



London Symphony Orchestra
Living Music



Friday 30 November 2012 7.30pm
Barbican Hall

UBS Soundscapes: LSO Artist Portrait
Leonidas Kavakos

Janáček Violin Sonata

Brahms Violin Sonata No 1 in G major

INTERVAL

Stravinsky Duo Concertante

Respighi Violin Sonata in B minor

Leonidas Kavakos violin

Nikolai Lugansky piano

Concert ends approx 9.30pm



Welcome
from Kathryn McDowell



Welcome to this evening's concert at the Barbican. Tonight, Leonidas Kavakos continues his UBS Soundscapes: LSO Artist Portrait in a duo recital with pianist Nikolai Lugansky. It is a pleasure to welcome both artists, distinguished soloists in their own right, to the Barbican; this evening's programme showcases their

talents across a diverse repertoire, from Stravinsky's neo-Classical *Duo Concertante* to Respighi's Violin Sonata, a work that Kavakos describes as an 'absolute masterpiece, one of the peaks of the violin repertoire'.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank UBS for their support of this concert and their continued commitment to the LSO.

I hope you enjoy tonight's concert, and can join us again at the Barbican next month; Leonidas Kavakos will continue his LSO Artist Portrait on 9 December in an all-Sibelius concert conducted by Osmo Vänskä.

Kathryn McDowell

Kathryn McDowell
LSO Managing Director

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

Violin Sonata (1914)

- 1 *Con moto*
- 2 *Ballada*
- 3 *Allegretto*
- 4 *Adagio*

Janáček was a late starter in almost every compositional field. He wrote relatively little orchestral and chamber music, and most of the latter – two string quartets, a wind sextet, a Concertino for piano and chamber ensemble, and the *Capriccio* for piano and wind ensemble – dates from the last five years of his life. The exceptions are *Pohádka* (Fairy Tales) for cello and piano, written in 1910, and the Violin Sonata, written four years later when Janáček had just turned 60.

This was, in fact, his third attempt at a violin sonata – both previous efforts are lost. It dates from the outbreak of the First World War, as the Czechs anticipated the arrival of Russian armies on their northern borders (Janáček was an ardent Russophile, and would have viewed them as liberators from Austro-Hungarian oppression). He revised the Sonata substantially over the next few years: the original version had just three movements, of which the last was deleted and replaced by the original, slow second movement; the Ballada became a new second movement; and a Scherzo was inserted as the third of four movements. In its final form, the Sonata was premiered in Brno on 14 April 1922 by the violinist František Kudláček with Janáček's pupil, Jaroslav Kvapil, at the piano. The first movement, marked 'Con moto', begins with a brief violin improvisation, and its main theme anticipates one in the penultimate scene of the opera *Káťa Kabanová*. Then comes a nocturne-like Ballada, a Scherzo with Trio, and a final, resigned Adagio, with a passionately emotional central section. The Sonata's wartime origins make their mark in a chorale-like tremolando passage on the piano near the end, which apparently represented the Russian armies entering Hungary. 'I could hear the steel clashing in my head', wrote Janáček.

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

Violin Sonata No 1 in G major Op 78 (1878–9)

- 1 *Vivace ma non troppo*
- 2 *Adagio*
- 3 *Allegro molto moderato*

Brahms wrote the first of his three mature violin sonatas during two summers he spent in the Carinthian lakeside holiday resort of Pörtlach. The work's lyrical, pastoral atmosphere reflects his relaxed mood – he told a friend that 'melodies are so thick on the ground that you must be careful not to tread on them'. The Sonata's melodic material is derived from a song, *Regenlied* (Rain Song), Op 59 No 3, which Brahms had written some six years earlier: the three-note dotted rhythm which opens the first movement of the Sonata appears in the piano introduction to the song, and dominates both the opening *Vivace ma non troppo* – a singularly gentle, sunny *Vivace* – and the middle section of the slow movement, an *Adagio* in the key of E-flat major. The Rondo Finale is also dominated by the same dotted rhythm, but here the connection with the song is made explicit as the lyrical song melody is extended by the violin, with the evocative 'falling rain' accompaniment in the piano part. Brahms wraps his structure even tighter together by bringing the *Adagio*'s main theme back in one of the episodes of the Finale, whose G minor tonality creates a mood of smiling melancholy, only brightened by the G major coda.

The Sonata was premiered in Vienna in November 1879 by the violinist Joseph Hellmesberger, with Brahms at the piano. It has always been a great favourite – one of Brahms' friends said that it 'engages the affections as do few other things in the entire realm of music'.

