
Welcome

A very warm welcome, especially if this is your first ever Philharmonia concert – we hope it will be the first of many.

For some of us a concert is the chance to watch every movement of the performers, and listen carefully to every note. For others it's time to let their thoughts and their imaginations wander as the music flows. This evening's programme rewards both approaches – focus on the artistry on stage, or let your mind journey down the Rhine, from the ancient world of the Norse gods, to the glories of Cologne cathedral.

If you'd like to get to know the Philharmonia better, and support our mission to bring the highest quality music-making to the widest possible audience, please consider becoming a Friend. Our Friends enjoy open rehearsals, priority booking, and opportunities to meet our players. We'd love to welcome you to the Philharmonia family.

With my best wishes,



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thorben".

Thorben Dittes
Chief Executive

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

We're the largest arts centre in the UK and one of the nation's top visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. We're here to present great cultural experiences that bring people together, and open up the arts to everyone.

The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward Gallery, National Poetry Library and Arts Council Collection. We're one of London's favourite meeting spots, with lots of free events and places to relax, eat and shop next to the Thames.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you need any information or help, please ask a member of staff. You can also write to us at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX, or email hello@southbankcentre.co.uk

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Philharmonia



Santtu-
Matias
Rouvali



Soumik
Datta



Isabelle
Faust



Alexandre
Kantorow

Alexandre Kantorow
plays Liszt

Thursday 9 May, 7.30pm

Soumik Datta:
Borderlands

Saturday 11 May, 7.30pm

The Bach Choir: The
Dream of Gerontius

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This evening's concert

Sunwook Kim plays Brahms

Thursday 2 May 2024, 7.30pm

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Santtu-Matias Rouvali – conductor

Sunwook Kim – piano

WAGNER The Entry of the Gods into Valhalla,
from *Das Rheingold* (arr. Zumpe) (8 mins)

BRAHMS Piano Concerto No. 2 (46 mins)

Interval (20 mins)

SCHUMANN Symphony No. 3, 'Rhenish' (32 mins)

This performance finishes at
approximately 9.30pm.

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Programme notes

Richard Wagner (1813 – 1883)

'The Entry of the Gods into Valhalla'
from *Das Rheingold*, arr. Hermann Zumpe
(1862)
(8 mins)

In 1876, after years of planning, Wagner staged the first complete production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at his 'festival theatre' in Bayreuth. The operatic epic takes the form of three 'days' (*Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*) and a 'preliminary evening' (*Das Rheingold*). While the whole tetralogy concerns the ring that holds all worldly power, the catalysts for the drama are to be found in the first of the operas. It is here that the ring is forged by the dwarf Alberich, using gold he has stolen from the Rhine. And having seized the ring, Wotan, the chief of the gods, is then forced to give it to the giants Fafner and Fasolt to pay for the building of Valhalla.

Wagner composed a suitably grand conclusion to *Das Rheingold*, as his flawed cast of deities cross a rainbow bridge to their new seat of power. But there can be no doubt that the rippling strings and noble brass-led themes are undermined by more ominous truths. Purling harps reveal the distant call of the Rhine maidens, reminding Wotan that his power derives from ill-gotten goods and the consequences will prove grave indeed.

Tonight, we hear this crucial passage in an arrangement by Hermann Zumpe, who assisted Wagner on the Bayreuth premiere. It follows the composer's own tradition of drawing excerpts from larger works for the concert hall, including 'The Entry of the Gods into Valhalla' in Vienna in

1862, when parts of the *Ring* were heard in public for the first time.

Programme notes by Gavin Plumley
© Philharmonia Orchestra/Gavin Plumley

Gavin Plumley is a cultural historian. Known for his work on Central Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries, he has written for newspapers, magazines, concert halls and opera houses worldwide.

