

Nicolas Bradard



Budapest Festival Orchestra/ Iván Fischer/ Sir Andrés Schiff

Saturday 30 November 2019 7.30pm, Hall

Dvořák Legend, Op 59 No 5
Chorus, Op 29 No 2, Ukolébavka
Slavonic Dance, Op 72 No 8
Beethoven Piano Concerto No 5
in E flat major, 'Emperor'

interval 20 minutes

Dvořák Symphony No 8

Sir Andrés Schiff piano
Budapest Festival Orchestra
Iván Fischer conductor

Part of Beethoven 250
Part of Barbican Presents 2019–20

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Programme produced by Harriet Smith;
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Welcome

Welcome to tonight's concert, part of our year-long Beethoven 250 celebrations.

Joining the Budapest Festival Orchestra and its founder-conductor Iván Fischer for Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto is Sir András Schiff. We don't know who gave the piece its 'Emperor' nickname but it's not difficult to understand why, for this is a concerto whose heroic and noble bent is evident from the very opening. Balm comes from one of the most serenely beautiful slow movements Beethoven ever wrote.

Dvořák's Eighth Symphony is a celebration of the composer's ear for melody and one of his most unashamedly sunny works,

finishing with a variation-form finale that allows the orchestral players plenty of opportunity to enjoy the spotlight.

Iván Fischer and the BFO begin with a sequence of shorter Dvořák pieces, which, in their folk-inspired idiom, celebrate the composer's love for the music of his homeland.

Tonight's musicians will return to complete the Beethoven concerto cycle with two further concerts on 23 and 24 May 2020.

I hope you enjoy the concert.

Huw Humphreys
Head of Music

Beethoven 250 at the Barbican

This season the Barbican, London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Academy of Ancient Music celebrate 250 years since the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven. But what is his relevance today?

Beethoven is the ultimate creative genius. He epitomises the popular, romanticised image of the great composer. Beethoven suffered. He was taciturn, isolated and lacking in social graces. He endured the worst affliction imaginable for a musician: deafness. In spite of all this (many, including Wagner, would argue because of all this), he managed to compose some of the most breathtaking, transcendental, sublime music of the Western canon. At first, Beethoven's deafness was understood as a barrier to his compositional prowess: the reason for the bizarre, jarring sounds of the late string quartets. Later, it was seen as the key to his greatness, enabling him to access profound, inward truths.

Living through turbulent revolutionary times, Beethoven was an advocate for political reform. He saw a power-shift away from the aristocracy. His political beliefs were more

ambivalent and changeable than his mythology allows, but his music has come to represent resistance against tyranny and oppression, and the defence of individual freedom, equality and radical social change. It is a powerful symbol of hope, revisited in times of political struggle, a celebration of freedom and brotherhood.

The popular image can be problematic. Beethoven's vocal and choral music, or simply the works that do not contain journeys from struggle to redemption, are rarely performed because they do not comply with our perception of the heroic, suffering artist. In contrast, the Barbican's innovative, inclusive and, occasionally, irreverent programme will question the myths. The Beethoven we hear will be at times refreshingly unfamiliar.

Beethoven's music endures. Its universal themes mean that it remains relevant to almost any time and place. It has been heard in prisons, concentration camps, at the fall of the Berlin Wall, in films, and in venues across the globe; 250 years after his birth, Beethoven belongs to everyone. And that is something to celebrate.

Dr Joanne Cormac
University of Nottingham

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Legend, Op 59 No 5 (1881)

Chorus, Op 29 No 2, Ukolébavka (1876)

Slavonic Dance, Op 72 No 8 (1886)

As in last night's concert – the first in this series, the three short pieces that open this programme bear witness to Dvořák's exceptional connectedness to the folk music of his homeland. Many of the outstanding nationalist composers of the 19th century were from middle-class backgrounds, reared at some distance from their native songs and dances, and in some cases also from its language. But as the son of a village butcher Dvořák heard Czech music sung and played probably before he learned to read and write, and he was a natural Czech speaker from the outset. All this can be felt in much of the music he composed – both vocal and instrumental.

The 10 *Legends*, Op 59, composed in 1881 (originally for piano duet) were one of his earliest success, impressing even the notoriously exacting Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick. Dvořák immediately set about arranging them for orchestra. There's no evidence he had any particular 'legends' in mind, Czech or otherwise, but their touching, direct simplicity speaks for itself. The use of the harp in Op 59 No 5 may suggest a bardic element – as it often does in the works of Dvořák's Russian

nationalist contemporaries, but its wistful charm is entirely his own.

