

**80th Birthday
Season 2025/26**

**Denis Kozhukhin plays
Beethoven**

**Sunday 29 March 2026
Royal Festival Hall**

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In a nutshell...

Tonight's concert opens with a new piece by Gabriela Ortiz, the Philharmonia's Featured Composer this season. A heartfelt tribute to the people she has loved and lost, Ortiz's *Tzam* is representative of her music's focus on dialogue, identity, and nature.

Nature was also important to Felix Mendelssohn. The composer had a special relationship to the British Isles. Warmly embraced on his first appearance in 1829, he quickly became a favourite of Queen Victoria and would visit another ten times over the next two decades. In one of the first concerts he gave in London, Mendelssohn himself played

Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, nicknamed the 'Emperor', performed today by Denis Kozhukhin. The Concerto is undoubtedly one of Beethoven's most popular – like his Symphony No. 7, the second movement of the 'Emperor' is also used in the Oscar-winning film, *The King's Speech*.

On the same first visit to Britain in 1829, Mendelssohn travelled to Scotland. For over a decade, he carried the memory of the Highlands until he finally premiered his 'Scottish' Symphony in 1842. The Symphony wasn't the only Scottish-inspired piece written by Mendelssohn – his popular *Hebrides Overture* was inspired by a trip to the island of Staffa.

Welcome to this evening's concert

Denis Kozhukhin plays Beethoven

Sunday 29 March 2026, 5pm
Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Clemens Schuldt – conductor
Denis Kozhukhin – piano

ORTIZ Tzam (UK premiere)
(20 mins)

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 5,
'Emperor'
(36 mins)

Interval (20 mins)

MENDELSSOHN Symphony No. 3,
'Scottish'
(40 mins)

This performance finishes at
approximately 7.10pm



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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 by the singing lift, before the concert.

4pm: a short introduction to the orchestra and today's concert

4.15pm: your chance to join the conversation, ask questions and connect with your fellow audience members

Programme notes



Gabriela Ortiz (b. 1964)

Tzam

(2022) (UK premiere)

*Her water washes air,
her breathing – wakes the sun.
She has a name that can be found
in every tongue
But the earth is not her name.
The earth refuses to be tamed*

– Benjamín Saenz

Due to circumstances that are entirely personal, heartfelt emotivity is conveyed in *Tzam* through a musical discourse that is, in turn, deeply rooted in the experiences life has to offer. Over the past two years, I have lost my father and two dear friends who were fundamental not only to me, but to musical development in Latin America: Carmen Helena Téllez, an orchestra conductor and tireless promoter of contemporary Latin American music, and Mario Lavista, my mentor and professor of musical composition.

Somehow, as I began to compose *Tzam*, I found it impossible to defer what I felt was a pressing need to express my gratitude toward all of them through music.

Dedicated to the memory of Mario Lavista, *Tzam* means ‘dialogue’ in Ayapaneco, one of more than 60 indigenous languages found in Mexico today although, with fewer than ten speakers, it is lamentably on the verge of extinction. I chose *Tzam* as a title not only for its attractive sound, but also because implicit in its meaning is our ability to converse and dialogue, not only with all that surrounds us and nourishes us as human beings within this secret, timeless space, but also and above all with what it means to be a human being on this Earth.

Parting from the action of dialogue as a primal concept, I decided to position the brass section differently, dividing it into two instrumental groups situated across from one another in a circular fashion, so that a stereophonic exchange of ideas could arise among them. Parting from this unusual instrumental placement of the brass, I thought it would be congruent to start out with a fanfare. This material acts as a leitmotiv or recurring *idée fixe*. Immediately afterwards, I carefully chose the main axes of harmony and textured timbre for each of the sections. I then tried to emulate the idea of representing an ocean of sounds – its rising and ebbing tides, acting time and again as a colourful harmonic and instrumental surprise. The central portion of *Tzam* includes the introduction of new musical material as

a personal tribute to remind us of the intimate, delicate realm of Lavista's music. Its development features a surprising and contrasting adagio for strings that, beyond a shadow of a doubt, originated in a genuine attempt to dialogue with Carmen, with Mario and with my father, perhaps for the last time. Finally, a brief epilogue appears in which I revisit the beginning of the work, thus reviving the primal concept that sparked its development.

