
Welcome

A very warm welcome to this Philharmonia concert.

Our brilliant woodwind players are used to sitting at the heart of the orchestra – clearly heard, but not so easily seen. Today we're turning the spotlight on our Joint Principal Clarinet Mark van de Wiel, a chance to celebrate his contribution to the Philharmonia over the last 25 years.

It's also a pleasure to welcome pianist Javier Perianes, and to hear a piano concerto and a symphony that are far less frequently performed than they deserve.

If you'd like to get closer to the music and the musicians and to support our work on stage and beyond, why not consider becoming a Friend? We're launching our new, improved membership tomorrow, and we'd love to welcome you to the Philharmonia community.

With my best wishes,



© Tommy Gavin/Win

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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This afternoon's concert

Santtu conducts French masterpieces

Sunday 30 March 2025, 3pm
Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Santtu-Matias Rouvali – conductor
Javier Perianes – piano
Mark van de Wiel – clarinet

DEBUSSY *Première Rhapsodie for clarinet and orchestra*
(8 mins)

SAINT-SAËNS *Piano Concerto No. 5 'Egyptian'* (29 mins)

Interval (20 mins)

FRANCK *Symphony in D minor* (39 mins)

This performance finishes at approximately 4.50pm

His Majesty King Charles III
Patron

Santtu-Matias Rouvali
Principal Conductor

Marin Alsop
Principal Guest Conductor

Esa-Pekka Salonen KBE
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Zsolt-Tihamér Visontay
Concert Master

Vidya Patel
Artist in Residence

Nemanja Radulović
Featured Artist

The concert at a glance

DID YOU KNOW? – Saint-Saëns wrote his 'Egyptian' Piano Concerto while escaping the Paris winter in Luxor, even weaving a boatman's song into the second movement. This concerto exhibits a blend of Egyptian, Javanese and Spanish musical influences, emblematic of 19th-century globalisation

WHO'S PLAYING? – Mark van de Wiel is the Philharmonia's Joint Principal Clarinet and joined the orchestra on April Fools' Day in 2000!

ABOUT THE MUSIC – From Debussy's impressionistic soundscapes to Saint-Saëns's exotic travels and Franck's deeply emotional symphony, this afternoon's concert offers a glimpse into the creative world of 19th century France.

LISTEN OUT FOR – Franck's Symphony in D minor is admired for its organ-like layers of sound, and the cor anglais melody over harp and pizzicato (plucked) strings in the second movement.

COME BACK FOR – Santtu-Matias Rouvali and violinist Arabella Steinbacher join us on Sunday 13 April for Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, Mendelssohn's heartfelt Violin Concerto and Shostakovich's extraordinary final Symphony.

Programme notes

Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

Première Rhapsodie for clarinet and orchestra
(1910)
(8 mins)

Remarkably, this *Rhapsodie*, completed in 1910, is one of only two pieces Claude Debussy wrote for solo clarinet and piano. This and the less ambitious *Petite Pièce*, owe their existence to Debussy's professional role at the Supreme Council of the Music Section of the Paris Conservatoire, where he was required to write musical pieces for the students' examinations. The *Pièce* he dismissed as a sight-reading exercise, but he was altogether more delighted with the *Rhapsodie*, declaring that it was 'one of the most pleasing pieces I have ever written'. He dedicated it to Prospère Mimart, clarinet professor at the Conservatoire, who also gave the premiere in January 1911. Inspired by the work's positive reception, Debussy went on to create a sumptuous orchestral arrangement later that year.

The *Rhapsodie* begins quietly, with delicate, gossamer-thin threads of violin sound descending from the ether as a twisting, turning clarinet melody rises up from the depths. A haze of harmony hovers around the solo woodwind voice, which languidly intones a fluid melodic line. As the title suggests, the piece is free-flowing and episodic, and before long, the dreamlike opening gives way to music of light-hearted, playful character, peppered with acrobatic trills and runs for the soloist.

