



LSO

**MÁ
VLAST**

barbican

Resident
Orchestra

London Symphony Orchestra

Sunday 14 October 2018
Barbican Hall

7-8.25pm

LSO SEASON CONCERT
CZECH ROOTS

Smetana *Má vlast*
No interval

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider conductor

5.30pm Barbican Hall
LSO Platforms: Guildhall Artists
Free pre-concert recital

Smetana String Quartet No 1
Accendo Quartet

Welcome



The LSO's 2018/19 season at the Barbican continues in this evening's concert. We are delighted to welcome back Nikolaj-Szeps Znaider, who tonight conducts Smetana's *Má vlast*, a cycle of symphonic poems reflecting the landscape and culture of the composer's Czech homeland.

The theme of roots and origins runs through the LSO's 2018/19 season, and tonight's programme continues a strand of concerts exploring the music of Czech composers. Czech Roots also includes a series of BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime Concerts at LSO St Luke's in May and June next year, and a new production of Janáček's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, directed by Peter Sellars and co-produced by the Barbican, in June 2019.

A pre-concert performance given by a quartet of students from the Guildhall School also took place this evening. These recitals, which are free to attend, take place on selected dates throughout the season and provide a platform for the musicians of the future.

I hope you enjoy the performance and that you will be able to join us again soon. Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider will join the Orchestra on-stage once again this month, appearing as the soloist in Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No 2 on 25 October, in a concert which also marks conductor Philippe Jordan's LSO debut. Before that, Jaime Martín conducts a programme of music inspired by his native Spain on 21 October, joined by soloist Christian Tetzlaff.

Kathryn McDowell CBE DL
Managing Director

LSO News

LSO EAST LONDON ACADEMY

Developed in partnership with ten East London boroughs, the LSO East London Academy is the first step on a path to making the Orchestra truly representative of its community in London. Opening at LSO St Luke's in spring 2019, it aims to identify and develop the potential of young East Londoners who show exceptional musical talent, irrespective of their background or financial circumstance.

▷ iso.co.uk/news

LIVE-STREAMED CONCERTS

The LSO's concert at the Barbican on 19 September, featuring Sir Simon Rattle conducting music by Janáček and Sibelius, was streamed live on YouTube and medici.tv, and is now available to watch again for free.

We invite you to tune in for our next live-stream: the final of the Donatella Flick LSO Conducting Competition on 22 November, which will be broadcast for free on medici.tv.

▷ iso.co.uk/livestream

On Our Blog

NIKOLAJ SZEPS-ZNAIDER: WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A CONDUCTOR

'The moment we stop being curious, the creative process stops' – conductor and virtuoso violinist Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider talks about what a conductor does and what it takes to be a great one.

VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON: 'TO KEEP EXPERIMENTING IS THE DREAM'

On Friday 21 September, Icelandic pianist Víkingur Ólafsson paid a flying visit to LSO St Luke's to perform a recital as part of our BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert series. We talked to Víkingur about music in Iceland, recording Bach, and how a fish factory in Iceland's West Fjords became the setting for his latest music video.

▷ iso.co.uk/blog

WELCOME TO TONIGHT'S GROUPS

Tonight we are delighted to welcome **Gerrards Cross Community Association**

Tonight's Concert



metana's *Má vlast* (My Country) reflects a decisive moment of Czech national revival, as the people reasserted their identity after 200 years of cultural and political domination by Austria. The cycle celebrates the unique history, mythology and landscape of Bohemia, using the form of the symphonic poem, a name which describes musical works written for symphonic forces with a real-world or fictional narrative in mind.

The first symphonic poem, 'Vyšehrad', refers to a fortress above the river Vltava's entry to Prague, and the music traces a journey through triumph to catastrophe. The second movement is woven through with an evocative folk melody representing the Vltava as it flows past forests and a rustic wedding before arriving in the capital itself. The third movement tells the bloody, mythological tale of Šárka, a spurned lover who is captured by warriors and subsequently seeks vengeance alongside a band of rebel women.

The second half of the cycle begins depicting the Bohemian countryside and 'Czech life in work and dance', before the final two closely connected movements reintroduce martial themes. 'Tábor' is the name of a town that was a stronghold of the Hussites, religious

reformers of the Middle Ages, and the musical fabric is pervaded by a melody taken from a Hussite chorale.

Following the Hussites' ultimate defeat, their warriors were said to lie sleeping on the hill of Blaník until the Czech nation should call upon them in their hour of need. In a quiet interlude during the final piece of the cycle, a shepherd boy pipes on the hillside. He is answered by a distant horn call and the music intensifies to a stirring conclusion.

PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTORS

Jan Smaczny is Hamilton Harty Professor of Music at Queen's University, Belfast. A well-known writer and broadcaster, his musical specialisms include the life and works of Dvořák and Czech opera, and he has published books on the repertoire of the Prague Provisional Theatre and Dvořák's Cello Concerto.

Andrew Stewart is a freelance music journalist and writer. He is the author of *The LSO at 90*, and contributes to a wide variety of specialist classical music publications.

Coming Up: LSO Season Concerts

Sunday 21 October 7-9.10pm
Barbican Hall

De Falla Scenes and Dances from 'The Three Cornered Hat' Part I
De Falla Three Dances from 'The Three Cornered Hat' Part II
Lalo Symphonie espagnole *
Stravinsky The Firebird – Suite (1945)

Jaime Martín conductor
Christian Tetzlaff violin *

Thursday 25 October 7.30-9.40pm
Barbican Hall

Mussorgsky Night on the Bare Mountain (original version)
Szymanowski Violin Concerto No 2
Tchaikovsky Symphony No 5

Philippe Jordan conductor
Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider violin

Thursday 1 November 7.30-9.50pm
Barbican Hall

Kodály Dances of Galánta
James MacMillan Trombone Concerto
Shostakovich Symphony No 4

Gianandrea Noseda conductor
Peter Moore trombone

Sunday 4 November 7-9.10pm
Barbican Hall

James MacMillan
All the Hills and Vales Along *
Shostakovich Symphony No 4

Gianandrea Noseda conductor
Ian Bostridge tenor
London Symphony Chorus
Simon Halsey chorus director
National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain

*Commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra and **14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions**, with the world premieres taking place at The Cumnock Tryst festival (chamber version) on 6 October 2018 and LSO (orchestral version) on 4 November 2018.

14-18-NOW

WW1 CENTENARY ART COMMISSIONS

Generously supported by **LSO Patrons**.

Part of the Barbican's

For the Fallen: Marking the First World War Centenary.

Bedřich Smetana *Má vlast* 1874–79 / note by Jan Smaczny

- 1 Vyšehrad
- 2 Vltava
- 3 Šárka
- 4 Z českých luhů a hájů
(From Bohemia's Woods and Fields)
- 5 Tábor
- 6 Blaník



ny holiday-maker who has ventured beyond Prague into the Bohemian and Moravian countryside will know that the capital, for all its glories, does not have a monopoly on visual beauty in the Czech Republic. Many Czechs feel the woods and fields of their native land to be a strong part of their national identity. Much the same was true in the 19th century when – after nearly 200 years in which their politics, language and culture had been dominated by Austria, when Prague had dwindled to the status of a mere provincial capital – the Czechs were beginning to stir again.

Having already made a decisive contribution to Czech music with opera in the 1860s, with such works as *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* and *The Bartered Bride*, it is hardly surprising that in this environment of strong national revival Smetana turned his attention in the 1870s to composing *Má*

vlast, a cycle of symphonic poems designed to celebrate the history, mythology and landscape of Bohemia. Unfortunately, soon after beginning work, Smetana became rapidly and completely deaf – a catastrophic blow for any musician, but particularly disastrous for one who earned the major part of his living from conducting. Thus, the music of *Má vlast* gained from Smetana's identification of personal suffering with the vicissitudes and triumphs of his nation.

Smetana's diary recounts that he began work on the score of 'Vyšehrad', the first part of *Má vlast*, in September 1874, completing it on 18 November; it is likely, however, from evidence based on different coloured inks in the manuscript, that the opening for two harps was originally written for one and begun as early as 1872. The completion of 'Vyšehrad' created sufficient impetus for Smetana to begin the second symphonic poem, 'Vltava', two days later, on 20 November, and finish it by 8 December. He started work on the third movement of the cycle, 'Šárka', in January the following year and the score was complete by 20 February.

Smetana's original plan for the cycle might well have included nine symphonic poems, and 'From Bohemia's Woods and Fields' was

going to be placed third; its repositioning as the start of the second part of the cycle, precluding the more militaristic movements 'Tábor' and 'Blaník', is far more effective. Smetana began work on 'From Bohemia's Woods and Fields' in early June 1875, completing it on 18 October, and there the cycle might have ended. However, it seems that the grand climax of that movement inspired him to add the two further movements, completing them on 13 December 1878 and 9 March 1879 respectively.

