

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Looking Back to Move Forward: Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven

Thursday, May 7, 2026 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Kirill Petrenko, conductor · Gautier Capuçon, cello

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	STRAVINSKY 1882–1971 <i>"Pulcinella," Suite (1949 revised version)</i>	22'
2	TCHAIKOVSKY 1840–1893 <i>Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra in A major, op. 33</i>	19'
3	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Symphony No. 2 in D major, op. 36</i>	33'
TOTAL MUSIC		74'

Igor Stravinsky

1882–1971

"Pulcinella," Suite (1949 revised version)

22 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Pulcinella is the work that launched Stravinsky's neoclassical phase, and it began with a suggestion from Diaghilev. In 1919, the impresario presented Stravinsky with a stack of musical manuscripts he had unearthed in libraries in Naples and London: pieces attributed (largely incorrectly, as it turned out) to the Italian Baroque composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. Diaghilev wanted Stravinsky to arrange them into a ballet score on the commedia dell'arte character of Pulcinella.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1840–1893

Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra in A major, op. 33

19 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The *Rococo Variations* are unique in Tchaikovsky's output: a heartfelt act of homage to the eighteenth-century music of Mozart, the composer Tchaikovsky revered above all others. He composed the work in late 1876 and early 1877, dedicating it to

Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, a German cellist and his colleague at the Moscow Conservatory. Despite the title, the theme is not actually drawn from the Rococo era; it is Tchaikovsky's own original melody, written deliberately in an eighteenth-century style.

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Symphony No. 2 in D major, op. 36

33 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The Symphony No. 2 was composed during that same desperate summer of 1802, the same months in which Beethoven contemplated ending his life. What is astonishing about the work is its character: it is the most exuberantly cheerful, optimistic, and witty of all his symphonies. Almost nothing in it betrays the personal crisis of its creator. Beethoven seems to have used composition itself as a way out of despair, channeling his dark mood into a work of radiant affirmation.

KIRILL PETRENKO, CONDUCTOR

Kirill Petrenko, born in Omsk, Siberia, in 1972, is the Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Berliner Philharmoniker, a position he has held since August 2019. The son of a violinist father and a musicologist mother, he emigrated with his family to Vorarlberg, Austria, in 1990, where he studied at the Vorarlberg Conservatory before continuing in Vienna. After

serving as General Music Director of the Komische Oper Berlin and then of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, he was elected by the Berliner Philharmoniker themselves in 2015 to succeed Sir Simon Rattle.

Petrenko is famously reticent: he rarely talks to the press and prefers to let his work speak for itself. Critics regularly describe him as one of the most musically penetrating conductors of his generation, equally at home in Wagner opera, Mahler symphonies, and twentieth-century repertoire. Tonight's programme is characteristic of his interests: a witty neoclassical work, an elegant Romantic concertante piece, and a Beethoven symphony less often heard than its more famous siblings.

GAUTIER CAPUÇON, CELLO

French cellist Gautier Capuçon, born in Chambéry in 1981, is one of the most charismatic musicians of his generation, a player whose generous tone and instinctive musicality have made him a regular guest with virtually every major orchestra in the world. He began the cello as a small child (his older brother is the violinist Renaud Capuçon) and trained at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris before completing his studies in Vienna with the legendary Heinrich Schiff.

A teenage member of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester under conductors such as Claudio Abbado and Pierre Boulez, Capuçon was named "New Talent of the Year" by Victoires de la Musique in 2001 and has never looked back. He records ex-

clusively for Erato/Warner Classics and plays a 1701 Matteo Goffriller cello on loan. Beyond the concert stage, Capuçon is deeply committed to music education, and in 2022 he set up his own foundation to support young musicians at the start of their careers. A small curiosity: in addition to first prize in cello, he also won first prize in piano at his hometown conservatory in Chambéry, a reminder that his musical horizons extend well beyond his primary instrument.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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