

Klaus Mäkelä in Barcelona: Schumann's Manfred, Lisa Batiashvili plays Sibelius, Dvořák's Seventh

Thursday, February 11, 2027 · 20:00 · Palau de la Música Catalana

Klaus Mäkelä, conductor · Lisa Batiashvili, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	SCHUMANN 1810–1856 <i>Manfred Overture, Op. 115</i>	12'
2	SIBELIUS 1865–1957 <i>Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47</i>	34'
3	DVORAK 1841–1904 <i>Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70</i>	40'
TOTAL MUSIC		86'

Robert Schumann

1810–1856

Manfred Overture, Op. 115

12 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Lord Byron published *Manfred* in 1817 and called it a dramatic poem. It was never really meant for the stage. Its hero is a nobleman who lives alone in a castle in the Alps, tormented by guilt over the death of Astarte, the woman he loved. The poem hints strongly that she was his sister and that the love was forbidden. The plot is slight, and its real subject is his inner turmoil. He rejects the consolations of faith and penance and chooses to meet his fate on his own terms. For the Romantic generation he was the model of the proud, self-tormenting outsider.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Three stabbing chords from the full orchestra tear open the curtain. A slow, sorrowing introduction follows, and the tempo gradually quickens until the music breaks into the main fast section.

The principal theme is breathless and driven, always pressing forward and never finding a firm footing. Against it Schumann sets gentler, plaintive phrases. Listen to how the ideas are pulled apart, stretched and joined together

again instead of simply being repeated: the whole movement surges up towards passion again and again, and each time falls back.

There is no victory at the end. The fast music exhausts itself, and the slow introduction returns as an epilogue. The overture closes in the minor key, without the redemption a listener might expect.

Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47

34 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Sibelius wanted, as a young man, to be a violinist. He gave up the ambition, but when he came to write his only concerto it was for the instrument he knew from the inside. The idea was with him from 1899. By the autumn of 1903 the work was far enough advanced for him to promise the dedication to Willy Burmester, a celebrated virtuoso who had once led the orchestra in Helsinki and who offered to give the first performance in Berlin. His wife Aino described him that winter playing the themes on his violin day and night, with so many ideas that he was almost dizzy.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro moderato. There is no orchestral introduction. Over a soft, pulsing cushion of strings the soloist enters at once with a long, wandering melody that seems to come out of the far distance. A second theme arrives dark and low on the violin's G string. Where a development section would normally stand, the orchestra falls silent and the soloist plays a long cadenza built on the opening theme, full of double stops, trills and runs. When the themes return they are darker in colour, and the movement ends with the main theme's dramatic material at full strength.

II. Adagio di molto. A short phrase from clarinets and oboes leads in the violin's broad, heartfelt melody, played over plucked strings. It asks for restraint and simplicity more than brilliance. The orchestra turns stormy in the middle of the movement, and the violin answers with plaintive double stops before the opening melody returns and the music sinks to a serene close.

III. Allegro, ma non tanto. Four bars of drumming rhythm from timpani and low strings set the pace, and the violin leaps in on its lowest string with a dance theme of fierce energy. Tovey called this movement 'a polonaise for polar bears', a joke that has stuck to it ever since. A second theme, with something of the waltz about it, is

given first to the orchestra. The solo part grows steadily harder, with passages in thirds, arpeggios, octaves and high harmonics, and the major key is won only in the final bars, where the violin's line climbs upward and the orchestra seals the ending with it.

Antonin Dvorak

1841–1904

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70

40 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

In June 1884 the Philharmonic Society in London elected Dvořák an honorary member and asked him for a new symphony. He had just had a great success in England with his *Stabat Mater*, and he knew what the invitation meant: this was the society that had commissioned Beethoven's Ninth. There was a second spur. He had recently heard the Third Symphony of his friend and supporter Johannes Brahms, and he was determined that his own next symphony should stand beside it. To a friend he wrote that the new work must be capable of stirring the world.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro maestoso. The symphony begins in the dark. Over a low held note in the basses and horns, violas and cellos mutter the main theme, which circles within a narrow range before it suddenly flares up. A gentler second theme, given to flute and clarinet, brings some warmth, but the development is among the stormiest music Dvořák wrote. The ending is unexpected: after a fierce climax the movement dies away into the gloom from which it came, with nothing settled.

II. Poco adagio. A clarinet opens with a melody like a quiet hymn. The calm does not last, and the movement passes through several waves of strong feeling, with fine solos for the horn, before it finds its way back. After the premiere Dvořák cut some forty bars and told Simrock that there was now ‘not a single superfluous note’.

III. Scherzo: Vivace. The nearest the symphony comes to a Czech dance. Violins play a lilting tune while cellos and bassoon sing a different one against it, and the rhythm keeps shifting between two beats and three. The minor key holds the gaiety in check, and the gentle middle section brings only passing relief.

IV. Finale: Allegro. The main theme opens with a leap of an octave, strained and defiant. A broad, singing tune for the cellos offers contrast, and the two ideas are fought out at length. Only in the final bars does the music turn from D minor to a hard-won D major.

Tonight's artists

Lisa Batiashvili *violin*

In 1995, at sixteen, Lisa Batiashvili took second prize at the Sibelius Competition in Helsinki, and the composer's concerto has gone with her through her whole career. She has been a guest of the Concertgebouw Orchestra for some twenty-five years, and she plays the work here with a Finnish conductor. The programme around her is a dark one: all three works are in minor keys, from the E-flat minor of Schumann's overture to the D minor shared by the concerto and Dvořák's symphony. According to the hall, the orchestra and Klaus Mäkelä last appeared together at the Palau early in 2025.

Lisa Batiashvili was born in 1979 in Tbilisi, Georgia, to a violinist father, who gave her first lessons when she was four, and a pianist mother. The family moved to Germany in 1991. She studied in Hamburg with Mark Lubotsky, a pupil of David Oistrakh, and later with Ana Chumachenco. In 1995, aged sixteen, she took second prize at the International Jean Sibelius Violin Competition in Helsinki, and from 1999 to 2001 she was among the first BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists. Alongside the central concerto repertoire she has given first performances of new works, including Magnus Lindberg's Violin Concerto, which is dedicated to her. She has held residencies with the New York Philharmonic and, in the 2023–24 season, the Berliner Philharmoniker. She records for Deutsche Gram-

mophon, and plays a Guarneri ‘del Gesù’ violin made in 1739. In 2021 she set up the Lisa Batiashvili Foundation to support young musicians from Georgia.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/rco-2027-02-11-makela>

Version 1, 7 October 2026