



# CBSO

City of  
Birmingham  
Symphony  
Orchestra

Viennese New Year  
Symphony Hall  
Sunday 7 January, 2024  
3pm

Concert programme £4

[CBSO.CO.UK](https://www.cbsoco.uk)

# VIENNESE NEW YEAR

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This February, we want to welcome 13,000 young people into the concert hall, some for the very first time, to experience the CBSO perform live. Our Schools' Concerts are here to make that moment special!

Delivering these tailored concerts costs over £160,000. Income from ticket sales and generous support from Services for Education covers just over half of this, but we are left with around £90,000 to fundraise through trusts and foundations and philanthropic individuals like you.

We hope every child in the West Midlands leaves school with a passion for music. By supporting our 2024 Schools' Concerts Appeal you help build crucial connections between the CBSO and schools across the region.

Thanks to generous support from anonymous donors, we have £23,000 of match-funding, meaning your donation has double the impact! If you can, please help us continue to deliver inspirational music to children across the West Midlands by donating online today.

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**Strauss II, Die Fledermaus: Overture, 8mins**

**Lehar, Giuditta: Meine Lippen\*, 4mins**

**Strauss II, Ritter Pásmán: Czárdás, 5mins**

**Josef Strauss, Dynamiden Waltz, 10mins**

**Puccini, Gianni Schicchi: O mio babbino caro\*, 3mins**

**Strauss II, Perpetuum mobile, 3mins**

**Smetana, The Bartered Bride: Overture, 7mins**

*Interval*

**Beethoven, Symphony No. 9: Scherzo, 13mins**

**Lehár, The Merry Widow: Vilja Song\*, 6mins**

**Strauss II, Wein, Weib und Gesang, 10mins**

**Puccini, La bohème: Quando m'en vo\*, 3mins**

**Strauss II, On the Beautiful Blue Danube, 9mins**

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**Christoph Koncz, Conductor**

**Francesca Chiejina, Soprano**

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# VIENNESE NEW YEAR

As sweet as apple strudel and as fizzy as champagne, it simply wouldn't be New Year without the music of Johann Strauss and friends! There'll be elegant waltzes, playful polkas, and good old-fashioned operetta romance. So let the CBSO and Austrian maestro Christoph Koncz whirl you back to a more glamorous age, as we raise a glass to the start of another great year of music. Prosit!

The Vienna of the Strauss family was Europe's first great multinational city. More than just the capital of Austria, it was the heart of an empire that stretched from the Swiss Alps to the Ukrainian steppe, and from the Adriatic Riviera to the bear-infested hills of Bohemia. In its nineteenth century golden age, its elegant dance halls and bustling coffee houses set the rhythm of a continent.

For pure multicultural fun, nothing tops Johann Strauss's operetta, *Die Fledermaus* (1874), which makes a perfect opening for today's celebration. Take an Italian tenor, a Russian prince, a French maid, and a (pretend) Hungarian countess - and just add champagne! The first notes of the overture could almost be three bottles popping open.

The story? It's a Saturday night in Vienna in the early 1870s. Gabriel von Eisenstein is preparing to spend a week in gaol for insulting a policeman. His wife Rosalinde has caught the eye of an admirer. Eisenstein's friend Falke is out for revenge, after one of Eisenstein's drunken pranks left



PHOTOGRAPH OF JOHANN STRAUSS II BY FRITZ LUCKHARDT. CC BY 4.0, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.



him stuck in the middle of town dressed as a bat (*Fledermaus*). And an eccentric Russian billionaire is throwing the biggest party Vienna has ever seen. One night brings them all crashing together in a romantic tangle so crazy that all anyone can do is blame it on the Bolly.

Still, Vienna has never needed much excuse for a good time. Lehár's 1934 operetta *Giuditta* is the tale of a flame-haired beauty who breaks hearts across Italy and North Africa. *Giuditta's* showstopping *Meine Lippen sie küssen so heiss* begins with a blaze of Latin passion, but before long she's gliding into a classic Viennese waltz. And once the party's over in Vienna, a shrewd musical businessman like Lehár or Strauss knew that there was always good business to be done in Budapest. (Vienna's all-dancing empire was called Austria-Hungary for a reason). This number from Johann Strauss II's 1892 opera *Ritter Pázmán* is a *Czárdás* – a traditional Hungarian dance that begins slow and sultry before accelerating into an ever-wilder whirl of gypsy fiddles and clarinets. You can almost taste the paprika.

