# Concert programme £4

**CBSO** 

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Tchaikovsky & Beethoven Symphony Hall Wednesday 14 February, 2024 7:30pm

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## City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra



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# INTRODUCTION

Tonight's programme combines romance, passion, and drama in equal measure - quite fitting for Valentine's Day! Under the baton of long-time friend of the CBSO Vassily Sinaisky, and featuring the Ukrainian-Welsh soprano Natalya Romaniw, we have prepared a feast of Tchaikovsky and Beethoven to enjoy together.

The concert opens with Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet: Fantasy Overture," a timeless masterpiece that breathes orchestral life into Shakespeare's iconic love story two star-crossed lovers. The overture, with its famous love theme which has been used in countless movies and TV soundtracks, sets the stage for an evening of musical storytelling that explores the profound depths of human emotion.

We turn up the drama in Tchaikovsky's "Letter Scene" from his opera Eugene Onegin. In this scene, Natalya plays the role of Tatiana, a shy but passionate widow's daughter, who spends the night pouring out her profession of love for Eugene Onegin in an emotional letter in what is now regarded as one of the great monologues of opera history. Throughout the scene, Tchaikovsky evokes Tatiana's fluttering heartbeat, her youthful elation, mixed with fear of rejection.

After we give Natalya the interval to recover from her painstaking penmanship, we dive straight into the depths of despair and rage in Beethoven's "Ah! Perfido." Written specifically for the concert hall and not extracted from an opera, this standalone

concert aria for soprano and orchestra, is a portrayal of a woman scorned, who has been deserted by her lover and is oscillating wildly between asking the gods to punish her lover and begging them to show him mercy, then bitter self-pity.

We conclude with Beethoven's Symphony No. 2. Often overlooked for his more famous symphonies (4, 5, 7, 9) this rollocking work is one of my personal favourites. Despite the symphony's vibrant optimism and intense momentum, Beethoven composed it amidst a profound sense of desolation caused by his rapidly deteriorating hearing. Nevertheless, he channelled remarkable energy and effort to surpass both personal and musical limitations to create this masterwork.



Tchaikovsky, Romeo and Juliet: Fantasy Overture 21mins

Tchaikovsky, Eugene Onegin: Letter Scene\*

14mins

Interval

Beethoven, Ah! Perfido: Scena and Aria\* 15mins

Beethoven, Symphony No.2, 34mins

Vassily Sinaisky, Conductor Natalya Romaniw, Soprano\*

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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.

We also regularly take photographs for promotional use, so you may see a professional photographer at our concerts. Please ask a member of the front of house team if you have any questions about this.

To ensure that everyone is able to enjoy the performance, please make sure your mobile phone is set to silent.

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# TCHAIKOVSKY & BEETHOVEN

Tchaikovsky: music's ultimate Romantic, who poured all his longing into melodies you never forget. Beethoven: the tousle-haired revolutionary, whose music celebrates passion, daring and the irrepressible spirit of youth. It's the perfect pairing for Valentine's Night – including Romeo and Juliet, and featuring the glorious voice of Natalya Romaniw, the fabulous young Welsh diva who's been winning standing ovations all over the world.

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

### ROMEO AND JULIET -FANTASY OVERTURE

A passionate story of doomed love in a violent world, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet could have been made for Tchaikovsky and he wrote this "Fantasy Overture" in barely two months in autumn 1869. As the title suggests, it isn't a blowby-blow re-telling of Shakespeare's story, but a fantasy inspired by the main themes of the drama - violence, reconciliation, and, of course, love. The solemn introduction depicts the wise and compassionate character of Friar Laurence, whose pleas for peace are shattered as the overture suddenly jolts into a savage and fastmoving portrayal of the war between Montagues and Capulets.

But out of violence emerges - at first tentatively, and then with growing passion - the great, sweeping love-theme of Romeo and Juliet (the cor anglais plays it first). In the afterglow, the orchestra seems to whisper with all the magic of an Italian summer night, before the conflict resumes, the love theme rises to an even more passionate height, and the final tragedy unfolds. As both families stand, stricken, around the dead lovers, the music slows once more and Friar Laurence speaks his final, consoling words.