1 VYŠEHRAD

The first symphonic poem takes its name from the high rock standing above the river Vltava's entry into Prague. According to legend, it was the fortress home of the first Bohemian kings. An atmosphere of distant times is conjured up by a cadenza on the harps, evocative of the predictions of an ancient poet. The memorable first theme represents the rock itself – Smetana's symbol of the Czech nation – followed by a rising and falling arpeggio signifying Bohemia's glory. Both motifs play an important part in later movements and return at the end of 'Blaník' as the climax of the whole cycle.

According to the composer, who supplied introductions to each of the symphonic poems in the first edition, a bard sings of the nation's triumphs and finally of its downfall when glory is but a memory. The musical substance of this depiction is a broad Allegro vivo in which thematic fragments build to a thrilling and noble climax followed by catastrophe, illustrated by a series of crushing diminished chords, and a muted elegiac close.

2 VLTAVA

'Vltava' is an eclectic movement. The evocative melody which runs through the composition – just as the river it depicts flows through the Bohemian countryside – derives from a Swedish folksong. Another source could be the distinctly similar 'Ballada' in Karel Šebor's opera *The Templars in Moravia*, which Smetana knew well. The rippling introduction might well have been inspired by another Czech opera, Josef Rozkošný's *The Rapids of St John*. Needless to say, Smetana superseded both models and produced one of the finest examples of 'topographical' music ever written.

We first catch sight of the river as two springs – one cold, one warm – unite in the

lovely countryside of South Bohemia. The river passes through a forest from which we hear the sounds of a hunt, then on past a rustic wedding, characterised by Smetana's favourite Polka. After an interlude in which water nymphs play in the moonlight, the stream turns into a torrent roaring over the Rapids of St John, south of Prague. The climax comes as the river flows into the capital itself past Vyšehrad, the point at which the opening theme of the first symphonic poem returns in triumph.

3 ŠÁRKA

The third symphonic poem returns to the world of mythology to tell the stirring tale of Šárka, who, because of an unfaithful lover, has sworn vengeance on men and taken to the woods with a band of rebel women. A furious introduction is followed by the arrival of male warriors led by Ctirad. Šárka is tied to a tree by her fellows as a decoy for Ctirad who, in almost Wagnerian ecstasy, falls in love with her. After she is freed, the men rejoice drunkenly – depicted by a tipsy Polka – and fall deeply asleep. After a moment's uncertainty, Šárka blows her horn as a signal and the women descend to slaughter the men.

4 Z ČESKÝCH LUHŮ A HÁJŮ (FROM BOHEMIA'S WOODS AND FIELDS)

After the blood and thunder of 'Šárka', Smetana begins the second half of his cycle with a picture of the natural beauties of the Bohemian landscape, evoking 'Czech life in work and dance'. The powerful opening depicts the impact of the countryside on stepping into nature's realm. The singing of birds, the sound of trees, and streams stirred gently by the wind form the background to the entry of a richly nostalgic melody on the horns, representing nature itself. A more specifically rustic episode with a Polka leads to the extended finale in which all the themes are combined, generating feelings of optimism and well-being.

5 TÁBOR

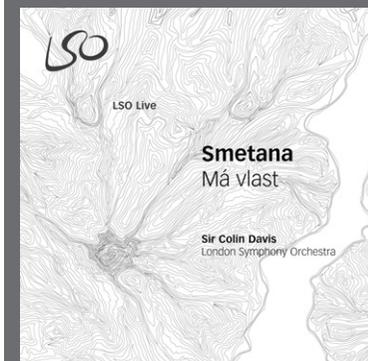
The last two poems of the cycle are closely united, both by their story and by musical means. Tábor is a South-Bohemian town, which in the Middle Ages was a stronghold of the Hussites, the followers of the religious reformer Jan Hus who challenged the Catholic Church long before Luther, and who established a flourishing dissident sect. The theme, which pervades the musical fabric and acts as a motto, is the Hussite

chorale 'Ye who are warriors of God'. This stern melody was used by many Czech composers as a symbol both of national identity and hatred of intellectual and political oppression. The music seeks to depict tension before battle, then triumph and vicissitude, with the piety and dignity of the Hussites much in evidence. Although the chorale is heard at the end in full panoply, the conclusion is uncertain and open-ended.

