

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Harding & Leonidas Kavakos

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate end time: 9.40pm, including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Programme

Johannes Brahms Violin Concerto

1. Allegro non troppo
2. Adagio
3. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No 6, *Pastoral*

1. Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the Countryside – Allegro ma non troppo
2. Scene by the brook – Andante molto mosso
3. Merry gathering of country folk – Allegro
4. Thunderstorm – Allegro
5. Shepherd's Song – Cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm – Allegretto

Brahms and Beethoven are on the menu this evening, with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra joined by world renowned violinist Leonidas Kavakos.

Brahms wrote his Violin Concerto for and in collaboration with his friend, the celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim. He had been impressed by Joachim's performance of Beethoven's Violin Concerto in 1848; 30 years later, in August 1878, he wrote telling him to expect 'a few violin passages'. This was an understatement: Joachim received the vast violin part of what would become the concerto's first movement. Brahms conceived the work on a symphonic scale, originally in four movements, and although the piece ended up in the more conventional three-movement structure, its character and orchestration retain a symphonic spaciousness. On shortening the work, Brahms wrote: 'The middle movements are bust – naturally they were the best ones! I'm writing a wretched adagio instead.' The two discarded movements were used elsewhere, one of them in the Second Piano Concerto.

Joachim was a composer as well as a violinist, and he took pains to assist Brahms with the solo part, not least the details of fingerings and bowings. Brahms regularly posted him chunks of the violin part and the two met up frequently, Joachim playing and rewriting, often introducing more virtuoso elements into the music.

Brahms veered between demanding stricter advice from him and ignoring the proffered ideas. Joachim, though exasperated by this inconsistency, persevered, motivated by the prospect of a dazzling result. He pressured Brahms to have the concerto ready for a New Year's Day Concert in Leipzig in 1879. Brahms felt the strain towards the end of 1878, writing to his publisher: 'Done! What is done? The violin concerto! No.'

The concerto's manuscript, even in its 'final' state, includes revisions, some of them written in by Joachim – who also composed the first movement's cadenza. Brahms may have completed the piece for the New Year's Day concert but he was nervous about conducting the work, and the initial reception was lukewarm. Joachim performed the piece – with yet more revisions – two weeks later at the Vienna Musikverein. The audience was in raptures, applauding Joachim's cadenza into the coda. Brahms reported 'a success as good as I've ever experienced'.

The Violin Concerto shares much of its temperament with the composer's Second Symphony. Both are in D major, and both start with a movement in 3/4 time; there are deeper connections, too, in the way the themes are created and developed. The first movement opens with such sweeping nobility that it could be a symphony, but Brahms balances his forces so that the violin soars above the ensemble.

barbican

Even so, the ravishing Adagio, with its delicious dissonant twinges, drew indignation from virtuoso Pablo Sarasate: 'Does anyone imagine ... that I'm going to stand on the rostrum, violin in hand, and listen to the oboe playing the only tune in the adagio?' The final rondo shows the influence of the Hungarian or gypsy style, a mixture of Hungarian and gypsy folk styles that Brahms had come to love when Hungarian political refugees passed through Hamburg on their way to the USA in 1848.

The popularity of Beethoven's Symphony No 6 owes much to its drama, humour and melodic charm, but, for all its captivating ease, this work was revolutionary. In what has since been regarded as a pivotal moment in western music's journey between Classical and Romantic aesthetics, Beethoven used a clear programme with corresponding musical material, and a five-movement structure instead of the conventional four. The work also has the capacity to be deeply moving, representing a haven of longed-for solace in Beethoven's isolated, sound-deprived existence.

Beethoven himself added the title *Pastoral* to the symphony, which is in F major, the traditional choice for pastoral music. He also emphasised that the work is 'a matter more of feeling than of painting in sounds', suggesting a more impressionistic than literal approach to his subject-matter.

The first movement, 'Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside', opens with a warm, shapely theme, interrupted by a gently insistent wind motif, giving way to a spacious secondary melody. The lilting second movement, 'Scene by the brook', includes cadenza-like woodwind solos evoking birdsong, as set out by Beethoven in the score: the nightingale is represented by the flute, the quail by the oboe and the cuckoo by the clarinet.

