

Maxim Emelyanychev conducts Mendelssohn, Mozart and Haydn

Thursday, November 19, 2026 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Maxim Emelyanychev, conductor · Yun Zeng, horn · Maxim Emelyanychev,
fortepiano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MENDELSSOHN 1809–1847 <i>Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage (Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt), Overture in D major, Op. 27</i>	12'
2	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat major, K. 495</i>	17'
3	HAYDN 1732–1809 <i>Keyboard Concerto in D major, Hob. XVIII:11</i>	20'
4	HAYDN 1732–1809 <i>Symphony No. 104 in D major, Hob. I:104 ('London')</i>	28'
TOTAL MUSIC		77'

Felix Mendelssohn

1809–1847

Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage (Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt), Overture in D major, Op. 27

THE COMPOSER

Felix Mendelssohn was born into one of the most cultivated families in Europe. His grandfather Moses was a celebrated philosopher of the Enlightenment; his father Abraham was a prosperous banker; his sister Fanny was a gifted composer in her own right. Baptized a Protestant in 1816, the young Felix received an extraordinary education in languages, art, philosophy, and music, studying piano with Ludwig Berger and composition with Carl Friedrich Zelter.

A child prodigy who gave his first public performance at age nine, Mendelssohn composed his miraculous overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at seventeen. But he was equally important as a conductor and cultural advocate: his 1829 Berlin performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, a landmark

12 minutes

event, was instrumental in reviving interest in Bach's music. As music director in Leipzig from 1835, he built the Gewandhaus Orchestra into one of Europe's finest ensembles and founded the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843.

Mendelssohn's music combines Classical clarity with Romantic expressiveness. His essentially conservative tastes set him apart from more radical contemporaries like Liszt, Wagner, and Berlioz, yet his orchestral writing, particularly his handling of color and atmosphere, was highly influential.

ABOUT THE WORK

Goethe's two short poems *Meeresstille* ("Calm Sea") and *Glückliche Fahrt* ("Prosperous Voyage") were hugely popular in the early nineteenth century. Beethoven set them as a cantata for chorus and orchestra, Schubert set the first as a song, and in 1828 the nineteen-year-old Felix Mendelssohn turned them into a concert overture without words. The titles are not a pair of synonyms. For a sailing ship a dead calm was a real danger, since without wind the crew could only wait, and the "prosperous voyage" begins when the breeze finally rises and the ship can move again.

The overture was first tried out privately at a concert in the Mendelssohn family home in Berlin on 7 September 1828. Mendelssohn kept revising it for several years afterwards.

Like *The Hebrides*, the overture is not a prelude to an opera or a play but an independent piece of orchestral scene-painting, and it anticipates the tone poems of later composers. Mendelssohn himself described the plan of the opening in a letter: a note "gently sustained by the strings for a long while hovers here and there and trembles, barely audible", until the music comes to a halt "with thick chords and the Prosperous Voyage sets out".

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The **Calm Sea** is an Adagio of almost motionless music: soft, sustained chords, a hymn-like melody in the strings, and a sense of waiting. There is no drama here, only stillness and unease.

Listen for the moment when a small rising phrase in the flute, like the first breath of wind, breaks the spell. The orchestra swells, the tempo quickens and the **Prosperous Voyage** begins, a bright and energetic Allegro in which the winds, timpani and trumpets join in. Near the end a broad, ceremonial passage seems to welcome the ship into harbour. Then comes Mendelssohn's surprise: instead of ending with a blaze of brass, the overture closes quietly, with a brief, gentle memory of the voyage.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

17 minutes

1756–1791

Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat major, K. 495

THE COMPOSER

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart needs little introduction. Born in Salzburg in 1756, he was a prodigy whose talents were cultivated and exhibited across Europe by his father Leopold. By the time he composed this concerto in 1779, the twenty-three-year-old Mozart was restless in provincial Salzburg, dreaming of Vienna and larger stages. Within two years he would make the move that defined his mature career.

Less well known is his sister Maria Anna, called “Nannerl,” five years his senior. She was an equally brilliant pianist as a child, and the siblings toured together as wonders of nature until Nannerl’s touring career ended when she was about seventeen. Following the customs of the time, she stayed at home while Wolfgang continued traveling with their father. The brother and sister remained close, and this concerto was written for the two of them to play.