As ever with Debussy, the orchestration is rich in exquisite detail, conjuring endless new orchestral colours from the original palette

of the piano accompaniment. Alongside the solo clarinet voice, we hear bursts of quickly-muted cymbals, the luxurious unfurling of harp arpeggios and showers of dagger-like brass interjections. It is a spellbinding work, creating an atmosphere of warmth and sensual abandon reminiscent of the enchanted glade referenced in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, composed sixteen years earlier, in 1894. It is telling of Debussy's genius that from a banal premise – an examination piece – he was able to create music of such mesmerising beauty. It remains popular over a century later, a true 'masterpiece in miniature'.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921)

Piano Concerto No. 5 in F major, Op. 103
'Egyptian' (1896)
(29 mins)

Allegro animato
Andante
Molto allegro

With its groundbreaking Exposition Universelle taking place regularly from the mid to late 19th century, the city of Paris was a melting pot of cultural influences. Like many other composers, and indeed, artists of the city, Camille Saint-Saëns took great inspiration from the huge range of musical and visual artefacts exhibited at those grand events. Having said that, he also liked to escape the cold Parisian winters whenever he could, and he travelled widely during his lifetime. It was during a holiday to Luxor that he began composing this so-called 'Egyptian' work, which he completed in the capital, Cairo.



The concerto is an upbeat, joyful work. Yet despite its Egyptian origins, and although the lilting charm of the opening movement is undeniable, it is not particularly “exotic” in its tastes. We have to wait until the tempestuous Andante to hear the echo of Saint-Saëns’s Egyptian travels in a shimmering, major-key section inspired by a Nubian song sung by boatmen on the Nile. This is followed by a dazzling, quasi-improvisatory section, accompanied, according to the composer, by the nighttime chirpings of crickets and frogs in musical form. Saint-Saëns wrote that the galloping final movement is a depiction of ‘the joy of a sea-crossing, a joy that not everyone shares’. Its opening passage depicts the thudding engines of a ship, as the orchestra, soloist and audience set sail on a thrilling voyage together. But where to?

The Concerto may be called the ‘Egyptian’, but the music has more than a hint of the Javanese Gamelan that Saint-Saëns’s compatriot Debussy had found so inspiring in his music, as well as a certain flamenco-style flair. In a sense, the Piano Concerto No. 5 is more reflective of Saint-Saëns’s magpie-like interest in a multiplicity of

global musical idioms, as heard elsewhere in the “Arabian”-style Bacchanale in his opera, *Samson et Dalila*, his *Suite algérienne* and his *Mélodies persanes*. This sunlit concerto, written in 1896, some forty years after the composer’s first such composition, is a testament to a lifetime’s cultural curiosity and musical exploration.

Interval (20 mins)

César Franck (1822 – 1890)

Symphony in D minor (1888)
(39 mins)

Lento
Allegretto
Allegro no troppo

In the lower strings, an ominous melody creeps and climbs upwards. We hear it again, wreathed in a halo of tremolo strings, before the orchestra erupts with a volatile, jagged outburst. There is a spiritual, almost cathedral-like atmosphere to this symphony that pervades more than just its dark, brooding opening moment. The Allegretto, which begins with a harp and pizzicato introduction, which is then overlaid with a sinuous cor anglais melody, has a processional solemnity to it, albeit interspersed with more light-hearted passages. The ‘Allegro non troppo’ – described as ‘radiant, quasi-luminous’ by Franck – motors along with irrepressible energy, exuding light and joie de vivre in its thrumming strings, close-harmony brass, and lively musical exchanges between the strings and woodwind.

Classical music lovers may hear echoes of the harmonies of Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner – hugely influential figures in the Parisian musical scene of Franck’s day – or perhaps the lyrical melodies and luscious string writing of Tchaikovsky, or even the grand spiritual arc of Edward Elgar’s later compositions. Comparisons have also been made to the symphonies of Bruckner, with their repeating motifs endlessly transformed in new incarnations. But in its totality, Franck’s symphony is utterly unique, perhaps, also, a little unconventional, which may have been what unsettled audiences at the first performance in Paris in February 1889. Allegedly, the public reaction ranged from puzzlement to outrage. Despite this, the symphony went on to enjoy huge popularity across the world, only falling into relative obscurity in the last few decades.

New listeners will enjoy the familiarity of hearing melodic fragments returning over and over again, throughout all three movements. This “cyclic form” was a technique Franck had pioneered in his early chamber works, but was perhaps more famously employed in Camille Saint-Saëns’s *Organ Symphony* (1887), which took the religious *Dies Irae* chant as a common thread (and which Franck would have heard in performance). Like Saint-Saëns, who was ten years his junior, César Franck was a virtuoso organist and a child prodigy.

