



Oslo Philharmonic/ Petrenko

Tuesday 22 October 2019 7.30pm, Hall

R Strauss Don Juan

Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor

interval 20 minutes

Shostakovich Symphony No 10

Leif Ove Andsnes piano

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra

Vasily Petrenko conductor

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Programme produced by Harriet Smith;
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Welcome

Welcome to tonight's concert, part of the Oslo Philharmonic's centenary celebrations. When the orchestra was founded in 1919 it transformed the musical life not only of its home city but of Norway as a whole. In recent decades it has become one of the world's most esteemed orchestras, in demand in halls all over the globe.

Tonight the Oslo Philharmonic is led by its Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko in music particularly closely associated with it. The orchestra is currently recording Richard Strauss's tone-poems, so it's apt to begin with his youthful masterpiece *Don Juan*, based not on the version of the legend used by Mozart in *Don Giovanni*, but

instead on one by Nikolaus Lenau in which the anti-hero's life is ended in a duel.

Grieg's Piano Concerto featured in the Oslo Philharmonic's very first concert, and who better to play it tonight than the great Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes?

To end, Shostakovich's 10th Symphony, written in the wake of Stalin's death in 1953. It combines searing emotional power and dramatic drive to ultimately shattering effect.

I hope you enjoy the concert.

Huw Humphreys
Head of Music

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Don Juan — tone-poem after Nikolaus Lenau, Op 20 (1888–9)

Southern light and the love of his life played vital roles in shaping Richard Strauss's first unqualified orchestral masterpiece. The 24-year-old composer jotted down initial ideas for *Don Juan* in 1888 in a church cloister in Italy (the 'land where the lemon-trees bloom' had already inspired the highly individual 'symphonic fantasia' *Aus Italien*, premiered earlier that year). He had also just fallen in love with one of his singing pupils, Pauline de Ahna, whom he later married. So, while Strauss would never savour the thousandfold conquests of his youthful alter ego, he had at least some experience with which to flavour the first of many passionate love scenes in his music.

Strauss was to come to know Mozart's *Don Giovanni* intimately during his conducting years at the Munich Court Opera and later cited it in an essay as an illustration of his favourite composer's astonishing emotional range. His model here, however, was not that version of the Spanish legend which culminates in the statue of the murdered Commendatore dragging the atheistical libertine down to hell. Instead he turned to fragments of a German verse-drama by Nikolaus Lenau, first published in 1851, a year after the poet's death. Here the idealistic protagonist's pursuit of the perfect moment ends in a duel; Don Juan dies because victory has come to seem as meaningless as everything else in his existence. Strauss reflects this in the last of the Lenau quotations he placed at the head of the score – 'the fuel is all consumed and the hearth is cold and dark' – as well as in the surprising final bars of his tone-poem, one of the few works in the

repertoire to start in a brilliant major key and end in the minor. Although Strauss deprives the audience of a chance to roar its delight, it was the sheer flamboyance of *Don Juan* which impressed at the Weimar premiere conducted by the composer on 11 November 1889. To his father, one of many musical conservatives who pleaded for 'less outward glitter and more content', he wrote proudly of the 'immense glow and sumptuousness' of the sound.

After a wayward fanfare, the violins characterise Don Juan's energetic genius with a high-leaping theme of irresistible ardour. Two very different love affairs appear in contrasting episodes: the first an ardent bedroom scene swiftly consummated, only to bring the first of many dissatisfactions in its wake; the second suggesting a more vulnerable victim in one of the most limpid oboe solos ever written, underpinned by muted horns and strings discreetly writhing in a theme already announced as a passionate introduction to this latest conquest. But our hero is not to be detained and, in a masterstroke to kindle our sympathy, Strauss gives him a new and noble melody emblazoned by the four horns. Don Juan passes through a carnival, has his first brush with death – bringing with it ghostly memories of the past – and strides onwards to the apogee of his career, with the horn theme raised aloft. He pauses expectantly, as if to ask 'where next?'; the answer is a rapier thrust, which swiftly brings the work shuddering to its shock conclusion.

