

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Zubin Mehta and Pinchas Zukerman with Bruch's First Violin Concerto

Thursday, November 12, 2026 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Zubin Mehta, conductor · Pinchas Zukerman, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Le nozze di Figaro, K. 492: Overture</i>	4'
2	BRUCH 1838–1920 <i>Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26</i>	25'
3	DVORAK 1841–1904 <i>Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70</i>	40'
TOTAL MUSIC		69'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791

Le nozze di Figaro, K. 492: Overture

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Le nozze di Figaro (“The Marriage of Figaro”) was the first of Mozart’s three operas with the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, followed by *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*. Its source was Beaumarchais’s comedy *La folle journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro*, in which a servant outwits his aristocratic master. The opera opened at the Burgtheater in Vienna in May 1786, with Mozart directing from the keyboard.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The overture begins with a hushed, scurrying figure, so quiet and fast that it almost sounds like whispering behind a door. It is easy to miss if the hall is still settling, so listen closely from the very first bar. Then the full orchestra bursts in, with trumpets and timpani. Listen for how often Mozart repeats this pattern of whisper and outburst, and for the chattering woodwind phrases that answer the violins. There is no slow section and no pause for breath: the music drives straight through to a brilliant close, just as the opera’s plot never lets its characters rest.

Max Bruch

1838–1920

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26

25 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Max Bruch wrote many works, including symphonies, operas and choral pieces, but for most concertgoers his name means one piece: the Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor. It is one of the most frequently performed violin concertos of all, and its fame became something of a burden to its composer. Late in life Bruch complained that violinists kept turning up to play it for him and begged them to try his other concertos instead.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Vorspiel: Allegro moderato. A quiet woodwind phrase is answered by the solo violin in a short, free cadenza. This happens twice before the movement proper begins, with a strong main theme and a warmer, more lyrical second one. At the end the opening cadenzas return, more elaborate than before, and the orchestra leads straight into the slow movement.

II. Adagio. One long song for the violin, over an orchestral accompaniment that keeps moving underneath. This is the music most listeners remember: listen for how the melody keeps rising to new climaxes, each more intense than the last.

III. Finale: Allegro energico. After a quiet, expectant orchestral introduction, the violin enters with a vigorous dance theme played in double stops (two strings at once). A broad, singing second theme interrupts it several times, before the tempo quickens into a final Presto and the concerto ends in a blaze of virtuosity.

Antonin Dvorak

1841–1904

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70

40 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

In the early 1880s Antonín Dvořák was becoming internationally famous. Brahms had championed him, his *Slavonic Dances* had sold widely, and his *Stabat Mater* had been a triumph in London. In June 1884 the Philharmonic Society of London elected him an honorary member and asked him for a new symphony. Dvořák had recently heard and admired Brahms's

new Third Symphony, and he set out to write something on the same scale: a symphony, as he wrote to a friend, that “must be capable of stirring the world”.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro maestoso. The main theme emerges quietly over a low, sustained D, like the calm before a storm, then rises suddenly to a harsh, dissonant peak. The second theme is gentler, but the development is one of the most dramatic passages Dvořák wrote. Listen to the end of the movement: after a fierce climax, the music ebbs away in the same hushed mood in which it began.

II. Poco adagio. A calm opening melody, sometimes heard as a prayer, is troubled by darker episodes. After the premiere Dvořák tightened this movement and told his publisher that there was “not a single superfluous note” left in the work.

III. Scherzo: Vivace. A dance, but not a carefree one. The main theme is sharply rhythmic, with a contrasting counter-melody, and the key of D minor keeps casting a shadow. Towards the end of the main section the music gathers into a wild, dark whirl.

IV. Finale: Allegro. The main theme opens with a bold upward leap and has a heroic, driving character. The movement fights its way through contrasting episodes to a broad, resolute coda that brings the symphony to a confident close.

Tonight's artists

Pinchas Zukerman *violin*

Pinchas Zukerman, like Zubin Mehta on the podium, has been associated with the Berliner Philharmoniker for decades, and the two have often performed together. Bruch's concerto, with its long singing lines, is a natural vehicle for a violinist who has spent a whole career in the Romantic repertoire.

Pinchas Zukerman, born in Tel Aviv in 1948, is one of the defining string players of his generation: a violinist, violist and conductor of rare versatility. The son of Holocaust survivors, he began on recorder and clarinet before switching to the violin at eight, and his gifts were spotted by Isaac Stern and Pablo Casals, who arranged for him to study in New York at the Juilliard School under the legendary teacher Ivan Galamian. He shared the Leventritt Competition prize with Kyung-wha Chung in 1967 and launched an international career that has now spanned more than half a century. Equally celebrated on the viola, Zukerman has long been admired above all for the warmth, breadth, and effortless beauty of his tone, qualities that make him an ideal interpreter of the great Romantic concertos of Bruch, Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Tchaikovsky. He has also built a substantial parallel career as a conductor, as Music Director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada from 1998 to 2015, and is a devoted teacher.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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