



Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Mariss Jansons

Friday 24 November 2017 7.30pm, Hall

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 4

interval 20 minutes

Prokofiev Symphony No 5

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Mariss Jansons conductor

Yefim Bronfman piano

Part of Barbican Presents 2017–18

Programme produced by Harriet Smith;
printed by Trade Winds Colour Printers Ltd;
advertising by Cabbell (tel. 020 3603 7930)

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Welcome

A warm welcome to this evening's concert, given by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under its Chief Conductor Mariss Jansons.

Tonight we honour Mariss Jansons as he receives one of music's top awards – the RPS Gold Medal – immediately after the concert.

The programme begins with one of the most remarkable concertos in the entire repertoire – Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto – which, from the outset, breaks all the structural and dramatic rules of conventional concerto-writing. To perform it tonight we're delighted to welcome Yefim Bronfman.

Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony is an entirely different proposition. It dates from 1944 and was the first symphony he wrote after returning to Soviet Russia; it also represents a return to the symphonic form after an extended break, 15 years after the completion of his Fourth Symphony. Like the symphonies of Shostakovich, Prokofiev's Fifth is full of enigmas, on the one hand suffused with memorable melodies and apparent good humour, on the other, reaching a heightened sense of grief and even anger in its slow movement.

I hope you enjoy the concert.

Huw Humphreys, Head of Music, Barbican

Please remain in your seats at the end of the performance for the presentation of the RPS Gold Medal to Mariss Jansons by Dame Mitsuko Uchida and John Gilhooly OBE.

The Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal is the Society's highest honour and is awarded for the most outstanding musicianship to musicians of any nationality. It was initiated in 1870, the centenary of Beethoven's birth, to celebrate the close relationship between the Society and the composer. It has become one of the most prestigious honours in the world of music.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Concerto No 4 in G major, Op 58 (1804–6)

1 **Allegro moderato**

2 **Andante con moto**

3 **Rondo: Vivace**

Yefim Bronfman piano

Among the masterpieces of Beethoven's prolific middle period it is the great conflict works, those that 'seize fate by the throat' and challenge the universe, that have shaped the popular image of the composer. But there is another kind, no less characteristic, in which the mastery is serene, lyricism predominates, and Beethoven celebrates the beauties and harmonies of creation, the Almighty's and his own – works such as the 'Pastoral' Symphony (No 6), the Violin Concerto, the 'Archduke' and 'Ghost' Piano Trios, and this unruffled, Olympian concerto, which was first performed, with the composer as soloist, in March 1807.

We should not be misled by the comparative lack of rhetoric and obvious large-scale gestures, or by the meditative beginning and the leisurely tempo of the opening movement, the profusion of delicate ornament in the solo part, the modest orchestral forces – trumpets and drums appearing only in the finale and then mainly in a rhythmic role, and a slow movement accompanied only by strings, almost entirely in unison. For all its air of relaxation, the music is as abundant in energy as the near-contemporary Fifth Symphony, with which it shares the rhythmic figure of three repeated quavers that binds the concerto's first movement together.

Nothing in Beethoven is more startling than the quiet opening, where the soloist, having announced the theme, alone and *piano e dolce*, in G major, is answered by the strings in the bright key of B major – as though the

orchestra is responding to the prominence of the note B in the piano's first chord. The absence and awaited return of the soloist during the long orchestral ritornello that follows – rich in melodies which the piano will decorate and enhance – are vital elements in the drama. Gradually it becomes clear that the piano's tender, unassertive first bars contain a formidable latent strength and sonorousness. The moment of full realisation arrives with dramatic suddenness at the reprise, where the theme is proclaimed, *fortissimo*, in the home key just when we were least expecting it – the development's modulations through distant minor keys have contrived to make the home key itself, when it is finally reached, sound remote. The composer's brilliant celebratory cadenza is no mere conventional gesture but the logical continuation and culmination of everything that has happened in this cornucopian movement. The same goes for the grand dramatic conclusion that grows out of the soft re-entry of the orchestra after the cadenza, with the rhythmic motto hammered out and the major third, B, again prominent in the bass.

Drama inspires the tense, enigmatic Andante, a movement which it is impossible not to think of in terms of Liszt's description – Orpheus taming the Furies – once you have been told of it. Having reduced the orchestra to submission by its gentle magic, the piano performs a rapt, triumphal dance, motionless and tumultuous at the same time.

Into the stillness of its final bars the Rondo erupts, but *pianissimo* and not in G but in the subdominant, C. All the subsequent reappearances of the main theme are in C (making the home key seem like a dominant) until the coda, where clarinets and bassoons finally restore it to G with a tranquil variant. Even then, the full orchestra insists, teasingly, on one final *fortissimo* statement in C. The whole movement – one of Beethoven’s most inventive and enchanting finales – is a *tour de force* of controlled caprice, of contrasting stillness and helter-skelter speed, full of dramatic strokes and playful high spirits, deep pools of lyricism and a mood of entranced contentment. The dream-like second subject, over a tonic pedal, is one of the most beautiful in all Beethoven. But the end of the work is triumphant.

