

# ECHO Rising Stars: Diana Tishchenko & José Gallardo

**Start time:** 1pm

**Approximate end time:** 2pm, with no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

## Programme

**Johann Sebastian Bach** 'Andante' from Violin Sonata No 2

**Fazıl Say** Sonata No 2, *Mount Ida*

1. Decimation of Nature

2. Wounded Bird

3. Rite of Hope

**Vasco Mendonça** *a box of darkness with a bird in its heart*

**Maxim Shalygin** *KAYA*

**The music in today's concert takes us on a journey from turmoil to reflection, clarity and hope for what comes next.**

The meaning of a sonata has shape-shifted over time – the word itself comes from the Latin 'sonare', which is literally 'to sound', meaning that a sonata in its original context can refer to anything 'sounded' by instruments. In more recent iterations, 'recent' in this instance meaning the last several hundred years, the word has been used more specifically to refer to a form of compositional expression. That form has wiggled its way into much of the symphonic writing we know and love, and is satisfying, according to Leonard Bernstein, because of its architecture. In all its re-inventions and variations, the sonata is nourishing to us as listeners because of the way it balances and contrasts.

Johann Sebastian Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo violin, six works essential to the repertoire, follow a Sonata da chiesa structure: a 17th-century invention of four movements, that very much fulfils Bernstein's idea of satisfaction through structure. The 'Andante' from the second sonata featured on today's programme sits as the third movement, and offers a lyrical, haunting melody atop a deliberate and unbroken bass line. There is great virtuosity in the seemingly simple melodic material.

This extract from Bach's Sonata No 2 is complemented by Turkish composer Fazıl Say's deeply moving second sonata, titled *Mount Ida*. Composed in 2019, the three-movement work is named for the 'great tragedy in nature that occurred at Mount Ida, in Turkey, where hundreds of thousands of animals and trees were destroyed,' Say told *The Violin Channel* in 2020, speaking of the 195,000 trees removed to make way for a prospective gold mine. The three movements, which deal with decimation, devastation and ultimately, hope, are in turn heart-wrenching and epic, desolate and somehow buoyant, as Say's music explores the possibility attached to the Turkish people's resistance to the destruction of the natural world.

Vasco Mendonça, a Portuguese composer equally interested in the architecture of music and the idea of exploring contemporary issues through composition, was commissioned to write his work *a box of darkness with a bird in its heart* by the European Concert Hall Organisation, who named violinist Diana Tishchenko as one of their six Rising Stars for the 2022/2023 season. Hearing Tishchenko play made Mendonça jump at the opportunity to write for her: 'she has a rich sound and makes the instrument resonate,' he says, a fact clear to him despite being forced to begin his compositional process over Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions. In writing for a solo instrument, there are natural restrictions set in your way, but parameters of this nature can, through the right lens, become great gifts. Mendonça approached the instrument orchestrally, exploring the natural resonances and quite simply, exploiting (as J S Bach did) the fact that the violin can play more than one note at once. In this work, he explores the violin's sound world through double-stops and open strings, delving into concepts of continuity, reflection, and abstraction.

When commissioned to write the piece in 2020, around the time of the presidential election in the United States, Mendonça had just discovered the American poet Terrance Hayes, whose work sparked something immediately: 'I felt in his poetry that he was capturing the essence of the dreadful moment we were living in, in a more accurate way than any news bulletin or political report. Through the personal, the abstract, he was telling us something more truthful.'

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The phrase 'I make you a box of darkness with a bird in its heart' from Hayes' poem *American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin* said something beyond just the political to Mendonça: 'he was also reflecting very deeply on what language means.' This type of reflection felt like a homecoming to the composer: 'music is, in itself, a very abstract language. A self-reflective language.'

Finally, we end as we begin: an arresting melody and a haunting exploration of lyricism and emotional extremes. A short, virtuosic work, Maxim Shalygin's *KAYA*, written in 2019 for the Netherlands Vioolconcours, creates a complex and immersive sound world from which it takes a moment to emerge. A Ukrainian-Dutch composer, Shalygin says that 'being shocked by music is about pain turning into beauty and getting under your skin, taking away your breath.' And it is this sentiment that all of the pieces today reach for – that irresistible and utterly human urge to go just a little further, a little deeper, in the hope of arriving at some kind of magnificence.

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## Performers

**Diana Tishchenko** violin  
**José Gallardo** piano

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