravinsky followed suit with *Pulcinella*, *Apollo*, *Oedipus rex* and *Persephone*, all of which recast earlier music and cultures in order to assert a new order and directness of expression.

The prospect of Europe at war for a second time led Stravinsky to seek tranquillity in the USA, settling in Los Angeles. Following his only full-length opera, *The Rake's Progress* (premiered in 1951), and exceptionally for a man in his seventies, he again sought to renew his musical language. The late great works, including *Agon* and his final masterpiece, *Requiem Canticles*, engaged with the serial method championed by his old rival Schoenberg. Yet these pieces really only marked a further intensification of the classicising tendency evident in his music over the preceding 40 years.

'Stravinsky demeure' (Stravinsky remains): so proclaimed Pierre Boulez in 1951. Over seven decades on and more than half a century after the composer's death, it still holds true. If anything, his music is now heard more widely than ever before and he continues to speak powerfully even into the 21st century.

Profile © Jonathan Cross

Jonathan Cross is Professor of Musicology at Oxford University. He is the author of three books on Stravinsky and was Series Consultant to the Philharmonia Orchestra's *Stravinsky: Myths and Rituals* series, which won the South Bank Sky Arts Award for Classical Music in 2017.

MORE STRAVINSKY AT THE PROMS

SATURDAY 26 AUGUST, 7.30pm • PROM 55
Petrushka (1947 version)

SATURDAY 2 SEPTEMBER, 3.00pm & 7.30pm
PROMS 62 & 63
The Rite of Spring

FRIDAY 8 SEPTEMBER, 6.00pm
PROMS AT GREAT YARMOUTH*
Circus Polka

**as part of the 'Proms at' series
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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 5 Why Are Classical Audiences So Quiet?

There's a common illusion: that, as you leaf through this week's Proms listings in your Proms Festival Guide, online or elsewhere, you read the choice of repertoire on offer and you imagine that you know what to expect. And yes, I know there are major exceptions this week in the Audience Choice programme that the Budapest Festival Orchestra will play, because there it's up to us, the Proms-goers and Radio listeners, to decide what we hear; there are new sounds too that we haven't yet heard in the European premiere of Samy Moussa's Second Symphony, and the first performance in this country of György Kurtág's opera *Endgame* based on Samuel Beckett's play.

That's admittedly three exceptions, but bear with me! Because it's not only in those concerts where the unexpected falls upon us – the unknown and the unpredictable is *always* there, even in concerts in which you could hear every note of the music before you turn up to the Royal Albert Hall, from Mahler's Third Symphony with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus to Steve Reich's *Double Sextet* from the Manchester Collective (on Saturday in Proms 45 and 46).

That unpredictability is because of us, the Proms-goers. The audience aren't only the third point of the triangle of musical experience, as Benjamin Britten put it (the other geometrical essentials being, of course, the composers and performers) – we're more essential than that. Like the question of whether a tree makes a sound when it falls in the deep forest if there

are no witnesses, what does Mahler's Third Symphony really mean if only its performers hear it? If the Proms were only about the repertoire and not the realisations, then you could reduce the essence of every season to the list of concerts in the brochure. And, while the brochure is a handsome thing, it isn't the substance of the Proms. The map is not the territory, to coin a Jorge Luis Borges-ism; and a concert is an empty noise without its audience.

In the Royal Albert Hall, it's the unpredictable energy of attention we give to the performers that counts. We know from the historical record that symphonies, string quartets and operas by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Rossini – and by every composer of the late 18th and 19th centuries – were not designed to be received in reverential silence and were, in fact, composed in order to hear us reacting in real time, applauding and shushing as part of the performance. I wish we had the confidence to do that again, but I know I'm currently in a Promming minority. What I know for sure is that the silence at the end of Mahler's Third Symphony – that we all make together, just before the applause – is the secret destination of the whole piece, a paradoxically loud soundlessness that's one of the proofs of how we as an audience participate in musical creation. Even when we're being quiet, we're not being silent: the quickening spark of our listening is the vital energy of every Prom this season!

→ Next week: **All the King's Men (Masters of the King's Music)**

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).



Gemma New *conductor*

PROMS DEBUT ARTIST

New Zealand-born Gemma New is Artistic Advisor and Principal Conductor of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of Canada's Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, and previously served as Principal

Guest Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Resident Conductor of the St Louis Symphony Orchestra and Associate Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony. A former Dudamel Conducting Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Conducting Fellow at Tanglewood Music Center, she was granted Solti Foundation US Career Assistance Awards in 2017, 2019 and 2020 before receiving the 2021 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award.

In addition to her BBC Proms debut tonight, this summer includes her debut at the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York, a return to the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and appearances at Grant Park Festival in Chicago, Festival de La Chaise-Dieu with the Orchestre National de Lyon and Opera Theatre of St Louis, where she conducts Floyd's *Susannah*.

Next season includes her subscription debuts with the London and Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras, the Bamberg, Chicago and Vancouver Symphony orchestras and the Orchestre National de France, and a debut with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Concertgebouw. She also returns to the Atlanta, Barcelona, Malmö, Montreal and Seattle Symphony orchestras, Spanish National Orchestra, Orchestra of the Opéra de Rouen-Normandie, Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine and Hanover State Orchestra.