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

### LETTER SCENE (FROM EUGENE ONEGIN)

"No, early on his heart was cooling and he was bored with social chat [...] soon, romance itself proved cloying, and friends and friendship, soul-destroying..."

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) has been described as Russia's Shakespeare, Byron and Jane Austen all rolled into one. And he never hit the mark more brilliantly than in his 1832 verse novel *Eugene Onegin*. Onegin is a single man in possession of a

good fortune, in no particular want of a wife. Sophisticated, sexy and stylish, he's enjoyed too much too young, and has grown cynical. As he drifts through Regency-era Russian society, he wins friends and hearts almost without trying – and destroys them just as carelessly. Then he meets the beautiful and sensitive young Tatyana Larina.

For a composer as lovelorn as Tchaikovsky, Onegin was almost too obvious a subject for an opera; the question was how to set it without vandalising a Russian classic. In the summer of 1877, the answer came to him, "Maybe my opera won't be theatrical" he declared "maybe there'll be little action in it - but I'm in love with the image of Tatyana. I'm enchanted by Pushkin's verses, and I'm setting them to music because I can't resist them." When it was premiered, by students of the Moscow Conservatoire in March 1879, some audience members muttered "blasphemy". A generation later, Igor Stravinsky declared that "Our greatest opera composer is Tchaikovsky, and the most Russian opera of all is Eugene Onegin".

At the climax of Act One, a single brief scene proves to be a turning point. Tatyana and her sister Olga live quietly with their mother on their country estate, heads buried in romantic fiction. So when Olga's fiancé Lensky introduces his dashing friend Onegin, Tatyana falls hard. Alone in her room on a long Russian summer night, she realises that she's in love, and decides to write to Onegin. At first, she's excited - then quiet and thoughtful, as she struggles to get the right words on paper. Tchaikovsky sets her wandering thoughts to music that's by turns dreamy, apprehensive, and hauntingly tender (the woodwinds and horn seem to echo her worries over and over). Gradually, heart racing, she summons her courage - and with a final flourish of the guill, the letter is written. For better or for worse, Tatyana has placed her happiness in Onegin's hands...



CABINET CARD PORTRAIT OF PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY, 1888. ÉMILE REUTLINGER, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

### AH! PERFIDO, OP.65

When in 1792 the 22-year Beethoven left his native Bonn to study in Vienna, his patron Count Waldstein set him a goal: "by diligent study, receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn". And one field in which Mozart excelled was that of the concert aria – designed to display an individual singer's particular gifts in concert. Mozart wrote over fifty such stand-alone songs, commenting that he "liked an aria to fit its singer like a well-tailored suit".

Beethoven was no man's (or woman's) tailor, and he wrote only a handful of concert arias. But this one, the most famous of all, has a particular connection to Mozart. Beethoven wrote it in Prague, in the spring of 1796 but it was performed in Leipzig on 21st November that year by Josefa Duschek: the star soprano for whom Mozart had written his own concert aria *Bella mia fiamma* in 1787. In many ways, Beethoven follows Mozart's formula – creating a miniature opera in three parts.

A dramatic introduction throws us into the action in mid-flow: the singer adopts the character of a betrayed lover, denouncing her faithless sweetheart (the text of this section was an off-the-peg lyric by Pietro Metastasio: the Bernie Taupin of 18th century opera). She pleads for him to stay, in grand expressive paragraphs, and finally – with the words *Ah crudel!* (Oh, cruel one!) races off into a final denunciation that's perfectly calculated to bring the house down.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

### SYMPHONY NO.2 IN D, OP.36

I. Adagio - Allegro con brio

II. Larghetto

III. Scherzo: Allegro

IV. Allegro molto

With Beethoven, categories become impossible. The experts agree that Beethoven's Second Symphony has the same basic shape and layout as a symphony by his youthful role models, Mozart and Haydn. But they also agree that it does something very different. For the music historian Sir George Grove, this was the last and greatest 18th century symphony – "the farthest point to which Beethoven could go before he burst into that wonderful new region into which no man had penetrated". To others, this piece was the turning point between musical eras.

