

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Italian Nights: Carnegie Hall Opening Night with Jonas Kaufmann

Thursday, October 8, 2026 · 19:00 · Carnegie Hall

Kirill Petrenko, conductor · Jonas Kaufmann, tenor

	TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME	MIN
1	VERDI 1813–1901 <i>La forza del destino, Overture</i>	8'
2	CILEA 1866–1950 <i>'È la solita storia' (Federico's Lament, L'arlesiana, Act II)</i>	4'
3	GIORDANO 1867–1948 <i>'Amor ti vieta' (Fedora, Act II)</i>	2'
4	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Fontane di Roma</i>	16'
5	LEONCAVALLO 1857–1919 <i>'Si può?' (Prologue, Pagliacci)</i>	6'
6	LEONCAVALLO 1857–1919 <i>Intermezzo from Pagliacci</i>	4'
7	LEONCAVALLO 1857–1919 <i>'Recitar! ... Vesti la giubba' (Pagliacci, Act I)</i>	4'
8	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Pini di Roma</i>	22'
	TOTAL MUSIC	66'

Giuseppe Verdi

1813–1901

La forza del destino, Overture

8 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

La forza del destino (“The Force of Destiny”) was commissioned by the Imperial Theatre in St Petersburg and first performed there in November 1862, the only Verdi opera to receive its premiere in Russia. Its sprawling plot, taken from a Spanish play by the Duke of Rivas, follows Leonora and her lover Alvaro, whose planned elopement ends when Alvaro’s pistol goes off by accident and kills her father. From that moment fate pursues all three principal characters (Leonora, Alvaro and her vengeful brother Carlo) across Spain and Italy, through battlefields, taverns and a monastery, to a catastrophe at the end.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen first to the stark unison calls in the brass, the summons of destiny, and then to the restless, twisting theme that follows in the strings. This is the “fate” motif, and it keeps returning throughout the overture, sometimes whispered, sometimes hammered out, like a pursuer that will not give up.

Against it Verdi sets a series of lyrical melodies from the opera. Listen for the long, soaring melodies associated with Leonora's desperate prayers for mercy and peace, and for a warm, hymn-like passage that recalls the monastery where she seeks refuge. The fate motif keeps breaking in beneath these melodies, and much of the excitement comes from the way Verdi combines them. Near the end the pace quickens, the brass takes up the melodies in a blaze of sound, and the overture races to a brilliant close.

Francesco Cilea

1866–1950

'È la solita storia' (Federico's Lament, L'arlesiana, Act II)

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Francesco Cilea's *L'arlesiana* is based on a story by Alphonse Daudet (best known through Bizet's incidental music to the play). Federico, a young man from a farming family in Provence, is obsessed with a woman from Arles: the "arlesiana" of the title, who never actually appears on stage. When he discovers that she has been the mistress of another man, his family pushes him towards the faithful Vivetta, but he cannot forget the woman he loved, and the opera ends in his suicide.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The aria begins very quietly, almost as recitative, over a gently rocking accompaniment; the orchestra recalls a simple, folk-like tune, the “shepherd’s story” Federico is telling. Listen for how Kaufmann shapes these opening phrases softly, almost as if he were talking to himself.

The mood changes when Federico stops talking about the shepherd and starts talking about himself. The melody rises, the orchestra swells beneath him, and the words become a cry: he wants to forget, but he cannot. Listen for the great climax at the top of the tenor’s range and then the sudden collapse into despair at the very end: the whole emotional arc of the opera compressed into about four minutes.

Umberto Giordano

1867–1948

'Amor ti vieta' (Fedora, Act II)

2 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Umberto Giordano’s *Fedora* was first performed at the Teatro Lirico in Milan on 17 November 1898, almost exactly a year after *L’arlesiana*, and once again the young Enrico Caruso was in the cast, this time as Count Loris Ipanov. Caruso had to en-

core “Amor ti vieta” on the opening night, and the role helped make his name. The opera is based on a play by Victorien Sardou (whose *La Tosca* Puccini would set two years later), originally written for Sarah Bernhardt: a melodrama set among Russian aristocrats in St Petersburg, Paris and Switzerland, full of intrigue, police spies and a heroine who takes poison at the end.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the lush, sweeping melody from the very first bar, carried by the tenor with the strings doubling it closely beneath. Loris is not confessing to murder here; he is confessing his love, and the music has the directness of a love song rather than an operatic scene.