Sadly, owing to Franck’s ‘Belgian’ origins (he was actually of Walloon and German parentage), he was deemed unsuitable for enrolment at the Paris Conservatoire at a young age, and spent many of his early years on a punishing regime of touring and performing, arranged by his domineering father. He finally broke free, defying his father’s disapproval to marry the woman he

loved (the impressively-named Eugénie-Félicité-Caroline Saillot) in 1848. In a dramatic turn of events, in 1870, Franck and his sons were caught up in the Franco-Prussian war, but they survived, and two years later, Franck was appointed as organ and composition professor at the very same Conservatoire that had rejected him in his youth. There he amassed a devoted following among a group of young student composers – *Les Franckistes*. Franck died in 1890, just two years after writing this *Symphony*, but in 1893, when the influential conductor Charles Lamoureux revisited the piece, he proclaimed it a great work, resulting in its adoption as a modern classic by 20th- and now, 21st-century audiences.

Programme notes by Sophie Rashbrook
© *Philharmonia Orchestra/Sophie Rashbrook*

Sophie Rashbrook Sophie Rashbrook is a writer, librettist and opera dramaturg. Formerly the Nicholas John Dramaturg at Welsh National Opera, she now edits the opera programmes at the Royal Opera House.

Get to know Javier Perianes



© Marco Borggreve

What are you most looking forward to about playing with the Philharmonia this afternoon in London, and on tour in Seville, Zaragoza and Madrid?

First of all, playing with the Philharmonia and Santtu is a great pleasure and honour. It is such a great orchestra with a rich tradition and background, with a fantastic conductor full of imagination and creativity – a perfect combination with the Saint-Saëns ‘Egyptian’ Piano Concerto. To enjoy this great experience four times in a row touring my country, I cannot ask for more.

Have you worked with Santtu-Matias Rouvali before? What it’s like to play under the baton?

Yes, we worked together some years ago when Santtu was the Music Director in Tampere and we played Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4. We really enjoyed working together, it was a great experience that I will always remember. Santtu is not just talented, he is flexible, creative and original – I love finding colleagues to share our visions and find a common point of understanding. Working with him was fantastic and I am really looking forward to these concerts with him and the Philharmonia.

What is your favourite thing about Saint-Saëns’s Piano Concerto No. 5 – is there a particularly interesting or exciting part to look out for?

It is a very special and original piece full of colours, influences and sounds from different cultures. Saint-Saëns was living in Luxor when he composed it and after the first movement where the French elegance and refinement is present, we have a very attractive second movement with that famous Nubian song with an Arabic twist and a frenetic and spectacular third movement. It is almost impossible to condense in a few words the experience of playing or listening to this beautiful piano concerto.

As a pianist, you don’t take your own instrument with you as you travel to different venues and countries. What do you look for in a piano when you prepare a performance?

A perfect combination of a beautiful sound (the soul of the instrument) and a perfectly prepared mechanism. It is really challenging to adjust to every single instrument you have to play in different countries and venues, but on the other side it is also exciting trying to get the best out of any instrument you might find.

What are you listening to right now?

At this moment I was listening to Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 23 played by Vladimir Horowitz, conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini. To be more precise, I was listening while I was watching the beautiful video documentary about the encounter and recording of these two giants. It is a curious recording with two totally different approaches about the same piece.

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

Santtu-Matias Rouvali

Conductor



© Marco Borggreve

Santtu-Matias Rouvali took up the baton as Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra in September 2021. He is just the sixth person to hold that title since the Philharmonia was founded in 1945.

Santtu has conducted a wide range of music with the Philharmonia, from blockbusters by Strauss and Rachmaninov to works by living composers including Magnus Lindberg and Anna Clyne. He has performed with the Philharmonia in all their residency venues – at the Southbank Centre in London, and in Bedford, Leicester, Canterbury and Basingstoke – at the BBC Proms, and Edinburgh International Festival. And annual visits to the Mikkeli Festival in Finland have fast become a highlight of the Philharmonia players' calendars.

In autumn 2024 Santtu led the Philharmonia's series *Nordic Soundscapes*, conducting music by Sibelius, Grieg, Nielsen, María Sigfúsdóttir, Miho Hazama and Mats Larsson Gothe. In the 2024/25 season, he takes the Orchestra on tour to Finland, Estonia, Spain and Japan.

In the Philharmonia's 2023 series *Let Freedom Ring: Celebrating the Sounds of America*, he conducted music by George Gershwin, Duke Ellington and Wynton Marsalis, and had the audience dancing in the aisles when he played drum kit in the first ever performance of the Philharmonia Big Band. Originally a percussionist, he played with the Philharmonia's percussion section in Steve Reich's *Music for Pieces of Wood* in a streamed performance during the Covid pandemic.

