

**80th Birthday
Season 2025/26**

**Lisa Batiashvili plays
Tchaikovsky
Sunday 22 March 2026
Royal Festival Hall**

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In a nutshell...

In this afternoon's concert, two rarely performed works from the twentieth century are paired with one of the great romantic works for the violin.

Grażyna Bacewicz was a Polish composer who left a huge legacy as one of the most influential female composers of all time. And she was a stellar violinist too – she was Concertmaster of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in the 1930s!

The title of today's piece, 'Divertimento', refers to a style of music from the 18th century – a light-hearted piece to be heard at social functions.

The long melodies, soaring passion, and lyric beauty of Tchaikovsky's violin concerto have made it a favourite with audiences. Listen out for the fast runs, the 'ricochet' effect (where the bow is dropped onto the strings to naturally 'bounce'), and above all, its nostalgic, embracing warmth.

Walton's Symphony No. 1 was a long time in the making. So long, in fact, that by the time he overcame his writer's block, Walton's turbulent relationship with the woman to whom the symphony had already been dedicated to had broken down irrecoverably. Through four movements of malice and pain, as well as beauty, we experience the incredible emotional power of music.

Welcome to this afternoon's concert

Lisa Batiashvili plays Tchaikovsky

Sunday 22 March 2026, 3pm
Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Santtu-Matias Rouvali – conductor
Lisa Batiashvili – violin

**BACEWICZ Divertimento for String
Orchestra**
(8 mins)

TCHAIKOVSKY Violin Concerto
(33 mins)

Interval (20 mins)

WALTON Symphony No. 1
(43 mins)

This performance finishes at
approximately 5pm



The performance of Grażyna Bacewicz's Divertimento is made possible with funding from the ABO Trust's Sirens programme, a ten-year initiative to support the performance and promotion of music by historical women composers.

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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.

2pm: a short introduction to the orchestra and this afternoon's performance

2.15pm: your chance to join the conversation, ask questions and connect with your fellow audience members

Programme notes



Grażyna Bacewicz, via Wikimedia Commons

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909 – 1969)

Divertimento for String Orchestra
(1965) (8 mins)

Grażyna Bacewicz was a Polish composer and violinist. After graduating from the Warsaw Conservatory, she studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris before being appointed principal violinist of the Polish Radio Orchestra. Alongside prestigious teaching roles, commissions flowed in, and composition became her main occupation – with many prizes received along the way.

Bacewicz's *Divertimento* was written towards the end of her life, to a commission from Karol Teutsch, a violinist and conductor with the Chamber Ensemble of the Warsaw Philharmonic. As with some of Bacewicz's early works, there is a neoclassical aspect to the piece, which borrows from the 18th-century form of the same name. Yet this is no throwaway pastiche, and the music also reveals the colourful and

intricate nature of Bacewicz's style. The *Divertimento* is in three sections: a brisk Allegro, introspective Adagio, and a final Giocoso that combines a variety of string techniques to create a dazzling display of vibrant textures.



Portrait of Tchaikovsky by Nikolai Kuznetsov, via Wikimedia Commons

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35
(1878) (33 mins)

- I. **Allegro moderato – Moderato assai**
- II. **Canzonetta. Andante**
- III. **Finale. Allegro vivacissimo**

Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto had a rather tumultuous journey from the work's conception to the popularity it enjoys today. Tchaikovsky completed the first sketches very rapidly while holidaying in the Swiss resort of Clarens on the shores of Lake Geneva. The intended

dedictee was the young violinist Iosif Kotek, a former student of Tchaikovsky's at the Moscow Conservatory who was greatly admired by the composer, and who mediated between Tchaikovsky and Nadhezha von Meck (who would become his patroness and confidante) during the early stages of their acquaintance. However, Kotek was not sufficiently well known to premiere the work, so Tchaikovsky approached Leopold Auer to be the dedictee. Auer dismissed the work as "unviolinistic", only revising his opinion in the last year of the composer's life.

Eventually, Adolph Brodsky premiered the work in Vienna in 1881, but its early success was hindered when the influential critic Eduard Hanslick denounced the work with considerable vehemence. Thankfully, the concerto has outlived the criticism, and it remains one of Tchaikovsky's best-loved works.

The first movement is based on two melodies which are explored and developed by soloist and orchestra. Tchaikovsky may partly have been inspired by Kotek, who played through the concerto as it was composed. The influence of Mendelssohn's Concerto is also evident in the placing of the cadenza (when the soloist takes a moment to display dazzling skill) at the end of the central section, before the main themes are reprised.

The slow movement's introduction delays the entrance of the main melody, which,

as a consequence, has all the more impact when it arrives. Its title, 'Canzonetta', means a type of vocal movement, highlighting the singing nature of the violin part.

The finale begins with a long introduction, after which the main melody fizzes along. It is contrasted with a reference to Tchaikovsky's opera, *Eugene Onegin*; the oboe (used for the same purpose in the opera) plays a theme which evokes Tatyana, the opera's tragic heroine. This does little to diminish the overall merriment of the finale, however; the violin writing is scintillating, and the work ends in high spirits.

Interval (20 mins)



William Walton, via Wikimedia Commons

William Walton (1902 – 1983)

Symphony No. 1 in B-flat minor
(1935) (43 mins)

- I. Allegro assai – Poco meno mosso**
– **A tempo, agitato – Poco meno mosso – Agitato poco a poco – Animato**
- II. Scherzo: Presto con malizia**
- III. Andante con malinconia**
- IV. Maestoso – Allegro, brioso ed ardentemente – Vivacissimo – Agitato – Maestoso**

Ten days after the premiere of *Belshazzar's Feast* in 1931, Walton was dining with his publisher, Hubert Foss, and Foss's wife, Dora. Following the meal, Walton began improvising at the piano, coming up with what Dora described as "a heavenly tune". This melody would find its way into the slow movement of Walton's First Symphony.