Programme note © David Nice

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op 16

(1868, rev 1907)

1 Allegro molto moderato

2 Adagio –

3 Allegro moderato molto e marcato – Quasi presto – Andante maestoso

Leif Ove Andsnes piano

Grieg's only piano concerto is so popular – comedian Eric Morecambe once memorably played 'all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order' – that it is all too easy to overlook its unique qualities. Even though the first movement owes an enormous debt to the formal patterning of Schumann's concerto, that fact does little to undermine the striking originality and sheer exuberance of the music enshrined therein.

Grieg was only 25 when, during a holiday in Denmark, he put the finishing touches to this, his first real masterpiece and the work that put Norway on the musical map. Inspired by his recent marriage to his cousin, the singer Nina Hagerup, the concerto was composed in a single creative sweep. Grieg could hardly have wished for a more distinguished seal of approval than that of the world's most famous living pianist, Franz Liszt. Having played through the work perfectly at sight, the great virtuoso enthusiastically described it as an 'intoxicating liqueur'.

Norway, needless to say, loved it, but critical reaction was decidedly mixed elsewhere. Despite Grieg having recently spent several years as a student in Leipzig, the 1872 German premiere there was a lukewarm affair. Europe's publishing houses hardly fell over one another to rush the work into print – indeed the first

edition was issued by the relatively small firm of Fritsch, who, having declared it 'not very interesting', only took it on at the insistence of its leading Norwegian composer, Johan Svendsen.

Grieg himself had doubts about the orchestration. Following a massive overhaul in the early 1880s, he was still tinkering with it in July 1907 – only a month and a half before his death – when the young Percy Grainger spent some time studying the concerto under Grieg's supervision. The alterations the old master made that summer (expanding the scoring to include four horns, among other things) were then incorporated into the 'definitive' 1919 Peters edition.

One of the reasons for the enormous popularity of the concerto is Grieg's seemingly unquenchable dramatic flair. The opening immediately commands the listener's attention with the timpani crescendoing straight into the soloist's all-conquering first entry – no wonder Grieg recalls this *coup de théâtre* to round things off at the end of the movement. The uncontainable flow of ideas is such that no fewer than seven distinctive thematic strands vie for attention along the way. But the real masterstroke comes in the finale, where the seemingly innocent second subject is recalled right at the very end as a massive peroration (clearly anticipating the trump card that

Rachmaninov played so effectively in his Second and Third Piano Concertos). Incidentally, it was this passage that Liszt particularly admired: 'He suddenly stopped playing, rose to his full height, left the piano and paced theatrically around the great hall of the monastery bellowing out the theme,' Grieg recalled in an excited letter to his parents. It follows a radiant central Adagio movement, which was composed as an enraptured response to the recent birth of Grieg's baby daughter Alexandra.

Chopin had previously featured Polish dance rhythms – most notably the mazurka and *krakowiak* – in his piano concertos, but Grieg's was the first to draw upon a native folk-song tradition in order to conjure the atmosphere of his homeland. Although not a direct quotation, the first movement's luxuriant second melody sounds for all the world as if it might have been heard echoing around the fjords, while the finale's main theme is consciously derived from the Norwegian *halling*, a distant cousin of the Scottish reel, brilliantly transformed into a triple-time *springdans* in the final coda.

Programme note © Julian Haylock

interval 20 minutes

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–75)

Symphony No 10 in E minor, Op 93 (1953)

1 Moderato

2 Allegro

3 Allegretto

4 Andante – Allegro

In newsreel and feature films from the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the post-war period is portrayed as one of cheerful reconstruction, with morale boosted by the victory over Fascism and shadowed only by the need for vigilance against renewed Western imperialism. One benign mustachioed visage appears again and again in the iconography of those years. Yet it took no more than the death of that one man, on 5 March 1953, to remove the keystone of the façade and to initiate the slow collapse of the entire edifice of Soviet Communism.

