



City of Birmingham  
Symphony Orchestra

# RACHMANINOFF'S SECOND PIANO CONCERTO

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Symphony Hall, Birmingham | Thursday 13 April 2023, 7.30pm

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CONCERT PROGRAMME: £4

simplify the complex.



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**Sir Peter Rigby**, Founder and Chairman of SCC



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# RACHMANINOFF'S SECOND PIANO CONCERTO

Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Thursday 13 April 2023, 7.30pm

**François Leleux** – Conductor

**Behzod Abduraimov** – Piano

**Brahms** Academic Festival Overture 10'

**Rachmaninoff** Piano Concerto No.2 32'

*Moderato*

*Adagio sostenuto – Più animato – Tempo I*

*Allegro scherzando*

*Interval*

**Brahms** Serenade No.1 40'

*Allegro molto*

*Scherzo. Allegro non troppo – Trio. Poco più moto*

*Adagio non troppo*

*Menuetto I – Menuetto II*

*Scherzo. Allegro – Trio*

*Rondo. Allegro*

An irresistible piano concerto is at the centre of this orchestral concert. Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.2 is sheer romantic drama – from its opening chords to its glorious melodies. Alongside is Brahms in festive mood, in the joyously tuneful *Serenade* and *Academic Festival Overture*.

**Free pre-concert performance:** Join Royal Birmingham Conservatoire pianists Joachim Lim and Maria Molero Linares from 6.30pm–7pm in the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space for a free recital.

Cover photo: Behzod Abduraimov © Evgeny Eutykhov

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**If you have any queries about the CBSO, please visit our Information Desk situated in the ground floor foyer. CBSO staff are available from 30 minutes before the concert and again at the interval and will be happy to help.**

**This programme features two composers renowned for their large-scale orchestral works, and for their seemingly endless supply of glorious melodies.**

Johannes Brahms (1833–97) was born into the orchestra, so to speak – the son of a musician who was at different times in his life a horn player in militia bands, a flautist, and eventually a successful orchestral double-bassist. While Brahms took a while to fully master the orchestral form, Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) entered the Moscow conservatory at a young age, producing his first orchestral pieces (including Piano Concerto No.1) in his late teens. Both composers have reputations for being musically ‘safe’ or ‘conventional’, even in their own time. However, both have been reassessed in recent years as being more progressive than they seem; and even within the relatively ‘safe’ formats of overture, concerto and serenade, there is a freshness and an irresistible sense of momentum, which speaks to their skill at invention, and at re-invention.

The two Brahms works in this programme come from very different periods of the composer’s life – the *Serenade* was written in 1858, when he was aged only 25, and amidst a slightly rocky start to his compositional career. Brahms composed the *Festival Overture*



over 20 years later in 1880, with two symphonies under his belt as well as his well-received *German Requiem* and Violin Concerto. The *Overture* was the first of a pair – the second was the *Tragic Overture* composed the following year – and was commissioned by the University of Breslau on the occasion of Brahms receiving an honorary doctorate. It is an infectious spirited work written for huge orchestral forces, and – surprisingly, given its ceremonial commission – is clearly a boisterous celebration of student drinking culture. It opens with a version of the Hungarian ‘Rákóczi’ march, yet the rest of the overture consists of what Brahms termed ‘a rollicking potpourri of student songs’ – notably ‘Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus’ (‘We have built a stately home’)

declaimed on the trumpets; and the final, glorious rendition of the drinking song 'Gaudeamus Igitur', with its exhortations to live for the moment: 'So, let us rejoice/While we are young./After a pleasant youth/After a troublesome old age/The earth will have us.'

Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto in C minor is celebrated for its apparently endless melodic invention and its structural perfection – as well as for its afterlife as soundtrack (most famously in *Brief Encounter*, but memorably in the Marilyn Monroe film *The Seven-Year Itch*). If it were only for its melodies that the concerto gained its reputation, it would be entirely justified. But it is the means by which Rachmaninoff sustains the melodic material that gives the Concerto its sense of constant yearning. The opening melody, for example – following the introductory chords in the piano – lasts an initial eight bars, based around a dotted minim/crotchet (three beats followed by one) figure. The melody then immediately expands in a continuous sequence, eventually lasting some 44 bars. After a fanfare-like flurry, a new, equally gorgeous theme begins in the piano. And so it continues. The second movement begins with yet another rapturously seamless tune (years later to become the basis of Eric Carmen's rock ballad

'All by myself'), comprising a dreamy series of triplets, written deliberately off-kilter with the orchestral theme above. The final movement, in mostly a more jaunty spirit, has another show-stopper as its second major theme – the one most associated with the train pulling out of Carnforth station in *Brief Encounter*.

