

Jazz, Metamorphosis, and a Boléro

Saturday, November 28, 2026 · 15:30 · Musikverein
Alain Altinoglu, conductor · Rudolf Buchbinder, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	GERSHWIN 1898–1937 <i>Concerto in F for Piano and Orchestra</i>	32'
2	DUTILLEUX 1916–2013 <i>Métaboles</i>	17'
3	RAVEL 1875–1937 <i>Boléro</i>	15'
TOTAL MUSIC		64'

George Gershwin

1898–1937

32 minutes

Concerto in F for Piano and Orchestra

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement opens not with the piano but with a rap of the timpani and a swinging orchestral introduction in Charleston rhythm. Listen for that dance pulse, which sets the movement's restless energy. The piano enters with a brooding, bluesy theme, and the two ideas are tossed, combined, and built toward a grand restatement before the close.

The slow movement is the heart of the concerto and its most famous page. It opens with a smoky, nocturnal blues led by a solo muted trumpet over softly sighing woodwinds, a sound straight out of a late-night club, evoking an empty city street. When the piano enters it brings a brighter, more songful melody, and the movement alternates between that lyrical warmth and the trumpet's bluesy melancholy. Listen for the muting on the brass, which gives the whole movement its veiled, intimate colour.

The finale erupts without pause: a fast, hammering toccata in driving rhythm, packed with the syncopations and brassy outbursts of the dance hall. Gershwin brings back themes from the earlier movements, including the trumpet blues, so that the whole concerto seems to gather and recapitulate itself, racing to a brilliant, emphatic close that brings the soloist and orchestra together in full cry.

Henri Dutilleux

17 minutes

1916–2013

Métaboles

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The five movements run together without pause, so the most rewarding way to listen is to follow how the music changes colour and character as it passes from one to the next, and to notice that each section spotlights a different part of the orchestra.

Incantatoire opens the work with the woodwinds to the fore, weaving a hushed, ritual, spell-like music, incantatory in the literal sense, as if summoning something into being. Listen for the small thematic cell introduced here, because it will be handed on and transformed throughout.

Linéaire turns to the strings, spinning a long, sustained, singing line of great expressive warmth, the most lyrical and flowing of the five. Obsessionnel then shifts the spotlight to the brass, with an insistent, driving, repetitive figure that lives up to its name: a fixed idea hammered and circled obsessively.

Torpide ('torpid', sluggish) is the strange, brooding heart of the piece, dominated by percussion and dark, slow-moving sonorities: heavy, drowsy, faintly menacing. Out of this torpor bursts Flamboyant, the dazzling finale for full orchestra: fast, brilliant, and ablaze with colour, it gathers the work's transformed material and drives it to a glittering climax, recalling the very opening before the final, incandescent close.

Maurice Ravel

1875–1937

Boléro

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen first for the snare drum. From the very opening it taps out the rhythmic pattern that will continue, utterly unchanged, for the whole piece, quiet at first, almost subliminal, and inexorably more present as the music grows. It is the spine of the entire work; once you hear it, you will never lose it.

Over that rhythm, follow the melody as it is handed from instrument to instrument. It begins on a solo flute, low and soft, then passes to clarinet, bassoon, and onward through the orchestra, including unusual soloists like the soprano saxophone and the high, piercing E-flat clarinet. The tune never changes; what changes is who plays it, and in what combination. Notice how Ravel adds instruments in ever-richer layers, doubling the melody in startling colours.

The single great event is the crescendo. Resist the urge to wait for a 'theme' to develop; there isn't one. Instead, attend to the slow, almost imperceptible swell from near-silence to overwhelming force, and to the discipline with which the conductor holds the tempo steady so the build never lurches. Then, in the final bars, comes the one surprise Ravel allows himself: the music lurches abruptly into a new key, a sudden harmonic swerve after fifteen minutes of unwavering C major, before three hammered chords bring the whole hypnotic machine crashing to its end.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/wp-2026-11-28-altinoglu>

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