So what did Beethoven himself say? A Romantic artist, like Beethoven, reflects his life in his work – and that work should come to him, fully-formed, in a blinding flash of inspiration. Shouldn't it? Yet at the end of the very summer – 1802 – in which Beethoven completed the Second Symphony, he completed another document; a heart-rending letter to his brothers, revealing the fact of his incurable

deafness: "You who think me to be morose, awkward and cynical, how badly you misjudge me!...joyfully, I hasten to meet death".

How on earth does that relate to such an irrepressibly joyful and imaginative symphony? And as for the bolt of inspiration...well. Beethoven is supposed to have thrown away three drafts of the piece. His biographer Ries asked him why he'd made a certain change in the second movement, and got a terse reply: "It's better that way". The simple fact remains: this is one of the sunniest, strongest, and most exhilarating symphonies ever written. True, some of Beethoven's techniques can be analysed (and how they have been!). Its outer movements both begin with a surprise, before rocketing off with breathtaking energy. Unusually, the violins don't launch any of the main themes of the first movement - but you can't miss the dazzling verve with which those fiddles. freed from their usual duties, flash across the musical landscape.

The long, luxurious slow movement is as soothing now as it was then. And in the high-octane comedy of the fourth and third movements (a three-note children's game enlarged to a giant scale – like one of those giant versions of Jenga or Connect Four you sometimes find in pub gardens) the jokes hit their marks as punchily as ever. When this symphony was first heard, in Vienna on 5th April 1803, it was the longest ever written. Let's leave the history at that, and just enjoy a life-affirming and fabulously entertaining masterpiece - in a class of its own.

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# **VASSILY SINAISKY**



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Vassily Sinaisky is one of the foremost Russian conductors in the great tradition of Musin and Kondrashin. He has had a highly distinguished career holding important positions with and guest conducting many of the world's leading orchestras and opera houses. Alongside his considerable experience and authentic voice in Russian repertoire, he is known for masterly interpretations of German and British repertoire. Most recently he held the position of Chief Conductor and Music Director of Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, and in September 2023 he commenced his fourth season as Music Director of the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra in Ostrava. Sinaisky holds the position of Conductor Emeritus of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, with whom memorable projects have included the 'Shostakovich and his Heroes' festival, tours to Europe and China, and many appearances at the BBC Proms. His guest conducting has included the Czech Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Cleveland Symphony Orchestras amongst others, and highlights of his 23/24 season include performances of Berlioz La damnation de Faust with the RTVE Symphony (Madrid) and a return to the Far East for concerts with the Taipei Philharmonic, Guangzhou and Suzhou Symphony orchestras.

# **NATALYA ROMANIW**

Welsh-Ukranian soprano Natalya Romaniw is hailed as one of the most impressive stars on stage today. Praised for her 'lyrical lines with creamy elegance' (The Times), Romaniw is continuously applauded for the richness of her astonishing Soprano voice, and the sophistication of her dramatic interpretations. Highlights of Romaniw's 2023/24 season include her role debut as Katya in Janacek Káťya Kabanová at Grange Park Opera. On the concert platform, she will feature with the CBSO and make a return to the BBC Proms. Romaniw is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. where she was awarded the prestigious Gold Medal in her final year. Since graduating, she has won many competitions including the Loveday Song Prize and the renowned Kathleen Ferrier Awards in 2012, and was a prize winner in the Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition. Romaniw was also winner of the Young Artist of the Year at the Gramophone Classical Music Awards 2020, Singer Award at the Royal Philharmonic Society 2020 Awards, and 2017 operatic nominee in The Times breakthrough category of the Southbank Sky Arts Awards.



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The late Joyce Middleton The late Christine Miller

The late Peter and Moyra Monahan

The late Arthur Mould
The late June North
The late Martin Purdy
The late Cyril Reeves
In memory of David Reeve,
a true music lover
The late J Renwick

The late Frederick Richardson

The late Mrs Edith Roberts
The late Trevor Robinson
The late John Roe
The late Mr Andrew Roulstone
The late Carl Schwalbe
The late Thomas Edward Scott
The late Barbara Shields
The late Margaret Skene
The late Mrs C E Smith
The late Mrs Sylvia Stirman
The late Mrs Diene
The late Mrs Eileen Summers
The late Mrs Fillah

The late Lorraine Westcott

The late David Wilson

Our anonymous donors and those that have pledged to support the CBSO through a legacy gift in the future.