ABOUT THE WORK

All of Mozart’s horn concertos were written for one man: Joseph Leutgeb, the leading Austrian horn player of his time. Leutgeb had been first horn of the court orchestra in Salzburg, where he became a friend of the Mozart family, and he later moved to Vienna, as Mozart himself did in 1781. The friendship lasted until the end of Mozart’s life, and it was full of teasing. Mozart peppered his horn manuscripts with jokes at Leutgeb’s expense, and he wrote the score of this concerto in four colours of ink (red, green, blue and black). This may have been a joke intended to rattle the soloist, although some scholars have suggested that the colours are a kind of code for dynamics and phrasing.

Mozart entered the work in his own catalogue in 1786 as “a horn concerto for Leutgeb”. Despite its number it was probably not the last of the four concertos, and the Berliner Philharmoniker’s introduction notes recent research suggesting that it may be the second in order of composition.

The horn of Mozart’s day was the natural horn, without valves. Players changed notes by adjusting their lips and by moving the hand inside the bell, so the chromatic lines in the first movement and the rapid passagework in the finale were a real test of Leutgeb’s skill. On the modern valve horn these concerts showcase the principal horn of the Berliner Philharmoniker, Yun Zeng, in his first solo appearance with the orchestra.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro maestoso. A broad, stately orchestral opening, after which the horn enters with a singing theme. Listen for the passages where the soloist moves by semitones: easy on a modern instrument, but on the natural horn a feat of hand-stopping.

II. Romance: Andante cantabile. Essentially a song without words, in which the horn's warm middle register carries a gentle, lyrical melody.

III. Rondo: Allegro vivace. The best-known movement, a lively hunting-style finale in 6/8 time. Its bouncing main theme, built largely on the notes of the major chord that a natural horn plays most easily, keeps coming back between episodes, each time with a little more brilliance.

Joseph Haydn

1732–1809

20 minutes

Keyboard Concerto in D major, Hob. XVIII:11

THE COMPOSER

Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in the Lower Austrian village of Rohrau, the son of a wheelwright, and rose from rural poverty to become the most famous composer in Europe. After years as a chorister at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and a precarious freelance youth, he entered in 1761 the service of the immensely wealthy Esterházy princes, for whom he would work for nearly three decades, much of it at the remote palace of Eszterháza in rural Hungary. There, as he later put it, he was 'cut off from the world' and 'forced to become original'. Out of that isolation came the body of work that effectively defined the Classical style: he is rightly called the father of both the symphony and the string quartet, having brought each to maturity over a long, experimental career of more than a hundred symphonies and almost seventy quartets. Genial, witty, and deeply professional, Haydn was admired across Europe, befriended and influenced the young Mozart, and taught the young Beethoven. After his prince's death in 1790 he travelled twice to London, where his late 'London' symphonies and the oratorio *The Creation* made him a celebrity. He died in Vienna in 1809, having lived through, and shaped, an entire era of music.

ABOUT THE WORK

Unlike Mozart, Haydn was not a keyboard virtuoso, and his reputation rests above all on his symphonies and string quartets. Yet his *Keyboard Concerto in D major, Hob. XVIII:11*, is the best known of his concertos for keyboard and one of the few to be published during his lifetime. It was written in the early 1780s and published in 1784, and it was his last concerto for the instrument.

The score allows for either harpsichord or fortepiano, a reminder that the 1780s were a period of transition between the two instruments. At these concerts Maxim Emelyanychev plays the fortepiano, the lighter, more transparent ancestor of the modern piano, and directs the orchestra from the keyboard as Haydn's contemporaries would have done. The concerto dates from the years in which Haydn and Mozart came to know and admire each other, and writers have heard echoes of Mozart's piano concertos in it. The Berliner Philharmoniker's own introduction suggests it may even have been a response to Mozart's work in Vienna.

The orchestral writing is modest. The interest lies in the solo part, which is more demanding than in Haydn's earlier keyboard concertos, and in the finale's borrowing of the "Hungarian" style that was fashionable at the time.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Vivace. A lively, instantly catchy main theme sets the tone. Listen for the dialogue between the fortepiano and the orchestra and for the crisp, sparkling passagework in the solo part.

