

Nosedà: Stravinsky, Chopin and Borodin's Second

Thursday, February 12, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican
Gianandrea Nosedà, conductor · Seong-Jin Cho, piano

	TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME	MIN
1	STRAVINSKY 1882–1971 <i>Divertimento from The Fairy's Kiss (rev. 1949)</i>	20'
2	CHOPIN 1810–1849 <i>Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21</i>	30'
3	BORODIN 1833–1887 <i>Symphony No. 2 in B minor</i>	30'
	TOTAL MUSIC	80'

Igor Stravinsky

1882–1971

20 minutes

Divertimento from The Fairy's Kiss (rev. 1949)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the unusual double identity of this music: Tchaikovsky's tunes heard through Stravinsky's ears. The melodies have a Romantic, lyrical warmth that is pure Tchaikovsky, but they are dressed in Stravinsky's clean, pointed orchestration, with sudden rhythmic kinks, dry wind sonorities and a slightly detached, ironic poise. The game of the piece is hearing where one composer ends and the other begins.

Follow the four movements: the opening Sinfonia, with its broad lyrical sweep; the lively, folk-flavoured 'Swiss Dances' (the ballet has an Alpine setting), full of perky tunes and dancing rhythms; the glittering, fairy-light Scherzo; and the great Pas de deux, the emotional heart of the suite, where a long, tender melody unfolds with real warmth before the music builds to a brilliant, energetic close. Throughout, listen for Stravinsky's superb craftsmanship: the clarity of his textures, the precision of his rhythms, and the affection beneath the elegant surface.

Frédéric Chopin

1810–1849

30 minutes

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement (Maestoso) opens with a substantial orchestral introduction before the piano enters; listen then for the way the soloist takes over completely, decorating two contrasting themes, one passionate and stormy, one tenderly lyrical, with cascades of filigree ornament, delicate runs and rubato (that flexible, expressive give-and-take of tempo Chopin made his own).

The slow movement (Larghetto) is the emotional core and one of Chopin's most beautiful inspirations, often heard as his musical love-letter to Konstancja. Listen for its serene, song-like main melody, and especially for the extraordinary central section: a dramatic, recitative-like passage where the piano seems almost to speak, like an operatic heroine in an impassioned scene, over tremulous, whispering strings. The finale is a sparkling rondo in the spirit of a Polish folk dance: listen for its lilt-ing mazurka-like rhythms, its playful elegance, and the brilliant, dancing piano writing, with a magical moment near the end where a horn call signals the brilliant final flourish. Throughout, follow the soloist's touch, colour and the singing quality of the line. This is music about the piano's power to sing.

Alexander Borodin

1833–1887

30 minutes

Symphony No. 2 in B minor

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement opens with one of the most arresting gestures in the symphonic repertoire: a fierce, hammered unison theme in the low strings (craggy, modal, unmistakably the 'heroes' motif') that dominates the whole movement with its raw power. Listen for how it alternates with a warmer, more lyrical second theme, and for the sheer muscular drive of the writing.

The scherzo is brilliant and headlong: listen for the dizzyingly fast repeated notes and the whirling energy, with a contrasting, more languid 'oriental' middle section full of Borodin's characteristic exotic colour. The slow movement (Andante) is the sym-

phony's lyrical jewel: listen for the gentle harp arpeggios and the glorious horn solo that sings the main theme, one of the great Romantic melodies, broad, nostalgic and warmly Russian, often heard as a depiction of an ancient bard singing of heroic deeds. The finale bursts in without pause: a festive, dancing celebration built on vigorous folk-like rhythms and brilliant orchestral colour, driving to a triumphant close. Listen throughout for Borodin's gift for memorable melody and his rich, vivid orchestration: the sound of Russian musical nationalism at its most heroic and exuberant.



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