

CBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

Beethoven 5
Symphony Hall
Wednesday 24 January 2024, 7:30pm
Thursday 25 January 2024, 2:15pm

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B E E T H O V E N 5



Concert programme £4

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INTRODUCTION

Our concert opens with a firm favourite - Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture. The piece evokes so many emotions in me and always takes me back to the many happy times that I've spent North of the Border.

I always talk of Scotland with a smile, and I hope you will sense this in our performance of Mozart's Flute and Harp Concerto.

Being Mozart's sole composition for the harp, it is always a pleasure to perform - today especially, as it's alongside flautist Marie-Christine and the CBSO. The first movement is the most technical, the second lyrical and the third playful.

Seeing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony on a concert programme always reminds me of my time as a student. As well as our instrumental lessons, there was chamber music, history, harmony, aural - and the dreaded conducting lessons.

Noel Tredinnick was the person guiding us through these sessions and I can remember vividly my terror in having to stand up in front of all the other students in my year and attempt to conduct the opening of Beethoven 5.

I thought I'd done quite a good job at the time: been quite clear and decisive, but, needless to say, my own vision of my technique and that of the orchestra were in stark contrast to each other!

I'm sure that the CBSO won't have any problems with Maxim Emelyanychev at the helm today; I can't wait to take my seat in Symphony Hall to enjoy it with you all.

Katherine

Mendelssohn, Hebrides Overture

10mins

Mozart, Concerto for Flute and Harp

29mins

Interval

Simon, Fate Now Conquers

5mins

Beethoven, Symphony No. 5

31mins

Maxim Emelyanychev, Conductor

Marie-Christine Zupancic, Flute

Katherine Thomas, Harp

We are very happy for you to take photographs and short video clips at our concerts, but please refrain from recording the whole performance. We'd love you to share them with us @TheCBSO.

We do ask that you are mindful of disturbing other audience members and therefore ask that you dim the brightness on your phone, take pictures during applause breaks and do not use your flash.

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BEETHOVEN 5

It's triumph. It's tragedy. It's fate knocking at the door. It's the most famous four notes in classical music. It's Beethoven's Fifth, and if you already know how it goes (or if you've never heard it in your life), guest conductor Maxim Emelyanychev has got some thrilling surprises in store. Add Mendelssohn's Scottish seascape, Carlos Simon's piece inspired by Beethoven's Fifth, and Mozart's sparkling showpiece for two CBSO stars, and expect an afternoon less ordinary...

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

OVERTURE – THE HEBRIDES (FINGAL'S CAVE), OP.26

Young gentlemen of the 18th century travelled to Italy to absorb the culture of classical Rome. But the age of Beethoven and Goethe had wilder tastes. And so, on 7th August 1829, the 20-year old Felix Mendelssohn urged his reluctant friend Karl Klingemann onto the steamer that was to take them on a sightseeing trip to the Hebridean island of Staffa, and its great basalt sea-cave, said to have been created by the giant Fingal.

Klingemann was right to worry: he was seasick. But if Mendelssohn suffered too, he didn't mention it in his letters home: "In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, the following came into my head there". There follows, messily scribbled but otherwise exactly as we hear it today, the opening of the *Hebrides* overture. "You will excuse a short note, as the best I have to

tell you is described exactly in the above music", he added, and he completed the overture in Rome on 16th December 1830. That opening motif begins its wave-like swell, and Mendelssohn lays out the squalls, the vistas and the whole fresh, bracing atmosphere of one of music's most unforgettable boat-trips.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

CONCERTO FOR FLUTE AND HARP

- I. Allegro
- II. Andantino
- III. Rondeau: Allegro

About four minutes into Mozart's flute and harp concerto – just after Mozart has twice presented an elegant, bustling series of melodies, and is now getting down to the business of developing them – the music turns dark, and the orchestra slides away downwards. It's as if Mozart is deliberately directing our ears to the ground – where sure enough, over the next few moments we repeatedly hear the flute, about as low as a

flute can go, playing deep, long notes while the harp continues its musical-box dance over the top.

