

Pappano Conducts Wagner's Tristan und Isolde

Wednesday, July 1, 2026 · 17:00 · Barbican

Antonio Pappano, conductor · Clay Hilley, Tristan · Sara Jakubiak, Isolde ·
Marina Prudenskaya, Brangäne · Franz-Josef Selig, King Marke · Gyula
Orendt, Kurwenal · Neal Cooper, Melot · Michael Gibson, Sailor / Shepherd ·
James Emerson, Steersman · London Symphony Chorus, choir

approximately 230 minutes

Richard Wagner

230 minutes

1813–1883

Tristan und Isolde (complete opera, concert performance)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen, at the very start, for the Prelude and its famous unresolved chord, the seed of everything that follows, establishing the mood of aching, unfulfilled longing that the whole opera sustains. Throughout, notice how Wagner's orchestra is not mere accompaniment but the true voice of the drama, carrying the surging, endlessly modulating harmony that mirrors the lovers' desire.

Act I (aboard the ship to Cornwall) builds from Isolde's furious humiliation to the shattering moment when she and Tristan drink the potion. Listen for the orchestra erupting as the music of death turns suddenly into the music of overwhelming love.

Act II is the great central love scene: a long nocturnal duet ('O sink hernieder,' the hymn to night), interrupted by the hunting horns of the returning king and the lovers' discovery. Listen for King Marke's long, grief-stricken monologue, music of profound human sorrow. **Act III** finds the wounded Tristan in delirium, his feverish visions among the opera's most extraordinary music, before Isolde arrives too late. Then comes the **Liebestod**: listen for the way the great surging theme from the Act II duet returns and finally, after four hours of yearning, achieves its resolution, the lovers united in death as the music at last comes home to rest. It is one of the supreme moments in all of opera.

In a concert performance like this, with surtitles, the orchestra is fully visible and central, a chance to hear, in the playing of a great symphony orchestra under a master conductor, the full glory of Wagner's revolutionary score.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/Iso-2026-07-01-pappano>

Version 3, 30 September 2026