Programme note © David Cairns

interval 20 minutes

Sergey Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Symphony No 5 in B flat major, Op 100 (1944)

1 Andante

2 Allegro marcato

3 Adagio

4 Allegro giocoso

Is this really a ‘symphony of the grandeur of the human spirit’, a phrase still blandly repeated in so much writing about Prokofiev? The cliché was first voiced by the composer himself, in a radio broadcast of 1945, but its terminology is nothing more than the flat jargon of Sovietspeak. After all, Shostakovich penned much the same public sentiments about his mostly tragic Eighth Symphony of 1943, and nobody takes his words at face value.

By the 1940s, Prokofiev certainly knew what kind of a symphony his Soviet masters might expect. He also knew how, in 1937, Shostakovich – his junior by 15 years – had answered accusations of flagrant modernism with a traditionally modelled but still individual symphony of suffering and ambivalent victory, the Fifth. His own was to be his first symphony for a decade and a half, and the first, too, to be composed in the Soviet Union, where he had relocated his family from France in 1936. There were certainly big events to reflect in 1944. As Prokofiev worked at white heat on the Fifth that summer, his country was still at war with Germany; as he stood on the podium ready to conduct its first performance in Moscow the following January, a cannonade resounded outside the Great Hall of the Conservatory where the concert was taking place, saluting the Red Army’s victorious crossing of the Vistula. And so, to many listeners at that premiere, the occasion did indeed support Prokofiev’s declaration about the ‘grandeur of the human spirit’.

The grandeur of his own spirit, however, was by then bowed, if not yet broken. If the war permitted Shostakovich – and this remains a contentious issue – the option of expressing his feelings about the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s more explicitly, with the threat of a foreign enemy justifying a musical expression of terror, why should the same not apply to Prokofiev too? It is true that a note of bleak despair rarely predominates in the Fifth Symphony – that remains the territory of the Sixth – and it would be wrong to deny Prokofiev’s intense concern for the progress of the Second World War and the determination of the Russian people. Yet the Fifth constantly gives the lie to easy heroics.

Even in the broad, epic-style first movement, the seemingly blithe opening theme for flutes and bassoons, soon joined by a bucolic drone bass, undergoes a radical transformation. Like Shostakovich, Prokofiev invariably equates brass and percussion with brute force. Their engagement in distorting the theme throughout the development leads to a coda in which the melody struts vaingloriously, a product of the war-machine rather than a valiant free spirit. A chamber-musical division among the cellos harks back nostalgically to where we started but is abruptly squashed flat with one of Prokofiev’s favourite devices for circumventing official optimism – a handful of grinding discords before a blinding major-key resolution to reassure beyond any doubt that all is well.

This, then, is the echo of the grand but ambivalent apotheosis that Shostakovich had placed at the end of his own Fifth. Prokofiev's comes early on, leaving the field open for the scherzo to caricature the first movement's well-padded unisons.

Prokofiev could always shrug off the sarcastic tone by pointing to the origins of the initial subject matter, shrill E flat clarinet and all, in material left over from his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. Its deployment, however, becomes more than just a grim joke. After the suave central trio section, three snapping trumpets pave the way for a whirlwind terror in which the scherzo tune hurtles to a dissonant end.

The Adagio offers time to grieve in a generous, richly human melody first heard on clarinet and bass clarinet two octaves apart – very much a hallmark of the composer – adapted from a theme that Prokofiev had invented to

represent the wan heroine in an uncompleted film of Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* eight years earlier. An austere funeral march then makes a more public statement of mourning before violence gives way to the returning dreamscape. The magically scored closing bars touch even more introspective depths of sadness – the territory of Prokofiev's next symphony.

The concluding Allegro giocoso seems at first to propose a radiant future but the deceptive good humour of a jolly Soviet galop goes under in the percussion-laden welter of the madcap coda, ripping even the noblest of the finale's hummable tunes to shreds. The scaling-down of the orchestration to little more than solo strings, harp, piano and snide low trumpets before yet another 'optimistic' B flat major chord provides one final enigma in this far from heroic conclusion.

Programme note © David Nice

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About the performers



Mariss Jansons

Mariss Jansons conductor

Mariss Jansons is considered one of the most outstanding conductors of our time. He was born in 1943 in Riga and is the son of the conductor Arvids Jansons; he studied at the Leningrad Conservatoire and later in Vienna under Hans Swarowsky and in Salzburg under Herbert von Karajan. In 1971 Evgeny Mravinsky made him his assistant with the Leningrad Philharmonic (today's St Petersburg Philharmonic). He remained closely connected with this orchestra as a regular conductor until 1999.

