

**80th Birthday
Season 2025/26**

**Santtu and Alena Baeva
Sunday 1 February 2026
Royal Festival Hall**



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In a nutshell...

A concert full of colour, contrast and vivid musical storytelling. Hailed as 'a magnetic presence', violinist Alena Baeva joins us for Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 2*, a work that moves between long, singing melodies and darker, more restless moods. Listen for the way the violin's lyricism gradually gives way to the off-kilter rhythms and stumbling dance of the finale.

Stravinsky's *Divertimento from The Fairy's Kiss* offers a playful and affectionate tribute to Tchaikovsky. Familiar melodies from Tchaikovsky's songs and piano pieces are transformed by Stravinsky's

sharp ear for colour and rhythm, their sweetness given a distinctly twentieth-century edge.

The concert closes with Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*, his final completed work and a sumptuous showcase for the orchestra. Every section gets a moment in the spotlight, from whispering woodwinds to blazing brass, with a haunting alto saxophone melody adding a touch of nostalgia. Santtu-Matias Rouvali brings these richly contrasted works together in an evening that celebrates both virtuosity and orchestral colour.

Welcome to this evening's concert

Philharmonia 80

Santtu and Alena Baeva

Sunday 1 February 2026, 7.30pm
Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Santtu-Matias Rouvali – conductor
Alena Baeva – violin

STRAVINSKY *Divertimento from The Fairy's Kiss*
(22 mins)

PROKOFIEV *Violin Concerto No. 2*
(26 mins)

Interval (20 mins)

RACHMANINOV *Symphonic Dances, Op. 45*
(35 mins)

This performance finishes at approximately 9.30pm

Please note change of artist: due to her ongoing recovery from a double pinched nerve, Hilary Hahn is no longer able to join us for this performance. We are very grateful to Alena Baeva for stepping in at short notice.



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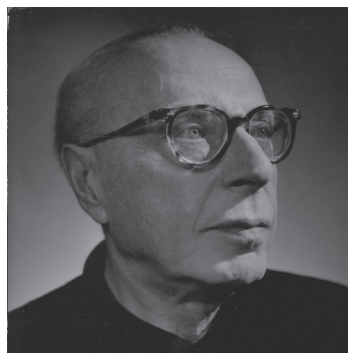
Philharmonia Social

Philharmonia Social is our new initiative to help everyone feel welcome at our concerts.

Our staff, players and volunteers will be on Level 2 blue side before the concert and during the interval.

6.30pm: a short introduction to the orchestra and this evening's performance.

6.45pm: your chance to join the conversation, ask questions and connect with your fellow audience members.



Igor Stravinsky © Lotte Meltner-Gray

Igor Stravinsky (1882 – 1971)

Divertimento from *The Fairy's Kiss*

(1928) (22 mins)

Sinfonia

Danses Suisses

Scherzo

Pas de deux

As Stravinsky explained to his confidant, conductor Robert Craft: “The Fairy’s Kiss probably began as far back as the 1890s, during my first visit to Switzerland”. Later, in 1928, he was commissioned to compose a full-length ballet: “The year was the 35th anniversary of Tchaikovsky’s death... therefore I conceived my compatriotic homage as an anniversary piece.”

Meanwhile, in 1921, Diaghilev had asked Stravinsky to add two orchestrations to a revival of Tchaikovsky’s ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Stravinsky observed: “My work on these numbers ... awakened my appetite to compose *The Fairy’s Kiss*.”

Stravinsky’s plot was inspired by *The Snow Maiden* by Hans Christian Andersen: a fairy gives a child a kiss before kidnapping him; when the youth grows up and gets married, the fairy takes him away into eternity, to preserve the happiest moment of his life. Stravinsky explained: “I chose Andersen’s *The Snow Maiden* because it suggested an allegory with Tchaikovsky himself. The fairy’s kiss on the heel of the child is also the muse marking Tchaikovsky at his birth”.

This Divertimento is a suite of music from the ballet, the solo violin part arranged by Stravinsky and his friend and recital partner, violinist Samuel Dushkin. The ‘Sinfonia’ represents the child being whisked away, and the second movement is a set of Swiss dances for the youth’s engagement party. In the ‘Scherzo’, the fairy reappears before leading the young man to his beloved for the final ‘Pas de deux’: a lyrical slow section, a set of variations, and a lively conclusion.

