

Iván Fischer's Two Worlds: Bernstein, the Beatles and Bohemia

Wednesday, March 11, 2026 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw
Iván Fischer, conductor · Guy Braunstein, violin · Mirella Hagen, soprano · Olivia Vermeulen, mezzo-soprano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BERNSTEIN 1918–1990 <i>Three Dance Episodes from 'On the Town'</i>	11'
2	BEATLES <i>Abbey Road Concerto (arr. Guy Braunstein)</i>	35'
3	DVORAK 1841–1904 <i>Selections from Moravian Duets (orch. Tibor Gátay)</i>	16'
4	SMETANA 1824–1884 <i>Vltava and other episodes from 'Má vlast'</i>	25'
TOTAL MUSIC		87'

Leonard Bernstein

1918–1990

11 minutes

Three Dance Episodes from 'On the Town'

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The three episodes are arranged fast–slow–fast for maximum contrast. The first, ‘The Great Lover,’ is a brassy, swaggering dance, full of jazzy syncopation and big-band swagger. The second, ‘Lonely Town: Pas de Deux,’ is the emotional heart: a tender, bluesy slow dance, an instrumental version of the show’s wistful song ‘Lonely Town,’ with aching solo woodwind lines.

The finale, ‘Times Square: 1944,’ is the showstopper: a riot of urban energy built around the show’s most famous tune, ‘New York, New York’ (“a helluva town”). Listen for the jazzy percussion, the wailing brass, the sense of a great city at full tilt, and for Bernstein’s irresistible rhythmic drive, which never lets up until the exuberant final bars.

The Beatles

35 minutes

Abbey Road Concerto (arr. Guy Braunstein)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Half the fun is recognising the songs, so listen for famous melodies from Abbey Road surfacing in the solo violin and the orchestra, with the violin taking the place of the singer and finding the vocal line in each song.

But listen, too, for the connective tissue, Braunstein's own music, which binds the songs into a concerto shape rather than a jukebox sequence. Notice how the Beatles' material is developed and transformed, and how the solo writing balances tunefulness with real virtuosity. This is crossover at its most affectionate: concert craftsmanship in the service of some of the best-loved songs ever written.

Antonin Dvorak

16 minutes

1841–1904

Selections from Moravian Duets (orch. Tibor Gátay)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

These are miniatures, short and songful settings of folk verses about love, nature and village life, so listen for the intertwining of the two voices, soprano and mezzo, weaving together in close harmony, by turns playful, tender and melancholy. Even orchestrated, the music keeps the intimacy of its origins as domestic music-making.

Listen for the unmistakable Dvořákian fingerprints that so charmed Brahms: the natural, song-like melodies with their folk lilt, the gently swaying dance rhythms, and the bittersweet shifts between major and minor that give even the happiest songs a touch of wistfulness. Each duet is a little scene; let the voices and the orchestral colours paint them, and enjoy this glimpse of the unaffected, melodious art with which the young Dvořák first won the wider world.

Bedřich Smetana

1824–1884

Vltava and other episodes from 'Má vlast'

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Vltava is a musical journey down a river, so follow the water. Listen at the start for two intertwining flute and clarinet lines, the two little springs that form the river's source, which gradually swell as more instruments join and the stream grows. Then the great river theme arrives: a broad, flowing, slightly melancholy melody in the strings that recurs throughout, carrying us downstream.

Along the way, listen for the vivid scenes Smetana paints: hunting horns in the forest; a rustic peasant wedding (a village polka); a magical, shimmering night scene with moonlit water-nymphs (hushed strings, harp and high woodwind); and the churning turbulence of the St John's Rapids, where the orchestra roars and crashes. Finally the river broadens into a majestic major-key statement of the main theme as it flows through Prague, with a grand quotation of the noble 'Vyšehrad' castle motif before it sweeps away into the distance. In the further episodes from *Má vlast*, listen for the same vivid storytelling, Smetana conjuring his beloved homeland entirely from memory and imagination.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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