

Nosedá: Debussy, Berg's Violin Concerto and Rachmaninoff's First

Thursday, February 26, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican
Gianandrea Nosedá, conductor · Patricia Kopatchinskaja, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	DEBUSSY 1862–1918 <i>Nuages and Fêtes from Three Nocturnes</i>	14'
2	BERG 1885–1935 <i>Violin Concerto</i>	26'
3	RACHMANINOFF 1873–1943 <i>Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13</i>	47'
TOTAL MUSIC		87'

Claude Debussy

1862–1918

14 minutes

Nuages and Fêtes from Three Nocturnes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

In 'Nuages,' listen for the very opening, quiet rocking chords in clarinets and bassoons that set up a sense of slow, aimless drift, and then for the plaintive solo cor anglais (English horn) melody that becomes the piece's recurring emotional centre. Notice how Debussy avoids strong cadences and clear rhythm, so the music seems to float free of time, all muted colour and half-light; listen, too, for a magical moment when flute and harp trace a delicate, pentatonic shape like a sudden gleam through the greyness.

In 'Fêtes,' the change is electric: listen for the scurrying, dancing rhythms and brilliant orchestral flashes that open the piece in a whirl of festivity. Then listen for the celebrated central procession: far-off muted trumpets and pizzicato strings building a strange, exciting march that grows louder as if approaching, reaches a blazing climax, and then fades away into the distance. Throughout both pieces, savour Debussy's revolutionary orches-

tration: the emphasis on colour and atmosphere over melody and development, the subtle washes of sound, and the sheer sensuous beauty that changed the course of music.

Alban Berg

1885–1935

26 minutes

Violin Concerto

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The concerto plays continuously but falls into two large parts. Listen at the very opening for the soloist's quiet, rising arpeggios over open strings, Berg's tone row laid out so that it sounds gentle and tonal, not harsh. In the first part, listen for the tender, dancing 'portrait' of the girl, and especially for the lilting Carinthian folk song that floats in like a memory, a touch of innocent, rustic charm.

The second part begins with violence: listen for the shattering orchestral outburst and the agitated, anguished solo writing that depict suffering and death. Then comes the work's miraculous turn: the entry of Bach's chorale 'Es ist genug,' first played by clarinets in Bach's own harmonisation, then taken up and varied by the soloist. Listen for the way this old Lutheran hymn of acceptance ('It is enough, Lord') brings consolation out of grief. The concerto rises to a final transfiguration: listen for the violin ascending, higher and higher, into serene stillness as the music dissolves into radiant calm, the angel's soul at peace. It is one of the most affecting endings in all music.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

1873–1943

47 minutes

Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen from the very first bars for the symphony's germinal idea: a terse, brooding motto, a short figure with the contour of chant and a kinship with the Dies irae, that pervades all four movements, binding the whole work together with a dark, obsessive intensity. The first movement grows from it into music of stormy power and surging Romantic sweep.

The second movement is a fleet, shadowy scherzo: listen for its nervous, scurrying energy and the way the motto theme keeps stealing back. The slow movement (Larghetto) offers respite: listen for the tender melodies and the warmer, more lyrical mood, though shadows are never far away. The finale bursts in with a blazing fanfare and a festive, march-like energy; listen for the brilliant orchestration, the recurrence of the motto theme, and the way the music drives through tumultuous climaxes to a dark, fateful close. Throughout, listen for how much of the mature Rachmaninoff is already here: the sweeping melodies, the chant-derived themes, the obsession with the Dies irae, and the deep vein of Russian melancholy, all in a bold symphonic work whose unjust early failure cost music dear.



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