© Joanna Wyld



Sergei Prokofiev © Public Domain

Sergei Prokofiev (1891 – 1953)

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63

(1935) (26 mins)

Allegro moderato

Andante assai

Allegro, ben marcato

The summer of 1935 was one of miraculous productivity for Sergei Prokofiev. At the Bolshoi Theatre’s retreat on the river Oka, he composed the entire piano score of his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, orchestrating at 20 pages a day. Another commission, for violinist Robert Soetens, was delayed; sketches for a ‘concertino’ were finished in May, but Prokofiev postponed its premiere until autumn.

The roots of what became the Second Violin Concerto were cosmopolitan, reflecting Prokofiev’s roving life before his Soviet commitments curtailed international options. The main theme was conceived in Paris, the Andante assai in Voronezh; orchestration began in

Baku, and the premiere took place on 1 December 1935 in Madrid, with Soetens as soloist and Enrique Arbos conducting.

The concerto suited Soetens’s flexible technique, heard on a rediscovered BBC recording. He had earlier premiered Prokofiev’s Sonata for two violins with Samuel Dushkin, for whom Stravinsky wrote a concerto. Prokofiev’s work differs markedly from Stravinsky’s and from his own First Violin Concerto, completed 18 years earlier for Pavel Kokhanski. Both concertos share lean orchestration, with only a tuba added in 1935 to two horns and two trumpets. The First opens dreamily in D major; the Second begins with a solitary violin playing a wintry Russian melody, soon joined by lower strings. Lyrical passages recall Romeo and Juliet, but development brings sinister runs and stark orchestral effects, even a hint of Stravinsky in flute and bassoon unisons. Anxiety underlies the music, reflecting dark times in Spain and the Soviet Union.

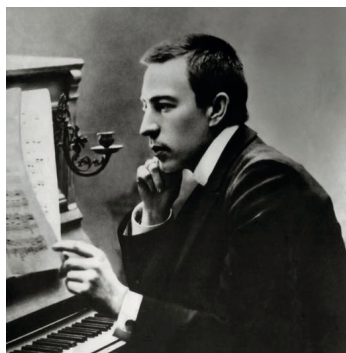
The slow movement is deceptively lyrical. Its tension lies between the cool violin melody and sparse pizzicato accompaniment, later twisted by hollow clarinet intervals. Distant bass drum thunder shadows the violin’s ecstatic elaboration, ending abruptly on clarinet and double basses. A curious episode introduces semitonal grooves, nagging violin passage-work, and muted trumpet.

The finale brims with dark fantasy, driven by a stamping dance launched by the soloist. Castanets add a Spanish flavour, perhaps nodding to the Madrid premiere. Their inflections are more Spanish than in Prokofiev's Russian Overture but less obvious than in *Cinderella*. They punctuate refrains of a spirited ritornello, recalling Lorca's lines from 'Malaguena': 'Death/Moves in and out/Of the tavern'. Tunefulness is undermined as fierce virtuosity spins the movement to a tumultuous close – a grim dance of death rather than mere display.

A loyal Soviet and believer in democracy, Prokofiev supported the republicans when the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936. Before the premiere, he gave piano recitals in Spain, delighted by the concerto's sound, then toured North Africa with Soetens, accompanying him in sonatas by Bach, Beethoven, and Debussy.

© David Nice

Interval (20 mins)



Sergei Rachmaninov © Public Domain

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 – 1943)

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45

(1940) (35 mins)

Non Allegro

Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)

Lento Assai – Allegro vivace – Lento Assai

Come prima – Allegro vivace

Rachmaninov left Russia in 1917, initially living in Copenhagen before settling in America in 1919. An intensive schedule of touring followed in the States and across Europe. In the early 1930s, while visiting Switzerland, he built a villa at Hertenstein on Lake Lucerne.

Russian remained his main language, and the family continued to welcome Russian visitors and observe Russian customs. A friend remarked that their lifestyle was 'very much like that of an old Russian estate'. Yet Rachmaninov relished novelty; his villa's architecture echoed Bauhaus style, and he enjoyed exploring Lucerne in a speedboat. Back in rural Russia, he

had been the first in his region to own a car, and in the States he became partial to ice-cream sodas.

In 1939, the threat of war compelled Rachmaninov and his family to return to the USA. He began work on the Symphonic Dances in late summer 1940, originally conceived as music for a ballet by choreographer Mikhael Fokin. Fokin's death ended the scheme, but the music remains Rachmaninov's only complete work composed in America. Initially scored for two pianos, he hurried to orchestrate it before the 1940–41 concert season. Writing to conductor Eugene Ormandy in August, he said:

"Last week I finished a new symphonic piece, which I naturally want to give first to you and your orchestra. It is called 'Fantastic Dances'. I shall now begin the orchestration..."