It's a gift that ran in the family – and with the Johann Strauss Orchestra in demand across Europe, in 1853 Johann recruited his reluctant younger brother Josef (a successful civil engineer) to join the firm. "You are the most talented of us all!" he told him (flattery is always a good strategy), and Josef went on to write more than 200 dances, including one of the most infectious of all waltzes: *Dynamiden* – written for the Viennese Industrialists' Ball in 1865. Inspired by technological progress (and because in Vienna, scientists danced too), its slow introduction depicts (said Josef) the "mysterious powers of magnetism".

And after that spin around the dancefloor, we're off to Italy. Puccini was fond of Vienna too (he was good friends with Lehar) but his flair for an unforgettable romantic tune isn't always exactly what it seems. His opera *Gianni Schicchi* (1918) is actually a

fast-moving black comedy, and while *O mio Babbino Caro* ("Oh my beloved daddy") sounds just like a soaring declaration of love, young Lauretta is actually turning all her pester-power on her all-too-devoted dad. You can't blame him for giving way.

Back in Vienna in the carnival season of 1861, the talk of the town was a ball billed as "Carnival Perpetuum Mobile" – an all-night party, in which the dance music would play non-stop till dawn. The Strauss brothers took turns conducting in relays, and Johann came up with the ingenious *Perpetuum Mobile*. To an unstoppable dance rhythm, each section of the orchestra gets a chance to strut its stuff as the music hurtles cheerfully onwards. Strauss called it *Ein musikalische Scherz* (A musical joke) – though you might have to wait till the end for the punchline...

And what could be more Viennese than ending our first half in (wait for it) Prague? The gorgeous, glittering capital of Bohemia has always adored music – and when the brewer's son Bedřich Smetana wrote his operatic rom-com *The Bartered Bride* in 1866, he wanted nothing more than a smash hit. "Composing it was child's play!" he admitted, and it turned out to be the happiest thing he ever wrote – a tale of young love, set in a Czech village where the sun always shines, the circus is always in town and (naturally) the beer is excellent. The overture sets the mood: unstoppable energy, a dash of romance and some irresistible dance rhythms.

"Even Ludwig van Beethoven (the grumpiest of adopted Vienna residents) couldn't resist the spirit of the dance."

Noone with even a dash of Vienna in their blood could stay off the dancefloor for long. Even Ludwig van Beethoven (the grumpiest of adopted Vienna residents) couldn't resist the spirit of the dance, and the mighty Scherzo of his Ninth Symphony is the sort of dance you might imagine being performed by gods and giants. Commissioned by Britain's Royal Philharmonic Society and premiered 200 years ago this year in May 1824, the raw power of its rhythm has never sounded more elemental – or more thrilling.

But traditionally, the Viennese approach is a bit softer, a bit sweeter, a bit more... shall we say?...seductive. In Franz Lehár's hit Viennese operetta *The Merry Widow* (1905), the beautiful (and newly single) millionairess Hanna sings a pretend folksong about a lovestruck water-nymph, or "Vilja" – and she aims it straight at the heart of the only man in town who isn't after her millions. Still, as the saying goes (and it's practically a bylaw in Vienna): who loves not wine, women and song remains a fool their whole life long. When the waltz first emerged in the early 19th century, it was the

music of seduction. Johann Strauss II wrote more than 140: each one a little love story set to that swaying, intoxicating rhythm. *Wein, weib und gesang* (Wine, Women and Song) dates from the carnival season of 1869 and – well, the name says it all.

Before the last dance, a quick trip to France courtesy of Puccini's opera *La bohème* (1896). It's Christmas Eve in Paris: the stars are shining, the streets of the Latin Quarter are teeming with revellers, and a group of penniless students (or "Bohemians") are having the night of their lives at the Café Momus. How will they pay? Oh, they'll think of something. Meanwhile, in *Quando m'en vo* the beautiful and flirtatious Musetta is out to get her man. And how better than with a showstopping song in the form of (you guessed it) a waltz?

But there's only one way to end a ball in Vienna – with the piece that became the personal signature tune of the man they called "The Waltz King". "The most musical man in Europe" – that was Richard Wagner's verdict on Johann Strauss II. "Sadly not by me" scribbled Brahms over the opening bars of *The Blue Danube* (1867). Make no mistake - this music can hold its head up beside Beethoven. Take those opening bars. With a hushed shimmer of violins and three simple notes on the horn Strauss creates the most recognisable (and most magical) opening in all music. Feel the back of your neck tingle, and your toes begin to tap – and let the rhythm do the rest.

