

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Season Finale at the Waldbühne with Daniel Harding and Augustin Hadelich

Saturday, June 26, 2027 · 20:15 · Waldbühne

Daniel Harding, conductor · Augustin Hadelich, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Die Fledermaus: Overture</i>	
2	RAVEL 1875–1937 <i>Tzigane, Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra</i>	10'
3	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Csárdás from Ritter Pásmán, Op. 441</i>	
4	STRAVINSKY 1882–1971 <i>Suite from 'The Firebird' (1919)</i>	22'
5	STRAUSS 1864–1949 <i>Salome, Op. 54: Dance of the Seven Veils</i>	9'
6	SARASATE 1844–1908 <i>Carmen Fantasy, Op. 25</i>	12'
7	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Künstlerleben, Waltz, Op. 316</i>	
8	RAVEL 1875–1937 <i>La Valse</i>	12'
TOTAL MUSIC		65'

Johann Strauss II

1825–1899

Die Fledermaus: Overture

ABOUT THE WORK

The Berliner Philharmoniker end their season out of doors, at the Waldbühne, with an evening built on dance: waltzes and a csárdás from Vienna, two Hungarian and Spanish showpieces for the violin, a Russian ballet, the most notorious dance in opera, and Ravel's dark portrait of the waltz itself. It starts where such evenings should, with Johann Strauss.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first notes have been compared to three champagne corks popping, and champagne is what the whole operetta runs on. After that the melodies come in a cascade, with the great waltz among them.

What makes the overture exciting, and difficult, is how often it changes speed. A Strauss waltz or polka usually settles into its tempo and stays there. Here the music keeps slowing down, hesitating and racing off again, and the players have to turn together on each corner. It is a demanding piece for an orchestra and a famously enjoyable one to hear.

Maurice Ravel

1875–1937

Tzigane, Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra

10 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Ravel described *Tzigane* as a virtuoso piece in the style of a Hungarian rhapsody. It came out of an evening in London. The Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi had played his Sonata for Violin and Cello at a private gathering, and afterwards Ravel asked her for some of the gypsy-style melodies of her homeland. She played for hours. Ravel decided to write her a showpiece that, as he put it, could not be anything but Hungarian.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The violin begins entirely alone, and stays alone for a long time: the opening cadenza takes up nearly half the piece. It starts low and dark, on the instrument's bottom string, and gradually works through a catalogue of virtuoso devices.

Like a csárdás, the piece moves from slow to fast. When the orchestra finally enters, listen for the harp and celesta, which give the accompaniment its glitter. From there a chain of short, dance-like episodes follows, getting quicker and quicker until the breathless close.

Johann Strauss II

1825–1899

Csárdás from Ritter Pásmán, Op. 441

ABOUT THE WORK

Johann Strauss wrote many operettas and a single opera. *Ritter Pásmán* (Knight Pásmán), a comic opera in three acts, had its first performance at the Vienna Court Opera on New Year's Day 1892. The libretto, by Ludwig Dóczi, is based on a narrative poem by the Hungarian poet János Arany. Its plot turns on a kiss: a hunter kisses the knight's wife on the forehead, the jealous Pásmán goes to the king to demand redress, and the king reveals that the hunter was himself, so that Pásmán is granted a kiss from the queen in return.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The story is set in Hungary, and here Strauss writes in the Hungarian national style. A csárdás is a Hungarian dance in two parts, the first slow, the second fast, and that is the plan to listen for here: a slow opening section, then a quick dance.

It is worth comparing with the Ravel just heard. *Tzigane* follows the same slow-to-fast pattern, a generation later and from a greater distance.

Igor Stravinsky

1882–1971

Suite from 'The Firebird' (1919)

22 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The Firebird made Stravinsky's name. Early in 1909 the impresario Serge Diaghilev and his circle had settled on the Russian legend of the Firebird as the subject for a new ballet for the Ballets Russes, with Michel Fokine as choreographer. Finding a composer proved harder. Diaghilev's first choice, Anatoly Liadov, was notoriously slow, and in the autumn of that year he turned to Stravinsky, who was twenty-seven and little known. Stravinsky saw the opportunity and began composing before the commission was even confirmed. The ballet was first danced in Paris on 25 June 1910, and its success was immediate. *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* followed within three years.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Stravinsky separates the two worlds of the story by musical means. The humans get simple, folk-like melodies; the supernatural beings get slithering chromatic music.

Introduction. Low strings creep through a dark, winding figure: Kashchei's garden at night.

The Firebird and its Dance, Variation of the Firebird.

The bird appears in a shimmer of strings and woodwinds, and dances to quick, darting music.

The Princesses' Khorovod. A slow round dance, on a melody introduced by the solo oboe.

Infernal Dance of King Kashchei. Wild syncopations and startling accents, as the Firebird forces Kashchei's followers to dance.

Lullaby. The calm after the dance.

Finale. A quiet, folk-like phrase begins the celebration and grows, repetition by repetition, into a blaze of sound for the whole orchestra.

