

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Dima Slobodeniouk and Yo-Yo Ma: Dean, Schumann and Mendelssohn

Thursday, June 3, 2027 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor · Yo-Yo Ma, cello

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	DEAN b. 1961 <i>Locket (version for chamber orchestra)</i>	
2	SCHUMANN 1810–1856 <i>Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129</i>	25'
3	MENDELSSOHN 1809–1847 <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 61: Excerpts</i>	
TOTAL MUSIC		25'

Brett Dean

b. 1961

Locket (version for chamber orchestra)

ABOUT THE WORK

Brett Dean, the Berliner Philharmoniker's Composer in Residence this season and a former violist of the orchestra, opens the evening with a short piece about remembering. The orchestra's programme lists it as *Locket*, in a version for chamber orchestra, and its introduction to the concert calls it *Recollections: Locket*, a nostalgic work in which Dean quotes a theme by Clara Schumann.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the moment when an older music comes into focus. A critic at the first performance wrote that the last movement lets the quotation from Clara Schumann hover behind a veil of new sounds. Her melody is not presented plainly, the way a set of variations would state its theme. It is glimpsed through Dean's own textures, as a keepsake might be recognised under the dust he mentions.

The title fits that image. A locket holds something small and private from the past, and the music treats its borrowed melody the same way, as something kept and briefly opened.

Robert Schumann

1810–1856

Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129

25 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Schumann wrote his Cello Concerto in the autumn of 1850, very quickly, soon after he and his family had moved to Düsseldorf, where he had taken up the post of municipal music director. The first months there were productive ones. The “Rhenish” Symphony belongs to the same period.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Nicht zu schnell (Not too fast). There is no long orchestral introduction. A few quiet chords in the woodwinds, and the cello enters at once with the main theme, a long, rising and falling melody. Much of the movement has the feeling of an improvised fantasy, with the soloist leading and the orchestra answering.

Langsam (Slowly). The brief slow movement is the heart of the concerto. The soloist sings over plucked strings and occasionally plays two notes at once. Listen for a second cello voice: Schumann has the orchestra’s principal cellist join the soloist in a duet, an unusual and very tender touch.

Sehr lebhaft (Very lively). The finale is lighter and more resolute, with a march-like main theme. Near the end comes the concerto's only cadenza, and it too is unconventional, because the orchestra goes on accompanying the soloist instead of falling silent. It leads straight into the coda, where the music turns from A minor to a bright A major.

Felix Mendelssohn

1809–1847

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 61: Excerpts

ABOUT THE WORK

Mendelssohn wrote music for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* twice, at either end of his career. In 1826, aged seventeen, he composed an overture. It was a concert piece, complete in itself and not tied to any staging of the play.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Scherzo. The first interlude, played after Act I. The first act is set in Athens, by day and among humans; this music opens the door to the forest, the night and the fairies. It is quick, light and dominated by chattering woodwinds.

“Ye spotted snakes”. The song with chorus with which the fairies sing their queen, Titania, to sleep. This is one of the numbers that needs the singers.

Intermezzo. Played after Act II, as Hermia, abandoned in the wood, goes anxiously in search of Lysander. A restless little figure is passed between woodwinds and violins over trembling strings. Then the mood changes and a rustic march brings on Bottom and his fellow tradesmen.

Nocturne. Music for the sleeping lovers at the end of Act III. The melody is given to a solo horn, supported by the bassoons.

Wedding March. The interlude between the last two acts, and by a wide margin the most familiar music Mendelssohn wrote: it has accompanied weddings around the world ever since.

Finale. “Through this house give glimmering light”, for soprano and women’s chorus, in which the fairies bless the house. If the performance includes it, listen at the very end for the four woodwind chords that began the overture, which return to close the circle.

Tonight's artists

Yo-Yo Ma *cello*

Yo-Yo Ma plays the Schumann concerto on all three evenings, 3, 4 and 5 June. The orchestra notes that he returns to the Berliner Philharmoniker after a long absence. The concerto gives its soloist little outward display. Its finest pages are a long song for the cello and, in the slow movement, a quiet duet with the orchestra's own principal cellist.

Yo-Yo Ma is an American cellist, born in Paris in 1955 to Chinese parents. He began to learn the cello with his father at the age of four and moved with his family to the United States three years later. He studied at the Juilliard School in New York and then took a liberal arts degree at Harvard. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestras around the world and has made a very large number of recordings, among them recordings of Bach's cello suites and chamber music with the pianist Emanuel Ax, a frequent partner. His curiosity reaches well beyond the classical repertoire: he founded the Silkroad collective, which brings together musicians from many traditions, and he has recorded with artists such as Bobby McFerrin and the bluegrass players of the Goat Rodeo Sessions. His honours include the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), the National Medal of Arts (2001), the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Polar Music Prize (2012) and the Birgit Nilsson Prize (2022), and he is a United Nations Messenger of Peace.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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