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat, Op. 83 (1881)
(46 mins)

Allegro non troppo
Allegro appassionato
Andante
Allegretto grazioso

During his later years Brahms preferred to leave Vienna during the summer months, finding the change of atmosphere conducive to creativity. In April 1878 he visited Italy for the first time, and was entranced by the climate, the scenery, which he compared to paradise, and the abundance of culture, especially medieval and Renaissance art. Over the next 15 years he visited Italy nine times; on a visit in 1881, he wrote to Clara Schumann, 'If you stood for just one hour in front of the facade of Siena Cathedral you would be beside yourself with delight, and agree that this alone would make the journey worthwhile ... On the next day at Orvieto you have to acknowledge that the cathedral was even more lovely, and after all this, to plunge into Rome is an indescribable joy!'

During this trip Brahms started serious work on a second piano concerto, which he had begun just after his first visit to Italy four years earlier, but had laid aside to concentrate on the Violin Concerto. This time, work progressed quickly and, on 7 July 1881, Brahms wrote to his friend and confidante Elisabeth von Herzogenberg (one of his many female admirers), 'I must tell you that I have written a teensy weensy piano concerto, containing a tiny little wisp of a scherzo. It is in the key of B flat major.'

Shortly afterwards he sent the score to his friend Billroth, with the message, 'I'm sending you a few small piano pieces', and justified its unusual four-movement form by saying that he had felt the need to place a scherzo second because the first movement was 'too plain'. As with all his orchestral works of this period, Brahms tried it out in private with the Meiningen court orchestra (then conducted by Hans von Bülow), which the music-loving Duke of Saxe-Weimar had put at Brahms's disposal for rehearsals of his new pieces, before giving the premiere himself on 9 November 1881 in Budapest, under the baton of Alexander Erkel.

In his own descriptions of his new piece, Brahms was being deliberately ingenuous, in the same laconic way that Vaughan Williams used to describe his symphonies as 'nice little tunes'. The B flat Piano Concerto is a massive work, longer even than the D minor Concerto, and it quickly gained acceptance as one of the masterpieces of concerto literature. Billroth characterised its relationship to the First Concerto as that of 'man to boy' in its greater maturity and serene avoidance of conflict.

Interval (20 mins)

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

Symphony No. 3 in E flat, Op. 97 'Rhenish' (1850)
(32 mins)

Lebhaft
Scherzo: Sehr mäßig
Nicht schnell
Feierlich
Lebhaft

By 1850 Robert and Clara Schumann had been married for ten years. After the unbearable tension of their unconventional courtship, the triumph of their union in the teeth of her father's opposition, and an ecstatic honeymoon period that unleashed a flood of artistic creativity, the marriage – as even the most passionate of love matches is apt to do – had settled down to a more prosaic level, and had thrown up a few problems for both parties. Schumann's fragile ego had been badly dented by his wife's continuing success as a concert pianist – which all too often eclipsed his own renown as a composer – and he resented her frequent absences on concert tours; while she found practising difficult when he needed peace to compose, quite apart from coping with the exhaustion of almost continual pregnancy. Always prone to fits of severe depression, Schumann suffered several nervous breakdowns, which reflected badly on his career. Life was made no easier by his shortcomings as a conductor, which often led to difficulties between him and the orchestras he attempted to direct. It must have been with some relief then, that in the late autumn of 1849, Schumann received an invitation to succeed Ferdinand Hiller as municipal music director at Düsseldorf.

Düsseldorf put on a gratifyingly warm reception for the Schumanns. Robert enjoyed a visit with Clara to Cologne, where they were particularly impressed by the magnificent Gothic cathedral. There, on 30 September, they attended a spectacular ceremony at which Archbishop Geissel of Cologne was elevated to the cardinalate. By mid-October Schumann had started composing again. He began the Cello Concerto on 10 October and completed it just a fortnight later. On the same day he conducted the first of the season's series of ten subscription concerts; the orchestra played well, and Clara was a great success as soloist. On 6 February 1851, at one of these concerts, Schumann introduced his own latest symphony, in E flat. It was, in fact, to be his last.