Pavel Kolesnikov *piano*

In 2012 Pavel Kolesnikov won the Honens International Piano Competition, the world's largest piano prize. The London-based artist was born in Siberia into a family of scientists. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory, London's Royal College of Music and the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Brussels. He was a member of BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme (2014–16).

He has given recitals at Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall, Carnegie Hall in New York, Berlin's Konzerthaus, the Louvre and Salle Gaveau in Paris, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam. In recent years he also performed at leading festivals, including Aldeburgh (where this year he was a featured artist), La Roque d'Anthéron, Musiq'3 in Brussels and Piano aux Jacobins in Toulouse, among others.

He regularly performs in piano duo with Samson Tsoy and collaborates with other musicians such as cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan, violist Lawrence Power and the Hermes and Calidore quartets. He formed Trio Aventure with Elina Buksha and Aurelien Pascal.

His award-winning discography ranges from Bach and Louis Couperin to Tchaikovsky and Chopin.

In 2019 he and Samson Tsoy founded the Ragged Music Festival, which takes place at the Ragged School Museum in London's East End.

Coming up at the Proms



Marco Borggreve

ANDRIS NELSONS

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST

PROM 52 JULIA ADOLPHE, STRAUSS & PROKOFIEV

6.30pm–c8.35pm • Royal Albert Hall

The mighty Boston Symphony Orchestra returns to the Proms under Music Director Andris Nelsons for the first of two concerts. Together they perform Prokofiev's defiant Fifth Symphony, Strauss's tone-poem *Death and Transfiguration* and Julia Adolphe's *Makeshift Castle*.



Timo Heikkala

ANNA-MARIA HELSING

MONDAY 28 AUGUST

PROM 57 FANTASY, MYTHS AND LEGENDS

7.00pm–c9.00pm • Royal Albert Hall

The BBC Concert Orchestra and conductor Anna-Maria Helsing recreate a host of classic fantasy soundtracks. We hear music from films such as *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* alongside TV themes from *Game of Thrones* and *His Dark Materials*.



E. Carén

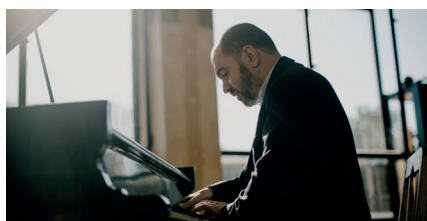
JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET

SATURDAY 26 AUGUST

PROM 55 CARLOS SIMON, STRAVINSKY, GERSHWIN & RAVEL

7.30pm–c9.45pm • Royal Albert Hall

Andris Nelsons and the Boston Symphony Orchestra give the European premiere of Carlos Simon's *Four Black American Dances*. Jean-Yves Thibaudet is the soloist in Gershwin's Piano Concerto, with Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and Ravel's *La valse* completing the programme.



Marco Borggreve

KIRILL GERSTEIN

THURSDAY 31 AUGUST

PROM 60 WEILL, THOMAS ADÈS & RACHMANINOV

7.30pm–c9.45pm • Royal Albert Hall

The esteemed Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra makes its Proms debut under Chief Conductor Vladimir Jurowski. Together they perform the suite from Kurt Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Thomas Adès's Piano Concerto (with soloist Kirill Gerstein) and Rachmaninov's final symphony.

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

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Formed in 1935, initially based in Edinburgh, then at Broadcasting House, Glasgow, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra has been based at Glasgow's City Halls since 2006. The BBC SSO is Scotland's national broadcasting orchestra and performs throughout Scotland, the rest of the UK and abroad, most recently touring to Vienna, Salzburg, Tokyo and Osaka (for the inaugural BBC Proms Japan). It maintains a busy schedule of broadcasts for BBC Radio 3 and BBC Sounds, BBC iPlayer, BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Television.

It is Scotland's leading champion of new music and presents Tectonics, an annual festival of new and experimental music. It has established strong links with local communities through its learning and engagement programmes in collaboration with its Associate Artist, Lucy Drever. It is a partner in Big Noise, Scotland's project for social change through music; it plays a major role in the BBC's Ten Pieces initiative; and has a close association with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, working across a variety of disciplines with conductors, composers, soloists and orchestral players. The orchestra appears regularly at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival and is a recipient of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award and of four *Gramophone* Awards.

Ryan Wigglesworth made his debut as Chief Conductor of the BBC SSO in September last year. One of the foremost composer-conductors of his generation, he has since directed a wide range of repertoire with the orchestra, including a UK premiere from its new Composer in Association, Hans Abrahamsen, as well as works by Messiaen to mark the 30th anniversary of the composer's death.

