

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Tugan Sokhiev and Yefim Bronfman: Britten, Mozart's C minor Concerto and Shostakovich's 'The Year 1917'

Thursday, May 13, 2027 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Tugan Sokhiev, conductor · Yefim Bronfman, piano

	TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME	MIN
1	BRITTEN 1913–1976 <i>Simple Symphony, Op. 4</i>	18'
2	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491</i>	30'
3	SHOSTAKOVICH 1906–1975 <i>Symphony No. 12 in D minor, Op. 112 ('The Year 1917')</i>	40'
	TOTAL MUSIC	88'

Benjamin Britten

1913–1976

Simple Symphony, Op. 4

18 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Britten was twenty and in his last year at the Royal College of Music when he went back to the music he had written as a boy. Between December 1933 and February 1934 he made a short symphony for strings out of it, and his note in the score says exactly where the material came from: the work is “entirely based on material from works which the composer wrote between the ages of 9 and 12”. He added that although the development of the themes was often new, “there are large stretches of the work which are taken bodily from the early pieces”.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Each movement is built from two childhood tunes, so it helps to listen for a pair of contrasted ideas each time: a first theme that sets the character, and a second that answers it.

Boisterous Bourrée. A bourrée is a quick Baroque dance, and this one lives up to its adjective. The two themes come from a piano suite of 1925 and a song of 1923.

Playful Pizzicato. The title describes the sound: the strings are plucked, not bowed. The material comes from a piano scherzo and a song, both of 1924, and the movement's catchy main tune has made it the most popular part of the work.

Sentimental Saraband. The slow movement, named after the stately Baroque dance in triple time, and the place where the string orchestra is allowed to sing. One of its two sources is a waltz for piano that Britten wrote in 1923, at nine or ten.

Frolicsome Finale. A quick close, drawn from a piano sonata of 1926 and a song of 1925.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791

Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491

30 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Mozart completed this concerto on 24 March 1786 and is thought to have played it for the first time about two weeks later, most probably on 7 April, at the Burgtheater in Vienna. Almost nothing is known about the concert. He was at the time

finishing *The Marriage of Figaro*, which stands next to the concerto in the Köchel catalogue as K. 492, and it would be hard to find two works written side by side that are less alike.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Allegro. The orchestra gives out the main theme softly and in unison. When the piano enters it does not take up that theme at all. It begins with a plaintive idea of its own, and throughout the movement the soloist approaches the main theme only indirectly, leaving its plain statement to the orchestra. Notice how often the woodwind play as a choir of their own. The piano's whirling passage-work continues into the coda.

Larghetto. The key turns to E-flat major and the piano alone plays a melody of extreme simplicity, which the orchestra repeats. Between its returns come two episodes led by the woodwind, the first in the minor, which the piano then decorates.

Allegretto. No cheerful rondo here, but a theme with variations, back in C minor. The theme has the tread of a march. Two variations offer relief, one in A-flat major that brings an abrupt change of mood and a later one in C major, but the minor returns each time. For the last variation Mozart changes the metre to a lilting six-eight, and the concerto ends, as it began, in the minor.

Dmitri Shostakovich

1906–1975

Symphony No. 12 in D minor, Op. 112 ('The Year 1917')

40 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Shostakovich's Twelfth Symphony is the one that his admirers have found hardest to defend. Written in 1961, subtitled "The Year 1917" and dedicated to the memory of Lenin, it tells the story of the October Revolution in four movements played without a break. Like the Eleventh Symphony before it, it is programme music, with a title for each part.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Revolutionary Petrograd. The longest movement, about a third of the whole. A moderately paced introduction leads to a fast main section laid out on traditional symphonic lines and driven hard.

Razliv. The slow movement, an Adagio, and the most reflective part of the symphony. It follows the first movement without a pause.

Aurora. The shortest movement, only a few minutes long, which takes the place of a scherzo. This is where the percussion comes into its own: the timpani strokes stand for the ship's guns.

The Dawn of Humanity. Music heard earlier as a funeral march comes back transformed into a jubilant theme, and the symphony ends in a long celebration for the full orchestra. Whether it sounds triumphant or merely loud is the question each performance has to answer.

Tonight's artists

Yefim Bronfman *piano*

Yefim Bronfman is the soloist in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 on all three evenings. The orchestra's announcement points to his wide expressive range, which this concerto, with its passionate outbursts and its intimate moments, asks for.

Yefim Bronfman, born in Tashkent in 1958 into a family of musicians, is one of the most commanding pianists of our time. He emigrated to Israel as a teenager and made his international debut under Zubin Mehta, going on to a major career based in the United States. Renowned for the power, depth and effortless virtuosity of his playing, combined with great musical intelligence and warmth, he is a favourite partner of the world's leading orchestras and conductors. A Grammy Award winner (for the Bartók concertos with Esa-Pekka Salonen), he commands a vast repertoire, and his combination of titanic technique and natural musicianship makes him an ideal interpreter of the grandest concertos, including Beethoven's 'Emperor.'

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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