With the E flat symphony, Schumann took the opportunity of paying homage to his new home in the heart of the Rhineland by portraying various aspects of local scenery, history and folklore. In this he was perhaps inspired by the programmatic nature of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, while the symphony's epic nature is clearly derived from the Eroica (Beethoven's Third Symphony), whose key it shares. Although the symphony was published without a title, Schumann himself referred to it as the *Rhenish* and the name has stuck. The most overtly programmatic movements are the second and fourth, which both originally carried subtitles: the second was inscribed 'Morning on the Rhine' and the fourth 'In the manner of an Accompaniment of a Solemn Ceremony' – a clear reference to the enthronement the Schumanns had witnessed in Cologne Cathedral the previous September.

The *Rhenish* is Schumann's only symphony that does not begin with a slow introduction that

provides the thematic kernel of the work. Instead the opening movement plunges straight into a long, majestic theme that is forcefully developed along Beethovenian lines, but with one notable Schumann fingerprint – the presentation of the second subject in the relative minor before it reappears in the expected dominant. The second movement is a moderately paced, rustic-sounding Scherzo, evoking the kind of peasant dance so beloved of German Romantics. The trio section is treated more as the second subject of a sonata form, rather than as an individual section.

The third movement, an intimate intermezzo in Romanze style, is followed by the famous 'cathedral' evocation, marked *Feierlich* (solemnly). Here Schumann drew on his study of Bach's contrapuntal techniques to underline the religious associations, with – a stroke of inspiration – the sombre main theme presented on dark-hued trombones. In contrast the finale returns us to the bright sunshine outside: this is a rather large-scale movement of driving energy, whose coda attempts to draw together the threads of some of the previous themes of the symphony.

Barely a month after the première, relationships between Schumann and the Düsseldorf orchestra had become strained and, before another year had passed, he had begun to suffer the first physical and mental symptoms of his fatal decline. But the *Rhenish* Symphony – the product of his first, optimistic months in his new job – remains as one of his finest and most completely successful orchestral works.

Programme notes by Wendy Thompson
© Philharmonia Orchestra/Wendy Thompson

Get to know Sunwook Kim



© Marco Borrgrave

You've played with the Philharmonia Orchestra regularly over the last 15 years, in London, around the UK and in Korea – what's your best Philharmonia memory?

I cherish every performance I've had with the Philharmonia Orchestra. The Schumann concerto with Vladimir Ashkenazy, Beethoven's Fourth with Juraj Valčuha, and Mozart's C Minor concerto with Edward Gardner are all memorable. I'm also very excited about this concert, collaborating with Santtu-Matias Rouvali for the first time.

Your career includes performing with orchestras, solo recitals, chamber music and conducting. Do you have a favourite?

Since I was young, I've just loved music. It brought me joy more than any other hobby and expressing that music through the piano was happiness to me. The reason I dreamed of becoming a conductor since I was young is not so much about conducting itself, but because I loved orchestral music, and I love chamber music because of its intrinsic beauty. When I play the piano, I don't think of it as playing the piano, and when I conduct, I don't think of it as conducting. I'm merely a messenger, conveying

the language and spirit of the music, as I perceive it, directly to the audience.

You've been playing Brahms's music for many years. If you could meet him, what would you want to talk about?

When I play the music of Brahms, I feel physically and mentally closer to it than the music of other composers. If I were to meet Brahms, given that his life and music were full of contradictions and he was always strict with himself in terms of his perfectionism, I would want to offer him support and encouragement, to let him know I'm on his side rather than asking questions.

The slow movement of Brahms's Second Piano Concerto starts with a beautiful cello solo. Do you discuss interpretation with the cellist before the rehearsals begin, or respond to each other in the moment?

When I am on the stage, I don't perform with a predetermined interpretation. Just as every day's weather is different, the process of creating flow in music varies from moment to moment. While all performers know the direction we should head towards, how we get there is crafted in each moment. This is especially true for the slow movement of this concerto – my performance changes depending on how the solo cello sings.

What have you been listening to lately?

