

Classics Live: Beethoven's Ninth in the Ziggo Dome

Saturday, October 3, 2026 · 20:00 · Ziggo Dome

Iván Fischer, conductor · Aurel Dawidiuk, conductor · Eleanor Lyons, soprano · Olivia Vermeulen, mezzo-soprano · Maximilian Schmitt, tenor · Hanno Müller-Brachmann, bass · Dominic Seldis, presenter · National Mixed Youth Choir, choir · Laurens Symfonisch, choir

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	GLINKA 1804–1857 <i>Overture to 'Ruslan and Lyudmila'</i>	5'
2	GRIEG 1843–1907 <i>Morning Mood from 'Peer Gynt' Suite No. 1, Op. 46</i>	4'
3	BRAHMS 1833–1897 <i>Hungarian Dance No. 5</i>	3'
4	VERDI 1813–1901 <i>'Va, pensiero' (Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves) from 'Nabucco'</i>	5'
5	ROSSINI 1792–1868 <i>Overture to 'William Tell'</i>	12'
6	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 ('Choral')</i>	68'
TOTAL MUSIC		97'

Mikhail Glinka

5 minutes

1804–1857

Overture to 'Ruslan and Lyudmila'

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The overture opens with a blaze: hammered full-orchestra chords, and then the violins set off on a scurrying, breathless theme at a Presto tempo that allows no rest. Listen to the strings here: this is famously one of the most exposed and treacherous passages in the orchestral literature, and a great orchestra makes it sound like quicksilver rather than hard work.

The contrast comes with a broad, warm second melody, sung out by the lower strings, a tune drawn from the opera itself. After the development, which tosses fragments of the main theme around the orchestra, listen near the end for something strange: in the bass, the low instruments intone a slow descent in whole tones, an eerie, rootless scale that was startlingly new in the 1840s and represents the sorcerer Chernomor's dark magic. It is only a moment, a shadow crossing the stage, before the music bursts back into daylight and races to a triumphant finish.

Edvard Grieg

4 minutes

1843–1907

Morning Mood from 'Peer Gynt' Suite No. 1, Op. 46

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The whole piece grows from a single, gently rocking phrase, passed back and forth between flute and oboe over sustained strings, a melody built largely on the notes of the pentatonic scale, which gives it its open, pastoral simplicity. Listen as it is taken up by ever larger forces: the strings and then the full orchestra carry it to a glowing climax, a moment of full sunrise. Then the light softens. Towards the close, listen for the horn's calm statement of the tune and the delicate birdsong touches in the woodwind, as the morning settles into stillness.

Johannes Brahms

3 minutes

1833–1897

Hungarian Dance No. 5

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is a dance built on contrast and caprice. The opening is a passionate, swaggering minor-key melody, full of dark colour, which the orchestra plays with exaggerated freedom; listen for the sudden slowings and stretchings of the tempo, the hallmark of the Hungarian style. Then the central section flips into the major, with quicksilver changes of speed: a sudden dead slow, a sudden rush, the music teasing the listener like a dancer who cannot decide whether to stop or to spin. The opening tune returns to round the whole thing off, all in barely three minutes.

Giuseppe Verdi

5 minutes

1813–1901

'Va, pensiero' (Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves) from 'Nabucco'

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

After a short orchestral introduction, with its quiet, expectant string tremolo and a pause, the choir enters softly with the famous melody, and for much of the chorus the voices sing in unison, not in harmony. It is a deliberate and powerful effect: a whole people singing with one voice. The melody swells in a great arch to a fortissimo climax at the words 'O mia patria, sì bella e perduta!' ('O my homeland, so lovely and lost!'), then falls back. Only near the end does Verdi spread the voices into harmony, as the chorus prays for strength to endure, and the music fades away in quiet, harp-accompanied resignation.

Gioachino Rossini

12 minutes

1792–1868

Overture to 'William Tell'

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The overture falls into four clear scenes. It begins at dawn in the Alps, and with a startling sound: five solo cellos, accompanied by the double basses, in a hushed, richly harmonised meditation. It is one of the most original openings in all of Romantic music.

Then a storm gathers. Listen for the patter of the first raindrops in the violins and woodwind, the rumbling of the lower strings, and the full fury of the tempest with crashing brass and timpani, before it rolls away into the distance.

In the calm that follows comes a pastoral scene: a *ranz des vaches*, the traditional call of Swiss herdsmen summoning their cattle, played by the *cor anglais* and answered by the flute's airy decorations. It is pure Alpine tranquillity.

And then the trumpets shatter the peace with a fanfare, and the orchestra launches into the famous galop, a thrilling charge that represents the Swiss soldiers' march to liberation. Listen to how Rossini, the master of the crescendo, keeps the energy building and building to a breathless close.

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 ('Choral')

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement (*Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso*) begins out of nothingness: bare open fifths, shimmering in the strings, from which fragments tumble downward until the full orchestra hurls out the mighty main theme in D minor. It is music of cosmic scale and grim power, and its coda, over a grinding, repeated figure in the bass, is among the darkest pages Beethoven wrote.

The second movement is the *Scherzo*, placed second rather than third, an unusual choice. Listen for the timpani, tuned an octave apart, cracking out the rhythm in the opening bars, and the relentless, driving energy of the fugal writing, with a more relaxed, pastoral trio section at its centre.

The third movement (*Adagio molto e cantabile*) is one of Beethoven's most sublime slow movements: two alternating, deeply serene melodies, the first varied and ornamented with increasing richness on each return. Near the end, two loud fanfares interrupt the calm, as if summoning us to what comes next.

The finale opens with a deliberate shock: a violent, dissonant outburst. The cellos and basses reply in a wordless recitative, as the orchestra quotes the themes of the first three movements and the low strings reject each in turn. Then, quietly, the basses announce the 'Ode to Joy' theme, which grows through variations to the full orchestra. The dissonant outburst returns, and this time a human voice answers it. The bass soloist sings words Beethoven wrote himself: 'O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!' ('O friends, not these sounds!'), and the chorus joins in the Ode.

From here the finale unfolds as a vast sequence of episodes: a comic Turkish march, with triangle, cymbals and bass drum, led by the tenor soloist; a hushed, awe-struck chorale on 'Seid umschlungen, Millionen!' ('Be embraced, you millions!'); a magnificent double fugue combining the two great themes; and a headlong, ecstatic coda that ends the symphony in a blaze of D major. In the Ziggo Dome, listen for the moment the audience is invited to join the singing: Beethoven's call to universal brotherhood taken, for once, at its word.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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