Modest as they are, the Four Choruses, Op 29, published two years earlier, are a masterly reconciliation of folk accents with the sophistication of the so-called 'art song'. No 2, 'Ukolébavka' (Cradle Song) is a touching re-creation of the spirit and contours of the kind of lullaby Dvořák himself might have heard as a child, but the melody is apparently entirely original.

Dvořák's first collection of eight *Slavonic Dances*, Op 46, composed in 1878, was such a huge success that before long his publisher Simrock was nudging him for a follow-up set. Dvořák obliged in 1886 with another sequence of eight dances, published as Op 72. The final number is a *sousedská*, a moderately paced Bohemian dance with three beats to the bar and a kind of swaying motion; it is usually danced by a pair of lovers (or, perhaps, would-be lovers). The delicate glockenspiel strokes are intriguing – just a touch of colour, or a clock-like reminder that time can't be slowed down forever, not even for lovers?

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Concerto No 5 in E flat major, Op 73, 'Emperor' (1809–11)

1 Allegro

2 Adagio un poco mosso –

3 Rondo: Allegro

Sir Andrés Schiff piano

Beethoven never referred to his Fifth Piano Concerto as the 'Emperor'. The nickname was probably coined by Johann Baptist Cramer, said to have been the only pianist Beethoven really admired. Although the nickname has stuck fast in this country, it has never caught on in Germany or Austria. So how appropriate is it? In his youth Beethoven was an admirer of the French revolutionary hero Napoleon Bonaparte, but when the latter proclaimed himself Emperor Beethoven reacted in rage, scratching out the intended dedication to Napoleon on the title-page of his 'Eroica' Symphony. Granted, there is something stupendously authoritative – 'imperious' even – about the beginning of the Fifth Concerto: massive full orchestral chords separated by virtuoso flourishes from the soloist, all in splendid defiance of Classical tradition in which the soloist was supposed to wait in the wings during the opening orchestral section of a concerto.

But it turned out to be a farewell gesture. The Fifth was the last concerto Beethoven completed. He had given the first performances of all his

earlier piano concertos, but by now his deafness was a serious handicap: accounts from around the time he was composing this concerto tend to give the impression that his playing, once so brilliant and colourful, was becoming increasingly erratic. Which only makes it all the more remarkable that the piano writing in the Fifth Concerto should be so daringly imaginative. That master of orchestration Hector Berlioz singled out the delicate celesta-like colours towards the end of the slow movement. As we listen to that ethereal rippling sound, unlike anything that had come before, we might well remember that it was composed by a man who could barely hear what he was creating.

After the arresting beginning of the 'Emperor' Concerto, the soloist falls silent for a while and the orchestra presents the main themes – thus far at least Beethoven honours concerto tradition. But the piano's next solo entry, though subtler than the first, is every bit as remarkable. Through a series of quiet wind chords the soloist begins a long upward-running scale ending on a trill. Piano and orchestra now begin to discuss

and develop the themes already heard, the pianist at times heading off into new imaginative vistas. Eventually, at a grand climax reminiscent of the concerto's opening, comes what sounds like the beginning of the solo cadenza. But here Beethoven stamps his 'imperial' authority on the music again, writing out the solo cadenza in full – a brief moment of solo display turning quickly to quiet poetry before the orchestra returns to join the soloist for a scintillating conclusion.

The slow movement begins with a serene hymn-like theme for muted strings. The pianist then begins a long chain of reflections and embellishments on this tune, ending in the

magical colours Berlioz so admired. Then comes another masterstroke. The orchestral bass note suddenly shifts down a semitone, and the soloist picks out fragments of what sounds like a new idea, *pianissimo*. Abruptly this explodes into life and the dancing Rondo-finale begins. Just before the end comes another not-quite cadenza. The soloist takes the spotlight as the tempo slows down, but he is forced to share the stage with the timpanist, who goes on playing the same dotted rhythm on one note quietly but persistently. Then with a grand flourish from soloist and orchestra, the 'Emperor' leaves the stage.

interval 20 minutes

Antonín Dvořák

Symphony No 8 in G major, Op 88 (1889)

1 Allegro con brio

2 Adagio

3 Allegretto grazioso

4 Allegro ma non troppo

Many composers struggle to find ideas; Dvořák's problem was that he often had too many. 'If only one could write them down straight away!' he wrote to a friend. 'But there – I must go slowly, only keep pace with my hand, and may God give the rest ... It's going unexpectedly easily and the melodies simply pour out of me.' At the time of writing, in August 1889, he was working on his Piano Quartet, Op 87. Nine days later it was finished, and a week later he was jotting down ideas for a new symphony – it was to be his Eighth (although it was first published as 'No 4'). The piano score was completed less than a month later.