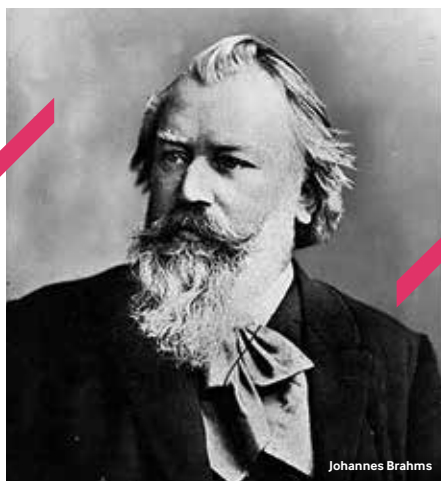
The Concerto's themes are generously shared between orchestra and piano, with the soloist often duetting with a member of the woodwind section (notably solo flute and solo clarinet), and for such a virtuosic work for piano, there is no big, sustained cadenza passage. Rather, there are brief sections of fireworks in each movement before the main business of this work – melody – is reclaimed by both soloist and orchestra. The Concerto ends in a well-earned major key, all passion finally spent.

Brahms' *Serenade* has a similar abundance of themes across its six movements, as well as a playful, creative approach to orchestration. It was composed following the disastrous reception of the composer's stormy, D minor Piano Concerto and its lightness of touch – in the major mode of D this time – stands in direct contrast to the turbulence of the earlier piece. It has the exuberance and clever construction of his later symphonies, and was composed

consciously in tribute to the earlier, classical symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, with more than a touch of Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony.

The *Serenade* was originally intended as a nonet for wind and strings, later expanded to a chamber orchestral work before finally emerging in its large-scale orchestral form. Brahms called the work a 'Sinfonie-Serenade', and indeed the substantial first three movements could easily represent a symphony, with the three final movements remaining closer to the work's chamber music origins (his first 'actual' Symphony would not appear until 1876, although he was already working on it at the time of the *Serenade*).

The bucolic, outdoorsy feel of the work is evident from the beginning, with a playful drone in the horns – later, in movements 5 and 6, the horns play up to their 'hunting' associations. The first movement is overflowing with contrasting melodies – some rhapsodic, some more in the character of the fiercer Piano Concerto. Following this 'pastoral' movement, the music moves indoors, as it were, for a series of dances. The first scherzo follows, which has a restlessness to its main D minor theme, followed by an elegant trio section in a lilting, slightly tricky waltz-time. The



*Adagio* movement is elegiac and restrained, pairing wind instruments in variations of a sweetly rising theme, with the full string section biding its time before emerging at full strength. The minuets which follow pare the texture right back again: pairs of woodwind intertwine in a major key; followed by a second, more wistful minuet for strings. The final two movements burst outdoors again, with hunting calls in the *Scherzo*, followed by an even more rambunctious finale with its themes bursting out all over the orchestra: a foretaste, perhaps, of the gloriously noisy conclusion of the *Festival Overture*.

Programme note © Lucy Walker





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## FRANÇOIS LELEUX

### Conductor

François Leleux – conductor and oboist – is renowned for his irrepressible energy and exuberance. Previously Artistic Partner of Camerata Salzburg, Artist-in-Association with Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, Leleux has featured as Artist-in-Residence with orchestras such as hr-Sinfonieorchester, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Berner Symphonieorchester, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife.

In the 2022/23 season, Leleux conducts the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, WDR Sinfonieorchester, Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra and Tiroler Symphonieorchester. He has previously conducted orchestras such as Oslo Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Lille and the Sydney, Gulbenkian and Tonkünstler orchestras.

As an oboist Leleux has performed as soloist with orchestras such as New York Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Budapest Festival Orchestra, and the Swedish Radio and the NHK symphony

orchestras. A dedicated chamber musician, he regularly performs worldwide with sextet Les Vents Français and with recital partners Lisa Batiashvili, Eric Le Sage and Emmanuel Strosser.

Committed to expanding the oboe's repertoire, Leleux has commissioned many new works from composers such as Nicolas Bacri, Michael Jarrell, Giya Kancheli, Thierry Pécou, Gilles Silvestrini and Eric Tanguy.