6 BLANÍK

The answer to the question posed in the last bars of 'Tábor' comes in the crushing opening of 'Blaník'. Following their ultimate defeat – which serves as a symbol for all defeats of the Czech nation – the Hussite warriors ride to the hill of Blaník where they lie sleeping until their nation calls on them in its final moment of need. The ride of the warriors, with continuous reference to the Hussite chorale, is followed by an affecting interlude. Centuries have passed and a shepherd boy plays his pipe on the hillside; from the distance comes an answering echo on a horn, a sign that the warriors still wait beneath the hill. With this boost to morale, the temperature of the music rises and, in a stirring conclusion, the themes of 'Vyšehrad' return combined with the Hussite chorale. □

MÁ VLAST ON LSO LIVE



Sir Colin Davis conductor

Sir Colin Davis' recordings of Czech music are prized for their strength and sensitivity. This 2005 recording of Smetana's *Má vlast* is no exception and is a rare example of the complete cycle being captured live in its entirety, here in the Barbican Hall.

isolive.co.uk

Bedřich Smetana in Profile 1824–84



Born in the East Bohemian town of Litomyšl on 2 March 1824, Bedřich Smetana became the first composer of genuine talent to reflect Czech stories, characters and even the country's scenery in his music. The first of eleven children to survive infancy, he took music lessons from his father, a master brewer and amateur violinist. Smetana moved to Prague in 1843 with his wife, teaching piano and studying composition with Josef Proksch. After the Prague Revolution of 1848, the German-speaking Smetana began to learn Czech. He moved to Sweden in 1856 and prospered there as a pianist, conductor and composer.

Political changes in Bohemia convinced Smetana to return to Prague in 1861, where he became principal conductor of the newly established Provisional Theatre. He almost single-handedly created a repertoire of Czech operas, his *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor* outstanding among them. Traditionalists within the press and the conservative directors of the theatre opposed Smetana's attempts to alter the status quo, preferring Italian, French and German imports to the composer's bold Czech operas.

Smetana stood up to his many critics but was forced to resign in 1874 following the onset of syphilis. Although he soon became totally deaf, the composer created a cycle of six symphonic poems, *Má vlast*, embodying the prevailing spirit of Czech nationalism, and a series of emotionally turbulent late works. Professional success countered the composer's depression and brought some comfort to his state of severe physical pain and mental distress. He was admitted to Prague's asylum for the insane three weeks before his death on 12 May 1884. □

Composer Profile by Andrew Stewart

LSO AT THE BARBICAN



Thursday 27 June 2019 7.30pm

Saturday 29 June 2019 7.30pm

Janáček *The Cunning Little Vixen*

(semi-staged performance, sung in Czech)

Sir Simon Rattle conductor

Peter Sellars director

Lucy Crowe *Vixen* (pictured above)

Gerald Finley Forester

Sophia Burgos Fox, Chocholka

Peter Hoare Schoolmaster, Cock, Mosquito

Jan Martiník Badger, Parson

London Symphony Chorus

Simon Halsey chorus director

Ben Zamora lighting designer

Nick Hillel video designer

Hans Georg Lenhardt assistant director

Produced by the LSO and the Barbican. Part of the LSO 2018/19 Season and Barbican Presents.

barbican

CZECH ROOTS

BBC RADIO 3 LUNCHTIME CONCERTS AT LSO ST LUKE'S

Friday 10 May 2019 1pm

Martinů, Voříšek, Janáček & Smetana
with Christian Ihle Hadland piano

Friday 31 May 2019 1pm

Janáček, Suk & Schulhoff
with Chloë Hanslip violin
Danny Driver piano

Friday 7 June 2019 1pm

Janáček & Dvořák
with LSO Wind Ensemble

Friday 14 June 2019 1pm

Janáček & Smetana
with Meccore Quartet



lso.co.uk/201819season

14 October 2018

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider conductor



The 2017/18 season saw Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider give acclaimed performances conducting the LSO, Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony and Cleveland orchestras. This season and next, he returns to the Orchestre National de Lyon, Detroit Symphony, Montreal Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra and Luxembourg Philharmonic, and expands the list of opera houses he appears with by making debuts with the Semperoper Dresden and the Hamburg Opera. Alongside this he continues his Nielsen project with the Odense Symphony Orchestra, conducting and recording the complete symphonies. Also a virtuoso violinist of distinction, he features as Artist in Residence with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, both performing with and conducting the orchestra in a series of concerts across the 2018/19 season, including his conducting debut at the Musikverein and a European tour with Philippe Jordan.

Szeps-Znaider has a particularly strong relationship with the LSO, making appearances with the Orchestra as both conductor and soloist every season. They recently recorded the complete Mozart Violin Concertos together, with Szeps-Znaider directing from the violin. The first

album, comprising Concertos 4 and 5, was released on LSO Live in March 2018 with *The Strad* describing Szeps-Znaider's playing as 'possibly among the most exquisite violin sound ever captured on disc'. Concertos 1, 2 and 3 follow in November 2018.

