

ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA

Janine Jansen plays Beethoven's Violin Concerto

Friday, April 2, 2027 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw

Kazuki Yamada, conductor · Janine Jansen, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61</i>	42'
2	TAKEMITSU 1930–1996 <i>Dreamtime (Yume no toki)</i>	14'
3	ROUSSEL 1869–1937 <i>Bacchus et Ariane, Suite No. 2, Op. 43</i>	18'
TOTAL MUSIC		74'

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

42 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven completed only one violin concerto. He wrote it in 1806 for Franz Clement, one of the leading violinists in Vienna, and it was first heard on 23 December that year at a benefit concert for Clement in the Theater an der Wien. By most accounts the solo part was finished so late that Clement had to play some of it more or less at sight. The evening is also remembered for a stunt: Clement put in a showpiece of his own, played with the violin held upside down. The accounts disagree about whether he did this between the movements of the concerto or later in the concert.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first sound is the timpani alone: a few soft, even strokes on one note. That drum rhythm runs through the whole first movement, passed to the violins, the horns and the trumpets, sometimes as a whisper and sometimes hammered out by the full orchestra. The woodwinds answer it with a calm hymn-like theme. The orchestra then sets out all the material of the movement at length before the soloist plays a note, so the first entry of the violin,

rising in octaves out of the orchestra, has been a long time coming. The movement is by far the biggest of the three.

The Larghetto is a set of gentle variations. Muted strings present the theme, and the violin does not so much play it as embroider it, while clarinet, bassoon and horns take turns with the tune. Much of the movement stays very soft, and the best performances make the hall go still.

There is no break before the finale. A short flourish from the soloist leads straight into the rondo, whose bouncing tune has the lilt of a hunting call; the violin plays it low, then two octaves higher, and the orchestra roars it back. A plaintive episode in G minor, shared with the bassoon, offers a moment of shade before the tune returns, and after the cadenza the concerto ends with two brisk chords.

Toru Takemitsu

1930–1996

Dreamtime (Yume no toki)

14 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

‘Dreamtime’ was written to be danced. The Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián asked Toru Takemitsu for a score for his company, the Nederlands Dans Theater in The Hague, which

commissioned the piece, and Takemitsu composed it in 1981. It was first heard in the concert hall, though: Hiroyuki Iwaki conducted the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra in the premiere in Sapporo on 27 June 1982. The Japanese title is ‘Yume no toki’.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The orchestra is large, but it almost never plays all at once and rarely plays loudly. Takemitsu asks for triple woodwind, including alto flute, cor anglais and bass clarinet, a full brass section, two harps, celesta, and three percussionists whose instruments nearly all ring rather than strike: glockenspiel, vibraphone, marimba, tubular bells, suspended cymbals, gongs and tam-tams.

Do not expect themes that are stated and developed. The piece, about fourteen minutes long, moves as a chain of short episodes. A phrase rises in the flutes or the strings, swells, and dissolves into the shimmer of harps and tuned percussion before the next begins, and some of these gestures come back, slightly altered, the way a place recurs in a dream. Takemitsu said that the small variations of rhythm and the changes of tempo are there to heighten ‘the sensation of floating’, and the easiest way in is to stop counting beats and follow the colours as they pass from one group of instruments to another.

Albert Roussel

1869–1937

Bacchus et Ariane, Suite No. 2, Op. 43

18 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Albert Roussel was sixty-one and at the height of his reputation when he composed ‘Bacchus et Ariane’ in 1930, at about the same time as his Third Symphony. It is a ballet in two acts on a scenario by Abel Hermant, and the Paris Opéra staged it on 22 May 1931 with choreography by Serge Lifar, sets by the painter Giorgio de Chirico and Philippe Gaubert conducting.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The suite plays without a break for about eighteen minutes and follows the stage action closely. It opens with Ariadne asleep: slow, drifting music with no clear beat. Her waking is drawn in small nervous details, darting figures on the clarinet and plucked strings. The tempo quickens as she looks for Theseus and runs to the rock, and the fall into the arms of Bacchus brings the first big climax.

From there the suite is a sequence of dances that grow steadily more intoxicated. Bacchus dances alone, and the two are brought together in a long, slow stretch of love music, the lyrical heart of the piece. Then his followers arrive, Ariadne dances, and the two dance together.

Everything leads to the final Bacchanale. Roussel builds it on a pounding rhythm that he tightens notch by notch, with the brass and percussion gradually let off the leash. He was a composer who liked to keep excitement on a tight rein, which makes the release at the end all the stronger: the dance sweeps into a broad, blazing coda for the coronation of Ariadne.

Tonight's artists

Janine Jansen *violin*

Janine Jansen has been a guest of the Concertgebouw Orchestra for more than twenty years, and yet, the orchestra points out, the two have never played Beethoven's Violin Concerto together until now. She plays it on 2 April and again at the Sunday matinee on 4 April, unusually as the first item on the programme, before the interval. On the podium is Kazuki Yamada, who makes his debut with the orchestra and has brought a piece by his compatriot Takemitsu with him.

Janine Jansen, born in Soest in 1978, is one of the most charismatic and admired violinists in the world. From a musical Dutch family, she studied with Coosje Wijzenbeek, Philippe Hirschhorn and Boris Belkin, and has built a career of the highest distinction as soloist and chamber musician, recording widely and founding the International Chamber Music Festival in Utrecht. She is the LSO's Portrait Artist this season. Renowned for the intensity, communicative warmth and fearless commitment of her playing, she also has a long creative partnership with the composer Richard Dubugnon, who has written several works for her, which makes her the natural soloist for tonight's premiere.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/rco-2027-04-02-yamada>

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