The conductor Sir Hamilton Harty asked Walton to write a symphony early in 1932. By October, Walton was able to report to Foss that the symphony "shows definite signs of being on the move, a little spasmodic perhaps, but I've managed to get down about 40 bars." Progress was hampered by Walton's involvement with the Baroness Imma von Doernberg, with whom he was staying on the shores of Lake Maggiore.

Harty huffed to Foss that he should "go over to Switzerland and wrest poor W. W.'s Baroness away from him so that he can stop making overtures to her and do a symphony for me instead!"

The first two movements were finished by the spring of 1933, the slow movement following during the summer. But when the Baroness left Walton for a Hungarian doctor, the composer had even more difficulty progressing with the symphony, and was only able to orchestrate these three movements in 1934. Walton then became involved with a woman 22 years older than him, the Viscountess Alice Wimborne; this new relationship, and work on the film score for *Escape Me Never*, slowed things up yet further.

A date was set for the premiere, to be conducted by Harty: 3 December 1934 (nine years to the day after the premiere of Gershwin's Concerto in F). The finale, for which Walton had begun sketches in 1932, was yet to materialise, so the composer

was persuaded by Harty and Foss that the work should be performed incomplete. It was a great success, but Walton was hospitalised soon afterwards, the stress of the preceding years taking its toll.

Early in 1935, Walton returned to the finale, but was still struggling. His friend Constant Lambert recommended the inclusion of a fugue, an intricate, formal structure of interwoven lines. Walton said he'd never written one; Lambert replied that there were "a couple of rather good pages on the subject in *Grove's Dictionary*". The fugue was finished in July, and by August the whole work was, at last, complete. On 13 October Walton played it through for some friends, and the whole symphony, dedicated 'To the Baroness Imma Doernberg', was premiered on 6 November 1935, again conducted by Harty.

The first movement, with its long-held notes, repeated motifs, meandering melodies, and resonant chords, is indebted to Sibelius. The scherzo is lighter, but with a sense of menace emphasised by punchy, syncopated rhythms. The melancholic slow movement recalls Elgar: richly romantic, and building to an impassioned climax.

The finale begins with a sonority that is quintessential Walton: a sweeping flourish answered by quick-fire fanfares. Following this majestic introduction, there is a series of themes heard in rapid succession, and two sections of counterpoint (the second

of which is the fugue), after which the opening material is reprised.

Fellow composer John Ireland wrote to Walton: "This is the work of a true Master – unlike any other English symphony, this is the real line of symphonic tradition. It is simply colossal". Proms conductor Sir Henry Wood told Foss that the work was "truly *marvellous*".

Programme notes by Joanna Wyld
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Santtu-Matias Rouvali – Principal Conductor



Santtu-Matias Rouvali © Marco 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.

Santtu and the Philharmonia returned from a major tour to the US, culminating at Carnegie Hall back in October. 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 Geroge 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 Stauss 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.

Lisa Batiashvili – violin



Lisa Batiashvili © Chris Singer

Lisa Batiashvili, the Georgian-born German violinist, is praised by audiences and fellow musicians for her virtuosity. An award-winning artist, she has developed long-standing relationships with the world's leading orchestras, conductors and musicians.

In 2021 Batiashvili formed and continues to lead the Lisa Batiashvili Foundation, which serves her lifelong dream and commitment in supporting young, highly talented Georgian musicians.

The 2025/26 season includes projects with the Munich Philharmonic & Lahav Shani, with the orchestras in Montreal and Philadelphia with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, a tour with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, directed by Klaus Mäkelä. As well as concerts with the Filarmonica della Scala, the Kammerakademie Potsdam, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra – and

her passion project 'City Lights' with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra.

An impressive discography also includes *Visions of Prokofiev* (Chamber Orchestra of Europe/Yannick Nézet-Séguin) which won an Opus Klassik Award. Earlier recordings include the concertos of Tchaikovsky and Sibelius (Staatskapelle Berlin/Daniel Barenboim), Brahms (Staatskapelle Dresden/Christian Thielemann), and Shostakovich (Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks/Esa-Pekka Salonen).

Her previous 2020 recording, *City Lights*, marks a musical journey that takes listeners around the world to eleven cities with an autobiographical connection with music ranging from Bach to Morricone, and Dvořák to Charlie Chaplin.

She has won a number of awards: the MIDEM Classical Award, Choc de l'année, Accademia Musicale Chigiana International Prize, Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival's Leonard Bernstein Award and Beethoven-Ring. Batiashvili was named *Musical America's* Instrumentalist of the Year in 2015, was nominated as *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year in 2017, and in 2018 was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Sibelius Academy (University of Arts, Helsinki).

In 2025, she was honoured with the Kaiser Otto Prize of the city of Magdeburg for her commitment against war and anti-semitism and for promoting European unity.

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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

Who's who

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inflected Piano Concerto in G*

Sun 12 Apr, 3pm

**Forged in Sound:
Heavy Metal
Orchestrated**

*Part of Southbank Centre's
Multitudes Festival*

Wed 22 Apr, 7.30pm

**Santtu conducts a
Strauss extravaganza**

*A recreation of a 1947 concert
once conducted by Strauss
himself*

Thu 4 Jun, 7.30pm

**SOUTHBANK
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