

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Treviño: Messiaen, Illés and Rachmaninoff's Second

Thursday, January 29, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican

Robert Treviño, conductor · Patricia Kopatchinskaja, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MESSIAEN 1908–1992 <i>Hymne (au Saint-Sacrement)</i>	12'
2	ILLÉS b. 1975 <i>'Vont-tér' for Violin and Orchestra</i>	21'
3	RACHMANINOFF 1873–1943 <i>Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27</i>	60'
TOTAL MUSIC		93'

Olivier Messiaen

1908–1992

Hymne (au Saint-Sacrement)

12 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The *Hymne au Saint-Sacrement* ('Hymn to the Blessed Sacrament') is one of Messiaen's earliest orchestral works, written in 1932 when he was just twenty-three, already the organist of La Trinité and already, unmistakably, himself. It belongs to a small group of early orchestral 'meditations' (with *Les Offrandes oubliées* and *Le Tombeau resplendissant*) in which the young composer first displayed his command of the orchestra and his lifelong subject: religious contemplation, here a hymn of adoration before the Eucharist.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the slow, contemplative, almost timeless quality of the music: Messiaen is not interested in conventional momentum or development, but in creating states of spiritual contemplation. Listen for his rich, sensuous harmonies (the young composer already finding the glowing, 'coloured' chords that would define his style) and for the way the music moves in waves of adoration, alternating hushed mystery with radiant, surging climaxes.

Even in this early work, you can hear the essential Messiaen: the sense of music as an act of worship, the love of bright orchestral colour, and a rhythmic freedom that makes the music seem to float outside ordinary time. At around twelve minutes it is a concentrated, glowing meditation, a window onto the spiritual world that would occupy this singular composer for the rest of his life.

Márton Illés

b. 1975

'Vont-tér' for Violin and Orchestra

21 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

'Vont-tér' for violin and orchestra is a recent concerto-like work by the Hungarian composer Márton Illés, completed in 2019 and premiered by tonight's soloist, Patricia Kopatchinskaja (the LSO notes that she gave the first performance with the WDR Symphony Orchestra in 2020). It features here as part of an LSO 'Artist Portrait' series spotlighting Kopatchinskaja, a violinist famed for her fearless advocacy of new music, and an ideal champion for a work of this kind.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Approach this one with fresh ears. Rather than waiting for hummable themes, listen for colour, texture and gesture: the ‘kaleidoscopic sounds and effects’ the LSO promises. Listen to the extraordinary range of sounds Kopatchinskaja draws from the violin (she is celebrated for exactly this kind of fearless, exploratory playing), and to how those sounds are mirrored, answered and coloured by the orchestra.

Listen, too, for the ‘ethereal, playful’ character: moments of delicacy and wit, shimmering textures, sudden contrasts. This is music about the interplay of the solo voice and the larger ensemble, about the discovery of new sonorities, and about atmosphere. Let it draw you into its strange and vivid world: a chance to hear a living composer’s music brought to life by the violinist who has made it her own.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

1873–1943

Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27

60 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony is one of the glories of late Romanticism: a vast, glowing, intensely lyrical work that represents the composer's triumphant return to the symphony after disaster. His First Symphony had failed catastrophically at its 1897 premiere, sending him into a deep depression; a full decade later, having rebuilt his confidence (and living quietly in Dresden to escape the distractions of Russia), he produced this richly Romantic masterpiece. It was premiered in St Petersburg in 1908 with the composer conducting, and was an immediate and lasting success.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The symphony grows from a brooding motto in the low strings at the very opening, a germinal idea that recurs throughout the work, binding its huge span together. Listen for the first movement's slow, dark introduction giving way to a surging, melancholy main movement, full of Rachmaninoff's characteristic long-spun melody.

The second movement is a vigorous scherzo: listen for the striding horn theme and the energetic drive, with a broad, sweeping lyrical contrast and a chattering fugal central section. Then comes the glory of the symphony: the Adagio, opening with a great soaring melody in the violins and, soon after, the famous long clarinet solo, one of the most beautiful melodies in all music, unfolding with seemingly endless breath. Let it wash over you. The finale is a blazing, festive movement that gathers up the symphony's themes (including a return of that ravishing slow-movement music) and drives, through surging climaxes, to a triumphant, bell-like close in the major, the hard-won affirmation of a composer who had once thought himself finished.

Tonight's artists

Patricia Kopatchinskaja *violin*

Patricia Kopatchinskaja gave the premiere of Márton Illés's 'Vont-tér', so this performance, part of an LSO portrait series devoted to her, places the work in the hands of the very artist who brought it into being. Famed for her fearless, exploratory approach and her command of the violin's full range of colours and effects, Kopatchinskaja is the ideal (indeed the originating) interpreter of this 'kaleidoscopic' contemporary concerto.

Patricia Kopatchinskaja, born in Chişinău (then Soviet Moldova) in 1977 into a family of folk musicians, is one of the most individual and electrifying violinists before the public. Her family emigrated to Vienna when she was a child, and she trained there and in Bern. Famous for her fearless, theatrical, intensely physical music-making (she often performs barefoot), she is a passionate champion of new music and an unconventional interpreter of the classics, winning a Grammy in 2018. Her folk-music roots and her wild, characterful energy make her an especially compelling interpreter of Bartók, whose own music is steeped in the folk traditions of Eastern Europe.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-01-29-trevino>

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