



# barbican

## Classical Music

**Concert programme**

**Evgeny Kissin**

**Wed 25 Jun 7.30pm**

**Hall**

# Important information



## **When does the concert start and finish?**

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.30pm, with a 20-minute interval.



## **I'm running late!**

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



## **Please ...**

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



## **Please don't ...**

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



## **Use a hearing aid?**

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



## **Need a break?**

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



## **Looking for refreshments?**

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



## **Looking for the toilets?**

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels -1, G and 2.



## **Carrying bags and coats?**

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

# Evgeny Kissin

Wed 25 Jun 7.30pm, Hall

## Evgeny Kissin piano

### **Johann Sebastian Bach** Partita No 2

- 1 Sinfonia
- 2 Allemande
- 3 Courante
- 4 Sarabande
- 5 Rondeaux
- 6 Capriccio

**Frédéric Chopin** Nocturne in C sharp minor,  
Op 27 No 1

Nocturne in A flat major, Op 32 No 2

Scherzo No 4

*Interval 20 minutes*

### **Dmitri Shostakovich** Piano Sonata No 2

- 1 Allegretto
- 2 Largo
- 3 Moderato (con moto) — Allegretto con moto —  
Adagio — Moderato

Prelude and Fugue in D flat major, Op 87 No 15

Prelude and Fugue in D minor, Op 87 No 24

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**For the last piano recital of the season, we welcome back the legendary Evgeny Kissin, who brings his inimitable pianism to music ranging from Bach and Chopin to Shostakovich, the 50th anniversary of whose death we've been marking this year.**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Dmitri Shostakovich's death and for his previous concert, in February 2025, Evgeny Kissin performed Shostakovich's sonatas for violin, viola and cello. Tonight he plays the lean, somewhat wistful Piano Sonata No 2 together with excerpts from Shostakovich's extended tribute to Bach. Before that, music by Chopin, a Kissin favourite. The programme opens with Bach's Partita No 2 in C minor, one of a set of Six Keyboard Partitas published between 1726 and 1731 as *Clavier-Übung I* or 'keyboard exercises'. Anything but 'exercises', these works represent the pinnacle of Baroque dance suite writing, combining technical brilliance, expressive depth and structural clarity.

The C minor Partita opens with a dramatic Sinfonia in three contrasting sections. A stately French overture-style introduction is followed by a lyrical Andante with expressive, ornamented lines and concludes with a lively fugal Allegro. This imposing movement sets the tone for a suite that is more serious and introspective than some of its companions.

What follows is a series of stylised dance movements: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Rondeaux and Capriccio. The Allemande is flowing and expressive, followed by a sparkling Courante. The lyrical Sarabande slows the pace, with poignant harmonies and subtle dissonances. The Rondeaux, with its recurring theme and contrasting episodes, brings a playful elegance before the virtuosic Capriccio concludes the suite with exuberant counterpoint and rhythmic vitality.

The music of Chopin remains at the heart of Evgeny Kissin's repertoire, and tonight he offers two Nocturnes – expressive music which ranks among the composer's most intimate for solo piano – followed by his final Scherzo, the playful fourth in E major.

Composed in 1835, the Nocturne in C sharp minor, Op 27 No 1 marks a significant departure from the gentler salon style of some of Chopin's earlier nocturnes. Dramatic and complex, it plumbs profound emotional depths before an unexpectedly cathartic coda. The A flat major Nocturne, Op 32 No 2 (1837), by contrast, is more characteristic of mid-19th century salon music with its lyrical melody embellished with filigree ornaments. It certainly does not lack emotional impact, however: like the previous nocturne, the middle section is the expressive heart of the piece before the reprise of the opening and hymn-like chords for a coda.

In Italian, a scherzo is a jest or a joke. In music, a scherzo from the Classical era generally refers to pieces or movements of a lighter, somewhat humorous nature. Yet Chopin's first three scherzos are anything but – they're dark, haunting and turbulent, full of Romantic fervour. The Fourth, from 1842–3, in contrast – in the sunny key of E major – is lyrical and joyful, though not without more pensive moments. Its playful opening contrasts with a reflective central section with a beautiful operatic cantilena which eventually gives way to the return of irresistible good spirits.

Composed in 1943 during the tumultuous years of the Second World War, Dmitri Shostakovich's Piano Sonata No 2 marks a deeply personal and introspective chapter in the composer's output. Dedicated to his former piano teacher, Leonid Nikolayev, who had recently died from typhoid fever, the work is both a tribute and a reflection on loss, resilience and artistic integrity in the face of crisis.

