



Large Print Concert Programme

Thursday 3 February 2022 7–9.05pm

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Symphony No 14 in G minor Op 135 (1969)

Dmitri Shostakovich

- 1 Adagio: 'De profundis' (Lorca)
- 2 Allegretto: 'Malagueña' (Lorca)
- 3 Allegro molto: 'Loreley' (Apollinaire)
- 4 Adagio: 'Le suicidé' (Apollinaire)
- 5 Allegretto: 'Les attentives I' (Apollinaire)
- 6 Adagio: 'Les attentives II' (Apollinaire)
- 7 Adagio: 'À la Santé' (Apollinaire)
- 8 Allegro: 'Réponse des Cosaques Zaporogues au Sultan de Constantinople' (Apollinaire)
- 9 Andante: 'O, Delvig, Delvig!' (Küchelbecker)
- 10 Largo: 'Der Tod des Dichters' (Rilke)
- 11 Moderato: 'Schlußstück' (Rilke)

In failing health from his mid-fifties, Dmitri Shostakovich was admitted to hospital in January 1969 and came out a month later with a whole bunch of songs on the theme of death. It was a project he had been considering for some while. The hospital stay upped the urgency, and within a fortnight of leaving he had scored his death songs for an orchestra of strings and percussion, intending the work for the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and its founder-conductor Rudolf Barshai. Formerly viola player of the Borodin Quartet, which had a close relationship with Shostakovich for a quarter-century, Barshai duly conducted the opening performances in Moscow and Leningrad in September 1969.

Endorsing the work's symphonic character, the songs form themselves, according to whether or not they are run together, into five movements: 1; 2-3-4; 5-6-7; 8-9 and 10-11. The integrity of these movements is further strengthened by motivic connections within them, and the integrity of the work as a whole by the full reprise the tenth song makes. Each movement, until the last, ends with an adagio (slow) section.

Dmitri Shostakovich

1906 to 1975 (Russia)

After early piano lessons with his mother, Dmitri Shostakovich enrolled at the Petrograd Conservatoire in 1919. His early successes included the First Symphony (1924–25). Shostakovich announced his Fifth Symphony of 1937 as ‘a Soviet artist’s practical creative reply to just criticism’. A year before its premiere he had drawn a stinging attack from the official Soviet mouthpiece Pravda, in which Shostakovich’s initially successful opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* was condemned for its ‘leftist bedlam’ and extreme modernism. With the Fifth Symphony came acclaim not only from Russian audiences, but also internationally.

In July 1941, during the Siege of Leningrad, Shostakovich began work on the first three movements of his Seventh Symphony, completing the defiant finale after his evacuation in October and dedicating the score to the city. In 1948 he and other leading composers, Sergei Prokofiev among them, were forced by the Soviet Cultural Commissar, Andrey Zhdanov, to concede that their work represented ‘most strikingly the formalistic perversions and anti-democratic tendencies in music’, a crippling blow to Shostakovich’s artistic freedom that was healed only after the death of Stalin in 1953.

Shostakovich continued to compose until weeks before his death in August 1975.

Symphony No 7 in A major Op 92 (1811–12)

Ludwig van Beethoven

- 1 Poco sostenuto – Vivace
- 2 Allegretto
- 3 Presto
- 4 Allegro con brio

When it came to noting down ‘meanings’ for his major works, the movement titles and specific birdcalls of the Sixth ‘Pastoral’ Symphony are about as explicit as Beethoven got.

Ludwig van Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony is not so easy to pin down. The rhythms which dominate each one of its movements have given rise to one oft-quoted appraisal: composer Richard Wagner’s description of it as ‘the apotheosis of the dance’. But by the time the Seventh Symphony has ended, has it not expressed a purer and freer form of euphoria than might primarily be associated with dancing? The modern Beethoven scholar David Wyn Jones has suggested that in this symphony Beethoven set himself the challenge of moulding a ‘continuous, cumulative celebration of joy’, which seems a more accurate assessment than Wagner’s.