© Gabriela Ortiz (2022)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

**Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat, Op. 73,
'Emperor'**

(1809) (36 mins)

I. Allegro moderato

II. Adagio un poco mosso

III. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Just as Mozart had before him, Beethoven soon got wise to the fact that piano concertos could provide him with a route to success in Vienna. Beethoven arrived in the city in 1792, famously insistent, impetuous and aloof. Initially, the Viennese must have thought Beethoven's music sounded a little like Mozart's. The first two piano concertos were built on the same sociable principles as those of his elder. But that changed with the profound, confessional feel of the third concerto.

Next came the veiled, inner turmoil of the fourth, and finally, in 1809, the fifth: a 'grand concerto' that would explode the scale of the genre and prove a model for composers from Brahms to Liszt and beyond.

Events both seismic and banal nudged Beethoven towards this upgrading of scale and utterance. In 1809, Napoleon's troops bombarded Vienna. Beethoven took cover in his brother's cellar, clasping pillows to his ears to protect what was left of his hearing. The composer testified that he had conceived "fragments here and there" while holed up in the cellar. It's difficult not to believe, when encountering the Emperor Concerto's militaristic gait and confrontational first movement, that some of those fragments ended up in the score.

As the first movement launches, the pianist immediately steps up, via a cadenza, as if to look the orchestra directly in the eye. The orchestra then introduces the movement's main ideas, before we return to the piano to hear the first of them rendered 'sweetly and very quietly', according to the score. But this march-like theme soon works itself up into protest and eventually full-on confrontation.

In contrast, Beethoven's slow movement conjures a mood of dreamlike reflection. Some say this movement's sense of spirituality comes from its thematic link to the 'Benedictus' movement from Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*. But the music's exalted footing is underlined

significantly by the contrasting music of the movements that surround it. As the Adagio ends, Beethoven plays deliciously with that contrast: the pianist, still in reposeful mood, has a fleeting premonition of the finale's perky main theme just as the music slides forebodingly from B to B-flat; suddenly, spontaneously, the finale is launched.

In the joyous, elegant and cheeky music that follows, enemies are brushed aside by that indefatigable dance tune, which may have roots in the celebratory dances Beethoven heard in the days immediately after the French Revolution. And what of the concerto's title, 'Emperor'? It was added by Beethoven's publisher. He sensed the concerto's grand, imperialist footing. But Beethoven's own message, surely, is not submissive but subversive: the only cause for true celebration, he seems to say, is the freedom of man and the absence of terror.

© Andrew Mellor

Interval (20 mins)



Portrait of Felix Mendelssohn, by James Warren Childre (1839)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

**Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 56,
'Scottish'**
(1829–42) (40 mins)

- I. Andante con moto – Allegro un poco
agitato**
- II. Vivace non troppo**
- III. Adagio**
- IV. Allegro vivacissimo – Allegro
maestoso assai**

In July 1829, the 20-year-old Mendelssohn and his friend Karl Klingemann went on a three-week walking tour of Scotland. Klingemann's detailed diary of the trip records that they visited Arthur's Seat and the Palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh, then went up the river Forth by steamer to Stirling, by pony and cart north to Dunkeld, west to Loch Tay, Glencoe and Fort William, and once more by paddle steamer down Lock Linnhe to Oban on the west coast. From there they took a boat trip to Mull, Iona and Staffa, and finally

returned to England via Glasgow.

Scotland made a deep impression on the young composer's Romantic susceptibilities: he drew inspiration from its "comfortless, inhospitable solitude" to produce two of his best-known works: the *Hebrides Overture* and the Third Symphony (known as the 'Scottish').

