

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Klaus Mäkelä and Yunchan Lim: Larcher, Rachmaninoff's Fourth Piano Concerto and Sibelius's Seventh

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

Klaus Mäkelä, conductor · Yunchan Lim, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	LARCHER b. 1963 <i>New work (German premiere)</i>	
2	RACHMANINOFF 1873–1943 <i>Piano Concerto No. 4 in G minor, Op. 40</i>	
3	SIBELIUS 1865–1957 <i>Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105</i>	22'
TOTAL MUSIC		22'

Thomas Larcher

b. 1963

New work (German premiere)

ABOUT THE WORK

The concert opens with a piece that, at the time of writing, has no announced title. The Berliner Philharmoniker list it simply as a new work by Thomas Larcher, commissioned jointly by the Berliner Philharmoniker Foundation, the Orchestre de Paris, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and these Berlin performances are its German premiere. The world premiere is announced for a few weeks earlier: the Orchestre de Paris and Klaus Mäkelä have a new work by Larcher, marked as a first performance, on their programme at the Philharmonie de Paris on 7 and 8 April 2027. Mäkelä conducts in both cities.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

With nothing yet published about the piece itself, the best guide is Larcher's other orchestral music. His publisher describes a style that combines contemplative harmonies with extended playing techniques, experimental and responsive to tradition at once, and the Berlin portrait speaks of a clearly tonal language and a shimmering sound world often inspired by experiences of nature. Expect recognisable harmony and a clear sense of direction, coloured by sounds that orchestral instruments are not

usually asked to make. Larcher says he wants each player to feel that their part is woven into the whole and could not simply be written differently, so it is worth listening to how individual voices emerge from the texture and return to it.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

1873–1943

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G minor, Op. 40

ABOUT THE WORK

The Fourth is probably the least known of Rachmaninoff's piano concertos and the one that gave him the most trouble. He left Russia with his family at the end of 1917 and never returned. To support them he remade himself as a touring pianist, and for the best part of a decade he composed almost nothing. Only in 1926 did he feel able to take time away from the concert platform and finish a new concerto, parts of which he had been carrying in sketches for years.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Allegro vivace. There is no preamble: the movement launches straight into its energetic opening. Compared with the earlier concertos the ideas pass by quickly and are less plainly signposted, which is what early critics took for shapelessness.

Largo. The heart of the concerto, in C major. The piano begins alone, in a melancholy, inward mood, and goes on to rich, poignant chords, the harmonies in which listeners hear an echo of jazz. The strings provide a soft bed of sound for the piano's sparse chords.

Allegro vivace. The finale breaks in with sudden force and gives the soloist an early flourish. This is the movement Rachmaninoff rewrote most thoroughly in 1941. It is restless and brilliant, the piano hardly pausing, and the tonality travels from G minor to a close in G major. The ending is brief.

Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105

22 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Sibelius's last symphony lasts a little over twenty minutes and is in a single movement. Nothing quite like it had been written before, and he himself was not sure at first what to call it.

When he conducted the first performance in Stockholm on 24 March 1924, three weeks after finishing the score, it was billed as a *Fantasia sinfonica*. Only afterwards did he decide that it was a symphony, and it was published the following year as Symphony No. 7 “in one movement”.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The opening. A soft sound from the timpani, then a slow scale rising through the strings, which arrives not where the ear expects but on a dark, remote chord. A quiet woodwind figure follows. Much of what comes later grows from these few bars.

The hymn. Soon the violas and cellos begin a broad, hymn-like melody, which builds slowly to the first climax.

The trombone theme. At the top of that climb the trombone enters with a noble, sustained theme. It is the landmark of the symphony and is heard three times in all. Sibelius told his son-in-law that the trombones here are handled like the instruments of antiquity.

Scherzo and return. The pace quickens by degrees into light, darting music for strings and woodwind. Beneath a swirling, darker texture the trombone theme comes back, now sounding like a voice from above the storm. A second, more relaxed fast section follows, the one sometimes linked with the “Hellenic rondo” of his early plan.

The ending. The rising scale returns and lifts the music to the trombone theme for the last time, in full splendour. Then the energy drains away into a grave passage for

strings, and the symphony ends on a long-delayed resolution: the note B, held in the strings, rises to C only at the very last moment.

Tonight's artists

Yunchan Lim *piano*

Yunchan Lim makes his debut with the Berliner Philharmoniker in these concerts, in Rachmaninoff's Fourth Piano Concerto, a work with which, the orchestra notes, he has already won over audiences.

Yunchan Lim, born in South Korea in 2004, became an international sensation in 2022 when, at the age of eighteen, he became the youngest ever winner of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The triumph, crowned by a now-legendary performance of Rachmaninoff's Third Concerto, was watched by millions online and announced a major new talent. Since then he has appeared with leading orchestras and in major recital halls around the world, and his debut studio album of Chopin's Études won a Gramophone Award. Admired for a maturity, seriousness and depth of musicianship well beyond his years, as well as for formidable technical command, he is widely regarded as one of the most exciting pianists to have emerged in a generation. This concert marks his debut with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

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