II. Un poco adagio. A singing slow movement in which the keyboard spins out long, ornamented melodies. Its expressive warmth can sound surprisingly forward-looking for music of the early 1780s.

III. Rondo all'Ungarese: Allegro assai. The finale is written in the "Hungarian" manner that was fashionable at the time: stamping rhythms, bright accents and a main theme that keeps returning with fresh energy.

Joseph Haydn

1732–1809

Symphony No. 104 in D major, Hob. I:104 ('London')

THE COMPOSER

Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in the Lower Austrian village of Rohrau, the son of a wheelwright, and rose from rural poverty to become the most famous composer in Europe. After years as a chorister at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and a precarious freelance youth, he entered in 1761 the service of the immensely wealthy Esterházy princes, for whom he would work for nearly three decades, much of it at the remote palace of Eszterháza in rural Hungary. There, as he later put it, he was 'cut off from the world' and 'forced to become original'. Out of that isolation came the body of work that effectively defined the Classical style: he is rightly called the father of both the symphony and the string quartet, having brought each to maturity over a

28 minutes

long, experimental career of more than a hundred symphonies and almost seventy quartets. Genial, witty, and deeply professional, Haydn was admired across Europe, befriended and influenced the young Mozart, and taught the young Beethoven. After his prince's death in 1790 he travelled twice to London, where his late 'London' symphonies and the oratorio *The Creation* made him a celebrity. He died in Vienna in 1809, having lived through, and shaped, an entire era of music.

ABOUT THE WORK

Symphony No. 104 is Haydn's last symphony and the last of the twelve he wrote for London. In 1790 the death of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy released Haydn from nearly three decades of court service, and the violinist and impresario Johann Peter Salomon persuaded him to come to London. His two visits, in 1791 to 1792 and 1794 to 1795, were among the great successes of his career, and the twelve symphonies he wrote for them are the summit of his orchestral music.

The nickname "London" is somewhat arbitrary, given that eleven other symphonies have an equal claim to it; in Germany the work is often called the "Salomon" Symphony. It was the main work at a concert of Haydn's own music at the King's Theatre in London on 4 May 1795, given for his benefit. Haydn noted in his diary: "The whole company was thoroughly pleased and so was I. I made 4,000 gulden on this evening: such a thing is possible only in England."

Whether or not Haydn knew it would be his last symphony, it has the feel of a grand summing-up: a solemn introduction, a first movement built almost entirely from one theme, an Andante with a sudden outburst, a sturdy minuet and a folk-flavoured finale.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Adagio; Allegro. The symphony opens with a stern call for the full orchestra, using only two notes, so that you cannot tell at first whether the music is in D major or D minor. A brooding minor-key introduction follows. Then the Allegro begins quietly in the violins in a bright D major. Listen for how Haydn builds the whole movement from this one theme: when the "second theme" arrives, it is essentially the first one again, in a new key.

II. Andante. A simple, lilting melody in G major for the strings. It darkens gradually and then breaks out into a minor-key storm for the whole orchestra, before calm returns, with the flute prominent near the end.

III. Menuetto: Allegro. A robust minuet, full of Haydn's wit and unexpected pauses. The trio in the middle is lighter and dominated by the oboe and bassoon.

IV. Finale: Spiritoso. The finale opens over a sustained drone in the bass, like a bagpipe, with a folk-like tune in the violins. It was long thought to be based on a London street cry, but it has more recently been identified with a Croatian song, "Oj, Jelena". Listen for the surprises Haydn keeps springing almost until the final chord.

Tonight's artists

Yun Zeng *horn*

Yun Zeng joined the Berliner Philharmoniker as principal horn in 2024, and these concerts are his debut as a soloist with the orchestra. Mozart's Fourth Concerto asks for both a singing tone and agility, the two qualities that make a principal horn's reputation.

Yun Zeng comes from a family of horn players in Sichuan, China: his father, principal horn of the Sichuan Symphony Orchestra, gave him his first lessons. He studied at the conservatory in Beijing with Quan Wen and then in Geneva with Bruno Schneider. He won first prize at the 2019 International Tchaikovsky Competition and second prize at the ARD International Music Competition in 2021. After serving as principal horn of the Staatskapelle Berlin from 2022, he joined the Berliner Philharmoniker as principal horn in September 2024, fulfilling an ambition he had held since childhood.