Mendelssohn had evidently had it in mind to write such a symphony before leaving Germany, since he wrote to his family from Edinburgh, after visiting Holyrood Palace: "The chapel is now roofless; grass and ivy grow there, and at that broken altar Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland. Everything around is broken and mouldering, and the bright sky shines in. I believe I found there today the beginning of my Scottish Symphony."

Thirteen years went by before Mendelssohn completed the symphony, and by that time his memories of the trip must have dimmed. Once back in Germany, he found himself occupied with other projects, including a trip to Italy less than two years later. Under the bright Italian sunshine another symphony took shape, and he wrote that he found it "impossible to return to my misty Scottish mood".

Finally completed at the beginning of 1842, the symphony was given its premiere in Leipzig on 3 March under the composer's direction. A few months later he conducted it in London, where it was very well received. The score was published the

following year with a dedication to Queen Victoria, and a note by Mendelssohn to the effect that all four movements should be played without a break.

Scholars have recently drawn attention to the close connections, both thematic and structural, between the 'Scottish' Symphony and *Echoes of Ossian* (1840) by Mendelssohn's younger Danish contemporary Niels Gade. It had been supposed that one of the reasons for the symphony's unusually long gestation was that Mendelssohn was held up by structural problems, which he eventually solved by the use of cyclic principles perhaps suggested to him by Gade's work. The material of the slow introduction to the first movement – the 'Holyrood' theme – returns at the end of the movement (as in Gade's overture), and not only fuels the main theme of the ensuing Allegro, but reappears in guise in the scherzo and, in a different order, in the finale, both movements influenced by Scottish folk song.

Echoes of Ossian's horn resound in hunting calls throughout the symphony, while the other instrument most closely associated with the Celtic bard – the harp – is imitated in the pizzicato string accompaniment to the Adagio – a scene which may have been inspired by an episode from Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*.

© Wendy Thompson

Clemens Schuldt – conductor



Clemens Schuldt © Stéphane Bourgeois

Clemens Schuldt, who has made a name for himself particularly thanks to his innovative programming and his deep repertoire understanding, has been Music Director of Orchestre Symphonique de Québec since the 2023/24 season. His artistic work is characterised by the combination of classical and romantic works with lesser known repertoire and contemporary music.

Clemens Schuldt opens the current season in Quebec with a symphonic programme from the world of opera with pieces from Wagner, Sarasate, Mahler and Strauss. In the past, he has already set programmatic accents there, placing Mahler, Britten and Rachmaninov in exciting contexts with compositions by Jacques Hétu, Anna Clyne, Keiko Devaux and Katia Makdissi-Warren, as well as curating crossgenre programmes.

His collaborations with soloists, such as Augustin Hadelich, Fazıl Say, Bruce Liu, Nemanja Radulovic and Noa Wildschut have been celebrated by audiences and critics alike. The 2025/26 season sees

this continue with, among others, James Ehnes, Lise de la Salle, Eldbjørg Hemsing, Nils Wanderer and Julian Steckel.

In November 2025, he made his debut with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra as part of the International Composers Festival. Other guest engagements this season will take Clemens to Japan with Kanagawa Philharmonic Orchestra and Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra as well as to Scandinavia where he returns to Malmö Symphony Orchestra and to the Finnish Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra. He also continues his longstanding collaboration with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London.

In addition to symphonic works, Clemens Schuldt devotes himself intensively to opera. In May 2026 he debuts at the Opéra de Québec with Puccini's *La Bohème*. Most recently, he conducted Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at Opera North, a highly acclaimed new production of Mozart's *Mitridate, re di Ponto* with The English Concert at Garsington Opera, and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe. At the Staatstheater Mainz, Clemens Schuldt previously conducted new productions of Bellini's *Norma*, Gluck's *Armide*, Gounod's *Faust*, Verdi's *Rigoletto* as well as productions of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. In 2019, he made his acclaimed debut at the Venice Biennale conducting George Benjamin's opera *Written on Skin* with the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI.