Few in the arts had more cause to rejoice in the death of Stalin than Shostakovich. Since his humiliation in the ‘anti-formalism’ cultural purges of 1948, Shostakovich had been stripped of his teaching positions, had been forced to represent the Soviet Union at a series of international ‘Peace’ congresses (where he parroted his compulsory thanks for the ‘wise guidance’ of the Party), and had had to prostitute his art by composing film scores to craven hagiographies of the Leader and Teacher. By March 1953 he had a significant number of more serious works awaiting either their premiere or their rehabilitation after suffering years of blacklisting.

The hostile climate of this late-Stalinist freeze helps to explain the unprecedented eight-year gap between Shostakovich’s Ninth Symphony of 1945 and his 10th of 1953 – previously he had composed one symphony more or less every other year. It also helps to account for the

extraordinary release of pent-up feeling in the new work. How that happens, and what exactly those feelings may have been, are complex and unanswerable questions.

Suffering is obviously at the heart of the massive opening Moderato. But then so is philosophical reflection. This is the most complex and carefully crafted of all Shostakovich’s symphonic first movements: the least rhetorical in its surface gestures, the most subtle in its large-scale construction, the most sophisticated in its counterpoint and the most effective in making a great deal out of very little. It progresses in increasing waves of tension from its initial gloom, through the soulful singing of the clarinet and the intimidated dancing of the low flute, to a denunciatory central climax and a final lamentation on two piccolos.

The whirlwind second movement is a graphic depiction of savagery. According to Solomon Volkov’s write-up of his conversations with Shostakovich, this is ‘a musical portrait of Stalin, roughly speaking’. Yet the composer’s son Maxim has singled out this passage as an example of spurious elements in those purported memoirs. In any case, for Shostakovich, once a musical idea is born, from whatever source, it takes on a life of its own and its flow is directed by the controlled release of musical energies at least as much as by adherence to any programme or storyline. Were it not so, a movement such as this would be a mere rant

rather than the sharply focused, four-minute outpouring of venom it is.

The third movement, which begins with a watchful, tiptoeing idea in the strings, features two themes with acknowledged personal significance.

The first of these is the stabbing idea in the woodwind, heard a couple of minutes in. This is based on Shostakovich's musical monogram DSCH, expressed as the notes D–E flat–C–B natural: the German musical letter-names of the composer's initials in their German transliteration. From the very beginning Shostakovich made no secret that this was his personal monogram. But what of the mysterious unaccompanied horn call that emerges out of the blue a couple of minutes later? This, as was finally revealed in 1994, spells out the name Elmira, the notes E–A–E–D–A being a cryptic mixture of French and German note-spellings: E–La–Mi–Ré–A. It pays homage to Shostakovich's Azerbaijani composition pupil, Elmira Nazirova, who was also his muse, confidante and object of unrequited affection at the time. When the two monograms are heard in conjunction near the end of the movement – ELMIRA still on the horn, DSCH still on the flute and piccolo, the two characters finally together in time but still apart in space – the symbolism is overpowering.

The darkness of the finale's prolonged introduction, with its mournful woodwind solos, is apparently dispelled by an insouciant clarinet and freewheeling violins. But this burst of extroversion represents no real achievement, merely psychological denial. The attempted cheerfulness is insufficient to overcome deep-seated uncertainties, as the central phase of the movement confirms, where increasingly uneasy speeded-up versions of the introduction's themes return, along with reminiscences of the brutal 'Stalin' scherzo, and the resulting crisis point is eventually swept aside by clamorous statements of the DSCH monogram. Determination and defiance are inscribed all over this work, and above all in the composer's musical signature, which in the final pages is driven home hard by horns and timpani.

Programme note © David Fanning

About the performers

C.F. Wesenberg



Vasily Petrenko

Vasily Petrenko conductor

Vasily Petrenko was born in 1976 and started his music education at the St Petersburg Capella Boys Music School. He then studied at the St Petersburg Conservatoire and participated in masterclasses with such major figures as Ilya Musin, Mariss Jansons and Yuri Temirkanov. After successes at a number of international conducting competitions he was appointed Chief Conductor of the St Petersburg State Academic Symphony Orchestra (2004–7).

