

Szeps-Znaider's Beethoven and Elgar's First

Wednesday, January 28, 2026 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw
Antonio Pappano, conductor · Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61</i>	42'
2	ELGAR 1857–1934 <i>Symphony No. 1 in A-flat major, Op. 55</i>	50'
TOTAL MUSIC		92'

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

42 minutes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen, right at the start, to those five soft drum-beats, an utterly novel way to open a concerto, and a rhythmic idea that recurs throughout the long first movement, sometimes gently, sometimes (on unexpected notes) with a faint sense of unease. The movement is vast and unhurried; rather than waiting for bravura, savour the breadth of its themes and the way the solo violin, when it finally enters, soars and decorates rather than competes, spinning endless lyrical lines.

The slow movement (Larghetto) is pure serenity: a hushed set of variations on a tender theme, the violin embroidering above muted strings, music of rapt, almost religious calm. It leads without a break, via a questioning pause, straight into the finale: a buoyant, dancing Rondo with a catchy hunting-horn lilt. Listen for how the soloist tosses the cheerful main tune around with the orchestra, with moments of charm and wit, bringing this most spacious and noble of concertos to a genial, high-spir-

ited close. (Listen, too, for the cadenzas, the soloist's unaccompanied flourishes, which different violinists choose from a range of versions.)

Edward Elgar

50 minutes

1857–1934

Symphony No. 1 in A-flat major, Op. 55

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Everything begins with the motto theme: listen, at the very opening, for a slow, grand, hymn-like melody over a quiet tread, noble and serene. Fix it in your memory, because Elgar will bring it back, transformed, throughout the symphony, and its triumphant return is the work's ultimate goal. After this majestic introduction, the first movement proper grows restless and stormy, the calm of the motto repeatedly disturbed.

The second movement is a fierce, driving scherzo, full of nervous energy and brilliant orchestration; listen for how its hurtling march-like material gives way to a gentler, almost pastoral episode. Then, magically, that same fast music slows and transforms directly into the great Adagio third movement, one of the supreme slow movements in the repertoire, music of profound, songful tenderness that Richter compared to Beethoven. (Listen for how the scherzo's notes literally become the Adagio's melody, slowed almost beyond recognition.) The finale begins in shadow and uncertainty, gathering its forces, until at last the noble motto theme returns in full glory, sweeping the symphony to a radiant, affirmative close in A-flat.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/rco-2026-01-28-pappano>

Version 3, 30 September 2026