Chief Conductor
Ryan Wigglesworth

Principal Guest Conductor
Ilan Volkov

Associate Artist
Lucy Drever

Conductor Emeritus
Sir Donald
Runnicles

Conductor Laureate
Jerzy Maksymiuk

Composer in Association
Hans Abrahamsen

First Violins
Kanako Ito
leader
David Routledge*
Emre Engin
Jane Mackenzie
Elita Poulter
Gent Koço
Olivier Lemoine
Kobus Frick
Katrina Lee
Wen Wang
Jane Lemoine
Fiona Stephen
Laura Ghiro
Abigail Young
Iona McDonald
Emilie Godden

Second Violins
Lise Aferiat*
Liza Johnson ‡
Tom Hankey
Katie Hull
Julia Norton
Alex Gascoine
Janis Walton
Julia Carpenter
Barbara Downie
Ana do Vale
Susanna Griffin
Julia Lungu
Daniel Stroud
Giulia Bizzi

Violas
Scott Dickinson*
Andrew Berridge †
Morag Robertson
Fiona Robertson
Rhoslyn Lawton
Martin Wiggins

Rik Evans
Alice Batty
Mary Ward
Emma Connell-Smith
Yvette Rosie
Rachel Davis

Cellos
Rudi De Groote*
Alison Lawrance †
Balazs Renczes
Amanda Shearman
Gill De Groote
Anne Brincourt
Feargus Egan
Andrew Huggan
Elias Rooney
Laura Sergeant

Double Bases
Gyunam Kim*
Iain Crawford †
Hugh Sparrow
Derek Hill
Paul Speirs
Genna Spinks
Lynette Eaton
Daniel Griffin

Flutes
Matthew Higham ¥
Brontë Hudnott †
Alasdair Garrett
Luke Russell †

Piccolo
Luke Russell †

Oboes

Stella McCracken*
 Alexandra Hilton†
 Mary James
 James Horan†

Cor Anglais

James Horan†

Clarinets

Yann Ghiro*
 Adam Lee†
 Lesley Bell
 Simon
 Butterworth†

Bass Clarinet

Simon
 Butterworth†

Bassoons

Charlotte Cox‡
 Graeme Brown†
 Peter Wesley†
 Rhiannon
 Carmichael

Contrabassoon

Peter Wesley†

Horns

Lauren Reeve
 Rawlings‡
 Hector Salgueiro
 Oliver Johnson‡
 Millán Molina
 Helena Jacklin

Trumpets

Mark O'Keeffe*
 Mark Calder
 Hedley Benson

Trombones

Simon Johnson*
 Jonathan Hollick†

Bass Trombone

Alexander Kelly†

Euphonium

Jonathan Hollick†

Tuba

Andrew Duncan*

Timpani

Gordon Rigby*

Percussion

Paul Stoneman‡
 David Lyons
 Martin Willis
 David Kerr
 Kate Openshaw

Harp

Helen Thomson
 Sharron Griffiths
 Zuzanna Olbrys

Piano

Lynda Cochrane

Celesta

Andrew Forbes

Wagner Tubas (off-stage)

Flora Bain
 Diana Sheach
 Dan Curzon
 Jacob Bagby

Trumpets (off-stage)

David Carstairs
 John Young
 Gideon Brooks

Percussion (off-stage)

Jonathan
 Chapman

* *Section Principal*

† *Principal*

‡ *String Sub-Principal*

‡ *Guest Principal*

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

Director

Dominic Parker

Content Assistant

Joanna Charnock

Assistant Orchestra Manager

Ian Coulter

Music Librarian

Julian de Ste Croix

Head of Marketing and Communications

Michael Devlin

Business Manager

Shona Kyle

Stage Manager

Steven Lamb

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Johnny Laville

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Marketing Co-ordinator

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Orchestra Manager

Richard Nelson

Business**Co-ordinator**

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 Rutherford

Business Co-ordinator

Emma Simpson

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Alison Rhynas

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Douglas Templeton

Head of Artistic Planning and Production

Andrew Trinick

BBC

Scottish
Symphony
Orchestra

ESCAPE INTO

PIANO HEAVEN.
DREAMS & PASSIONS.
MYTH & MELANCHOLY.
BEAUTY OF NATURE.
DAZZLING VIRTUOSITY.
FOLKTALES & MISCHIEF.
SWEEPING MELODIES.
UNRESTRAINED JOY.
ADVENTURE. PULSE-
RAISING PASSION.

MUSIC

2023/24 Season

A survey of Stravinsky's ballet music continues, including *Orpheus* and *The Fairy's Kiss* with **Chief Conductor Ryan Wigglesworth**

BBC Commissions from **Lisa Illean, Roxanna Panufnik, Michael Parsons** and **Jörg Widmann**

A celebration of 20 years of music-making with **Principal Guest Conductor Ilan Volkov**, including music by **Cassandra Miller, Howard Skempton, Berlioz** and **Stravinsky**

Violinist **Bomsori Kim** is a 2023/24 Featured Artist, performing concertos by **Sibelius** and **Szymanowski** (No.1)

Concerts in **Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow** and across Scotland, on **BBC Sounds, BBC iPlayer, BBC Radio 3** and **BBC Radio Scotland**

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Ryan Wigglesworth
Chief Conductor

RADIO **3**