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# CHRISTOPH KONCZ



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The Austrian conductor Christoph Koncz has already strongly established himself on the international conducting circuit. During the upcoming season, Christoph Koncz will appear for the first time with Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, Orchestre de Paris, The CBSO and Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo. He will also conduct performance series of *Don Giovanni* at the National Theatre Prague and *Rigoletto* at the Teatro Real Madrid. He will return to hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, Aarhus Symphony and Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa and make further debuts with Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and Orquestra Simfònica de les Illes Balears und at the Tsinandali Festival. In September 2023 Christoph Koncz started his tenure as Music Director of Orchestre symphonique de Mulhouse. Currently in his fifth season as Chief Conductor of Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss am Rhein, Christoph Koncz has also been appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the renowned French period instrument ensemble Les Musiciens du Louvre.



# FRANCESCA CHIEJINA

Nigerian-American soprano Francesca Chiejina is a graduate of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where her roles included Countess Ceprano *Rigoletto*, Lady-in-Waiting *Macbeth*, Voice from Heaven *Don Carlo*, and Ines *Il trovatore*. This season, Francesca sings the title role in *Semele* (Blackheath Halls) and performs Strauss Lieder with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Opera North. She will premiere *Odyssey*, a new work by Jonathan Dove. Chiejina has participated in masterclasses with Martin Katz, Kamal Khan, Gianna Rolandi, Joyce DiDonato, Brigitte Fassbänder, Edith Wiens and Felicity Lott. Competition successes include reaching the finals of the inaugural Glyndebourne Opera Cup in 2018, the semi-finals in the National Mozart Competition and winning the GSMD English Song Prize, the GSMD Aria Prize, as well as second prize in the Classical Singer Competition. She was also a finalist in the 2017 Kathleen Ferrier Awards. Chiejina studied at the University of Michigan with Martha Sheil and James Paterson, and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Sue McCulloch.



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We are Birmingham's orchestra – loud and proud. An internationally celebrated symphony orchestra that makes music that matters to the people of Birmingham, the West Midlands and beyond.

A family of 90 incredible musicians, we exist to create exciting musical experiences for all. From brightening up the morning commute, to inspiring audiences and musicians of the future – we make epic, powerful, meaningful music that fills concert halls, communities, streets, schools and lives with passion, excitement, inspiration, hope and joy.

We've come from all over the world, but we're at home right here in Birmingham. See us at Symphony Hall playing some of the greatest symphonic music of all time, at pop-up performances around the city, at the CBSO Centre performing intimate smallscale gigs or in schools, community centres, libraries and even the occasional pub!

We're musicians, but we're also parents, teachers, runners, gardeners, writers, sports fans, foodies and so much more. We're part of your city, and we couldn't be happier to be here to play, share, write, sing, live and breathe music with you!

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Alexandra Caldon  
Peter Liang  
Imogen East  
Jane Wright<sup>#</sup>  
Bethan Allmand\*  
Robert Bilson  
Mark Robinson<sup>#</sup>  
Nathan Bomans\*  
Anais Boyadjieva  
Wendy Quirk  
Zhivko Georgiev

## **VIOLIN II**

Emily Davis  
Moritz Pfister\*\*  
Stephen Payne  
Bryony Morrison\*  
Georgia Hannant\*  
Richard Thomas  
Tam Mott  
Amy Littlewood  
Cleo Annandale  
Margaret Jackson

## **VIOLA**

Adam Römer\*<sup>#</sup>  
Catherine Bower\*<sup>#</sup>  
Michael Jenkinson\*<sup>#</sup>  
David BaMaung\*  
Daichi Yoshimura  
Sarah Malcolm  
Amy Thomas<sup>#</sup>  
Jessica Tickle\*

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## **TRUMPET**

Jack Wilson  
Joseph Skypala  
Jonathan Quirk\*<sup>#</sup>

## **TROMBONE**

Richard Watkin\*  
Anthony Howe\*<sup>#</sup>

## **BASS TROMBONE**

David Vines\*<sup>#</sup>

## **TUBA**

James Tavares

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Matthew Hardy\*

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## **HARP**

Katherine Thomas\*

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