

Rattle's Bartók and de Falla's Three-Cornered Hat

Sunday, January 18, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican
Sir Simon Rattle, conductor · Patricia Kopatchinskaja, violin · Rinat Shaham, mezzo-soprano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BARTÓK 1881–1945 <i>Violin Concerto No. 2, BB 117</i>	38'
2	BARTÓK 1881–1945 <i>Five Hungarian Folksongs for Voice and Orchestra</i>	11'
3	FALLA 1876–1946 <i>The Three-Cornered Hat (complete ballet)</i>	38'
TOTAL MUSIC		87'

Béla Bartók

1881–1945

Violin Concerto No. 2, BB 117

38 minutes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement opens with strummed harp and pizzicato strings, like a folk minstrel tuning up, before the violin enters with a broad, noble, rhapsodic theme; listen for the music's swing between Hungarian-flavoured lyricism and fierce energy, for the eerie quarter-tone slides in the solo part, and for the dazzling cadenza.

The central slow movement is the set of variations: listen for the simple, songful theme stated at the start, then for the extraordinary variety of its transformations: by turns serene, glittering, agitated and mysterious, including a magical 'night music' variation. The finale is a dancing, driving transformation of the first movement's material (Bartók's symmetry at work), full of folk-rhythm exuberance and brilliance. Patricia Kopatchinskaja, a fearless and characterful soloist, brings the work both its lyricism and its wild, earthy edge.

Béla Bartók

11 minutes

1881–1945

Five Hungarian Folksongs for Voice and Orchestra

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the directness and authenticity of the folk melodies themselves (these are real Hungarian peasant songs, with their distinctive modal inflections and speech-like rhythms) and for the sensitivity of Bartók's orchestration, which colours and supports the voice without ever overwhelming the simple tunes.

The set moves through contrasting moods: listen for the sorrowful, inward songs (laments of loneliness or sorrow) set against more animated, dance-like numbers full of rhythmic life. The mezzo-soprano (here Rinat Shaham) carries the songs; follow the words and the way Bartók matches the music to each text's character. It is a brief but rewarding glimpse of Bartók the folk-song collector and miniaturist, and a reminder of the roots from which his whole musical language grew.

Manuel de Falla

38 minutes

1876–1946

The Three-Cornered Hat (complete ballet)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen, right at the start, for the burst of energy (a fanfare, shouts of 'Olé!' and castanet-clicks, with the mezzo-soprano's flamenco-style cry) that throws us straight into the heat and colour of Andalusia. Then follow the dances, which are the heart of the work. Listen for the sultry, swaggering **Farruca** (the Miller's Dance), one of de Falla's most famous pages, with its proud, stamping rhythm; for the graceful dance of the Miller's Wife; and for the comic, lumbering music of the pompous magistrate.

De Falla's orchestration is brilliant throughout: listen for the guitar-like figurations, the snapping castanets and percussion, the sultry woodwind solos and the blazing full-orchestra climaxes, all evoking the Spanish idiom with a Frenchman's precision of colour. The ballet builds to its tremendous **final dance (Jota)**, a whirling, exuberant celebration as the magistrate is tossed in a blanket and the lovers reunited, bringing the evening to an irresistibly festive close.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-01-18-rattle>

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