Highlights of this season and beyond include debuts at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, and with the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra, and returns to the Montreal and Pittsburgh Symphony orchestras, and the Netherlands Radio and Rotterdam Philharmonic orchestras. He will also return to the Asia-Pacific region, giving concerts with the New Zealand, West Australian and Singapore Symphony orchestras. He celebrates the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra's centenary with a European tour as well as numerous concerts in Norway. Ten years on from his landmark Mahler cycle in the 2009–11 seasons, he returns to the composer's symphonies, presenting them in chronological order during 2020 with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 2021 he will take up the position of Music Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

and this season he works on numerous projects with the orchestra both at home and on tour. He is currently Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the European Union Youth Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia. He has also served as Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

In 2017 Vasily Petrenko was given the Artist of the Year Award by Gramophone, a decade after receiving the magazine's Young Artist of the Year Award. In 2010 he won the Male Artist of the Year at the Classic BRIT Awards. He is only the second person to have been awarded honorary doctorates by both the University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University, and has also received an honorary fellowship of the Liverpool John Moores University and, most recently, an honorary doctorate from the University of York.

Vasily Petrenko has established a strongly defined profile as a recording artist. His Shostakovich symphony cycle for Naxos with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra has garnered worldwide acclaim, and he has also recorded award-winning surveys of Rachmaninov's symphonies, orchestral works and complete piano concertos with Simon Trpčeski, Elgar's symphonies and orchestral music, Tchaikovsky's complete symphonies, piano concertos and *Manfred* (which won a 2009 Gramophone Award) and works by Offenbach, Jennifer Higdon and John Tavener. With the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra he has released the Shostakovich cello concertos with Truls Mørk, Szymanowski violin concertos with Baiba Skride and Prokofiev's complete *Romeo and Juliet* ballet, as well as cycles of Scriabin's symphonies and Richard Strauss's tone-poems. Recent and forthcoming releases include works by Stravinsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Respighi and Britten with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Prokofiev's Symphonies Nos 5 and 6 with the Oslo Philharmonic.

Gregor Hohenberg



Leif Ove Andsnes

Leif Ove Andsnes piano

The celebrated Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes combines a commanding technique with searching interpretations, leading to worldwide acclaim. He performs concertos and gives recitals at the world's leading concert halls and with its foremost orchestras, while building an extensive award-winning discography. He is the founding director of the Rosendal Chamber Music Festival, was co-artistic director of the Risør Festival of Chamber Music for nearly two decades, and has served as music director of California's Ojai Music Festival. He is a *Gramophone* Hall of Fame inductee and holds honorary doctorates from Norway's University of Bergen and New York's Juilliard School.

Following the success of their 'Beethoven Journey' collaboration, he and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra have now reunited for another major multi-season project: 'Mozart Momentum 1785/86'. This season they focus primarily on the composer's Piano Concertos Nos 20–22, which are also the vehicle for his forthcoming collaborations with the Berlin and

Oslo Philharmonic orchestras, San Francisco Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, where he is this season's Artist-in-Residence. Another highlight of the Swedish residency is Grieg's Piano Concerto, which he reprises with the Boston and Chicago Symphony orchestras, NDR Elbphilharmonie and the Bergen, Oslo and St Petersburg Philharmonic orchestras. In recital he joins Matthias Goerne for Schumann Lieder at La Scala, Milan and tours Europe with a solo programme of Dvořák, Bartók and Schumann.

During 'The Beethoven Journey', his four-season focus on the composer's music for piano and orchestra, Leif Ove Andsnes gave more than 230 live performances in 108 cities across 27 countries, as chronicled in the documentary *Concerto – A Beethoven Journey* and captured on the award-winning Sony Classical recordings *The Beethoven Journey*. He now records exclusively for the label and recently received his ninth Grammy nomination and has been recognised with no fewer than six *Gramophone* Awards. His other accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist Award, the Gilmore Artist Award and Norway's Peer Gynt Prize; he is also a Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav. He has been a New York Philharmonic Artist-in-Residence, was the first Scandinavian to curate Carnegie Hall's 'Perspectives' series, and was the subject of a London Symphony Orchestra Artist Portrait series.