Leleux's latest recording, *Bienvenue en France*, released on Warner Classics is a collaboration with pianist Emmanuel Strosser featuring 20th century French composers including Saint-Saëns, Dutilleux and Debussy and the contemporary Thierry Pécou. As a conductor, Leleux and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra released an album of works by Bizet and Gounod for Linn Records in 2019. His album of works by Hummel and Haydn, recorded with Münchener Kammerorchester, received award recognition in 2016. Other recordings include works by JS Bach with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Mozart with Camerata Salzburg, and Strauss' Oboe Concerto with Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Daniel Harding.

François Leleux is a Professor at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München.





François Leleux © Thomas Kost



Behzod Abduraimov © Evgeny Eutykhov

**BEHZOD ABDURAIMOV****Piano**

Behzod Abduraimov's performances combine an immense depth of musicality with phenomenal technique and breath-taking delicacy. He performs with renowned orchestras worldwide including Philharmonia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, San Francisco Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris and Concertgebouworkest, and with prestigious conductors such as Juraj Valčuha, Vasily Petrenko, Lorenzo Viotti, James Gaffigan, Jakub Hruša, Santtu-Matias Rouvali and Gustavo Dudamel.

European performances in 2022/23 include concerts with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Wiener Symphoniker, SWR Symphonieorchester, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin and the Philharmonia Orchestra. In North America Behzod returns to The Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic amongst others.

Summer 2022 saw Behzod's third appearance at the BBC Proms, this time performing Beethoven Piano Concerto No.1 with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Thomas Dausgaard. He also returned to

Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and to the Queensland and West Australian symphony orchestras.

In recital Behzod has appeared a number of times at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, Queen Elizabeth Hall in London and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and has recently been presented by Alte Oper, Frankfurt; Amare Hall, The Hague, Vancouver Recital Society and at The Conrad Center, La Jolla. In 2022/23 recitals include Meany Hall, Seattle; Spivey Hall, Atlanta and La Società dei Concerti di Milano to mention a few.

2021 saw the highly successful release of his recital album for Alpha Classics based on a programme of Miniatures. In 2020 recordings included Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with Lucerne Symphony Orchestra for Sony Classical and Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No.3 with Concertgebouworkest for the RCO live label.

Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in 1990, Behzod began the piano aged five at Uspensky State Central Lyceum in Tashkent. In 2009, he won First Prize at the London International Piano Competition with Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No.3. He studied at the International Center for Music at Park University, Missouri, where he is Artist-in-Residence.



CBSO

Photo: Mark Allan

## CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) is the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the West Midlands, and one of the world's great orchestras.

Based in Symphony Hall, the CBSO typically presents over 150 concerts each year in Birmingham, the UK and around the world, playing music that ranges from classics to contemporary, film scores and even symphonic disco. With a far-reaching community programme and a family of choruses and ensembles, it is involved in every aspect of music-

making in the Midlands. But at its centre is a team of 90 superb musicians, and over a 100-year tradition of making the world's greatest music in the heart of Birmingham.

That local tradition started with the orchestra's very first symphonic concert in 1920 – conducted by Sir Edward Elgar. Ever since then, through war, recessions, social change and civic renewal, the CBSO has been proud to be Birmingham's orchestra. Under principal conductors including Adrian Boult, George Weldon, Andrzej Panufnik and Louis Frémaux, the

CBSO won an artistic reputation that spread far beyond the Midlands. But it was when it discovered the young British conductor Simon Rattle in 1980 that the CBSO became internationally famous – and showed how the arts can help give a new sense of direction to a whole city.

Rattle's successors Sakari Oramo (1998-2008) and Andris Nelsons (2008-15) helped cement that global reputation, and continued to build on the CBSO's tradition of flying the flag for Birmingham. Now, with Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla as Principal Guest Conductor, the CBSO continues to do what it does best – playing great music for the people of Birmingham and the Midlands.

### Meet the family

The CBSO Chorus is one of the world's great choirs – 180 people from all walks of life who come together to sing symphonic choral music. Trained for almost 40 years by Simon Halsey CBE, and supported by a professional staff team, the chorus is a hard-working group of singers who give up their own time to perform the most challenging works in the choral repertoire to the highest international standard. The CBSO Children's Chorus and Youth Chorus showcase singers as young

as six. Through its unauditioned community choir – CBSO SO Vocal in Selly Oak – the CBSO shares its know-how and passion for music with communities throughout the city. The CBSO Youth Orchestra gives that same opportunity to young instrumentalists aged 14-21, offering high-level training to the next generation of orchestral musicians alongside top international conductors and soloists. These groups are sometimes called the "CBSO family" – over 650 amateur musicians of all ages and backgrounds, who work alongside the orchestra to make and share great music. But the CBSO's tradition of serving the community goes much further. Its Learning and Participation programme touches tens of thousands of lives a year, energising whole neighbourhoods.

