

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

On Tour at Carnegie Hall: Beethoven's Triple Concerto and Ein Heldenleben

Sunday, March 14, 2027 · 14:00 · Carnegie Hall

Antonio Pappano, conductor · Maxim Vengerov, violin · Alisa Weilerstein, cello · Kirill Gerstein, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Triple Concerto in C major, Op. 56</i>	36'
2	STRAUSS 1864–1949 <i>Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40</i>	45'
TOTAL MUSIC		81'

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Triple Concerto in C major, Op. 56

36 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven wrote this concerto in 1803 and 1804, the years of the ‘Eroica’ Symphony and the ‘Waldstein’ Sonata, and it is the odd one out among his concertos: the only one for more than a single soloist, and the only one in which he gave a solo part to the cello. The three soloists make up a piano trio, and putting that ensemble in front of an orchestra seems to have had no precedent. There were plenty of earlier concertos for several instruments, but not for this combination.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Allegro. The concerto begins very quietly, with cellos and basses alone muttering the main theme, and builds from there. When the soloists enter it is the cello that goes first, as it will in the other two movements. The movement is spacious and unhurried, and much of its pleasure lies in the way the three soloists pass ideas among themselves, in the manner of chamber music.

Largo. The slow movement is short, more an introduction than a movement in its own right. The cello sings a long melody in A flat major, the violin joins it, and the piano does little more than decorate. The music does not come to an end: it leads straight into the finale.

Rondo alla polacca. The cello slips into the main theme of the finale, a polonaise, the courtly Polish dance in triple time that was fashionable across Europe at the time. The mood is festive and good-humoured to the end.

Richard Strauss

1864–1949

Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40

45 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Ein Heldenleben ('A Hero's Life') is the largest of the tone poems Richard Strauss wrote in the 1890s, and he was 34 when he finished it. In July 1898 he wrote from a Bavarian mountain resort that, since Beethoven's 'Eroica' was so unpopular with conductors and so rarely played, he was filling the gap with a long tone poem on a similar subject: 'It is entitled A Hero's Life, and while it has no funeral march, it does have lots of horns, horns being quite the thing to express heroism.' The joke tells you a good deal about the tone of what followed. He completed the score at the end of December and conducted the

first performance himself in Frankfurt on 3 March 1899. The dedication went to the young Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The six sections run into one another, but each has a clear character.

The Hero. The piece opens with its main theme, a long, striding melody for horns and cellos that climbs through nearly three octaves in E flat major, the key of the ‘Eroica’. Other ideas pile up around it until the whole orchestra stops on an expectant, unresolved chord, followed by silence.

The Hero’s Adversaries. Into the silence come the critics: thin, chattering woodwind, each instrument carping in its own register, with two tubas grumbling in the parallel fifths that students of harmony are taught to avoid. The hero’s theme sinks into the minor before he shakes them off.

The Hero’s Companion. A solo violin, played by the orchestra’s leader, enters with a long sequence of cadenzas, by turns flirtatious, tender, sulky and scolding. The hero answers in the low strings and horns. Eventually the two

come together in a broad love scene, the most richly scored music in the work, with the critics briefly audible in the distance.

The Hero's Deeds of War. Trumpets sound from offstage and the battle begins. Percussion drives the music on, and the hero's theme fights its way through against the adversaries' music, with the companion's at his side. It ends with the opening theme returning in triumph.

The Hero's Works of Peace. Here Strauss quotes himself. Fragments of Don Juan, Also sprach Zarathustra, Death and Transfiguration, Don Quixote and Till Eulenspiegel, among others, drift past, woven together so smoothly that they can be hard to pick out one by one.

The Hero's Retreat from the World and Fulfilment. After a last outburst of anger the music settles. The hero's rising theme is reshaped into a slow, falling melody for the strings, the most touching passage in the score, and the work closes quietly in E flat major, a long way from the swagger with which it began.

Tonight's artists

Maxim Vengerov *violin*

The Sunday matinee at Carnegie Hall closes the LSO's 2027 tour of the United States with Sir Antonio Pappano, and it brings the tour's two string soloists onto the same stage. Maxim Vengerov played Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the orchestra in the same hall the evening before; here he takes the violin part in the same composer's Triple Concerto, in the bicentenary year of Beethoven's death.

Maxim Vengerov, born in Novosibirsk in 1974, is a Soviet-born Israeli violinist and conductor. The son of an oboist and a choir director, he began the violin at five with Galina Turchaninova and went on to study with Zakhar Bron. At ten he won the junior Wieniawski competition, and in 1990, at fifteen, the Carl Flesch Competition in London, which opened the way to an international career and a long series of recordings; these have brought him a Grammy and two Gramophone Awards among other prizes. In 1997 he became the first classical musician to be named an International Goodwill Ambassador by UNICEF. He has also built a second career as a conductor, becoming the first chief conductor of the Menuhin Festival Gstaad Orchestra in 2010. Teaching occupies much of his time: he is a professor at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg and, since 2016, Polonsky Visiting Professor of Violin at the Royal College of Music in London.

Alisa Weilerstein *cello*

Alisa Weilerstein has spent the tour playing Elgar's Cello Concerto with the LSO. For its last concert she moves to the Triple Concerto, where the cello has the most exposed of the three solo parts and introduces nearly every theme.

Alisa Weilerstein, born in Rochester, New York, in 1982, is an American cellist. She grew up in a family of musicians: her father, Donald Weilerstein, is a violinist, her mother, Vivian Hornik Weilerstein, a pianist, and her brother Joshua a conductor. She took up the cello at four and at thirteen made her professional debut with the Cleveland Orchestra in Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations. She studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music and, unusually for a touring soloist, also took a degree in history at Columbia University, graduating in 2004. In 2011 she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. Her recordings include the Elgar and Elliott Carter concertos with Daniel Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin and Bach's six solo suites. She is a committed advocate of new music and has given the first performances of concertos written for her by Pascal Dusapin, Matthias Pintscher, Joan Tower and others. Her solo project Fragments interleaves the movements of the Bach suites with newly commissioned pieces. She is married to the conductor Rafael Payare.

Kirill Gerstein *piano*

Kirill Gerstein joins the tour's two string soloists to complete the trio. The piano part of the Triple Concerto is the lightest of the three, closer to chamber music than to the solo role in Beethoven's piano concertos.

Kirill Gerstein, born in Voronezh in 1979, is a Russian-born American pianist. He studied classical piano at a special music school and taught himself jazz from his parents' record collection. A meeting with the vibraphonist Gary Burton led to a place at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he arrived at fourteen as the youngest student the college had admitted. He then returned to classical music, studying with Solomon Mikowsky at the Manhattan School of Music, where he had taken both his bachelor's and master's degrees by the age of twenty, and later with Dmitri Bashkirov in Madrid and Ferenc Rados in Budapest. He won first prize at the Arthur Rubinstein Competition in Tel Aviv in 2001 and in 2010 became the sixth recipient of the Gilmore Artist Award, using the prize to commission new works from Timo Andres, Chick Corea, Alexander Goehr, Oliver Knussen and Brad Mehldau. He taught in Stuttgart from 2007 to 2017 and since 2018 has been a professor at the Hanns Eisler academy in Berlin and at the Kronberg Academy.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2027-03-14-pappano>

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