It starts with a massive slow introduction. Its leisurely wind themes contain few hints of the energy soon to be unleashed, but there is a coiled-spring quality to the heavy accents and upward

string scales which accompany them. When the main part of the first movement arrives, however, it is not with a rush but with a gentle slide into the principal theme, a lilting melody announced by the flute.

The second movement is one of the most striking in all of Beethoven's symphonies, and one of the most immediately influential. It was encored at the first performance – a testament no doubt both to its extraordinary affecting power and its 'stand-out' quality within the symphony – and it did not take long for it to make its mark on other composers.

With the third movement we return to the prevailingly joyful tenor of the work.

In the finale the music reaches its peak of elation in an unstoppable swirl of ebullience and energy, driven along by off-beat accents and prodding repeated-note figures. For the listener there is really little choice here but to abandon oneself to the music's engulfing exuberance.

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770 (Germany) to 1827 (Austria)

Ludwig van Beethoven showed early musical promise, yet reacted against his father's attempts to train him as a child prodigy. The boy pianist attracted the support of the Prince-Archbishop Maximilian Franz, who supported his studies with leading musicians at the Bonn court. With the decline of his alcoholic father, Ludwig became the family breadwinner as a court musician.

Encouraged by his employer, the Prince-Archbishop, Beethoven travelled to Vienna to study with Joseph Haydn. The younger composer fell out with his renowned mentor when the latter discovered he was secretly taking lessons from several other teachers. Beethoven soon attracted support from some of the city's wealthiest arts patrons. His public performances in 1795 were well received, and he shrewdly negotiated a contract with Artaria & Co, the largest music publisher in Vienna.

From 1800 Beethoven began to complain bitterly of deafness. Despite this, he continued to create many remarkable compositions, including symphonies, concertos, chamber music and the opera *Fidelio*. In his final years he produced masterpieces that include the *Missa solemnis*, Symphony No 9, and the late piano sonatas and string quartets.

Gianandrea Noseda

LSO Principal Guest Conductor

Gianandrea Noseda is one of the world's most sought-after conductors, equally recognised for his artistry in the concert hall and opera house. He is Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra.

A native of Milan, Noseda is a Commendatore al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, marking his contribution to the artistic life of Italy. In 2015, he was *Musical America's* Conductor of the Year, and was named the International Opera Awards Conductor of the Year in 2016.

Elena Stikhina

soprano

Russian soprano Elena Stikhina has made spectacular debuts in recent seasons at the Paris Opera (as Tatyana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*) and at the Metropolitan Opera, New York (as the title role in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*), and has gone on to sing for many leading companies worldwide.

Since the 2017/18 season she has triumphed at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Berlin Staatsoper, Dresden Semperoper, Baden-Baden Festspielhaus, and in concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, with the Munich Philharmonic and at the Paris Philharmonie.

Vitalij Kowaljow

bass

Praised for the depth and richness of his voice, Vitalij Kowaljow has established himself in recent years as one of the leading basses in the opera scene. Among his more than 40 performed roles are Filippo II in *Don Carlo*, Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra*, Zaccaria in *Nabucco*, Banco in *Macbeth*, Ramphis in *Aida*, Barbarossa in *La battaglia di Legnano*, Procida in *I vespri siciliani*, Padre Guardiano in *La forza del destino*, Walter in *Luisa Miller* and the title-role in *Attila* (all by Verdi). Moreover, he has appeared as Wotan and Der Wanderer in Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and Russian language roles as Prince Igor (Borodin), Pimen in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and Prince Gremin in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

London Symphony Orchestra

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Today, we are ranked among the world's top orchestras. As Resident Orchestra at the Barbican, we perform 70 concerts here every year. Our family of artists includes Music Director Sir Simon Rattle, Principal Guest Conductors Gianandrea Noseda and François-Xavier Roth, and Conductor Laureate Michael Tilson Thomas.

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In 1999, we formed our own recording label, LSO Live, and revolutionised how live orchestral music is recorded, with over 150 recordings released so far.

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