Why was this a problem? Because when it came to writing symphonies – as long as one accepted the prevailing Beethoven-Brahms model – the development of ideas was supposed to be at least as important as the motifs themselves:

just think of how much Beethoven extracts from the famous da-da-da-DA motif in the first movement of his Fifth Symphony. In his own Seventh (1885), Dvořák had shown that he could knuckle down and, as his mentor Brahms put it: 'make a penny do the work of a shilling'. But now, as another friend reported, he set out to create 'a work different from his other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way'.

Not only is there a remarkable profusion of ideas in the Eighth Symphony's first movement, they are all very striking, strongly flavoured and highly memorable. But that very profusion is also perhaps a sign of something else. When one considers the outstanding symphonies from the last two decades of the 19th century, one is struck by how deeply serious, often profoundly troubled, they are: Mahler's Second and Bruckner's Eighth were being written at the same time as Dvořák's

Eighth, and Tchaikovsky had just finished his Fifth. There are darker, stormier moments in the first movement, but they pass quickly, and even the striking fanfares in the finale aren't really martial: as the conductor Rafael Kubelík observed once in rehearsal, 'Gentlemen, in Bohemia the trumpets never call to battle – they always call to the dance!'

Initially the first movement's character seems a long way from its *con brio* marking: cellos lead off with a solemn, chant-like theme in G minor, but this is soon dispelled by a cheery bird-call on flute, and an exciting crescendo builds to a resolutely major-key hymn theme on violas and cellos, which in turn yields to pure dancing joy. In essence this is the emotional template for the entire work. The whole process is dramatically enhanced at the movement's central climax: the cello's minor-key chant now sounded out by trumpets through furious driving strings, the flute's birdsong now more reflective on cor anglais (its only appearance in this symphony).

As the musicologist Gerald Abraham pointed out, the Adagio is more 'mood-picture' than traditional symphonic slow movement, strongly

resembling the third of Dvořák's *Poetic Mood-Pictures*, Op 85, 'At the Old Castle', composed that same year. One can imagine the visitor's thoughts as he or she surveys the ancient fortress: grave one moment, sunlit the next, turning moodily atmospheric for a moment with reminders (pace Rafael Kubelík) of warlike fanfares at the end. It is followed by the gorgeous Allegretto grazioso, half languid waltz, half sweetly melancholic folk dance. The coda is a lovely surprise: suddenly a rapid two-beat major-key dance sweeps the Allegretto out of the way, and the end is all sunshine.

The finale is a set of variations on another memorable cello theme, its mock-seriousness soon deflated by what follows. Before that however comes the striking trumpet fanfare mentioned above. Apparently Dvořák added this after he'd composed most of the rest of the movement, but there isn't a hint of last-minute surgery, least of all in the fanfare's wonderfully engineered return at the movement's central climax. The end is pure high spirits. Dvořák could certainly do tragedy, but it's hard to find even a hint of it here.

Programme notes © Stephen Johnson

About the performers



Akos Stiller

Iván Fischer

Iván Fischer conductor

Iván Fischer is the founder and Music Director of the Budapest Festival Orchestra. He is an honorary conductor of Berlin's Konzerthaus and Konzerthausorchester. In recent years he has also gained a reputation as a composer, with his works being performed in the USA, the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary, Germany and Austria. He has directed a number of successful opera productions and last year founded the Vicenza Opera Festival.

He has conducted the Berlin Philharmonic more than 10 times and he also spends two weeks every year with Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He is a frequent guest of the USA's leading symphony orchestras as well. As

Music Director, he has led Kent Opera and the Opéra National de Lyon, and he was Principal Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC.

The BFO's frequent worldwide tours, together with a series of critically acclaimed recordings, have contributed to Iván Fischer's stellar reputation. Many of his recordings have been awarded prestigious international prizes.