Santtu conducts Strauss, the first release on the Philharmonia Records label, features his recordings of four Strauss tone poems, two of them recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall in his first concert as Principal Conductor. His second Philharmonia Records release is a live recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 2, 'Resurrection'. The third, *Santtu conducts Shostakovich*, was released in November 2024. He has also released Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5 with the Philharmonia on Signum Records.

Santtu is Chief Conductor of Gothenburg Symphony, with whom he is recording an award-winning Sibelius cycle. He is Honorary Conductor of Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, and also performs regularly with top orchestras around Europe and the US.

When he's not conducting, Santtu loves to spend time meditating, foraging and hunting in the forest around his home in Finland, and cooking the food he brings home.

Javier Perianes

Piano



© Marco Borggreve

The international career of Javier Perianes has led him to perform in the most prestigious concert halls, with the world's foremost orchestras, working with celebrated conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Charles Dutoit, Zubin Mehta, Gustavo Dudamel, Klaus Mäkelä, Gianandrea Noseda, Gustavo Gimeno, Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Simone Young and Vladimir Jurowski.

Perianes ends the 2024/25 season by performing with Auckland Philharmonia and Sydney, Queensland, Adelaide, Tasmania and New Zealand symphony orchestras.

Perianes frequently appears in recital across the globe, with performances in Bilbao, Frankfurt, Regensburg, Canary Island Festival, San Francisco, Montreal and Vancouver this season. A natural and keen chamber musician, he regularly collaborates with violist Tabea Zimmermann and Quiroga Quartet, and appears at festivals such as the BBC Proms, Lucerne, Argerich Festival, Salzburg Whitsun, La Roque d'Anthéron, Grafenegg, Prague Spring, Ravello, Stresa, San Sebastian, Santander, Granada, Vail, Blossom, Ravinia and Canary Island.

Career highlights have included concerts with Wiener Philharmoniker, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Washington's National, Yomiuri Nippon and Danish National symphony orchestras, Oslo, London, New York, Los Angeles and Czech philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre de Paris, Cleveland, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and Swedish and Norwegian Radio orchestras, Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Budapest Festival Orchestra.

Perianes exclusively records for harmonia mundi and his most recent releases feature Granados's *Goyescas*, and Chopin's Sonatas No. 2 and No. 3 interspersed with the three Mazurkas from Op. 63. The 2020/21 season saw the release of *Jeux de Miroirs* and *Cantilena*. *Jeux de Miroirs* centres around Ravel's Concerto in G recorded with Orchestre de Paris and Josep Pons and includes the piano and orchestral versions of *Le tombeau de Couperin* and *Alborada del gracioso*. Together with Tabea Zimmermann, he released *Cantilena* in April 2020, an album which is a celebration of music from Spanish and Latin America.

Perianes was awarded the National Music Prize in 2012 by the Ministry of Culture of Spain and named Artist of the Year at the International Classical Music Awards (ICMA) in 2019.

Mark van de Wiel

Clarinet



© Timothy Ellis

Mark van de Wiel is long established as one of Britain's leading clarinetists. As principal clarinet of the Philharmonia (since 2000), the London Sinfonietta (since 2002) and the London Chamber Orchestra (since 1997), and as a well-known soloist and chamber musician, he appears at major venues throughout the world. He has played as soloist with the Philharmonia (under conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Edward Gardner and John Wilson), the London Sinfonietta, and the LCO (including a solo appearance at La Scala, Milan).

Noted for performances of contemporary music, Mark gave the world premiere of Joseph Phibbs's Clarinet Concerto which he jointly commissioned with the Philharmonia and Malmö Live Konserthus. Mark also performed the world premiere of the Van der Aa concerto *Hysteresis*, commissioned for him by the London Sinfonietta. He has given several London premieres in the Philharmonia's Music of Today series, and elsewhere the Spanish premiere of the Carter Concerto, the UK premieres of the Carter Clarinet Quintet and of Tavener's *Cantus Mysticus* (at the BBC Proms), and the London premiere of Graham Fitkin's *Agnostic*. He played Boulez's *Domaines* at the Proms and Berio's *Sequenza* in the Sydney Opera House.

Mark has been the clarinetist with Endymion since its formation in 1980. Other chamber music collaborators have included Vladimir Ashkenazy, Elizabeth Leonskaja, the Quarteto Camargo Guarneri of São Paolo, the Dante Quartet, and the Brodsky Quartet. Recordings include the Nielsen Concerto with the Philharmonia and Paavo Järvi, the Phibbs and Mozart Concertos with the Philharmonia, LCO and Christopher Warren-Green, Bartók's *Contrasts* with Zsolt-Tihamér Visontay and Yefim Bronfman on Signum, Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* on Psalmus, and a disc of chamber works by Alissa Firsova on Vivat.

