

ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA

Henze's Chaconne and Brahms's Second

Wednesday, December 9, 2026 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw

Fabio Luisi, conductor · Julia Fischer, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MEYER b. 1991 <i>Fleur de verre</i>	10'
2	HENZE 1926–2012 <i>Il Vitalino raddoppiato</i>	28'
3	BRAHMS 1833–1897 <i>Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73</i>	42'
TOTAL MUSIC		80'

Sophie Søs Meyer

b. 1991

Fleur de verre

10 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The evening opens with a contemporary voice: *Fleur de verre* ('glass flower') by the young Danish composer Sophie Søs Meyer. Meyer belongs to a generation of Scandinavian composers for whom orchestral sound is as much about texture, colour and atmosphere as about theme and development, and this piece begins from a vivid image. Its starting point is the skeleton flower, whose petals turn transparent in the rain: at once delicate and brittle, beautiful and on the edge of vanishing, it is the sort of fragile, ambiguous picture from which her music likes to grow.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Come to this one with open ears and few preconceptions. With music of this kind, the rewards lie less in following tunes than in attending to texture and atmosphere: the way sounds emerge and dissolve, the play of orchestral colour, the sense of a fragile image (glass, light, a flower) translated into shifting sonority. Listen for how Meyer uses the full resources of the orchestra not to build a traditional argument but to conjure a state, an atmosphere, a single sustained image rendered in sound. It is a brief,

concentrated opening, a pane of glass held up to the light before the Baroque-tinged Henze and the warmth of Brahms.

Hans Werner Henze

1926–2012

Il Vitalino raddoppiato

28 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012) was one of the towering figures of post-war European music, and *Il Vitalino raddoppiato*, for solo violin and chamber orchestra, written in 1977, is one of his most fascinating works. Its starting point is a famous Baroque relic: the great Chaconne in G minor for violin and continuo long attributed, though not beyond dispute, to the Italian composer-violinist Tomaso Antonio Vitali. Henze takes this haunting old piece and ‘doubles’ it (that is roughly what the punning title means), building from it an elaborate set of variations. It has aptly been called ‘a chaconne on a chaconne.’

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The key to this piece is its sense of journey through musical time, so listen for the gradual transformation. At the start, the solo violin presents the old Vitali chaconne theme, a slow, dignified, descending pattern, unmistak-

ably Baroque, and the early variations stay close to that world: ornate, expressive, almost like a period performance.

Then follow how Henze begins to pull the music away from its origins. The harmonies grow more pungent and ambiguous, the orchestral colours stranger, the violin writing increasingly free and virtuosic, until the Baroque frame has dissolved into something thoroughly modern. The high point is the soloist's extended cadenza late in the work, where the music turns most hallucinatory and intense. Keep one ear on that steady chaconne bass-pattern underneath it all: even as the surface is transformed almost beyond recognition, the old foundation keeps the piece anchored. It is the sound of three centuries collapsing into a single span.

Johannes Brahms

1833–1897

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73

42 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

If Brahms's First Symphony cost him more than two decades of labour, weighed down by the shadow of Beethoven, his Second came as if on a holiday. He wrote it in the summer of 1877 dur-

ing a stay at Pörtlach, a beautiful village on the Wörthersee in the Austrian Alps, and the contrast with the stormy, hard-won C-minor First could hardly be greater. Sunny, songful and pastoral, the D-major Symphony has often been likened to Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Sixth, and is sometimes nicknamed Brahms's own 'Pastoral.' He wrote it quickly and happily, in surroundings he found idyllic, and it shows.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The symphony grows from a tiny seed planted in its very first bars: a three-note turn in the cellos and basses (down-up) that recurs, transformed, throughout the work. Listen for it at the warm, flowing opening, and for the gentle horn calls that follow; this first movement is broad and lyrical, but notice the sudden shadow cast early on by soft, solemn trombones, the 'mourning' Brahms half-joked about.

The slow movement (*Adagio non troppo*) is the symphony's most serious music: deeply felt, harmonically rich, with long-spun cello melody and a searching, complex argument. The third movement is a delight: not a driving scherzo but a graceful, gently rocking intermezzo led by the oboe, twice interrupted by quicker, skipping episodes that grow from the same tune. Then comes the finale, which begins hushed and conspiratorial before bursting into exuberant high spirits; listen for how

Brahms builds the momentum and saves his trump card for the very end, where the trombones ring out a blazing D-major peroration to close the symphony in pure jubilation.

Tonight's artists

Julia Fischer *violin*

Henze's *Il Vitalino raddoppiato* is a formidable showcase, demanding a soloist who can move convincingly from Baroque poise to acerbic modernist intensity across a single span, and sustain a long, hallucinatory cadenza at its heart. Julia Fischer, with her flawless technique and searching musicianship, is ideally equipped for that journey through musical time. The Concertgebouw notes this as her first appearance with the orchestra, making the encounter doubly worth hearing: a great violinist and a great orchestra meeting for the first time, in a work that asks everything of the soloist.

Julia Fischer, born in Munich in 1983, is one of the most admired violinists in the world and, remarkably, an accomplished concert pianist as well. A prodigious talent, she came to international attention as a child, winning the junior category of the Yehudi Menuhin Competition in 1995, and has since built a career of the highest distinction, appearing with the leading orchestras and conductors and amassing a celebrated discography. Her playing is prized for its flawless technique, purity of tone and probing musical intelligence, qualities that have made her as compelling in the great Romantic concertos as in Bach, Mozart and contemporary repertoire. A dedicated teacher and chamber musician, she is admired not only for her artistry but for the seriousness and integrity she brings to musical life.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/rco-2026-12-09-luisi>

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