Iván Fischer is a founder of the Hungarian Mahler Society and Patron of the British Kodály Academy, and is an honorary citizen of Budapest. He has received the Golden Medal Award from the President of the Republic of Hungary, and the Crystal Award from the World Economic Forum for his services in promoting international cultural relations. The government of the French Republic has appointed him Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres. In 2006 he was honoured with the Kossuth Prize, Hungary's most prestigious arts award. In 2011 he received a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, Hungary's Prima Primmissima Prize and the Dutch Ovatie Prize. Two years later he was granted Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music. In 2015, he was presented with the Abu Dhabi Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement, while in 2016 he won the Association of Music Critics of Argentina's award for Best Foreign Conductor.

Joanna Bergin



Sir András Schiff

Sir András Schiff piano

Sir András Schiff was born in Budapest in 1953 and studied piano at the Liszt Ferenc Academy with Pál Kadosa, György Kurtág and Ferenc Rados; and in London with George Malcolm. Having collaborated with the world's leading orchestras and conductors, he now focuses primarily on solo recitals, play-directing and conducting.

Since 2004 he has performed the complete Beethoven piano sonatas in over 20 cities, including Zurich, where the cycle was recorded live for ECM. Other acclaimed recordings for the label include solo recitals of Schubert, Schumann and Janáček, alongside J S Bach's *Partitas*, *Goldberg Variations* and *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

In recent years his Bach has become an annual fixture at the BBC Proms. Elsewhere, he regularly performs at the Verbier, Salzburg and Baden-Baden festivals; the Wigmore Hall, Musikverein and Philharmonie de Paris; on tour

in North America and Asia; and in Vicenza, where he curates a festival at the Teatro Olimpico.

Vicenza is also home to Cappella Andrea Barca – a chamber orchestra he founded in 1999 and which consists of international soloists, chamber musicians and friends. Together they have appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Lucerne Festival and Salzburg Mozartwoche, while forthcoming projects include a tour of Japan and a cycle of Bach's keyboard concertos in Europe.

He also enjoys a close relationship with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Budapest Festival Orchestra and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. In 2018 he accepted the role of Associate Artist with the OAE, complementing his interest in performing on period keyboard instruments.

He continues to support new talent, primarily through his Building Bridges series which gives performance opportunities to promising young artists. He also teaches at the Barenboim-Said and Kronberg academies and gives frequent lectures and masterclasses. In 2017 his book *Music Comes out of Silence* – essays and conversations with Martin Meyer – was published by Bärenreiter and Henschel.

Sir András Schiff's many honours include the International Mozarteum Foundation's Golden Medal (2012), Germany's Great Cross of Merit with Star (2012), the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal (2013), a knighthood for Services to Music (2014) and a doctorate from the Royal College of Music (2018).



Budapest Festival Orchestra

Iván Fischer founded the Budapest Festival Orchestra in 1983 together with Zoltán Kocsis. From the very beginning, the ambition of the ensemble has been to share music of the highest quality and to serve the community in the most diverse ways.

The BFO is rated among the top 10 orchestras in the world. It regularly performs at leading international concert venues, including Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center in New York, the Musikverein in Vienna and the Royal Albert Hall and Barbican Centre.

The orchestra is regularly invited to perform at the Mostly Mozart, Salzburg and Edinburgh International festivals, among others.

It has won two *Gramophone* awards and was nominated for a Grammy in 2013 for its recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 1. The following year its recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 5 won a *Diapason d'Or* and the

Italian *Toblacher Komponierhäuschen* Prize. The BFO received the Association of Music Critics of Argentina's award for Best Foreign Symphony Orchestra in 2016.

The BFO is also renowned for its innovative approach to music-making, with its autism-friendly Cocoa Concerts, Surprise Concerts, and musical marathons. The Midnight Music concerts attract young adults, while the Dancing on the Square project involves disadvantaged children in its music-making. The orchestra also promotes free Community Weeks and co-produces the Bridging Europe festival with Müpa Budapest.

The Budapest Festival Orchestra, under Iván Fischer, is also active in the opera house, presenting operas at the Mostly Mozart, Edinburgh and Abu Dhabi festivals. Their production of *The Marriage of Figaro* was ranked first on the *New York Magazine's* list of the best events in classical music in 2013. The Vicenza Opera Festival, founded by Iván Fischer, was inaugurated in the autumn of 2018.