Mark has jointly commissioned with the Philharmonia a new clarinet concerto, *Rainbow*, from Jonathan Dove, which will be premiered in March 2026 under Santtu in the Royal Festival Hall, together with the Copland Concerto. It will be recorded by Signum as part of a clarinet concerto album by Mark, Santtu and the Philharmonia. Mark's forthcoming Signum releases also include quintets by Anna Clyne, Weber and Gipps with Philharmonia colleagues, quintets by Weber and Phibbs with the Brodsky Quartet, and a Peter Maxwell Davies album with the London Sinfonietta.

Born in Northampton and educated at Oxford and the Royal College of Music, Mark was appointed principal clarinetist with Welsh National Opera and subsequently with Glyndebourne Touring Opera. For several years, he was the clarinet and basset horn soloist in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* at the Bayerisches Staatsoper. Mark is an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music, where he is a Professor, and has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Northampton University. Mark is a committed teacher, with ex-students holding principal positions in a number of major orchestras.

About the Philharmonia



© Luca Migliore

Founded in 1945, the Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's leading symphony orchestras. Finnish conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali took up the baton as Principal Conductor in 2021, and Marin Alsop joined him as Principal Guest Conductor in 2023. They follow in illustrious footsteps: Herbert von Karajan, Otto Klemperer, Ricardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Christoph von Dohnányi, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Esa-Pekka Salonen are some of the key figures who have honed the renowned Philharmonia sound over eight decades.

The Orchestra is made up of 80 outstanding musicians. It has premiered works by Richard Strauss, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Errollyn Wallen, Laufey and many others, and performs with many of the world's most admired soloists.

The Philharmonia thrives on creative collaborations: in the 2024/25 season, violinist Nemanja Radulović is Featured Artist, and dance artist Vidya Patel is Artist in Residence.

The Philharmonia is resident at the Southbank Centre in the heart of London and also holds residencies in Basingstoke, Bedford, Canterbury and Leicester, at Garsington Opera and at the Three Choirs Festival. In each of these residencies, the Orchestra is deeply embedded

in the community, empowering people to engage with and participate in orchestral music. Projects with primary and secondary schools, children in foster care, people living with dementia and their carers, young people learning instruments, and adults who face barriers to experiencing the arts, all testify to the many ways music enriches our lives.

The Orchestra tours extensively throughout Europe and has performed in China, Colombia, Japan, Mauritius and the USA. In the 2024/25 season, Santtu-Matias Rouvali takes the Orchestra to Estonia, Finland and Spain. Marin Alsop has also led a tour across mainland Spain and the Canary Islands.

The Philharmonia is known for embracing innovative technology. The Orchestra's recordings include benchmark LPs, more than 150 film and videogame soundtracks and streamed performances. Its recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 is travelling through interstellar space on board the Voyager spacecraft, and its immersive installations and virtual reality (VR) experiences have introduced many thousands of people to orchestral music.

The Philharmonia Records label was established in 2023. The Orchestra has released live recordings of major works by Strauss, Mahler, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, with Santtu at the helm.

The Philharmonia is a registered charity. It is proud to be supported by Arts Council England and grateful to the many generous individuals, businesses, trusts and foundations who make up its family of supporters.

philharmonia.co.uk

Who's who

FIRST VIOLINS

Zsolt-Tihámér Visontay

Marika Fältskog
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Minhee Lee
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Hugh Sparrow

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Owen Nicolaou
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James Trowbridge
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Samuel Coles †

The Principal Flute Chair is endowed by Norbert and Sabine Reis
June Scott
The No. 2 Flute Chair is endowed anonymously
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Robert Looman †

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Kurt Sanderling
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‡ *Professor at the Royal
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+ *Professor at Codarts
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* *Professor at the Guildhall
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** *Professor at Trinity Laban
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§ *Musical Director,
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Santtu and violinist Nemanja Radulović reunite

Marin Alsop and the Philharmonia Chorus

Thursday 24 April, 7.30pm

Bernstein, Shostakovich and a film by William Kentridge

Santtu and Nikolai Lugansky

Wednesday 11 June, 7.30pm

Rachmaninov, Ravel and Respighi close the season

Santtu conducts Shostakovich

Sunday 13 April, 3pm

Arabella Steinbacher plays Mendelssohn's beloved Violin Concerto

Belshazzar's Feast with The Bach Choir

Thursday 8 May, 7.30pm

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