Leif Ove Andsnes was born in Karmøy, Norway in 1970, and studied at the Bergen Music Conservatory. He is currently an Artistic Adviser for the Prof Jiri Hlínka Piano Academy in Bergen.



Oslo Philharmonic

On 27 September 1919, a new orchestra took to the stage of the old Logen Hall in Oslo to give its first public concert. Conductor Georg Schnéevoigt presided over performances of Grieg's Piano Concerto and Sinding's First Symphony. After 40 years of making do, the Norwegian capital had at last got the orchestra it deserved. The Oslo Philharmonic was born.

In the eight months that followed, the orchestra gave 135 concerts, most of which sold out. It tackled Mahler, Debussy and Nielsen. Soon, world-famous musicians were coming to conduct it, relishing its youth and enthusiasm. Stravinsky and Ravel visited Oslo to coach the musicians through brand-new music. National broadcaster NRK began to hang microphones at the orchestra's concerts, transmitting them to the entire country.

Over the next half-century, the Oslo Philharmonic's reputation grew steadily. Then, in 1979, it changed forever. A young Latvian arrived in Norway, taking the orchestra apart section by section, putting it back together as a finely tuned machine with a whole new attitude. Under Mariss Jansons, the orchestra became a rival to the great Philharmonics of Vienna, Berlin and New York. It was soon playing everywhere, from Seattle to Salzburg, Lisbon to London. In 1986 EMI drew up the largest orchestral contract in its history, ensuring the world would hear the rich, visceral sound of the Oslo Philharmonic.

Three decades on, the Oslo Philharmonic retains its spirit of discovery and its reputation for finesse. Under Jukka-Pekka Saraste it developed the weight and depth that Jansons had instilled; under its current Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko, it works at the highest levels of detail and style.

In Oslo's burgeoning cultural scene, the Philharmonic under Petrenko is a vital and forward-looking centenarian. Its 100th-anniversary season features major works central to the history of the orchestra and new commissions by Steve Reich, Kaija Saariaho, Bent Sørensen and Lera Auerbach and a host of Norwegian composers. Outdoor concerts attract tens of thousands; education and outreach programmes connect the Philharmonic with many hundreds more and the orchestra also arranges debates and specialist events across the city.

Outside Oslo, this year it appears in Spain, the UK, Romania, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Italy. Recent critically acclaimed recordings include a Scriabin symphony cycle. Forthcoming releases include the tone-poems of Richard Strauss.

Vasily Petrenko leads the orchestra through its 100th-anniversary season, culminating in a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No 9 in Mahler's expanded orchestration in May 2020. From August the same year, the outstanding young Finn Klaus Mäkelä will take over as Chief Conductor.

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra

Violin 1

Elise Båtnes *leader*
Pauls Ezergailis
André Orvik
Eileen Siegel
Jørn Halbakken
Arild Solum
Øyvind Fossheim
Alyson Read
Arve Moen Bergset
Alison Rayner
Daniel Dalnoki
Leah Andonov
Mariam Maghradze
Patrycja Blaszk
Guro Asheim
Amanda Horn
Brage Sæbø
Mons M Thommesen

Violin 2

Maria A Carlsen
Dagny Bakken
Vegard Johnsen
Svein Skretting
Arne Jørgen Øian
Berit Sem
Tove H Resell
Niels Aschehoug
Marit Egenes
Ragnar Heyerdahl
Hans Morten Stensland
Baard W Andersen
Aslak Juva
Aleksandre Khatiskatsi
Emil Huckle-Kleve

Viola

Catherine Bullock
Anders Rensvik
Birgitta Halbakken
Eirik Sørensen
Povilas Syrrist-Gelgota
Heidi H Carlsen
Stig Ove Ose
Henninge Landaas
Bénédicte Royer
Arthur Bedouelle
Øystein Torp
Michael Grolid