Richard Strauss

1864–1949

Salome, Op. 54: Dance of the Seven Veils

9 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Strauss saw Oscar Wilde's play *Salomé* in Berlin in November 1902, in a German translation, and turned that translation into the libretto of a one-act opera. *Salome* had its first performance in Dresden on 9 December 1905. The mixture of biblical subject, eroticism and murder shocked audiences from the

start and made the opera a sensation. At the Metropolitan Opera in New York the run was cancelled after a public outcry. Kaiser Wilhelm II is said to have worried that the piece would do Strauss a great deal of damage; the damage, the composer is reported to have remarked later, enabled him to build his villa at Garmisch.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is the opera's huge orchestra let off the leash. Listen for the exotic colouring Strauss gives the music: winding, heavily ornamented melodies, and a percussion section that includes tambourine and castanets.

The shape is a long, calculated build-up. Strauss works by crescendo and by a gradual quickening of the pace, so that the excitement mounts by stages until the final headlong rush.

Pablo de Sarasate

1844–1908

Carmen Fantasy, Op. 25

12 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

When a nineteenth-century violin virtuoso wanted a new piece for his own concerts, the obvious thing to do was to take the hit tunes of a popular opera and decorate them. Pablo de

Sarasate wrote fantasies of this kind on operas from *Don Giovanni* and *Der Freischütz* to Gounod's *Faust*. The best known is the one on Bizet's *Carmen*.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

There are five sections, played without a break, each based on a different number from the opera. You will recognise most of them.

First comes the **Aragonaise**, the entr'acte before the last act. Then the **Habanera**, Carmen's entrance song, lavishly ornamented. A slower section follows, built on the mocking "Tra la la" with which Carmen defies the officer Zuniga; it ends in ghostly high harmonics. Next is the **Seguidilla** from the first act. The finale is the **Gypsy Dance** from the opening of the second act, where Carmen and her friends entertain the officers. It ends with a virtuoso acceleration, the soloist adding racing passages in thirds and arpeggios that sweep the whole range of the instrument.

Johann Strauss II

1825–1899

Künstlerleben, Waltz, Op. 316

ABOUT THE WORK

Künstlerleben (Artist's Life) is a close contemporary of the most famous waltz of all. Johann Strauss wrote it for the ball of the Hesperus, the Viennese artists' association to which all three Strauss brothers belonged, and it was first played on 18 February 1867, only a few days after the first performance of *The Blue Danube*.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

A Strauss concert waltz is a chain: a slow introduction, a sequence of five waltzes and a coda that looks back over what has been heard.

Here the introduction is especially fine. It begins pensively, with a foretaste of the waltz melody, and is cut short by two loud chords before the dance proper begins. The first waltz is high-spirited. The second and third are more wistful, the last two brighter again. The coda is long, reprising what has come before, and ends in triumph.

Keep these sounds in mind for what comes next. Ravel's *La Valse* takes exactly this world, and exactly this form, and looks at it through a darker glass.

Maurice Ravel

1875–1937

La Valse

12 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The evening closes with a waltz to end all waltzes. Ravel called *La Valse* a kind of homage to the great Strauss: “not Richard, the other one, Johann”. The idea went back a long way. Well before the First World War he had planned a symphonic poem to be called *Wien* (Vienna), and he had begun to work on it when war broke out; a piece with that title, he felt, no longer suited the times. He returned to it only in 1919, when Serge Diaghilev commissioned a ballet from him for the Ballets Russes.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The form is that of the Strauss waltz just played, an introduction, a chain of waltzes and a closing section, but nothing behaves as it should.

The opening. A barely audible rumble in the double basses, a pulse like a heartbeat, scraps of melody in the bassoons. Out of this mist the three-in-a-bar rhythm takes shape, and finally the violins sweep in with the first full waltz tune.

The waltzes. A series of episodes follows, some sweet and hesitant, some brassy and grand, with swooping string glissandos and glittering harps. This is the ball-room Ravel described, at full brilliance.

The unravelling. In the second half the same tunes come back, but they collide, pile up and distort. The long crescendo is broken off and started again, each time more violently. The final pages hurl the waltz to pieces.

Tonight's artists

Augustin Hadelich *violin*

Augustin Hadelich is the guest of the evening and plays twice, once in each half: Ravel's *Tzigane* before the interval and Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy* after it. The two pieces make a pair. Both are portraits of a national style painted by a virtuoso's brush, one Hungarian as imagined in Paris, the other Spanish as imagined by a Spaniard working from a French opera, and both finish at top speed. He appears with Daniel Harding, whose association with the Berliner Philharmoniker, the orchestra notes, goes back three decades.

Augustin Hadelich, born in Italy in 1984 to German parents and now an American citizen, is one of the most acclaimed violinists in the world. After a childhood on a Tuscan farm, and recovery from a serious fire injury in his teens, he trained at the Juilliard School and rose to international prominence by winning the gold medal at the 2006 Indianapolis Competition. A Grammy Award winner with a vast repertoire and a celebrated discography, he is admired for the beauty and refinement of his tone, his flawless technique and his deep musical intelligence. He joined the faculty of the Yale School of Music in 2021. His combination of brilliance and lyricism makes him an ideal interpreter of the great Romantic concertos.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2027-06-26-harding>

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