Maxim Emelyanychev *fortepiano*

Emelyanychev takes a dual role tonight: he conducts the Mendelssohn, the Mozart and the Haydn symphony, and he directs Haydn's Keyboard Concerto from the fortepiano, as Haydn and his contemporaries would have done.

Maxim Emelyanychev, born in 1988, is a Russian conductor and keyboard player who studied in his home city of Nizhny Novgorod. He is chief conductor of the period-instrument ensemble Il Pomo d'Oro, with which he tours widely and has made many recordings, including albums with the mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato. In 2018 he stepped in at short notice to conduct the Scottish Chamber Orchestra; the musicians were so impressed that the orchestra appointed him its principal conductor from the 2019/20 season. Much of his work centres on Mozart and his contemporaries, and he often directs from the harpsichord or fortepiano; with Il Pomo d'Oro he has been recording all of Mozart's symphonies. He made his debut with the Berliner Philharmoniker in the 2022/23 season.

FURTHER READING

ACCESSIBLE The Life of Haydn

David Wyn Jones, Cambridge University Press 2013

A compact life of Haydn by a Haydn specialist, with a vivid account of the London visits that produced the 'London' Symphony No. 104.

ACCESSIBLE The Faber Pocket Guide to Haydn

Richard Wigmore, Faber and Faber 2009

A listener's guide to Haydn's music, with entries on the symphonies and concertos that help place the D major Keyboard Concerto and Symphony No. 104.

DEEPER Mendelssohn: A Life in Music

R. Larry Todd, Oxford University Press 2003

R. Larry Todd's large biography of Mendelssohn, which discusses the Goethe-inspired *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* overture within his early career.

SOURCES

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3. Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage (Mendelssohn), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calm_Sea_and_Prospereous_Voyage_\(Mendelssohn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calm_Sea_and_Prospereous_Voyage_(Mendelssohn))
4. Mendelssohn: Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage, Boston Symphony Orchestra. <https://www.bso.org/works/mendelssohn-calm-sea-and-prospereous-voyage>

Joseph Haydn ·Symphony No. 104 in D major, Hob. I:104 ('London')

5. Mendelssohn: Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. <https://www.indianapolissymphony.org/backstage/program-notes/mendelssohn-calm-sea-and-prosperous-voyage/>
6. Horn Concerto No. 4 (Mozart), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horn_Concerto_No._4_\(Mozart\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horn_Concerto_No._4_(Mozart))
7. Horn Concerto No. 4, K. 495, Los Angeles Philharmonic. <https://www.laphil.com/works/horn-concerto-no-4-k-495>
8. Keyboard Concerto No. 11 (Haydn), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keyboard_Concerto_No._11_\(Haydn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keyboard_Concerto_No._11_(Haydn))
9. Concertante B flat major Hob. I:105 (with Haydn timeline), G. Henle Verlag. <https://www.henle.de/Concertante-B-flat-major-Hob.-I-105-for-Oboe-Bassoon-Violin-Violoncello-and-Orchestra/HN-154>
10. Symphony No. 104 (Haydn), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._104_\(Haydn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._104_(Haydn))
11. Haydn: Symphony No. 104 "London", The Cleveland Orchestra. <https://www.clevelandorchestra.com/works/haydn-symphony-no-104-london>
12. Symphony No. 104 in D major, "London", Hollywood Bowl. <https://www.hollywoodbowl.com/musicdb/pieces/3916/symphony-no-104-london>
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14. Maxim Emelyanychev, Salzburg Festival. <https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/en/a/maxim-emelyanychev>
15. Yun Zeng, Berliner Philharmoniker. <https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/about-us/orchestra/musicians/yun-zeng/>
16. Probationary period passed: Yun Zeng, Berliner Philharmoniker. <https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/news/probationary-period-passed-yun-zeng/>
17. Yun Zeng Appointed Principal Horn of the Berlin Philharmonic, The Violin Channel. <https://theviolinchannel.com/yun-zeng-officially-appointed-principal-horn-of-the-berliner-philharmoniker>
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<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2026-11-19-emelyanychev>

Version 2, 30 September 2026