Credits correct as of 12 February 2024

# **MEET THE TEAM**

Emma Stenning Chief Executive
Joe Graham Executive Assistant

### **CONCERTS & PLANNING**

Graham Sibley Director of Orchestral Operations
Anna Melville Head of Artistic Planning
Maddi Belsey-Day Planning & Tours Manager
Jean Attard Assistant Planning Manager
Claire Dersley Orchestra Manager
Chris Goodchild Assistant Orchestra Manager
Peter Harris Platform Manager
Robert Howard Assistant Platform Manager
Jack Lovell-Huckle Librarian

### **LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT**

Nathan Isaac Assistant Librarian

Tom Spurgin Director of Learning & Engagement
Katie Lucas Head of Learning & Engagement
Carolyn Burton Assistant Learning &
Engagement Manager
Leeloo Creed Learning & Engagement Officer
Georgia Wells Learning & Engagement Officer
(Sandwell)
Alexandra Parker Acting Chorus Manager
Louise Madden Chorus Officer

### **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

Beki Smith Director of Marketing & Communications
Melanie Ryan CRM & Insight Manager
Anna O'Connor Marketing Manager
Amy Hoult Senior Marketing Officer
Hannah Blake-Fathers Digital Content Producer
Jenny Bestwick Communications Officer
Lee Hunt Data Analyst
Liam Churchard Designer

### DEVELOPMENT

Claire Tilt Director of Development
Rachel Bowden Senior Development Manager
Eve Vines Membership Manager
Amy Self Individual Giving Manager
Megan Bradshaw Corporate Partnership Manager
Charlotte Wheeler Assistant Events Manager
Rachel Cooper Development Administrator

### FINANCE & RESOURCES

Sally Munday Director of Finance & Resources Alan Johnson CBSO Centre Manager Hollie Dunster HR Manager Mark Pallett Finance Manager Jaspreet Hothi Assistant Accountant Susan Price Senior Finance Officer Lindsey Bhagania Salaries Administrator Peter Clarke Assistant CBSO Centre Manager Pauline Cuff Receptionist Suni Dhew Receptionist

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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Player Nominated Trustee
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### **GET IN TOUCH**

CBSO Centre, Berkley Street, Birmingham, B12LF General Enquiries: email information@cbso.co.uk or phone 0121 616 6500. For ticket enquiries, or queries directly relating to Symphony Hall, please contact B:Music.

# UPCOMING CONCERTS...



### KAZUKI CONDUCTS ELGAR & BEETHOVEN: PART 2

Musical portraits and pure, soaring beauty.

Thu 22 Feb, 7:30pm



### **BRITTEN & TCHAIKOVSKY**

From the tranquil to the fantastical, each dream is as vivid as the next.

Wed 17 Apr, 7:30pm



### **BEST OF BALLET**

Captivating, breath-taking storytelling through music and dance.

Fri 31 May, 7:30pm

Book online at **cbso.co.uk** or call the B:Music Box Office on **0121 780 3333** 

### CBSO MEMBERSHIP

From priority booking to members' events and behind-the-scenes information, there are plenty of reasons to join the CBSO.

But it is the people themselves who are at the very heart of our membership. CBSO members can enjoy the chance to share the company of musicians and artists and meet new like-minded friends.

### **JOIN THE FAMILY**

Simply visit cbso.co.uk/ membership to sign up online, or call Rachel Cooper on 0121 616 6510.

We look forward to welcoming you to the family!



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# WE'RE ALL EARS

We'd love to hear from you!

Complete our survey and be in with the chance of winning a £50 voucher for a restaurant of your choice.

We're working to better understand our audiences, and by completing a survey following a CBSO concert, you can opt in to be entered into the prize draw.



If you'd like to share any additional feedback, or have any questions, please email us at marketing@cbso.co.uk.

Registered Charity no. 506276. All performance timings are approximate. The information in this programme was correct at the time of going to print. The CBSO reserves the right to alter programmes and artists without notice. Cover photo: Lloyd Winters