

Jakub Hrůša and Yuja Wang: Dvořák, Bartók and Brahms

Thursday, January 7, 2027 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Jakub Hrůša, conductor · Yuja Wang, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	DVORAK 1841–1904 <i>Nocturne in B major, Op. 40</i>	9'
2	BARTÓK 1881–1945 <i>Piano Concerto No. 1, Sz. 83</i>	24'
3	BRAHMS 1833–1897 <i>Serenade No. 1 in D major, Op. 11</i>	45'
TOTAL MUSIC		78'

Antonin Dvorak

9 minutes

1841–1904

Nocturne in B major, Op. 40

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Nocturne holds a single mood from beginning to end. After a brief, plain introduction, the upper strings begin a long, winding melody that moves in small steps over a gently pulsing accompaniment. Underneath it the basses hold one deep note, an F sharp, for a very long time. That held note is what gives the first part of the piece its feeling of suspense: the harmony seems to be waiting to resolve and never quite does. The main Czech reference site on the composer describes the effect as almost hypnotic.

Eventually the bass lets go, the music becomes more animated, and the texture opens out. The opening returns at the end, but the tension has gone, and the piece closes in calm.

Béla Bartók

1881–1945

Piano Concerto No. 1, Sz. 83

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro moderato. The concerto begins quietly, with low rumbling from timpani, piano and brass. Out of this comes the idea that drives the whole movement: one note, struck again and again by the piano. The main Allegro piles up from there in octaves and syncopated orchestral chords. Listen for how often the piano and the drums seem to be finishing each other's sentences.

II. Andante. The strings are silent throughout this movement. The piano is joined only by woodwinds, brass and percussion, which gives the music a bare, nocturnal colour. It opens as a quiet exchange between piano and drums; the winds enter one by one in the middle and build, over a repeating figure in the piano, to a harsh climax before the opening returns.

III. Allegro molto. The finale follows without a break, launched by drums and sliding trombones. It is a fast, stamping dance dominated by piano and percussion, with the brass punctuating. A short, angry fugal passage interrupts near the end, and the concerto stops abruptly, at full speed.

Johannes Brahms

1833–1897

Serenade No. 1 in D major, Op. 11

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro molto. Low strings set up a drone, like a bagpipe, and a horn plays a cheerful, rustic tune over it. The opening closely resembles the finale of Haydn's last symphony, No. 104, which is in the same key and begins over the same kind of drone. The movement is broad and sunny, and the horns stay prominent throughout.

II. Scherzo: Allegro non troppo. A shadowy movement in D minor, quiet and restless, with a warmer middle section in B flat major.

III. Adagio non troppo. The longest movement and the centre of the work, in B flat major. It unfolds slowly, with long melodies for the woodwinds and horn over murmuring strings.

IV. Menuetto I and II. Two tiny minuets, the first in G major and the second in G minor, scored for only a few instruments. This is the movement where the serenade's origin as chamber music is easiest to hear.

V. Scherzo: Allegro. A short, boisterous movement led by the horns.

VI. Rondo: Allegro. The finale is built on a bouncing, dotted rhythm that keeps returning between contrasting episodes, and it ends the work in high spirits.



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