

Karina Canellakis conducts Shostakovich's Fifth, with Alina Ibragimova in Mozart

Wednesday, June 16, 2027 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw

Karina Canellakis, conductor · Alina Ibragimova, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BORISOVA-OLLAS b. 1969 <i>The Kingdom of Silence</i>	15'
2	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Violin Concerto No. 5 in A major, K. 219 'Turkish'</i>	30'
3	SHOSTAKOVICH 1906–1975 <i>Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op. 47</i>	45'
TOTAL MUSIC		90'

Victoria Borisova-Ollas

b. 1969

The Kingdom of Silence

15 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Victoria Borisova-Ollas wrote 'The Kingdom of Silence' in 2003, and the title names a place rather than a mood. In her own note on the piece she writes that the mysterious country we all go to after our lifetime has many different names, and that this is one of them. She has said that the words come from a line in Psalm 94, which she translated freely from the Russian Bible. It is one of several orchestral pieces of hers that start from a psalm: 'Wings of the Wind' drew on Psalm 104, and 'Before the Mountains Were Born' on Psalm 90.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The opening is the thing to hold on to, because it comes back. Glockenspiel and celesta play what the composer calls a rather simple melody, a lullaby, and the strings wrap it in an echo. The sound is bright and small, like a musical box in a large room.

From there, in her words, we gradually sink into a dream. The middle of the piece is a chain of separate scenes. Some are joined to their neighbours by a shared tempo, so that one seems to grow out of another. Others are cut off

by a sudden change of mood. The reviewer for Arcana, writing about the BIS recording, heard the whole as the journey of a life, moving from stillness through episodes of anguish and of resolve to a serene close.

When the bell sounds of the opening return, the shape closes: a critic quoted on the composer's website calls it an arc form that begins and ends with subtle playing from the percussion section, with a kind of narrative unfolding in between. Listen to how the lullaby sounds the second time, after everything that has passed, and to how the music stops without quite answering the composer's question.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791

Violin Concerto No. 5 in A major, K. 219 'Turkish'

30 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Mozart was nineteen when he wrote this concerto, and it is the last of the five violin concertos he composed in Salzburg. The Fifth is dated December 1775; the note written by Keith Horner for Rockport Music gives the day as 20 December, a few weeks before his twentieth birthday. Four of the five concertos belong to that one year, and after it he wrote no more of them.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro aperto. The orchestra begins alone with a brisk introduction ('aperto' means open). Then the violin enters, and instead of taking up the tune it plays six bars of Adagio, slow and sweet, as if the piece had started again somewhere else. When the Allegro resumes, the soloist has a new melody, and the orchestra's opening theme turns out to be its accompaniment.

II. Adagio. The slow movement is in E major and is the most extended in any of Mozart's violin concertos, laid out in full sonata form. The violin sings a long, unhurried line above the orchestra almost without interruption. This is the movement Brunetti wanted replaced.

III. Rondeau: Tempo di Menuetto. The refrain is a graceful minuet that keeps returning. Halfway through, the 'Turkish' episode arrives: the key turns to A minor, the three-beat minuet gives way to a quick two, and the music is suddenly all sharp accents and chromatic scales that swell and vanish. Listen for the cellos and double basses striking their strings with the wood of the bow, Mozart's stand-in for percussion. Then the minuet comes back as though nothing had happened.

Dmitri Shostakovich

1906–1975

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op. 47

45 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

In January 1936 Stalin went to see Shostakovich's opera 'Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District', which had been running with great success for two years. A few days later Pravda printed an unsigned article, 'Muddle Instead of Music', that condemned the opera and its composer. A second attack followed, on his ballet 'The Limpid Stream'. Shostakovich was twenty-nine. People around him were being arrested, and he had reason to think he might be next. He withdrew his Fourth Symphony, which was being prepared for its premiere in Leningrad, and it stayed unperformed for many years.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Moderato. A stark, jagged figure passed between low and high strings opens the symphony, and a lamenting melody for the violins follows. The second theme, over a steady pulse, is spare and tender. Then the piano enters in its lowest register, the tempo quickens, and the same lyrical material is turned into a brutal march with brass and drums. After the climax the second theme returns, and the movement ends with a solo violin and the cold chime of the celesta.

II. Allegretto. A short scherzo with heavy boots: gruff cellos and basses, shrill woodwind, mock-military fanfares. In the middle a solo violin plays a tipsy little tune that the flute then repeats. The humour has an edge to it.

III. Largo. The centre of the work. The brass are silent throughout, and the strings carry a long lament. At its heart are lonely woodwind solos over almost nothing. The music rises once to an anguished climax and then subsides; harp and celesta close it very quietly.

IV. Allegro non troppo. Brass and timpani break in with a march. It drives to a crisis, then the music turns inward, and over repeated harp figures comes the reference to the Pushkin song 'Rebirth'. From there a slow build leads to D major, with the brass pealing above hammered timpani. Whether that ending is a victory or something forced out of the players is the question the whole symphony leaves with you.

Tonight's artists

Alina Ibragimova *violin*

Alina Ibragimova is the soloist in Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 on both nights, Wednesday 16 and Thursday 17 June 2027, each at 20:15 in the Main Hall of the Concertgebouw. Her agency lists the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra among the orchestras she returns to in the 2026/27 season, with Karina Canellakis among the conductors. She is at home in this repertoire on period instruments as well as modern ones, which suits a concerto that depends on lightness and quick changes of character. For Canellakis, chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, this is a return to the orchestra she first conducted in October 2024, and she brings a piece she has championed before: she was the conductor when the London Philharmonic Orchestra programmed the first British performance of 'The Kingdom of Silence' in January 2022. The orchestra's page heading also mentions 20 June, but no concert on that date is listed by the orchestra or the hall.

Alina Ibragimova was born in Russia in 1985 and moved to England as a child. She attended the Gnessin School in Moscow, the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal College of Music in London. She plays on both modern and period instruments, in music from the Baroque to newly written works. She is a founding member of the Chiaroscuro Quartet, which plays on gut strings, and has a long-standing duo with the pianist Cédric Tiberghien. A former BBC Radio 3 New Generation

Artist, she records for Hyperion; her recording of Shostakovich's two violin concertos won a Gramophone Award. She was appointed MBE in the 2016 New Year Honours.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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