His extensive discography also includes the Nielsen Concerto with Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic, Elgar's Concerto in B minor with the late Sir Colin Davis and the Staatskapelle Dresden, award-winning recordings of the Brahms and Korngold concertos with Valery Gergiev and the Vienna Philharmonic, the Beethoven and Mendelssohn concertos with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic, the Prokofiev Concerto No 2 and Glazunov Concerto with Mariss Jansons and the Bavarian Radio Symphony, and the Mendelssohn Concerto on DVD with Riccardo Chailly and the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Szeps-Znaider has also recorded the complete works of Brahms for violin and piano with Yefim Bronfman.

Szeps-Znaider is passionate about supporting the next generation of musical talent and spent ten years as Founder and Artistic Director of the annual Nordic Music Academy summer school. He is now President of the Nielsen Competition, which takes place every three years in Odense, Denmark.

Szeps-Znaider plays the 'Kreisler' Guarnerius 'del Gesù' 1741 on extended loan to him by The Royal Danish Theater, through the generosity of the VELUX Foundations, the Villum Fonden and the Knud Højgaard Foundation. □

MORE NIKOLAJ SZEPS-ZNAIDER IN 2018/19

**Thursday 25 October 2018 7.30pm
Barbican Hall**

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider returns to perform Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No 2 with the LSO and Philippe Jordan, in a programme also featuring Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony.

Buy tickets at Iso.co.uk/whats-on

London Symphony Orchestra on stage tonight

Guest Leader

Julien Szulman

First Violins

Carmine Lauri
Ginette Decuyper
Gerald Gregory
Maxine Kwok-Adams
Claire Parfitt
Elizabeth Pigram
Laurent Quénelle
Harriet Rayfield
Sylvain Vasseur
Rhys Watkins
Morane Cohen-Lamberger
Laura Dixon
Hilary Jane Parker
Erzsebet Racz
Helena Smart

Second Violins

David Alberman
Thomas Norris
Sarah Quinn
Miya Väisänen
Matthew Gardner
Julian Gil Rodriguez
Naoko Keatley
Belinda McFarlane
Andrew Pollock
Ingrid Button
Alix Lagasse
Gordon MacKay
Greta Mutlu
Csilla Pogany

Violas

Edward Vanderspar
Gillianne Haddow
Malcolm Johnston
Anna Bastow
German Clavijo
Robert Turner
Paloma Cueto-Felgueroso Mejias
May Dolan
Stephanie Edmundson
Nancy Johnson
Cynthia Perrin
Sofia Silva Sousa

Cellos

Rebecca Gilliver
Alastair Blayden
Jennifer Brown
Eve-Marie Caravassilis
Daniel Gardner
Hilary Jones
Penny Driver
Victoria Harrild
Kim Mackrell
Deborah Tolksdorf

Double Basses

Graham Mitchell
Colin Paris
Patrick Laurence
Thomas Goodman
Joe Melvin
Emre Ersahin
Jim Vanderspar
Nicholas Worters

Flutes

Gareth Davies
Luke O'Toole

Piccolo

Patricia Moynihan

Oboes

Juliana Koch
Rosie Jenkins

Clarinets

Andrew Marriner
Chi-Yu Mo

Bassoons

Rachel Gough
Joost Bosdijk

Horns

Diego Incertis
Angela Barnes
Jonathan Lipton
Alex Wide
Andrew Budden

Trumpets

David Elton
Toby Street
Paul Mayes

Trombones

Dudley Bright
James Maynard
Rebecca Smith

Bass Trombone

Paul Milner

Tuba

Sasha Koushk-Jalali

Timpani

Nigel Thomas

Percussion

Sam Walton
David Jackson
Tom Edwards

Harp

Bryn Lewis
Eluned Pierce

LSO String Experience Scheme

Since 1992, the LSO String Experience Scheme has enabled young string players from the London music conservatoires to gain work experience at the start of their professional careers by playing in rehearsals and concerts with the LSO. The musicians are treated as professional 'extra' players (additional to LSO members) and receive fees for their work in line with LSO section players. The Scheme is supported by: The Polonsky Foundation
Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust
Derek Hill Foundation
Angus Allnatt Charitable Foundation

Editor

Fiona Dinsdale | fiona.dinsdale@lso.co.uk

Editorial Photography

Ranald Mackechnie, Lars Gundersen,
Marco Borggreve

Print Cantate 020 3651 1690

Advertising Cabbells Ltd 020 3603 7937

Details in this publication were correct at time of going to press.