Cello

Louisa Tuck
Bjørn Solum
Katharina Hager-Saltnes
Anne Britt Årdal
Ole Morten Gimle
Hans Josef Groh
Cecilia Götestam
Kari Ravnar
Johannes Martens
Ingvild Sandnes

Double Bass

Kenneth Ryland
Dan Styffe
Glenn Lewis Gordon
Cécile-Laure Kouassi
Kjetil Sandum
Steinar Børmer
Danijel Petrovic
Henrik Bondevik

Flute

Francisco López
Tom Ottar Andreassen

Flute/Piccolo

Helen Benson
Trond Magne Brekka

Oboe

David F Strunck
João Miguel Silva

Oboe/Cor anglais

Håvard Norang
Min Hua Chiu

Clarinet

Leif Arne T Pedersen
Pierre Xhonneux
Catherine Berg

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet

Ingvill Hafskjold

Bassoon

Per Hannisdal
Roman Reznik
Linn C Ringstad

Bassoon/ Contrabassoon

Frode Carlsen

Horn

Inger Besserudhagen
Jan Olav Martinsen
Kjell Adel Lundstrøm
Maria W Flaate
Marie S Gran
Maksim Semenov

Trumpet

Jonas Haltia
Axel Sjøstedt
Per Ivarsson
Timur Martynov

Trombone

Audun Breen
Terje Midtgård
Thorbjørn Lønmo
Eirik Devold

Tuba

Frode Amundsen

Timpani

Tom Vissgren

Percussion

Christian Berg
Terje Viken
Heming Valebjørg
Thorbjørn Ottersen

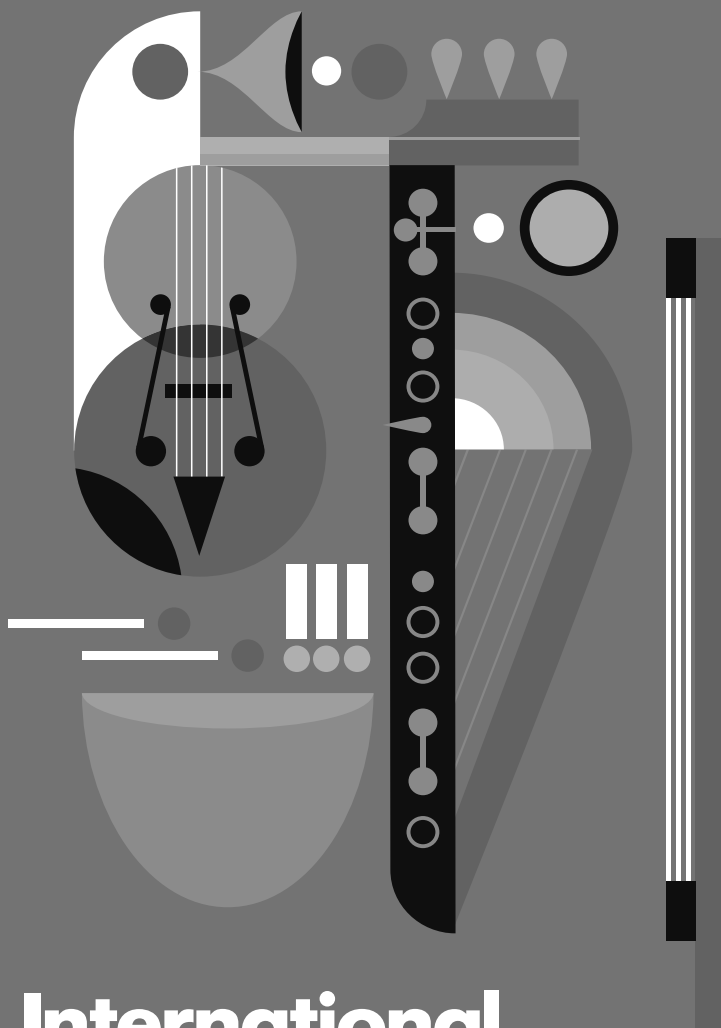
Harp

Birgitte V Håvik

Piano

Gonzalo Moreno

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