INTERVAL: 20 minutes

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Duo Concertante (1932)

- 1 *Cantilène*
- 2 *Eclogue I*
- 3 *Eclogue II*
- 4 *Gigue*
- 5 *Dithyrambe*

This work belongs to a mid-point in Stravinsky's long composing career, written during his so-called 'neo-Classical' period. It is intimately linked to the 1931 Violin Concerto, which Stravinsky was commissioned to write for Samuel Dushkin, the Russian-born protégé of a wealthy American, Blair Fairchild, who had helped Stravinsky through financially straitened times after the First World War. Stravinsky and Dushkin became great friends, and often toured together, performing the Concerto (in a violin and piano reduction) and other Stravinsky pieces. The *Duo concertante* was written in the first half of 1932 as a filler for their concert programmes, and was first performed at the headquarters of Berlin Radio in October 1932. In March 1933 they played it at a BBC recital in London. Stravinsky deliberately adopted an anti-lyrical stance during his early engagement with neo-Classicism, but in the *Duo* he aimed to create 'a lyrical composition' in the original sense of the word, its spirit and form dictated by 'the pastoral poets of antiquity and their scholarly art and technique'. Three of the *Duo*'s five movements – a pair of Eclogues (a type of pastoral verse) and the final Dithyrambe – are named after Classical verse forms. The opening Cantilène suggests a piece in a singing style, but it is actually a rather spiky toccata-style movement which features extensive violin double-stopping. The Eclogues are more pastoral in style, while the fourth movement, a Gigue, is dominated by the interval of a fourth. The Dithyrambe, a hymn to Dionysus, god of wine, again confounds expectations by being brief, solemn and ornate.

Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)

Violin Sonata in B minor (1916–17)

- 1 *Moderato*
- 2 *Andante espressivo*
- 3 *Passacaglia: Allegro moderato ma energico*

Respighi's music deserves to be better known. His international reputation suffered from the unwelcome approbation of Mussolini, who appreciated his delight in celebrating the beauties of Roman culture and landscape. Much of his music apart from the orchestral tone-poems has been unjustly neglected, including this Violin Sonata, a fine example of the late-Romantic style. Respighi wrote it during the First World War, around the same time as the symphonic poem *Fountains of Rome*, and the Sonata condenses his brilliance as an orchestrator (he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov) into the contrasting timbres of just two instruments. Respighi was a professional-standard string player, but his piano writing is equally accomplished. Passion, lyricism and drama infuse this Sonata, from its expressive opening Moderato, through a reflective, intensely emotional Adagio, to the concluding Passacaglia, in which Respighi constructs a sequence of 20 variations, widely contrasted in mood from the vehement to the skittish, over an obsessively rhythmic, dotted-note ground bass.

Programme Notes © Wendy Thompson

Wendy Thompson is Executive Director of Classic Arts Productions, the major supplier of independent programmes to BBC Radio 3, including *Private Passions* and *Essential Classics*.



Leonidas Kavakos

Violin



Leonidas Kavakos is known for his virtuosity, superb musicianship and the integrity of his playing. International recognition first came while he was still in his teens, winning the Sibelius Competition in 1985 and, three years later, the Paganini Competition.

Kavakos now works with the world's major orchestras and conductors – the LSO, the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Royal Concertgebouw, Orchestre de Paris, Budapest Festival, La Scala Philharmonic, Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He is also a committed chamber music and recitalist, and is a favoured artist at the Verbier, Montreux-Vevey, Bad Kissingen and Edinburgh International Festivals and at the Salzburg Festival where in August 2012, together with Enrico Pace, he played the complete violin sonatas by Beethoven. Kavakos' distinguished partners include Gautier and Renaud Capuçon, Emanuel Ax, Antoine Tamestit, Nikolai Lugansky, Denis Kozhukhin and Yuja Wang, with whom he will give a series of recitals in Europe in 2013/14.

Leonidas Kavakos is increasingly recognised as a conductor of considerable musicianship and will make his conducting debut with the LSO in the 2013/14 season. He has worked as conductor/soloist with the Boston Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Stockholm Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, La Scala Philharmonic, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

Kavakos is an exclusive Decca recording artist, and his first release on the label will be the complete Beethoven Violin Sonatas with Enrico Pace. Kavakos already has a distinguished discography with a number of award-winning recordings – his Mendelssohn Violin Concerto disc on Sony Classical receiving an ECHO Klassik award for Best Concerto Recording 2009. In 1991, shortly after winning the Sibelius Competition, he won a *Gramophone* Award for the first ever recording of the original version of Sibelius' Violin Concerto (1903/04), recorded on BIS.

Leonidas Kavakos plays the 'Abergavenny' Stradivarius of 1724.

Nikolai Lugansky

Piano



Nikolai Lugansky is a pianist of extraordinary depth and versatility. Highlights for the 2012/13 season and beyond include concerto projects with the New York Philharmonic (with Charles Dutoit), the Orchestre de Paris (Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos), Bamberger Symphoniker (Mikhail Pletnev), the LSO (Gianandrea Noseda) and

St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra (Yuri Temirkanov). In recital and chamber performances, Lugansky will appear at Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, London's Wigmore Hall, the Konzerthaus Berlin and Madrid's Auditorio Nacional de Música.

He regularly appears at some of the world's most distinguished festivals, including the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival.

Last season saw Lugansky make his debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (with Dutoit), as well as performances with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (Andris Nelsons), Mariinsky Theatre Symphony Orchestra (Valery Gergiev), and tours with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and Marek Janowski, and the Russian National Orchestra. Nikolai Lugansky records exclusively for Naïve-Ambrosie and his most recent recording, featuring Rachmaninov's two Piano Sonatas, was released in Autumn 2012 and won the Diapason d'Or and the Choc de Classica. He also won the Diapason d'Or for his recordings of the complete Chopin Études and Preludes and the Rachmaninov Preludes and *Moments musicaux*, and an ECHO Klassik award for his 2005 recording of Rachmaninov's Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 4.