

BSO

BROMLEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

104th Season **2023 - 2024**

Music Director - Adrian Brown

Leader - Andrew Laing

Soloist - Rustam Khanmurzin

Saturday 11th November 2023

Langley Park Centre for the
Performing Arts

£2.00



PROGRAMME

Berlioz Béatrice et Bénédict

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 4

Soloist Rustam Khanmurzin

Interval - 20 Minutes

Refreshments are available in the dining hall

Debussy Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

Dvořák Symphony No. 5

Unauthorised audio or video recording is not permitted

This concert is dedicated to the memory of
Masayuki Tayama (1974-2023)



Adrian Brown -Music Director



Adrian Brown comes from a distinguished line of Sir Adrian Boult's most gifted pupils, studying intensively with him for some years after graduating from the Royal Academy of Music. Sir Adrian wrote: He has always impressed me as a musician of exceptional attainments who has all the right gifts and ideas to make him a first-class conductor. Adrian remains the only British conductor to have reached the finals of the Karajan Conductors' Competition: the Berlin Philharmonic was the first professional orchestra he conducted.

In 1992 Adrian was engaged to conduct one of the world's great orchestras, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic.

In 1998 Sir Roger Norrington recommended him to conduct the Camerata Salzburg. Adrian has also conducted many leading British orchestras including the City of Birmingham, the BBC and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestras, and the London Sinfonietta. He is a great proponent of contemporary music and has given several first performances.

Working with young musicians has been an area where Adrian has made an invaluable contribution to British musical life, as well as abroad. Between 1972 and 2013 he was Music Director of Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra, his tenure honoured with a Celebratory Concert in Cadogan Hall in March 2013. He has frequently conducted both the National Youth Orchestra (working with Sir Colin Davis and Norrington) and the National Youth Wind Orchestra. He regularly runs courses for young musicians, coaches young conductors, and was given the Novello Award for Youth Orchestras at the 1989 Edinburgh Festival. Adrian was one of a hundred musicians presented with a prestigious Classic FM Award at their Tenth Birthday Honours Celebration in June 2002. In 2013 he was awarded the Making Music NFMS Lady Hilary Groves Prize for services to Community Music.

Adrian is particularly highly-regarded for his interpretations of Berlioz and Elgar. In December 2017 he was presented with the Berlioz International Society Medal, and, coinciding with his 70th birthday in October 2019, he was awarded the Elgar Medal.

Adrian founded his own orchestra, the Elgar Sinfonia, in 2018: it has gone from strength to strength, including Elgar's Falstaff in June 2021 and, in October, celebrating the Elgar Society 50th anniversary with Sea Pictures, Polonia and the Crown of India in the presence of Dame Janet Baker. The Sinfonia is currently performing a cycle of the Elgar Symphonies and future plans include The Black Knight and the Bliss Piano Concerto.

Adrian led a moving performance of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis in Autumn 2021 with the London Chorus and the Royal Orchestral Society, and conducted the Royal's 150th Anniversary Concert in 2023. He has a 42-year association with Waveney Sinfonia, Suffolk and was delighted to return to Trianon Music Group in Ipswich this Spring. His longest-standing appointment is as Music Director of Bromley Symphony with whom he performed Mahler's Sixth Symphony in early 2023.

Rustam Khanmurzin

Piano



Rustam Khanmurzin is a Young Artist of The Musicians' Company, a former Constant and Kit Lambert Junior Fellow at the Royal College of Music, and a Young Artist of the Oxford International Song Festival. He is a graduate of the RCM, where he studied with Ian Jones and Kathron

Sturrok. Rustam has appeared at numerous festivals with solo, chamber, and concerto programmes across Eurasia, including the Festival Auvers-sur-Oise, Rheingau Musik, and Oxford Lieder. His awards include the 1st Prize of the RCM Concerto Competition, the 3rd Prize of the Clamo International Piano Competition, the 2nd Prize of the Asia-Pacific F. Chopin Piano Competition, as well as semifinalist awards in the Premio Jaen and Dudley International Piano Competition. In 2023, he celebrated the 150th anniversary of S. Rachmaninoff by performing Piano Concertos No. 2 and No. 4 with the Ulsan Philharmonic Orchestra (South Korea) and the Bromley Symphony Orchestra, while also presenting a song programme at the Oxford International Song Festival. The highlights of the upcoming events include a Christmas recital at St Martin-in-the-Fields, performing Arthur Bliss's Piano Concerto with the Elgar Sinfonia of London, and tours in Barcelona and several Swiss cantons.

Rustam Khanmurzin's appearance is supported by the legacy funding kindly received by BSO from the former Ripley Recitals Association.

Hector Berlioz 1803 - 1869

Overture *Béatrice et Bénédict* (H138)



Berlioz brilliantly described *Béatrice et Bénédict* as 'a caprice written with the point of a needle'. He was famously mad about Shakespeare, which also complicated his private life, since his first wife, Harriet Smithson, was an eminent Shakespearian actress. A deliciously lively work, as light as a cream puff, and based of course on *Much Ado about Nothing*, the opera was written near the end of the composer's life. As David Cairns has marvelled, 'Listening to the score's exuberant gaiety, one would never guess that its composer was in pain when he wrote it and impatient for death.'