The aria is so short that it grows in a single breath: the melody climbs steadily, the orchestra builds under it, and the climax on “l’amor ti vieta” is reached almost before you realise it. Pay attention to how the tenor balances passion and elegance: this is an aria that rewards line and legato more than sheer volume.

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Fontane di Roma

16 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Ottorino Respighi had lived in Rome for only a few years when he wrote *Fontane di Roma* (Fountains of Rome) in 1915–16, and the piece is in a way a newcomer's love letter to the city. It was the first of what became his "Roman trilogy" of tone poems, later completed by *Pini di Roma* (1924), heard in the second half of this concert, and *Feste romane* (1928). The first performance in Rome in 1917 met a cool reception; it was a performance in Milan the following year under Arturo Toscanini that made the work famous.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn. A pastoral opening: muted violins create a soft haze of sound, over which oboe and clarinet sing a simple, rustic melody. Respighi's preface describes a pastoral landscape at daybreak. Listen for the gentle, rocking motion of the water flowing quietly in the half-light.

The Triton Fountain in the Morning. A sudden, loud horn call breaks the calm and the orchestra explodes into a bright, splashing scherzo. Respighi pictured naiads and

tritons chasing one another and dancing among the jets of water. Listen for the glittering runs in the woodwinds, harps and celesta.

The Trevi Fountain at Midday. A solemn theme in the low woodwinds and brass slowly gathers strength until the whole orchestra bursts into a triumphant fanfare: Neptune's chariot drawn by sea horses across the water, as Respighi described it. This is the climax of the piece; listen to how it rises and then fades away as the procession passes into the distance.

The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset. A melancholy, evening mood. A flute and a solo violin sing over a gently murmuring accompaniment, a bell tolls softly, birds twitter, and the music gradually dissolves into silence as night falls over Rome.

Ruggero Leoncavallo

1857–1919

'Si può?' (Prologue, Pagliacci)

6 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Ruggero Leoncavallo wrote both the words and the music of *Pagliacci* ("Clowns"), and the opera, first performed at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan on 21 May 1892 under the young

Arturo Toscanini, made him famous overnight. It is the classic example of Italian verismo (“realism”), the movement launched two years earlier by Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*, with which *Pagliacci* is still often paired: stories about ordinary people, violent passions and sudden death, told in compact, highly charged music. Leoncavallo claimed that the plot was based on a real crime judged by his father, a magistrate in Calabria, when the composer was a child.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Prologue begins with a lively orchestral introduction that previews the opera’s main themes: first the bright, bustling music of the travelling players, then a sombre, sobbing theme for Canio’s heartbreak (you will hear it again in “Vesti la giubba” later in the evening), and finally a warm, sweeping love theme.

Then the singer steps forward with “Si può? Si può? Signore! Signori!” Listen for the way the vocal line moves between conversation and song: the explanation of the author’s intentions is almost spoken, but when Tonio talks about the actors’ real feelings, that they too are men of flesh and blood, the music opens up into a broad, passionate melody. The Prologue ends with a famous call, “Incominciate!” (“Let’s begin!”), which sends the curtain up.

Ruggero Leoncavallo

1857–1919

Intermezzo from Pagliacci

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Between the two acts of *Pagliacci*, Leoncavallo places a short orchestral Intermezzo. In the opera, Act I has just ended with Canio's devastating "Vesti la giubba"; the Intermezzo bridges the gap between that outburst and Act II, in which the villagers gather for the evening performance at which the tragedy will unfold.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the solemn, weighty opening and then for the themes of grief from Act I, taken up broadly by the strings. The music swells to a passionate climax before subsiding into a quiet, sombre close. It is short, but it is one of the purest examples of the Italian orchestral sound of the 1890s: warm, emotional and unashamedly direct.