That passage isn't just an intriguing musical technicality – it's the concerto's whole reason for being. Mozart had come to Paris in March 1778 convinced that he'd make his fortune. After all, the Parisians had lionised him and his sister Nannerl when they'd been child prodigies back in the early 1760s. But as he was soon to find out, nothing was as stale in Paris as the last decade's fashion. A seven-year old prodigy was adorable but a 22-year old one was just embarrassing. Mozart quickly realised that he'd need to adapt if he was to pay his bills. If that meant accepting commissions from a wealthy amateur flautist, the Comte de Guines, and his "magnifique" harpist daughter, so be it. And if the concerto had to include a passage in which the Comte could show off the distinctive low notes on his expensive new flute, Mozart was happy to oblige.

The concerto is written in the French taste – statelier and more formal than Mozart's usual style. But he was writing for amateurs, after all, even if the Comte did (according to Mozart), "play the flute matchlessly". The concerto is designed to challenge them without embarrassing them; he knew that the sparkling, featherweight texture of the two solo instruments would do the rest. And Guines was suitably charmed: two months later, he hired Mozart to teach composition to his daughter. But – in what was to become an all-too-familiar experience for Mozart in Paris – he'd unfortunately forgotten to pay for the concerto. "He must have thought: this is a young fellow, and a stupid German besides!" fumed Mozart. He left Paris in September – as far as we know, unpaid.



PORTRAIT OF WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART BY JOHANN NEPOMUK DELLA CROCE, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Carlos Simon (b.1986)

FATE NOW CONQUERS

"My dad, he always gets on me. He wants me to be a preacher, but I always tell him, 'Music is my pulpit. That's where I preach'". So says the American composer Carlos Simon, in a recent interview for *The Washington Post*. Born in Atlanta, Georgia, and brought up in a home filled with gospel music, he's worked alongside some of the biggest names in R'n'B, while composing concert works – such as his *Elegy* for string quartet (2015) and his opera *Night Trip* (2020) – that fuse his American roots, his fascination with the European classics, and his commitment to social justice, into one of the most distinctive voices in 21st century music. He wrote *Fate Now Conquers* in 2020 for the Philadelphia Orchestra, and in his own words:

"This piece was inspired by a journal entry from Ludwig van Beethoven's notebook written in 1815: "Iliad. The Twenty-Second Book: But Fate now conquers; I am hers; and yet not she shall share In my renown;

that life is left to every noble spirit And that some great deed shall beget that all lives shall inherit."

"Using the beautifully fluid harmonic structure of the 2nd movement of Beethoven's 7th symphony, I have composed musical gestures that are representative of the unpredictable ways of fate. Jolting stabs, coupled with an agitated groove with every persona. Frenzied arpeggios in the strings that morph into an ambiguous cloud of free-flowing running passages depicts the uncertainty of life that hovers over us."

"We know that Beethoven strived to overcome many obstacles in his life and documented his aspirations to prevail, despite his ailments. Whatever the specific reason for including this particularly profound passage from the Iliad, in the end, it seems that Beethoven relinquished to fate. Fate now conquers."

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

SYMPHONY NO.5 IN C MINOR, OP.67

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Scherzo: Allegro
- IV. Allegro

What's left to say about the most famous symphony ever written? From the day of its first performance, in Vienna on 22nd December 1808, everyone has had an opinion on Beethoven's Fifth. It's acquired its own myth. Napoleon's soldiers leapt spontaneously from their seats and saluted at the beginning of its *finale*. Hector Berlioz witnessed fellow audience-members fainting and gasping for breath at an early Paris performance. Its first four notes became the morse code symbol for "V" - and the musical symbol of

Victory in the BBC's wartime broadcasts to occupied Europe. "Thus Fate knocks at the door", Beethoven is supposed to have said of them. (One recent recording of the symphony has a clenched fist on its cover).