Rachmaninov completed the Symphonic Dances between 22 September and 29 October 1940, dedicating the work to Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, who agreed to give the première early in 1941. Rachmaninov met with Ormandy and the orchestra, explaining the dedication with great warmth – and alluding to his admiration for Feodor Chaliapin: "When I was a young man, I idolised Chaliapin... Today, when I think of composing, my thoughts turn to you..."

The premiere took place on 3 January 1941 and met with a tepid critical response. Critics may have dismissed the Symphonic

Dances as nostalgic reworkings, yet there is much that is fresh and masterful. This was not a desperate last gasp, but a vigorous and assured final statement.

The glittering, witty first dance, representing Midday, is rich in musical allusion. Rachmaninov's use of the alto saxophone recalls Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet, and he quotes his own First Symphony of 1895 – a bold gesture given its disastrous première. The theme was based on Russian liturgical music, one of several allusions to church music in the Dances.

The second dance, a waltz, conjures Twilight, with a languorous, jazz-like quality and sinuous woodwind solos, yet a darker undercurrent reminds us that night is near.

The third dance evokes Midnight – death. Rachmaninov returns to the Dies irae plainchant and quotes his All-night Vigil. The coda, marked Alleluia, brings a life-affirming conclusion. Fittingly, he wrote at the end of the score: "I thank thee, Lord."

© Wendy Thompson

Santtu-Matias Rouvali – Principal Conductor



Santtu-Matias Rouvali © Marc Borggreve

Santtu-Matias Rouvali took up the baton as Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra in September 2021.

Santtu performs 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. Annual visits to the Mikkeli Festival in Finland have fast become a highlight of the Philharmonia players' calendars.

In October 2025, Santtu and the Philharmonia undertook a major tour to the US, culminating at Carnegie Hall. He has also conducted the Orchestra on tours to Finland, Estonia, Germany, Austria, Spain and Japan. In the Philharmonia's 2025/26 London season, he conducts music from Beethoven to Bernstein, and taps into his past as a rock drummer for an evening bringing together iconoclastic classical works with heavy metal anthems. In the season finale, he recreates an epic all-Strauss concert originally conducted in 1947 by Richard Strauss himself.

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 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.

Santtu's live recordings on the Philharmonia Records label feature Strauss tone poems, Shostakovich's sixth, ninth and tenth symphonies, Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony and two Stravinsky ballets.

From 2017 – 2025 Santtu was 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 international orchestras including Berliner Philharmoniker and Concertgebouw, as well as New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra and Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

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

Alena Baeva – violin



Alena Baeva © Marco Borggreve

Described as "a magnetic presence" (*New York Classical Review*), violinist Alena Baeva is considered one of the most versatile and captivating soloists active on the world stage today. Possessing a passionate musical curiosity, Baeva holds a vast active repertoire: she is a champion of lesser-known works alongside mainstream violin literature, including composers such as Bacewicz, Karaev, Karłowicz and Silvestrov.

As an international soloist, Baeva has performed with orchestras including New York Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Hong Kong and Seoul Philharmonic, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and Gürzenich-Orchester Köln. Highlights of this season include the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya, Ensemble Resonanz, Il Giardino Armonico, Antwerp Symphony

Orchestra and Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège. She has worked with conductors including Paavo Järvi, Vladimir Jurowski, Cornelius Meister, Riccardo Minasi, Tomáš Netopil, Kazushi Ono, Petr Popelka, Dinis Sousa and Kazuki Yamada.

Chamber music holds a special place in Baeva's musical life, and she enjoys collaborations with artists such as Yuri Bashmet, Daishin Kashimoto, Misha Maisky, Jean-Guihen Queyras and the Belcea Quartet. Her regular duo partner is Ukrainian pianist Vadym Kholodenko.

Baeva records for Alpha Classics: her upcoming album is Vol.1 of Beethoven violin sonatas with Vadym Kholodenko. Her previous release *Fantasy* (Alpha, 2024) features works by Schubert, Stravinsky, Schumann and Messiaen. Her discography also includes Wieniawski Violin Concerto No.2 with Orchestra of the XVIII Century; Karłowicz Violin Concerto with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; Schumann Violin Concerto and Mendelssohn Violin Concerto for Melodiya Records.