The comedic third movement is based on Beethoven's observation of increasingly drunken folk musicians; the bucolic dance frequently gets out of hand, and Beethoven subverts the musical conventions of the time with incomplete phrases and untidy rhythms. This merriment is curtailed by the intervention of the 'Thunderstorm', with its timpani-rolls suggestive of thunder and sharp stabs of lightning. But the drama is short-lived and, here at least, Nature is kind, eliciting from the composer a devotional, hymn-like finale: 'Shepherd's song. Cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm'.

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Produced by the Barbican

Performers

Daniel Harding conductor
Leonidas Kavakos violin

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

violin I

Vesko Eschkenazy
Liviu Prunaru
Tjeerd Top
Marijn Mijnders
Ursula Schoch
Marleen Asberg
Keiko Iwata-Takahashi
Tomoko Kurita
Henriëtte Luytjes
Borika van den Booren-Bayon
Marc Daniel van Biemen
Christian van Eggelen
Mirte de Kok
Junko Naito
Benjamin Peled
Nienke van Rijn
Jelena Ristic
Valentina Svyatlovskaya
Michael Waterman

violin II

Caroline Strumphler
Susanne Niesporek
Jae-Won Lee
Anna de Veij Mestdagh
Herre Halbertsma
Marc de Groot
Arndt Auhagen
Elise Besemer
Leonie Bot
Coraline Groen
Caspar Horsch
Sanne Hunfeld
Mirelys Morgan Verdecia
Sjaan Oomen
Jane Piper
Eke van Spiegel
Joanna Westers

viola

Santa Vižine
Michael Gieler
Saeko Oguma
Frederik Boits
Roland Krämer
Guus Jeukendrup
Jeroen Quint
Eva Smit
Martina Forni
Yoko Kanamaru
Vilém Kijonka
Edith van Moergastel
Jeroen Woudstra

cello

Gregor Horsch
Tatjana Vassiljeva-Monnier
Johan van Iersel
BenediktENZler
Chris van Balen
Joris van den Berg
Jérôme Fruchart
Christian Hacker
Maartje-Maria den Herder
Boris Nedialkov
Clément Peigné
Honorine Schaeffer

double bass

Dominic Seldis
Pierre-Emmanuel de Maistre
Théotime Voisin
Mariëtta Feltkamp
Rob Dirksen
Léo Genet
Felix Lashmar
Georgina Poad
Nicholas Schwartz
Olivier Thiery

flute

Emily Beynon
Kersten McCall
Julie Moulin
Mariya Semotyuk-Schlaffke

piccolo

Vincent Cortvrint

oboe

Alexei Ogrintchouk
Ivan Podyomov
Nicoline Alt
Alexander Krimer

cor anglais

Miriam Pastor Burgos

clarinet

Calogero Palermo
Olivier Patey
Hein Wiedijk

e flat clarinet

Arno Piters

bass clarinet

Davide Lattuada

bassoon

Andrea Cellacchi
Gustavo Núñez
Helma van den Brink

contrabassoon

Simon Van Holen

horn

Katy Woolley
Laurens Woudenberg
José Luis Sogorb Jover
Fons Verspaandonk
Jaap van der Vliet
Paulien Weierink-Goossen

trumpet

Miroslav Petkov
Omar Tomasoni
Hans Alting
Jacco Groenendijk
Bert Langenkamp

trombone

Bart Claessens
Jörgen van Rijen
Nico Schippers

tenor/bass trombone

Martin Schippers

bass trombone

Raymond Munnecom

tuba

Perry Hoogendijk

timpani

Tomohiro Ando

percussion

Mark Braafhart
Bence Major
Herman Rieken

harp

Petra van der Heide
Anneleen
Schuitemaker

piano

Jeroen Bal

Staff on tour

managing director
Dominik Winterling

artistic director
Ulrike Niehoff

director of operations
David Bazen

planning & production manager
Lisette Castel

tour managers
Manon Wagenmakers
Jan Binnendijk

stage crew & instrument logistics
Johan van Maaren

public relations manager
Michiel Jongejan

personnel managers
Harriët van Uden
Peter Tollenaar

librarian
Christopher Blackmon

stage managers
Jan Ummels
Ton van der Meer

International tour management by Askonas Holt Ltd

chief executive
Donagh Collins

head of tours & projects
Sergio Porto

associate director
Suzanne Doyle