And everyone knows those first four notes. There'd never been a symphonic opening like them, or anything in music to match the sheer elemental power of what follows. Everything in Beethoven's Fifth can be explained in terms of traditional musical forms and processes. But despite its stupendous formal strength, Beethoven's stormy first movement isn't just serious - it's a human tragedy portrayed in music of torrential force. If you doubt that this is an emotional drama rather than just a superbly-paced musical procedure, listen out for the tiny, heartbroken oboe solo Beethoven slips into one of the music's few moments of hesitation.

The lilting *Andante* seems to offer a gentle respite, but ringing trumpets keep sounding a very different note. The struggle continues; the third movement, traditionally the lightest in a classical symphony, instead surges up from an eerie gloom, and trumpets ring out again, now menacing. Finally the orchestra sinks to a hush, drums rumble ominously until with a sudden *crescendo*, the skies clear and Beethoven launches the *finale* in a triumphant blaze of brass.

Just in case there's any doubt what he meant, Beethoven introduces the trombones - instruments traditionally associated with sacred or dramatic music. Piccolo and contrabassoon also join in - the instruments of the wind-bands of Revolutionary France. Beethoven wasn't just battling his own deafness; the whole of Europe was engulfed in war and revolutionary struggle. Let the music sweep you to its supremely stirring finish, and you'll agree - this isn't just a symphony, it's a triumph of the human spirit.

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MAXIM EMELYANYCHEV



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Born in 1988 into a family of musicians, Maxim Emelyanychev studied conducting in Gennady Rozhdestvensky's class at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. In 2018 the Scottish Chamber Orchestra appointed Maxim as their Principal Conductor from the 2019/20 season onwards. He is also Principal Conductor of Il Pomo d'Oro and has been sought-after by quite a few symphonic orchestras around the world, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic or the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. In 2023 he has been appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra to be effective from 2025/26. In 2023/24 Maxim's highlights include the following debuts : Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, Mozarteum Orchestra at the Salzburg Festival, the Orchestra of Europe or Mahler Chamber Orchestra. He also returns to the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra. Other highlights: a violin-piano recital with Aylen Pritchin at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, a European tour with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and an Asian tour with the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris.

MARIE-CHRISTINE ZUPANCIC

Supported by Basil and Patricia Turner



Marie-Christine Zupancic is Section Leader Flute of the CBSO, with whom she frequently appears as a soloist. Born in Germany, she studied at the Conservatoire in Cologne with Professor Robert Winn. She won numerous prizes in international flute competitions in Cremona, Moulins, Cracow and Bayreuth. After graduating in Cologne, she won a place at the Karajan Academy and subsequently played with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra for two years. Highlights included a tour of the US under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle. Chamber music has always been an important part of Marie-Christine's life. During her studies she was awarded a scholarship with Villa Musica with her woodwind quintet and toured China and South America. In June 2014 she was invited to play at Lars Vogt's festival Spannungen in Heimbach, Germany. The live recording of Mahler 4 in Erwin Stein's chamber music version won the Mahler Record Prize 2015. Marie-Christine teaches at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and gives masterclasses in the UK and internationally. She plays a 14k Brannen-Cooper rose gold flute with a Brannen/Lafin headjoint that was handmade for her in Boston, MA in 2013.

KATHERINE THOMAS

Supported by an anonymous donor



Katherine Thomas is a harpist who has performed with artists ranging from Bryn Terfel and Rolando Villazon to Katherine Jenkins and the Manic Street Preachers. She has toured as a soloist and with orchestras including Orchestra of Welsh National Opera with whom she was Principal Harp. A graduate of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Katherine plays the traditional Celtic and triple harps as well as the pedal harp. Her recordings range from classical music and traditional Welsh music to contemporary recordings, with recent projects including new releases by Sheku Kanneh-Mason and The Four Seasons re-imagined with the CBSO. Katherine is a member of the Enigma Duo with violinist Laurence Kempton. Replacing the harpsichord and used as a continuo instrument in works such as Sonatas by Handel and Corelli, the harp then becomes an entire orchestra in Bartok's Romanian Folk Dances and Danse Macabre by Saint-Saëns. Striving to expand the repertoire for their combination, the duo compose and commission new works from others and challenge the boundaries of the harp's capabilities.



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