Born in Kyrgyzstan, Baeva began violin lessons at five before studying with Professor Eduard Grach in Russia. She also took part in the Seiji Ozawa International Academy Switzerland. Naturalised Luxembourgish, Alena Baeva has resided in Luxembourg since 2010.

On the road with Nuno Carapina

Second Violin



Nuno Carapina © Camilla Greenwell

What's your favourite memory from touring with the orchestra?

There are too many to capture in a short answer. Many relate to the remarkable places we performed in or the unforgettable meals that accompanied them, but my favourites are the concerts where unexpected challenges brought the orchestra together on stage. One such moment was in Zaragoza, when Santtu was unwell and unable to conduct, and we performed the concerto with the concertmaster conducting! It was tense, but deeply memorable.

What did it mean for you to perform again on stages like Carnegie Hall as part of the 80th Birthday US tour?

Although I had performed in New York before, it was my first time playing at Carnegie Hall. It was a very special experience. I was aware of the mythology surrounding the hall, but I did not fully anticipate the quality of its acoustics.

What do you do to stay connected with colleagues on the road?

After concerts, I enjoy unwinding with colleagues by sampling local beer or wine. On longer journeys, there was a period where spirited Mario Kart competitions took place. But my absolute favourite is to organise a football match, ideally against local musicians. It's a great way to meet musicians all over the world.

Have you discovered any local music traditions that inspired you while touring?

Musicians absorb influences constantly, and there is invariably something that leaves an impression – whether a cimbalon player in Bucharest, a flamenco guitarist in Seville, or even the jingles of Tokyo's underground stations.

What does a typical day look like for you on tour?

Tour schedules vary considerably, which makes a typical day hard to define. I try to include some exercise and, when time allows, seek out a good espresso. Above all, knowing the bus departure time, and being on it, is essential.

What advice would you give fellow musicians about maintaining performance quality and wellbeing through extensive touring?

Prioritise eating and sleeping whenever possible, as both can easily be disrupted and affect everything else. And if there has been generous "sampling" of local drinks, a pint of water before bed is always wise.

About the Philharmonia

Philharmonia **80**

Founded in 1945, the Philharmonia Orchestra Celebrates its 80th birthday in the 2025/26 season.

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, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Christoph von Dohnányi, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Esa-Pekka Salonen are some of the key conductors who have shaped the Philharmonia's reputation as one of the world's great orchestras.

The Philharmonia has premiered music by composers including Richard Strauss, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Errollyn Wallen and performs with many of the world's most admired soloists. Víkingur Ólafsson is this season's Featured Artist, and Gabriela Ortiz is Featured Composer.

Resident at the Southbank Centre since 1995, the Philharmonia also holds residencies in Basingstoke, Bedford, Canterbury and Leicester, and tours extensively worldwide. A major US tour in October culminated in two concerts at Carnegie Hall.

The Philharmonia's 80-year recording history includes many benchmark LPs and more than 150 film and videogame soundtracks. The Orchestra's recording of Beethoven's Symphony No.5 is travelling through interstellar space on board the Voyager spacecraft, and immersive installations and virtual reality experiences introduce orchestral music to new audiences.

The Philharmonia is committed to nurturing and developing the next generation of instrumentalists and composers, with a focus on increasing diversity within the classical music industry.



Santtu-Matias Rouvali and the Philharmonia Orchestra

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Emma Lisney
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Chair endowed by Gillian and Lionel Frumkin
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Adrián Varela
Soong Choo
Eleanor Wilkinson
Karin Tilch
Shoshanah Sievers
Vera Beumer
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Jane Kim
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Joe MacDonald

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Anabelle Meare

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Fiona Cornall
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Nuno Carapina
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Robert Looman †

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It's what
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Come back for more

**Marin Alsop conducts
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With guitarist Sean Shibe

Sun 8 Feb, 3pm

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A spiritual journey in music

Thu 19 Mar, 7.30pm

**Denis Kozhukhin plays
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Enjoy the spellbinding

'Emperor' Concerto

Sun 29 Mar, 5pm

**Runnicles conducts
Bruckner 8**

*Experience Bruckner's epic
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Thu 19 Feb, 7.30pm

**Lisa Batiashvili plays
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*Enjoy Tchaikovsky's fiercely
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Sun 22 Mar, 3pm

Bruce Liu plays Ravel

*The outstanding Canadian
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Sun 12 Apr, 3pm

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