

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Symphonic Landscapes: Kirill Petrenko and Leif Ove Andsnes in Sibelius, Grieg and the Pastoral Symphony

Wednesday, April 28, 2027 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Kirill Petrenko, conductor · Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	SIBELIUS 1865–1957 <i>Night Ride and Sunrise, Op. 55</i>	15'
2	GRIEG 1843–1907 <i>Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16</i>	30'
3	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68 ('Pastoral')</i>	40'
TOTAL MUSIC		85'

Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

Night Ride and Sunrise, Op. 55

15 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Night Ride and Sunrise is among the less often played of Sibelius's tone poems, and among the oddest. He completed it in November 1908. It was the first orchestral score he finished after a series of painful operations that year to remove a tumour from his throat, and the experience has been linked with the sparer, more inward manner of the works that followed, the string quartet *Voces intimae* and the Fourth Symphony.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The ride. After a few violent opening bars the strings settle into a galloping long-short rhythm, quiet and relentless, that runs for minutes on end. The harmony shifts beneath it, the volume swells and drops, and little else changes. Eventually the woodwind add a plaintive, drooping melody over the hoofbeats.

The transition. The rhythm at last gives out. The strings alone take up the woodwind's melody and turn it into something like a hymn, broad and eloquent. This is the hinge of the piece.

Sunrise. The first light comes in the horns, with soft chords that swell and overlap. Woodwind figures stir above them, the brass harmonies widen step by step, and the work ends not in a blaze but in a calm, full glow, fading on a quiet chord.

Edvard Grieg

1843–1907

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16

30 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Grieg wrote his only piano concerto in the summer of 1868, when he was in his mid-twenties. He and his wife Nina were spending the season at Søllerød in Denmark, and the concerto was the product of a few unusually happy and productive months. It was first played in Copenhagen on 3 April 1869 by the pianist Edmund Neupert, with Holger Simon Paulli conducting, and it has been popular ever since.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Allegro molto moderato. A drum roll swells from nothing, the orchestra strikes one chord, and the piano crashes down the length of the keyboard. After that flourish the woodwind give out the main theme quietly, a tune with a march rhythm that is meant to be played gently.

The second theme belongs to the cellos, warm and song-like. Near the end the soloist has a long cadenza, which is Grieg's own and builds from a murmur to full thunder before the opening flourish returns.

Adagio. Muted strings play a long, calm melody in a distant key, D-flat major. The piano does not take it up at first but answers with delicate filigree of its own, and only later states the theme in full, grandly. The movement leads into the finale almost without a pause.

Allegro moderato molto e marcato. The main theme is a halling, stamped out by the piano with strong accents. In the middle the dance stops and a solo flute plays a new melody, high and still, over shimmering strings: a clearing in the forest. The dance returns, then changes into a quick triple-time version of itself, and at the very end the flute's quiet tune comes back transformed, in the full orchestra and the major key, with the piano thundering chords beneath it.

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68 ('Pastoral')

40 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies are twins. He worked on them side by side, completed both in 1808, and introduced them to the world at the same concert, the long evening of his own music that he conducted at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna on 22 December 1808. They could hardly be less alike on the surface: one all struggle, the other a walk in the country.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside. The violins begin with a short, simple phrase and pause on it, as if taking a breath. Almost everything in the movement grows from that phrase and its little rhythmic cells, repeated dozens of times with constantly changing colour.

II. Scene by the brook. The murmuring of the water runs through the lower strings, with two muted solo cellos in the middle of the texture. Near the end the music halts for three birds, which Beethoven names in the score: a nightingale (flute), a quail (oboe) and a cuckoo (two clarinets).

III. Merry gathering of country folk. A rustic scherzo. In the middle section Beethoven affectionately mocks a village band: the oboe comes in off the beat, and the bassoon can manage only a few notes.

IV. Thunderstorm. The dance breaks off. Low strings rumble, raindrops patter in the violins, and the storm bursts. Beethoven saves instruments for this moment: the timpani and piccolo play only here, and the trombones enter for the first time.

V. Shepherd's song: happy and thankful feelings after the storm. A clarinet and then a horn call across the valley, and the violins turn the call into a broad, swinging melody. The Berlin note hears in it not jubilation but humility. The tune returns in ever richer variations, and just before the end a muted horn recalls the opening call once more, followed by two firm closing chords.

Tonight's artists

Leif Ove Andsnes *piano*

Leif Ove Andsnes is the soloist in Grieg's Piano Concerto, in Berlin and then on the orchestra's tour of the Nordic countries with the same programme in early May.

Leif Ove Andsnes, born on the Norwegian island of Karmøy in 1970, is one of the most admired pianists of his generation, celebrated for the clarity, intelligence, refinement and complete lack of showy excess in his playing. He studied with Jiří Hlínka at the Bergen Music Conservatory and made his Oslo debut in 1987, going on to a major international career as a recitalist, concerto soloist and chamber musician. Among his most acclaimed projects are his complete survey of the Beethoven piano concertos (his 'Beethoven Journey,' which he directed from the keyboard) and his Mozart and Sibelius recordings, as well as his lifelong championing of his compatriot Grieg. A musician of probing seriousness and patrician taste, he is an ideal interpreter of Beethoven's dramatic Third Concerto.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2027-04-28-petrenko>

Version 1, 8 October 2026