Ruggero Leoncavallo

1857–1919

'Recitar! ... Vesti la giubba' (*Pagliacci*, Act I)

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

"Recitar! ... Vesti la giubba" ("To perform! ... Put on the costume") ends Act I of *Pagliacci*, and it is perhaps the most famous tenor aria of the verismo repertoire. Canio has just discovered that his wife Nedda has a lover, although he has not learned the man's name. The performance for the villagers is about to begin, and he has to go on stage as the clown Pagliaccio, whose role in the comedy is to be the laughing-stock of a cheating wife.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen first to the recitative "Recitar! Mentre preso dal delirio": halting, broken phrases in which Canio can barely think straight, with the orchestra reacting to each outburst. Then comes the aria itself, built on the sobbing theme you heard in the Prologue's introduction. The singer's line rises steadily, reaching its climax on the words "Ridi, Pagliaccio, sul tuo amore infranto!" ("Laugh, clown, at your broken love!"), the highest and most exposed moment of the aria.

After that climax, the tenor often breaks into a real sob, and the orchestra takes up the melody in a great, grieving statement of its own as the curtain falls. Listen for the tension between singing and weeping: in the best performances you cannot quite tell where one ends and the other begins.

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Pini di Roma

22 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Eight years after *Fountains of Rome*, Respighi returned to the city for a second tone poem, *Pini di Roma* (Pines of Rome), first performed at the Augusteo in Rome on 14 December 1924 under Bernardino Molinari. This time his subject was the umbrella pines that are among the most characteristic features of the Roman landscape, and once more he took four locations, each chosen, as he put it, as “witnesses of the principal events of Roman life”. Where *Fountains* moves through the times of a single day, *Pines* moves through time itself, from children playing in a modern park to the soldiers of ancient Rome marching into the city.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Pines of the Villa Borghese. Bright, noisy, joyful music: children playing and singing nursery rhymes in the gardens of the Villa Borghese, marching like soldiers and dancing in circles. Listen for the dazzling, chattering orchestration, trumpets and all, which stops dead at the end.

Pines near a Catacomb. A complete change. Muted, low strings create a gloomy atmosphere, and a trumpet off-stage sings a slow chant. Respighi imagined the pines standing over an early Christian catacomb, from which the sound of a mournful hymn rises. Listen for the chant growing into a huge, solemn climax before sinking back into darkness.

The Pines of the Janiculum. A night scene: a piano arpeggio, a warm clarinet solo, soft strings, the full moon over the pines on the Janiculum hill. At the end, listen for the recorded song of the nightingale that Respighi wrote into the score: a real bird singing over the orchestra's hushed chords.

The Pines of the Appian Way. Dawn on the ancient Appian Way. Out of nothing comes a soft, heavy tread in the low strings, piano and timpani: the sound of a Roman army approaching. The march grows louder and louder as

the extra brass (the *buccine*) enter in fanfares, until the whole orchestra, with organ, reaches a colossal climax as the legions march triumphantly up to the Capitol.

Tonight's artists

Jonas Kaufmann *tenor*

Jonas Kaufmann and Kirill Petrenko have a long shared history at the Bavarian State Opera, where Petrenko conducted Kaufmann's first staged Tristan in Munich in 2021, in Petrenko's last Wagner production as the company's music director. Tonight they turn to Italian opera around 1900 (Cilea, Giordano and Leoncavallo), which calls for exactly what Kaufmann is known for: a dark, powerful voice combined with an actor's attention to the words. Listen for the difference between the intimate, almost conversational opening of Federico's lament and the full-throated despair of Canio's "Vesti la giubba", which closes the operatic part of the programme. This concert is Carnegie Hall's Opening Night Gala for its 2026–2027 season, the first of four concerts by Petrenko and the Berliner Philharmoniker in New York.

Jonas Kaufmann, born in Munich in 1969, has been for more than two decades one of the most celebrated tenors in the world. He studied at the Munich University of Music and Performing Arts and began his career in the ensemble of the Saarbrücken State Theatre in the mid-1990s, before a long period as a company member at the Zurich Opera. His international breakthrough came in 2006 with his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York as Alfredo in *La traviata*; since then he has appeared at all the major opera houses, among them Covent Garden, La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, the Paris Opéra and the Bavarian State Opera in his native Munich, in a repertoire

that stretches from Wagner (Lohengrin, Parsifal, Tristan) to French and Italian opera (Don José, Werther, Cavaradossi, Otello). His dark, baritone timbre and his acting intensity have made him particularly associated with the dramatic roles of Italian verismo, including Canio in Pagliacci, which he sang together with Turiddu in Cavalleria rusticana in a double bill at the Salzburg Easter Festival in 2015.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2026-10-08-petrenko>

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