

# Elgar's Cello Concerto with Alisa Weilerstein, and Tchaikovsky's Fifth

Thursday, February 18, 2027 · 19:00 · Barbican  
Antonio Pappano, conductor · Alisa Weilerstein, cello

| TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME |                                                                          | MIN |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1                   | <b>ELGAR</b> 1857–1934<br><i>Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85</i>       | 30' |
| 2                   | <b>TCHAIKOVSKY</b> 1840–1893<br><i>Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64</i> | 48' |
| TOTAL MUSIC         |                                                                          | 78' |

## Edward Elgar

1857–1934

30 minutes

### *Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

There are four movements, not the usual three, all of them concise, and the first two are joined.

The cello begins alone with a grand, declamatory flourish of full chords. This recitative is the concerto's signature and will return twice. It dies away, and the violas, unaccompanied, quietly introduce the melody Elgar wrote down in 1918. The cello takes it over and the orchestra slowly gathers behind it, but the movement ends as bare as it began.

A plucked version of the opening recitative leads to the second movement. After several hesitant false starts the cello sets off in rapid repeated notes, a quicksilver scherzo that is over in a few minutes and gives the soloist no rest.

The Adagio is the heart of the work and its simplest music: a single unbroken song for the cello over a reduced orchestra of strings, clarinets, bassoons and horns. It is brief, and it ends on an unresolved harmony, as if the thought were unfinished.

The finale starts with another recitative and then strides out in a robust, march-like main theme, the nearest the concerto comes to the confident Elgar of earlier years. That confidence does not last. Towards the end the pace slackens, the harmony grows more painful, and the cello recalls a phrase from the Adagio. Then the opening recitative of the whole concerto returns in full, and a brusque few bars from the orchestra bring the end.

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

48 minutes

1840–1893

### *Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

First movement. Two clarinets in their lowest register, over quiet strings, give out the motto theme, a grave melody with the rhythm of a slow march. Fix it in your ear. The Allegro grows from a lilting, slightly uneasy tune for clarinet and bassoon and rises to several great climaxes, then sinks back into the depths of the orchestra where it began.

Second movement. After a few bars of dark string chords a solo horn plays one of the best-known melodies Tchaikovsky wrote, long-breathed and yearning. The oboe joins it with a second idea, and the music swells into an impassioned love song. Twice the motto theme breaks in at full force on the brass, and after the second interruption the movement ends in exhausted quiet.

Third movement. In place of a scherzo comes a graceful waltz, a reminder that this is the composer of the great ballets. Its middle section is a scurrying, feather-light passage for the strings. Just before the close the motto slips in softly on clarinets and bassoons, like a shadow crossing the ballroom.

Finale. The motto opens the movement, now in the major and broad and solemn in the strings. A stormy Allegro follows and drives to a tremendous halt on a held chord, a pause so emphatic that audiences sometimes start to clap. Then the motto returns as a grand march for the whole orchestra, and in the last bars the trumpets and horns bring back the main theme of the first movement, also turned to the major.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2027-02-18-pappano>

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