

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# Stutzmann: Beethoven's Third Concerto, Rieni and Der Rosenkavalier

Thursday, May 14, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican

Nathalie Stutzmann, conductor · Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

| TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME |                                                                              | MIN |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1                   | <b>BEETHOVEN</b> 1770–1827<br><i>Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37</i> | 33' |
| 2                   | <b>WAGNER</b> 1813–1883<br><i>Rieni, Overture</i>                            | 12' |
| 3                   | <b>STRAUSS</b> 1864–1949<br><i>Der Rosenkavalier, Suite</i>                  | 21' |
| TOTAL MUSIC         |                                                                              | 66' |

# Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

## *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37*

33 minutes

### ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto marks a decisive turning point: the work in which he stepped out of the long shadow of Mozart and Haydn and found his own heroic, dramatic voice in the concerto form. Composed around 1800–1803 and premiered in Vienna in 1803 with the composer himself as soloist (famously playing from a barely-notated score, turning pages that were mostly blank to all but him), it is the only one of his five piano concertos in a minor key. That key, C minor, was for Beethoven the key of struggle, fate and tragedy, the same as his Fifth Symphony and the 'Pathétique' Sonata, and it gives the concerto a new seriousness, power and emotional weight.

### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement opens not with the soloist but with a long orchestral exposition built on a terse, marching C minor theme; listen for its quiet, ominous beginning and the way it grows in power. When the piano finally enters, it does so dramatically, with rising scales, and then takes command. Listen for the interplay of stormy drama and lyrical tenderness, and for the big cadenza near the end

(Beethoven's own), after which the movement closes with a mysterious, hushed timpani-and-piano passage before a final flourish.

The slow movement (Largo) is a sublime surprise: it moves to the remote, glowing key of E major, far from the home key, and unfolds as a serene, hymn-like meditation of great beauty and stillness. Listen for the rapt, song-like piano writing and the magical, almost sacred atmosphere. The finale is a vigorous rondo that returns to C minor with a spiky, energetic main theme; listen for its rhythmic drive, its wit and its episodes of contrasting lyricism, and for the thrilling coda, where Beethoven shifts at last into a bright, fast C major (Presto), turning struggle into exuberant triumph to bring the concerto to a joyous close.

## Richard Wagner

1813–1883

### *Rienzi, Overture*

12 minutes

#### ABOUT THE WORK

The Overture to *Rienzi* comes from the opera that made the young Richard Wagner famous, and it sounds quite unlike the mature 'music dramas' for which he is now best known. *Rienzi*, *der Letzte der Tribunen* ('*Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes*'),

composed in the late 1830s and premiered in Dresden in 1842, was Wagner's first real success: a big, old-fashioned grand opera in the spectacular French style of Meyerbeer, full of crowds, processions, ballets and political drama, telling the story of Cola di Rienzo, a medieval Roman demagogue who rises to power as a champion of the people and is then destroyed by the mob. Wagner was still in his twenties, ambitious and hungry for a hit, and *Rienzi* gave him one: its grand spectacle and stirring tunes were exactly what audiences of the day wanted.

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen at the very start for the famous slow build: a single sustained trumpet note, swelling out of silence, which heralds the broad, hymn-like melody that is the heart of the Overture: the noble tune of *Rienzi*'s prayer ('Allmächt'ger Vater'), one of Wagner's most heartfelt early inspirations. Listen for how this great melody is introduced gently and then returns later in full, glowing orchestral splendour.

Around it, listen for the contrasting material: stirring, martial rhythms and fanfares evoking the opera's political and military drama; surging, energetic string writing; and a gradual building of excitement. The Overture follows the classic 'grand opera' pattern of stitching together the opera's best themes into an exciting orchestral

showpiece, and it builds, through accelerating energy and brilliant orchestration, to a rousing, triumphant conclusion. Enjoy it as a vivid glimpse of the young Wagner, writing to dazzle and to please, already a master of the orchestra and not yet the revolutionary he would become.

## Richard Strauss

1864–1949

### *Der Rosenkavalier, Suite*

21 minutes

#### ABOUT THE WORK

*Der Rosenkavalier* ('The Knight of the Rose') is Richard Strauss's most beloved opera, a glorious, bittersweet comedy of love, time and renunciation, set in an idealised, gilded vision of eighteenth-century Vienna. First staged in 1911, with a brilliant libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, it tells of the aristocratic Marschallin, her young lover Octavian, and the way she nobly gives him up when he falls for the young Sophie, all wrapped in a glittering, sentimental world of waltzes, intrigue and aristocratic comedy (presided over by the boorish Baron Ochs). Though set in the era of Maria Theresa, the opera is suffused with the lilting Viennese waltz, an affectionate anachronism that has become inseparable from its charm.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen at the very opening for the music depicting the night of love between the Marschallin and Octavian: surging, ardent strings and whooping horns (Strauss's famously vivid, unmistakable evocation of passion). Then listen for the magical music of the 'Presentation of the Silver Rose,' one of the opera's most exquisite moments: shimmering, otherworldly high writing (celesta, harps, high violins) conjuring the silvery glint of the rose, as young Octavian and Sophie fall instantly in love.

The heart of the Suite is its waltzes. Listen for the sequence of lilting, swaggering Viennese waltz tunes (associated especially with the comic Baron Ochs), full of charm, swing and nostalgia. Then listen for the music drawn from the opera's sublime final scene: the great trio in which the Marschallin, with aching tenderness, gives up Octavian to Sophie, and the radiant closing love duet, some of the most beautiful music Strauss ever composed. The Suite ends with a final, energetic waltz flourish. Throughout, savour Strauss's opulent orchestration and his gift for melody: a glowing, sentimental, utterly captivating farewell to the evening.

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## Tonight's artists

### **Leif Ove Andsnes** *piano*

Beethoven's Third Concerto, the only one in a minor key, balances stormy drama with profound lyricism and demands an interpreter of both power and refinement. Leif Ove Andsnes, whose acclaimed 'Beethoven Journey' surveyed all five concertos, is one of the great Beethovenians of our day, bringing his celebrated clarity, structural intelligence and unforced poetry to this cornerstone of the repertoire.

Leif Ove Andsnes, born on the Norwegian island of Karmøy in 1970, is one of the most admired pianists of his generation, celebrated for the clarity, intelligence, refinement and complete lack of showy excess in his playing. He studied with Jiří Hlinka at the Bergen Music Conservatory and made his Oslo debut in 1987, going on to a major international career as a recitalist, concerto soloist and chamber musician. Among his most acclaimed projects are his complete survey of the Beethoven piano concertos (his 'Beethoven Journey,' which he directed from the keyboard) and his Mozart and Sibelius recordings, as well as his lifelong championing of his compatriot Grieg. A musician of probing seriousness and patrician taste, he is an ideal interpreter of Beethoven's dramatic Third Concerto.

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## CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-05-14-stutzmann>

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