Budapest Festival Orchestra

Conductor/ Music Director

Iván Fischer

Assistant Conductor

Paul Marsovsky

Violin 1

Yoonshin Song *leader*

Violetta Eckhardt

Ágnes Bíró

Mária Gál-Tamási

Radu Hrib

Erika Illési

István Kádár

Péter Kostyál

Eszter Lesták Bedő

Gyöngyvér Oláh

Gábor Sipos

János Pilz

Csaba Czenke

Emese Gulyás

Violin 2

Tímea Iván

Györgyi Czirikó

Tibor Gátay

Krisztina Haják

Zsófia Lezsák

Levente Szabó

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Antónia Bodó

Noémi Molnár

Anikó Mózes

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Emma Gibout

Viola

Csaba Gálfi

Ágnes Csoma

Cecília Bodolai

Zoltán Fekete

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László Bolyki

György Fazekas

István Polónyi

Cello

Péter Szabó

Lajos Dvorák

Éva Eckhardt

György Kertész

Gabriella Liptai

Kousay Mahdi

Rita Sovány

Orsolya Mód

Double Bass

Zsolt Fejérvári

Attila Martos

Károly Kaszás

Géza Lajhó

László Lévai

Csaba Sipos

Flute

Anna Garzuly-

Wahlgren

Anett Jóföldi

Oboe

Kyeong Ham

Marie-Noëlle Perreau

Clarinet

Ákos Ács

Roland Csalló

Bassoon

Andrea Bressan

Dániel Tallián

Horn

Zoltán Szóke

András Szabó

Dávid Bereczky

Zsombor Nagy

Trumpet

Gergely Csikota

Tamás Póti

Trombone

Balázs Szakszon

Attila Sztán

Csaba Wagner

Tuba

József Bazsinka

Timpani

Roland Dénes

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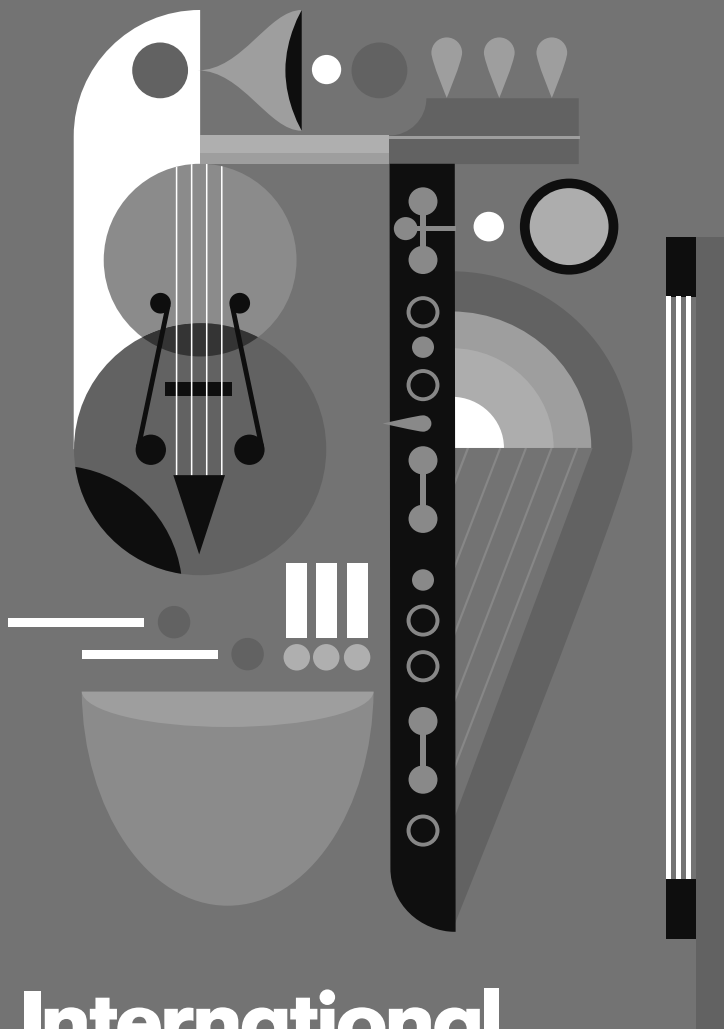
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