The overture opens cheekily with music swiped from its finale. (The text: 'Today the truce is signed (but We'll be enemies again tomorrow!') The famously sparring lovers – here, mostly, the strings – are then obliged to yield, first to brassy fanfares and then to a typically elliptical, but deeply felt, love theme. Both themes are reprised, then the overture appears to end in orchestral laughter – a tough trick to pull off!

Sergei Rachmaninov 1873 - 1943

Piano Concerto no 4 in G minor



1. ***Allegro vivace***
2. ***Largo***
3. ***Allegro vivace***

All his life Rachmaninov was subject to desperate fits of depression, for which he was treated. (Stravinsky memorably termed him 'a six-and-a-half-foot-tall scowl!') However, while writing the Fourth Piano Concerto he had plenty to be depressed about: WWII was still on-going, he was unwell, he was at crisis-point in his careers as both pianist and as conductor, and he was deprived of contact with his daughter. He was also rocked back by the disappointing reception of his Third Symphony, plagued by a sense of exile from his homeland and – though this was still unsuspected – only a few years from death.

His Fourth Piano Concerto had a notably rocky kick-off – with most critics frankly missing the point. Complaints were made of its 'thinness and monotony', that it was 'neither as expressive or as effective' as his earlier piano concertos – It was even slammed, in print, as an 'interminable, loosely knit hodge-podge.' Instead, Rachmaninov's style was in transition, with fascinating new influences ranging from Scriabin and Stravinsky to jazz. (He was especially smitten by Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue.)

Some musicologists, and some conductors, have since argued that he should have stuck to his guns – and stuck to his first version of the Fourth Piano Concerto, too – rather than the version we're playing tonight. Instead, Rachmaninov chose to take the critics seriously, and

to almost entirely rebuild the work. He clearly strung along with Sabaneyev's verdict here: 'one senses in Rachmaninov a tremendous inner power, a potential that some barrier prevents from emerging fully ... his artistic personality contains the promise of something greater than he has yet given us.'

And it may well be that his first 'go' at the Fourth Piano Concerto really did go a bit overboard – being almost relentlessly virtuosic, and lacking in structure. He also decided that the finale was too long – he completely overhauled it – and that the pianist was not prominent enough, compared to the orchestra.

As for the detail of the music, I so admired Michael Steinburg's notes that I quote them, with permission:

The Fourth Concerto begins in a state of high excitement, in mid-sentence, with rapid, chattering triplets first preparing, then accompanying a grand melody for the piano (taken from the abandoned Étude-Tableau of 1911). What follows is lighter in texture, more capricious in mood. A detail worth pointing out is the beautiful scoring of the first melody when it reappears in the recapitulation, high in the first violins, with support from a few woodwinds and quick arpeggios in the piano but virtually no bass. It dissolves into a plaintive wail on the English horn, but neither the piano nor the rest of the orchestra are disposed for such matters, and in six quick measures they cut the music off. It is one of Rachmaninov's most daring and singular gestures.

Rachmaninov believed the theme of the second movement was related to the theme of the first movement of

Schumann's Piano Concerto, though context, harmony, and sonority ensure that the effect is vastly different. In Rachmaninov's Largo, the simple primary theme is a brooding presence. We hear it over and over, in changing registers and colours, with an occasional variation of contour, in ever new and ever bolder harmonisations. It allows no other musical thought to exist. Even when the piano protests in furious fortissimo chords, the horns and the violas insist on this dour litany. The piano's flight into lyric melody breaks the spell only for a moment. Then the violins and cellos sing a powerfully rising theme (also taken from the discarded Étude-Tableau), which leads us in a masterfully made transition into the finale. This music, haunting, asymmetrical, using so little material to imply so much, is one of the most powerful inventions of 'the new Rachmaninov.'

The finale maintains that level of fantasy, particularly in the piano writing itself, which is enormously more demanding than in the first two movements, and in the kaleidoscopic orchestration. This was the movement that Rachmaninov recast and tightened most drastically, and the brief and startling invasion of it by the opening of the first movement is one of the most interesting of his second thoughts.—

Michael Steinberg

Claude Debussy 1862 - 1918

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune



'Music is the expression of the movement of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes.'
(Debussy)

This ten-minute jewel was birthed in 1894. It was later hailed by Boulez as 'the beginning of modern music... the flute of the faun brought new breath to the art.' While Alfred Bruneau described it as 'one of the most exquisite instrumental fantasies which the young French school has produced. This work is exquisite, alas! it is too exquisite!'

The evanescent L'après-midi captured British attention through its first London performance under Wood at a 1904 Prom. Critics, nervily feeling their way, were reduced to evocations of wispy ethereality – but audiences embraced the new sound-world with enthusiasm. (In Henry Wood's My Life in Music he recalled 'more letters asking for a repetition' than any other new work ever.)