Now more than ever, the CBSO remains the beating heart of musical life in the UK's Second City. Kazuki Yamada has been appointed as its Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor with effect from 1 April 2023.

# CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## **VIOLIN I**

Zsolt Tihamer Visontay  
Jonathan Martindale \*  
Philip Brett \*  
Alexandra Caldon  
Imogen East  
Mark Robinson #  
Coco Inman  
Kirsty Lovie \*  
Stefano Mengoli \*  
Colette Overdijk \*  
Chu-Yu Tang  
Elizabeth Golding #  
Wendy Quirk  
Robert Bilson  
Ryo Koyama

## **VIOLIN II**

Emily Davis  
Moritz Pfister \*  
Charlotte Skinner \*  
Amy Jones \*\*  
Tom Aldren  
Heather Bradshaw \*\*  
Tam Mott  
Timothy Birchall \*  
Gabriel Dyker \*\*  
Katherine Atkinson  
Amy Littlewood  
Bethan Allmand  
Risa Sekine

## **VIOLA**

Rebecca Jones  
Michael Jenkinson \*\*  
David BaMaung \*  
Catherine Bower #  
Angela Swanson #  
Amy Thomas #  
Laura Sinnerton  
Elizabeth Fryer \*\*  
Sarah Malcolm  
Jessica Tickle \*  
Helen Roberts

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Jessica Burroughs  
Arthur Boutillier \*  
Miguel Fernandes \*  
Catherine Ardagh-Walter \*\*  
Joss Brookes  
Jacqueline Tyler \*\*  
David Powell \*\*  
Alistair Howes  
Phillipa Schofield  
Meera Raja

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Anthony Alcock \*  
Julian Atkinson \*\*  
Jeremy Watt \*  
Sally Morgan \*\*  
Julian Walters \*\*  
Aisling Reilly

## **FLUTE**

Marie-Christine Zupancic \*\*  
Veronika Klírová \*

## **PICCOLO**

Helen Benson \*

## **OBOE**

Steve Hudson  
Emmet Byrne \*

## **CLARINET**

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Joanna Patton \*\*

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Emily Newman

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Finlay Bain  
Mark Phillips \*\*  
Jeremy Bushell \*  
Martin Wright #

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Stuart Essenhigh  
Jonathan Quirk \*\*

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Richard Watkin \*  
Anthony Howe \*\*

## **BASS TROMBONE**

David Vines \*\*

## **TUBA**

Stephen Calow

## **TIMPANI**

Matthew Hardy \*

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Toby Kearney \*

## **HARP**

Katherine Thomas \*

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*List correct at time of going to press*

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**From a closer insight into the music and rehearsals, to hearing about life as a musician, CBSO members can get more from their concert-going experience by getting to know the people behind the instruments.**

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. In

addition, through their annual donation, they help to provide vital support towards our Sound of the Future Campaign, a fundraising campaign launched to help the orchestra recover from the pandemic and reinvigorate its future, giving musical experiences to even more people.

**“Membership has really enhanced our experience of the CBSO. We enjoy talking to the team, the orchestra members and fellow CBSO supporters. We feel privileged to be able to support.”**

Chris and Eve Parker, Gold Patrons

## GET IN TOUCH

To join us as a CBSO member, simply visit [cbsocentral.co.uk/membership](https://www.cbsocentral.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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**WHEN:** Saturday 22 April 2023

**TIMINGS:** 7pm–9pm

**WHERE:** Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**TICKETS:** £15–£25



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## HOW TO BOOK

Tickets can be booked online at [cbso.co.uk](https://www.cbso.co.uk) or through the B:Music Box Office at Symphony Hall, either in person (Monday-Saturday, 10am-5pm) or by phone on **0121 780 3333** (Monday-Saturday, 10am-2pm). Full details of how to book, alongside ticket terms and conditions can be found at [cbso.co.uk](https://www.cbso.co.uk).



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- Tickets for children aged 17 or under will be priced at **£5** for all group bookings and no further discount applies (excluding Family and Notelets concerts)
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# THANK YOU

The Sound of the Future is a £12.5m fundraising campaign – launched to mark the CBSO's centenary – which will ensure the orchestra's recovery from the pandemic and redefine its future for the benefit of everyone across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

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**WHEN:** Wednesday 19 April 2023

**TIMINGS:** 2.15pm

**WHERE:** Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**TICKETS:** £26–£56

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