The opening movement unfolds with a sense of restless lyricism, its irregular phrasing and shifting tonalities creating an unsettled atmosphere. The middle movement is the emotional core of the work – a solemn, almost funereal meditation of stark simplicity and restraint. The finale

is a set of extended variations, a direct tribute to the composer's mentor who had recommended writing variations as a way for composers to develop their own style. Symphonic in scale, its moods are wide-ranging and constantly flowing, blending elements of dramatic passacaglia and fugue with folk-like themes and intricate counterpoint. In the final closing moments, strands from all three movements are brought together before the movement dissolves in a muted, solemn conclusion.

Inspired by Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Shostakovich composed his monumental set of 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op 87, in 1950. Written in every major and minor key, just like Bach's set, this is both homage and personal statement, combining the structural discipline of Bach with Shostakovich's own distinct harmonic language and emotional breadth.

One of the most joyful and whimsical pieces in the set, the D flat major Prelude dances with lively rhythms and sparkling textures. Its lightly syncopated patterns and bright harmonies create an air of playful elegance. In contrast, the Fugue is angular, aggressive and almost completely atonal.

The final pair, in D minor, is the climax of the set, and perhaps of Shostakovich's entire output for solo piano. Grand and imposing, the Prelude's thunderous, chordal declarations set a tone of solemn intensity which owes something to the Sinfonia of Bach's Partita No 2. The tension increases relentlessly, concluding with three *fortissimo* bars, then subsides again before a heroic statement in G major, recalling a distant trumpet sounding a military eulogy, which then becomes the subject of the Fugue. This is one of the longest and most complex in the set, and is two parts: the first takes that poignant trumpet motif from the Prelude to create a quiet, fully worked out fugue before a succession of continuous quavers herald the second part. Now the music moves forward inexorably, imbued with a sense of yearning, before a torrent of octaves in C minor. The tonality shifts again and the trumpet motif from the fugue subject sounds, now in exultant D major, creating a majestic coda.

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## Evgeny Kissin

Russian pianist Evgeny Kissin is revered the world over by audiences and critics alike for the virtuosity and eloquence of his pianism and the imagination and insight of his interpretations. He has worked with the world's leading orchestras and conductors, including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim, James Levine, Riccardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa and Sir Antonio Pappano.

He was born in Moscow in 1971 and began to play by ear and improvise on the piano at the age of 2. At 6, he enrolled at Moscow's Gnessin School, where he received lessons from Anna Pavlovna Kantor, who became his only teacher. At the age of 10 he made his concerto debut with Mozart's Piano Concerto in D minor, K466 and he gave his first solo recital in Moscow a year later. His international breakthrough came in 1984, when he performed Chopin's piano concertos in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory with the Moscow State Philharmonic conducted by Dmitri Kitaienko. This concert was recorded live by Melodiya,

and a two-LP album was released the following year.

He gave his first performance at the BBC Proms in 1990 and made his North American debut soon after, performing Chopin's two piano concertos with the New York Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta. He opened Carnegie Hall's centennial season in September 1990 with a debut recital, the live recording of which proved an exceptional success.

His discography also includes a Grammy Award-winning album of solo works by Scriabin, Medtner and Stravinsky; Beethoven's complete piano concertos with the London Symphony Orchestra and Colin Davis; a Grammy Award-winning recording of Prokofiev's Piano Concertos Nos 2 and 3 with the Philharmonia and Vladimir Ashkenazy; and discs devoted to solo works by Brahms, Chopin and Schumann. In 2017 he signed a new exclusive contract with DG, an event marked by the release of a double-disc set comprising live recordings of popular sonatas and other piano works by Beethoven.

In 2024, he was acclaimed for a special project in Europe with Matthias Goerne featuring Brahms and Schubert Lieder.

This season he returns to tour North America, Europe and Asia in a recital programme featuring works by Bach, Chopin, and Shostakovich. Tonight's concert is part of a tour marking the 50th anniversary of Shostakovich's death which takes place in major international venues.

Evgeny Kissin's achievements have been recognised with many prestigious awards and prizes. These include the Shostakovich Award (2003), Honorary Membership of London's Royal Academy of Music (2005), the Herbert von Karajan Music Prize (2005), the Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli Award (2007), and honorary doctorates from the Manhattan School of Music (2001), University of Hong Kong (2009), Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2010) and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (2014).



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