From 1979 to 2000 he was Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic, which he developed into a leading international orchestra. In addition, he was Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra (1992–7) and Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (1997–2004).

Since 2003, he has been the Chief Conductor of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. From 2004 to 2015 he was also Chief Conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Among other orchestras he also works regularly with the Berlin and Vienna

Philharmonics. In 2016 he conducted the New Year's Concert in Vienna for the third time.

Mariss Jansons has toured with the BRSO and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra to virtually every musical capital and festival city in the world. In 2005 his tour to Japan and China with the BRSO was hugely acclaimed; together they also make regular appearances as Orchestra-in-Residence at the Easter Festival in Lucerne.

Working with young musicians is close to Mariss Jansons's heart. He has conducted the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra on a European tour and has given regular concerts with various Bavarian youth orchestras and with the Academy of the BRSO in Munich.

Mariss Jansons has recorded a wide range of repertoire with both the BRSO and the Royal Concertgebouw. These releases have won many international prizes, among them a Grammy for Shostakovich's complete symphonies. He has also been named Conductor of the Year by ECHO Klassik (2007) and by *Opernwelt* magazine (2011). Under his baton, the BRSO was named Orchestra of the Year by ECHO Klassik in 2010 for its recording of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony.

Other awards include the Norwegian Royal Order of Merit, the Austrian Cross of Honour for Scholarship and Art, the Three Stars Medal of the Republic of Latvia and the Bavarian Order of Maximilian. In 2013 Mariss Jansons was awarded the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, the German Federal Cross of Merit, 1st Class, was made a Knight of the Lion of the Netherlands and appointed Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres. In 2015 he was honoured with the Latvian Great Music Award, the country's highest artistic accolade, in recognition of his lifetime commitment to music.



Yefim Bronfman

Yefim Bronfman piano

Yefim Bronfman is internationally recognised as one of today's most acclaimed and admired pianists, regularly sought after by festivals, orchestras, conductors and recital series.

Highlights this season include a tour of the US with the Israel Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta; the current European tour with the BRSO; and appearances with the Los Angeles and New York Philharmonic orchestras, Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra and the Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Toronto and Washington DC Symphony orchestras. In the spring he will celebrate his 60th birthday with a tour with the Vienna Philharmonic under Andrés Orozco-Estrada. In Europe he can also be heard in Italy, France, Belgium, Germany and the UK and on tour with the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester conducted by Andris Nelsons. A tour in Asia with the London Symphony Orchestra under Gianandrea Noseda brings the season to a close in June.

He regularly works with the world's leading conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Herbert

Blomstedt, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Christoph von Dohnányi, Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Daniele Gatti, Valery Gergiev, Alan Gilbert, Mariss Jansons, Vladimir Jurowski, James Levine, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jaap Van Sweden, Franz Welser-Möst and David Zinman. He has appeared at the major festivals of Europe and the US and his chamber-music partners have included Pinchas Zukerman, Martha Argerich, Magdalena Kožená, Anne-Sophie Mutter and Emmanuel Pahud, among many others.

His awards include the Avery Fisher Prize in 1991 and, in 2010, the Jean Gimbel Lane prize in piano performance from Northwestern University.

Yefim Bronfman has been nominated for six Grammy awards, winning in 1997 with his recording of the Bartók piano concertos with Salonen. His large and wide-ranging discography includes works for two pianos by Rachmaninov and Brahms (with Emanuel Ax), a cycle of Prokofiev concertos with Mehta, a disc of Schubert and Mozart with the Zukerman Chamber Players and the soundtrack to Disney's *Fantasia 2000*. His most recent CD releases include his Grammy-nominated recording of Magnus Lindberg's Piano Concerto No 2, commissioned for him and performed by the New York Philharmonic under Gilbert; Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1 with Jansons and the BRSO; a recital disc, *Perspectives*, complementing his designation as a Carnegie Hall 'Perspectives' artist for the 2007–8 season; and recordings of the Beethoven piano concertos and the 'Triple' Concerto with Gil Shaham and Truls Mørk with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra under Zinman.

Astrid Ackermann



Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1949 by Eugen Jochum; it rapidly developed into an internationally renowned orchestra under chief conductors Rafael Kubelík, Colin Davis and Lorin Maazel. Since 2003 that role has fallen to Mariss Jansons, who has continued to set new standards.

As well as the orchestra's repertoire of Classical and Romantic music, there is a strong focus on contemporary works, in conjunction with the *musica viva* series founded in 1945 by Karl Amadeus Hartmann. Right from the orchestra's earliest days, contemporary music has played an important role, with works by composers such as Stravinsky and Milhaud, as well as, more recently, Stockhausen, Kagel, Berio and Peter Eötvös, with many of them conducting their own music.