Recently, I attended the UK premiere of the cello concerto by Donghoon Shin, a close friend of mine and a great composer. From Rameau and Bach, through Wagner's operas, to Kurtág, all music is air and oxygen to me.

Read the full interview on our website: philharmonia.co.uk

Santtu-Matias Rouvali

Conductor



© Marco Borrgeve

Santtu-Matias Rouvali first conducted the Philharmonia in 2013, aged 27. He was instantly recognised by the players as “an inspiring individual... a musician with spirit and passion akin to our own” (Cheremie Hamilton-Miller, viola).

He took up the baton as Principal Conductor in September 2021. He is just the sixth person to hold that title since the Orchestra was founded in 1945. He is also the Chief Conductor of Gothenburg Symphony, and the Honorary Conductor of Tampere Philharmonia Orchestra.

Since his appointment, Santtu has conducted a wide range of music with the Philharmonia, from blockbusters by Strauss and Rachmaninov to less well known works by his compatriots Sibelius and Lindberg. He made his BBC Proms debut with the Philharmonia in summer 2022, and returned in 2023 with music by Elgar, Chopin and Strauss. In the 2023/24 season, he has conducted music by George Gershwin, Duke Ellington and Wynton Marsalis as part of the Philharmonia’s series

Let Freedom Ring: Celebrating the Sounds of America, alongside Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Sibelius and Shostakovich.

Santtu’s third release on the Philharmonia Records label, *Santtu conducts Stravinsky*, was released in March, featuring his recordings of *Petrushka* and *The Firebird Suite*, recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall. Previously, he has released *Santtu conducts Strauss*, featuring his recordings of four Strauss tone poems, and *Santtu conducts Mahler* – a recording of Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, ‘Resurrection’.

This season, Santtu has conducted the Philharmonia in all its UK residency venues – London, Basingstoke, Bedford, Leicester and Canterbury – and taken the Orchestra on tour to some of Europe’s most prestigious venues, including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Musikverein in Vienna.

With Gothenburg Symphony, he is recording an award-winning Sibelius cycle. The most recent volume released in October 2022 – Symphonies Nos. 3 & 5 and *Pohjola’s Daughter* – was awarded a Radio Classique Trophée. The first two volumes both received the Choc de Classica, and the first was also named Gramophone Editor’s Choice and Diapason D’Or Découverte.

Originally a percussionist, Santtu played with the Philharmonia’s percussion section in Steve Reich’s *Music for Pieces of Wood* in a streamed performance during the Covid pandemic, and in October 2023 he played drum kit in the first performance of the Philharmonia Big Band. When he’s not conducting, Santtu loves to spend time meditating, foraging and hunting in the forests around his home in Finland.

In the Philharmonia’s 2024/25 season, he leads the *Nordic Soundscapes* series, and also conducts music by Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Bartók.

Sunwook Kim

Piano



© Marco Borggreve

Sunwook Kim came to international recognition when he won the prestigious Leeds International Piano Competition in 2006, aged just 18, becoming the competition's youngest winner for 40 years, as well as its first Asian winner. Since then, he has established a reputation as one of the finest pianists of his generation, appearing as a concerto soloist in the subscription series of some of the world's leading orchestras including the Berliner Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Berlin Radio Symphony, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Finnish Radio Symphony, and the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Recital highlights to date include regular appearances at the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall (London International Piano Series), in the Piano 4 Etoiles series at the Philharmonie de Paris and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Piano aux Jacobin Festival, AIX Festival, La Roque d'Anthéron International Piano Festival (France) as well as at the Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festspiele, Teatro Colon Buenos Aires, Kioi Hall in Tokyo, Symphony Hall Osaka and Seoul

Arts Centre. Sunwook is also a keen chamber musician and enjoys collaborating with singers.

In the 2023/24 season, Sunwook will make his debut with Atlanta Symphony, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Royal Northern Sinfonia and Gävle Symfoniorkester as well as his conducting debuts with the National Symphony Orchestra Taiwan, Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra (Budapest), Georges Enescu Philharmonic and Filharmonia Śląska (Poland). Sunwook will also return to conduct the Seoul Philharmonic and Bournemouth Symphony and as soloist with BBC Philharmonic. In September 2023, Sunwook was announced as the next Music Director of the Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra for an initial term until December 2025.