Denis Kozhukhin – piano



Denis Kozhukhin © Sasha Gusev

A pianist of exceptional technique, emotional depth and sophistication, Denis Kozhukhin has gained significant recognition through his powerful performances, establishing himself as one of the most accomplished musicians of his generation.

In the 25/26 season, Kozhukhin will return to the Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia Orchestra, to the Concertgebouw with the Netherlands Philharmonic on a nationwide tour led by their Chief Conductor Lorenzo Viotti, and to the Megaron in Athens to perform all Rachmaninoff concerti in consecutive nights. Other highlights of the season include debuts with the Toronto Symphony and Baltimore Symphony Orchestras under Music Directors Gustavo Gimeno and Jonathan Heyward respectively, the Hallé Orchestra, SWR Stuttgart, Barcelona Symphony, Orchestre National de Lille, Iceland Symphony, and an Asian tour that includes performances with the NSO Taiwan, Hong Kong

Sinfonietta, and recitals in Pohang, Daegu, and Tokyo.

Other recent highlights include performances with Oslo Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Washington's National Symphony, Danish National Symphony, Camerata Salzburg, Royal Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony, Dallas, Melbourne and San Francisco Symphonies, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and WDR Sinfonieorcheste, working with Rafael Payare, Ryan Bancroft, Alain Altinoglu, Jakub Hrůša, Paavo Järvi, Cristian Macelaru, Daniel Barenboim, Hannu Lintu, Sir Simon Rattle, Dalia Stasevska and Santtu-Matias Rouvali among others. He also has performed recitals at Carnegie Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Bozar Brussels, Vienna's Musikverein, Philharmonie Paris and Cologne, Stockholm's Konserthus, Berlin's Boulez Saal, as well as London's Wigmore Hall. Away from the piano, Kozhukhin has also begun to appear as a conductor, a growing area of his musicianship.

Since winning the Queen Elizabeth Competition in 2010, Denis has performed with the London Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Staatskapelle Berlin. A sought-after recitalist and chamber musician, Kozhukhin regularly appears at a number of prominent music festivals including Verbier, Gstaad, Grafenegg, Dresden, Intonations Festival, Tsinandali, Klavier Ruhr, Lanaudiere, and Jerusalem Music Festivals, as well as the BBC Proms.

Get to know Denis Kozhukhin



Denis Kozhukhin © Marco Borggreve

You've performed with the Philharmonia many times – what do you enjoy about working with the orchestra?

I've been very fortunate to perform with the Philharmonia Orchestra several times, and it's always something I look forward to. They're an exceptional group of musicians – highly experienced, incredibly responsive, and remarkably versatile. What makes them truly special is their distinctive character and unmistakable sound.

Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto is a firm audience favourite. What draws you to the piece?

If I had to describe the 'Emperor' Concerto by Ludwig van Beethoven in a few words, I would call it a truly monumental work for piano and orchestra. In many ways, it feels almost like a symphony, with the piano sometimes leading rather than dominating.

It's a piece full of contrasts and unexpected harmonic shifts, but above

all, it carries an extraordinary sense of optimism. There's a feeling of strength, vitality, and a kind of heroic energy – as if it reflects the struggle of life itself, and ultimately the triumph of overcoming it.

Do you have a favourite moment in the concerto?

I have many favorite moments in this piece, but if I had to choose one, it would be the beginning of the second movement. After the heroic and triumphant energy of the first movement, it suddenly shifts into something that feels almost like a dream, or even a quiet prayer.

There's also a remarkable change of tonality at that point, which makes the contrast even more striking. For me, that moment is pure magic.

If someone in the audience is hearing the 'Emperor' for the first time this evening, is there anything in particular they should listen out for?

To be honest, I envy those who will hear this piece for the first time, because it can truly feel like a revelation. I wouldn't suggest focusing on anything specific – it's really about allowing yourself to experience the music.

Simply enjoy its beauty and try to become part of it. And if that connection happens – both for the audience and for us on stage – it creates something truly special, almost miraculous.

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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