The orchestra has also worked with many renowned guest conductors, including Erich and Carlos Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Leonard Bernstein, Georg Solti, Carlo Maria Giulini, Kurt Sanderling and – in more recent times – Bernard Haitink, Riccardo Muti, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Herbert Blomstedt, Daniel Harding, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle and Andris Nelsons.

As well as giving regular performances in Munich and throughout Germany, the orchestra

also tours to Europe, Asia and North and South America. It makes regular appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall and at the renowned concert halls in Japan's musical centres. It has also been, since 2004, Orchestra-in-Residence at the Easter Festival in Lucerne.

The BRSO has a particular focus on nurturing up-and-coming musicians. In conjunction with the ARD International Music Competition, it accompanies young musicians in both the final rounds and the prizewinners' concert. Since 2001 the Academy of the BRSO has been doing vital educational work by preparing young musicians for their careers and thus building a solid bridge between education and professional activity. In addition to this, the BRSO undertakes outreach programmes to bring classical music to a younger generation of music lovers.

The BRSO has a large discography on a wide range of labels, including Bavarian Broadcasting's own label BR-Klassik. It has won many national and international awards, most recently a Diapason d'Or in November 2016 for Mahler's Sixth Symphony conducted by Daniel Harding. It has also been numbered among the top ten orchestras in the world in surveys by *Gramophone* and the Japanese magazine *Mostly Classic*.

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Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Violin 1

Radoslaw Szulc*
Anton Barakhovsky*
Florian Sonnleitner*
Tobias Steymans*
Julita Smolen
Michael Christians
Peter Riehm
Corinna Clauser-Falk
Franz Scheuerer
Michael Friedrich
Andrea Karpinski
Daniel Nodel
Marije Grevink
Nicola Birkhan
Karin Löffler
Anne Schoenholtz
Daniela Jung
Andrea Kim
Johanna Pichlmair

Violin 2

Korbinian Altenberger*
Jehye Lee*
Heather Cottrell*
Yi Li
Andreas Wohlmacher
Angela Koeppen
Nicolaus Richter
de Vroe
Leopold Lercher
Key-Thomas Märkl
Bettina Bernklau
Valérie Gillard
Stephan Hoever
David van Dijk
Susanna Pietsch
Celina Bäumer

Viola

Hermann
Menninghaus*
Wen Xiao Zheng*
Benedict Hames
Andreas Marschik
Anja Kreynacke
Mathias Schessl
Inka Ameln
Klaus-Peter Werani
Christiane Hörn

Veronique Bastian
Giovanni Menna
Alice Marie Weber

Cello

Lionel Cottet*
Hanno Simons
Stefan Trauer
Eva-Christiane
Lassmann
Jan Mischlich-Andresen
Uta Zenke
Jaka Stadler
Frederike Jehkul-Sadler
Samuel Lutzker
Katharina Jäckle

Double Bass

Heinrich Braun*
Philipp Stubenrauch*
Wies de Boevé
Alexandra Scott
Frank Reinecke
Piotr Stefaniak
Teja Andresen

Flute

Philippe Boucly*
Henrik Wiese*
Petra Schiessel
Natalie Schwaabe
Ivanna Ternay

Oboe

Stefan Schilli*
Ramón Ortega Quero*
Emma Schied
Tobias Vogelmann

Clarinet

Stefan Schilling*
Christopher Corbett*
Werner Mittelbach
Bettina Faiss
Heinrich Treydte

Bassoon

Eberhard Marschall*
Marco Postinghel*
Rainer Seidel
Susanne Sonntag

Horn

Eric Terwilliger*
Carsten Carey Duffin*
Ursula Kepser
Thomas Ruh
Ralf Springmann
Norbert Dausacker
Francois Bastian

Trumpet

Hannes Läubin*
Martin Angerer*
Wolfgang Läubin
Thomas Kiechle
Herbert Zimmermann

Trombone

Hansjörg Profanter*
Thomas Horch*
Uwe Schrodi
Lukas Gassner
Joseph Bastian

Tuba

Stefan Tischler*

Timpani

Stefan Reuter
Raymond Curfs

Percussion

Markus Steckeler
Guido Marggrander
Christian Pilz

Harp

–

Piano

Lukas Maria Kuen

* *principal*

*This list represents the
orchestra roster for
the 2017–18 season*

barbican

Wed 24 Jan

Filarmonica
della Scala
**Riccardo
Chailly**



Image: Riccardo Chailly © Silvia Lelli

Riccardo Chailly conducts Tchaikovsky's volcanic Fourth Symphony alongside Grieg's show-stopping Piano Concerto with **Benjamin Grosvenor**.

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