Sunwook Kim's debut recital disc was released on the Accentus label in October 2015, featuring Beethoven's Waldstein and Hammerklavier sonatas. This was followed by a recording of Franck's Prelude, choral et fugue paired with Brahms Sonata No. 3. He has released further recordings of Beethoven's Pathétique, Moonlight and Appassionata as well as sonatas Nos. 30-32 and his most recent chamber music release features the Violin Sonatas of Beethoven in collaboration with Clara-Jumi Kang.

Born in Seoul in 1988, Sunwook completed an MA in conducting at the Royal Academy of Music and was subsequently made a fellow (FRAM) of the Royal Academy of Music in 2019. Besides Leeds, international awards include the first prize at the 2004 Ettlingen Competition (Germany) and the 2005 Clara Haskil Competition (Switzerland). In 2013, Sunwook was selected by the Beethoven-Haus Bonn to become the first beneficiary of its new mentoring fellowship.

About the Philharmonia



© Luca Migliore

The Philharmonia Orchestra is made up of 80 outstanding musicians of 17 different nationalities. Every one of us is dedicated to bringing orchestral music of the very highest standard to the widest possible audience – in the world’s top concert halls, in our residency communities and in your own home.

Founded in 1945, we quickly established our reputation as the leading recording orchestra, our unparalleled catalogue growing as fast as the global market for LPs. We’ve continued to embrace the use of cutting-edge technology to share the orchestral experience around the world and beyond – our recording of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 is travelling through interstellar space on board the Voyager spacecraft. In the last two decades our pioneering immersive installations and VR experiences have introduced hundreds of thousands of people to the symphony orchestra, and our streamed performances have been enjoyed by listeners from Fiji and Indonesia to high above the Arctic Circle in Norway.

In 2021, Santtu-Matias Rouvali took up the baton as our Principal Conductor. He follows in illustrious footsteps: Herbert von Karajan, Otto Klemperer, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Carlo Maria Giulini, Arturo Toscanini, Riccardo Muti and Esa-Pekka Salonen are just a few of the great conductors to be associated with the Philharmonia over the years, honing the celebrated Philharmonia sound.

Marin Alsop is our Principal Guest Conductor. Violinist Nicola Benedetti and singer Julia Bullock are our Featured Artists this season, and sarod virtuoso Soumik Datta is our Artist in Residence.

We regularly tour throughout Europe, performing in some of the world’s most prestigious venues, such as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg. Further afield, we’ve performed in China, Japan and Colombia. We recently returned to China, and in January we were the first major international symphony orchestra to tour to Mauritius. You’ll also find us playing in some unexpected venues, from the Apple Store in Berlin to a multi-storey car park in Peckham.

The Southbank Centre’s Royal Festival Hall, in the heart of London, has been our home since 1995. Across the UK, we have residencies in Bedford, Leicester, Canterbury, Basingstoke, at Garsington Opera and at the Three Choirs Festival. Our established and award-winning Learning & Engagement programme is embedded in several of our residency communities, and delivers

experiences that empower people to engage with and participate in orchestral music. Our Emerging Artists Programme develops the next generation of instrumentalists, composers and conductors, with a focus on increasing diversity within the classical music industry.

We commission new music every year, and we have premiered works by Richard Strauss, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Errollyn Wallen, Kaija Saariaho, Anna Clyne, Laufey and many others. Our film credits stretch back to 1947, and we are in demand among film and videogame composers in the UK and Hollywood. We have recorded around 150 soundtracks, bringing the Philharmonia sound to millions of cinema-goers and gamers.

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Thank you for coming to hear us play live. We look forward to sharing more great music with you, through memorable concerts and ground-breaking projects, for the next 80 years and beyond.

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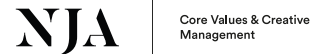
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