

On Tour in Palm Desert: Maconchy, Elgar's Cello Concerto and Tchaikovsky's Fifth

Friday, February 26, 2027 · 19:30 · McCallum Theatre
Antonio Pappano, conductor · Alisa Weilerstein, cello

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MACONCHY 1907–1994 <i>Nocturne for Orchestra</i>	7'
2	ELGAR 1857–1934 <i>Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85</i>	30'
3	TCHAIKOVSKY 1840–1893 <i>Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64</i>	48'
TOTAL MUSIC		85'

Elizabeth Maconchy

7 minutes

1907–1994

Nocturne for Orchestra

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The piece opens high and still. The upper strings hold a thin, glinting sonority and shift slowly between two chords, and against that background the woodwind play angular, searching lines that overlap one another.

The lower strings are more restless and push the music forward. Listen for the harp, which ushers in a more dream-like passage coloured by tuned percussion, and for the trumpets, whose brief fanfares give way to long melodic lines.

The climax comes in the middle, led by the trombones, in a great swell of warm orchestral sound. It clears quickly. A solo violin is left exposed, and from there the texture thins until the instruments fade into silence one by one.

Edward Elgar

1857–1934

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

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-2027-02-26-pappano>

Version 1, 7 October 2026