Debussy's work is a spontaneous response to Mallarmé's poem, in which a woodland faun while messing about with pan-pipes, becomes aroused by lovely nymphs and naiads, unsuccessfully pursues them, and then slips into a slumber filled with visions.

The poet was initially furious. Stéphane Mallarmé strongly objected to his poem being used as the basis for music – any music. Yet after Debussy cannily sweet-talked him into attending the premiere, the poet wrote, transported, to the composer: 'I have just come out of the concert, deeply moved. You marvel! Your illustration of the Afternoon of a Faun, which presents no dissonance with my text, but goes much further, really, into nostalgia and into light, with finesse, with sensuality, with richness. I shake your hand admiringly, Debussy. Yours, Mallarmé'

Debussy's biographer, Stephen Walsh, memorably described Debussy's harmonies here as flowing 'gently downstream, sometimes getting caught in side currents or running up against the bank.' Also notable are whole-tone scales, harmonic fluidity, tritones and a liquid chromaticism, generally. But it's not only the harmonies that enthral: Debussy's orchestration is famously brilliant, from the solo flute to the initial accompaniment of muted horns, harp and strings. Strangenesses abound, including violas playing higher than violins, and flutes in unison... neither of which 'ought' to work. (Spoiler alert: they both do.)

Perhaps Pierre Boulez put it best: 'Modern music was awakened by L'Après-midi d'un Faune.'

Antonin Dvořák 1841 - 1904

Symphony no 5 in F Major Opus 76, B54



Dvořák's sensationally tuneful symphony was composed, from start to finish, in under six weeks and, in its use of Bohemian folksongs, foreshadows his so-called 'Slavic Period'. It is dedicated to the conductor Hans von Bülow, who – it's fair to say – was chuffed, writing, 'Esteemed Maestro! This dedication from you – alongside Brahms, the most blessed composer of our times – is a higher honour for me than any grand cross from any prince!'

Von Bülow had every right to feel honoured, for the symphony is glorious. The clarinets – which are prominent throughout – announce the joyously pastoral first theme... while the second soars, almost Beethovenian, with dramatic minor thrusts. Suddenly, Dvořák sideslips into a furiant, a sharply accented, up-tempo, Bohemian dance in alternating duple and triple time. However, the bucolic mood prevails in the end, decorated with solo horn.

The slow movement, which has the flavour of a nocturne, begins in the cellos. The theme, designated *espressivo e dolente*, is curiously reminiscent of the famous slow movement of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, itself at the time still unknown. However, Beethoven's 'Pastoral' certainly was influential, with woodwind birdcalls in the second section, though these are overruled in a characteristically Dumky-esque twist. The movement ends as it began, in melancholic, Slavic tranquility.

The third movement – crammed end-to-end with tunes – opens with a short cellistic bridge from the slow movement. The rousingly vital Scherzo which follows is effervescently jaunty and energetic, with the toe-taps dipping only momentarily. Dvořák fretted that the saucy Trio was too long to balance the rest of the work, but could never bear to cut it – luckily for us, for it just flies by.

The ferocity of celli/basses' vengefulness in finale's opening comes as a rude shock after such Bohemian good nature – the key itself remains in flux for over fifty bars. Basically, the orchestra has a temper tantrum, complete with off-beats in the heavy brass – though this is damped down and softened into tender effusions in the winds. The powerful first theme resurfaces in horns and timpani – it's basically untameable – while every theme features in the development, which also gives a nod of thanks to the second movement before memories of the symphony's opening rouses the brass to its tumultuous, and glorious, conclusion.

Bromley Symphony Orchestra

Bromley Symphony Orchestra was formed in 1918 by Miss Beatrice Fowle and Miss Gwynne Kimpton, teachers at Bromley High School for Girls. Over the years, it has earned a high reputation for concerts of professional standard and has worked with many famous soloists and conductors. Sir Adrian Boult conducted regularly in the 1940s and in 1952 Norman Del Mar took over. Internationally renowned soloists who have performed with the orchestra include Paul Tortelier, John Lill, Dennis Brain, Kathleen Ferrier, Ralph Holmes, Hugh Bean, Emma Johnson, Leslie Howard and Sir Donald McIntyre.

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We are pleased to support another student from the University of Surrey's Tonmeister course in recording today's rehearsal and concert.

NEXT CONCERTS

Saturday 20th January 2024 7.30pm

Rawsthorne Street Corner Overture

Walton Violin Concerto - Soloist Ryo Koyama

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 5

Saturday 9th March 2024 7.30pm

Bizet L'Arlésienne (Suite 1 complete, Suite 2 movements 1, 4)

Debussy Jeux

Franck Symphonie in D minor

Saturday 11th May 2024 7.30pm

Wagner Flying Dutchman Overture

Haydn Symphony 85 La Reine

Wagner Götterdämmerung, Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey,
Siegfried's Funeral, Immolation Scene - Soloist Zoe South

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