

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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

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

20 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The Divertimento is a concert suite that Stravinsky drew from his 1928 ballet *The Fairy's Kiss* (*Le Baiser de la fée*), a work that is, in effect, a loving homage to Tchaikovsky. Commissioned by the dancer Ida Rubinstein to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of Tchaikovsky's death, the ballet took as its starting point a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, 'The Ice Maiden,' in which a fairy marks a baby boy with her kiss and later, on his wedding day, claims him for her own. Stravinsky saw in this an allegory of Tchaikovsky himself, touched in the cradle by the muse and claimed by an early death, and built the whole score out of Tchaikovsky's own music, taking lesser-known piano pieces and songs and weaving, orchestrating and transforming them into something unmistakably his own.

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

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

30 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Chopin’s Second Piano Concerto is, confusingly, the first he wrote, composed in 1829–30 when he was not yet twenty, still living in Warsaw and on the brink of leaving Poland forever. It was published after the E minor concerto and so took the later

number, but this F minor work came first, and it bears all the freshness, ardour and slight formal naivety of a brilliant young composer pouring out his heart. It is also a deeply personal piece: the ravishing slow movement is reportedly inspired by Konstancja Gładkowska, a young singer at the Warsaw Conservatory with whom he was secretly, hopelessly in love. The whole concerto glows with that first-love tenderness.

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 lilting mazurka-like rhythms, its playful elegance, and the bril-

liant, 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

Symphony No. 2 in B minor

30 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Borodin's Second Symphony is his orchestral masterpiece: a broad, heroic, intensely Russian work that the critic Vladimir Stasov nicknamed the 'Bogatyr' or 'Heroic' Symphony, after the bogatyr, the legendary warrior-knights of Russian epic. According to Stasov, Borodin meant the first movement to evoke a gathering of these ancient heroes, and the music has exactly that quality: massive, granite-hewn, full of primal strength. It was written in the years when his great opera Prince Igor lay set aside, and the two works share a sound-world of epic grandeur and broad-shouldered melody.

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 symphony’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.

Tonight's artists

Seong-Jin Cho *piano*

Chopin's Second Concerto asks above all for poetry: a singing tone, the art of rubato, and the delicacy to spin its filigree decoration into long, breathing lines. Seong-Jin Cho, who first came to world attention by winning the 2015 International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, is one of the foremost Chopin interpreters of his generation, and brings to this early, love-struck concerto exactly the blend of refinement, lyricism and quiet brilliance it needs.

Seong-Jin Cho, born in Seoul in 1994, is one of the most admired pianists of his generation. He took up the piano at six, gave his first recital at eleven, and won a string of competitions as a teenager before the victory that made his name internationally: first prize at the 2015 International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw, the first South Korean ever to win it. Trained in Seoul and then at the Conservatoire de Paris with Michel Béroff, he has since appeared with the world's foremost orchestras and signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, recording a wide repertoire from Mozart and Schubert to Chopin, Debussy and Ravel. Famed for the poise, refinement and quiet intensity of his playing, he served as Artist in Residence of the Berlin Philharmonic for the 2024–25 season.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-02-12-nosed>

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