



London Symphony Orchestra
Living Music



Sunday 27 October 2013 8pm
Barbican Hall

LSO STRING ENSEMBLE

Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings

Bartók Divertimento

INTERVAL

Dvořák Serenade for Strings

Roman Simovic director

LSO String Ensemble

Concert ends approx 9.45pm

Welcome
to tonight's concert



Welcome to this evening's concert at the Barbican. Following the success of LSO String Ensemble performances at the Barbican last season and as part of LSO St Luke's 10th Birthday Festival, tonight our focus turns once again to the Orchestra's magnificent string section.

We welcome to the stage LSO Leader Roman Simovic, who directs a performance of three substantial works for string orchestra: the much loved Dvořák and Tchaikovsky String Serenades, together with Bartók's lesser known Divertimento.

Tonight's performance is the first LSO String Ensemble performance to be recorded by LSO Live, which will release its 100th disc next year.

We hope you enjoy tonight's concert and can join us for our next LSO ensemble focus on 23 January, when the LSO Brass Quintet will explore music from Bach to Broadway.

Kathryn McDowell

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LSO Managing Director CBE DL

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–93)

Serenade for Strings in C major Op 48 (1878)

- 1 PEZZO IN FORMA DI SONATINA: ANDANTE NON TROPPO – ALLEGRO MODERATO
- 2 VALSE: MODERATO
- 3 ELEGIA: LARGHETTO ELEGIACO
- 4 FINALE (TEMA RUSSO): ANDANTE – ALLEGRO CON SPIRITO

Tchaikovsky composed his Serenade in the autumn of 1880, at the same time as the '1812' Overture. After several years spent travelling in Europe in the aftermath of his disastrous marriage, he had finally returned to Russia. His mind was very much on a successor to the Fourth Symphony, but the work that emerged in November was scored for strings only. The Serenade – which was dedicated to Carl Albrecht, a violinist and fellow professor of Tchaikovsky's at the Moscow Conservatory – was first played at a private concert there on 3 December 1880. Its public premiere took place on 30 October 1881 in St Petersburg at a concert sponsored by the Russian Musical Society, conducted by Eduard Napravnik, and it was repeated in Moscow in January the following year.

The Serenade has proved to be one of Tchaikovsky's most enduringly popular works. It opens with a movement 'in sonatina form' – i.e. without a development section. A slow introduction returns at the end. Then comes a waltz, one of Tchaikovsky's favourite dance forms, whose opening theme is cunningly transposed and recast to form the opening theme of the slow third movement, an Elegy. The finale is subtitled 'Russian theme'. This theme, which appears after a quiet, slow introduction, turns out to be a transformation of the opening theme of the first movement, which then returns in its original, slow form in the coda to the whole work.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

Divertimento Sz 113 (1939)

- 1 ALLEGRO MA NON TROPPO
- 2 MOLTO ADAGIO
- 3 ALLEGRO ASSAI

Bartók's Divertimento was one of the last works he wrote before leaving Europe for exile in the US. Like the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste*, it was written for the influential Swiss conductor and patron of contemporary music Paul Sacher, and his Basle Chamber Orchestra. The list of Sacher's commissions, apart from Bartók's pieces, eventually included Strauss' *Metamorphosen* and Stravinsky's Concerto in D major, alongside works by Honegger, Henze, Malipiero, Britten and Tippett, among others.

Bartók had become a vigorous and vocal opponent of Fascism during the 1930s, and by 1938 he was seriously considering emigration. But he had a frail, elderly mother to look after in Budapest and he was clearly torn between his desire to 'stay at home and help matters as much as possible', and his fear that by staying on, he would be perceived as tacitly condoning Nazi cultural and social policies. Then, in November 1938, he received Sacher's commission, together with the generous offer of the loan of a chalet in the Swiss mountains, where he could compose in peace. After a frenetic round of international concert tours and folk-music collecting in the first half of 1939, Bartók finally accepted Sacher's invitation. He spent about a month in Switzerland, feeling like 'a musician of olden times, the invited guest of a patron of the arts'. In mid-August he reported to his family in Budapest that work on the new Divertimento had gone well, and he had finished the piece in just 15 days. Such was his intense concentration that when Sacher went to tell him of the outbreak of war, he found Bartók so utterly absorbed in his work that he was unaware of the momentous political upheaval which would affect his life so dramatically. After the Divertimento's premiere in Basle on

11 June 1940, a critic wrote: 'Thinking back to the concert, it now seems unreal and ghostly. Will the creative forces that stirred here be able to survive against the raging forces of annihilation, the violence that leads to total extermination of life?' Within four months, Bartók had left Europe for the safety of the US. He never returned.

For a piece written in such troubled times, the Divertimento at first seems unusually buoyant and light-hearted. Bartók announced that he was thinking of 'some kind of concerto grosso', and the scoring pits a solo string quartet against the broad mass of strings, rather in the 18th-century manner. But there the resemblance ends. The Divertimento is a highly original work in his own unique idiom, and is in no sense a neo-classical pastiche. The first movement is a sonata-form structure in light, carefree mood; the second, a sombre Adagio in four sections (of which the first and last correspond in Bartók's favourite arch form), while the finale is a playful rondo which effortlessly incorporates a double fugue at its heart.

INTERVAL – 20 minutes

There are bars on all levels of the Concert Hall; ice cream can be bought at the stands on the Stalls and Circle level. Why not tweet us your thoughts on the first half of the performance @londonsymphony, or come and talk to LSO staff at the Information Desk on the Circle level.

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) Serenade for Strings in E major Op 22 (1875)

- 1 MODERATO
- 2 TEMPO DI VALSE
- 3 SCHERZO: VIVACE
- 4 LARGHETTO
- 5 FINALE: ALLEGRO VIVACE

Dvořák's enchanting Serenade for Strings was composed in an even shorter time than Bartók's Divertimento. In 1874, Dvořák, then a struggling and impecunious young composer, had won a composition bursary from the Austrian government. As a result, he was able to compose several new works the following year, including his Fifth Symphony, the Serenade and a quintet for strings, a piano trio, an opera, and the *Moravian Duets* for two sopranos and piano, which Brahms – who had been on the judging panel, and had been greatly impressed by Dvořák – generously recommended to his own publisher. This seal of approval launched Dvořák's career.

The Serenade, which was completed in just twelve days in early May 1875, was premiered in Prague on 10 December 1876 by a theatre orchestra under the baton of Adolf Čech, and appeared in print three years later. Its instant popularity may well have inspired Tchaikovsky to write his own Serenade.

The five-movement piece is cast in the sunny key of E major. It begins with a lyrical Moderato in sonata form, with a dancelike second subject. The spirit of the Viennese waltz, in the wistful key of C-sharp minor, pervades the second movement, which is followed by a lively Scherzo and Trio in F major. The third theme of the Tempo di Valse leaves a trace throughout the tender Larghetto; while the Finale conjures up a rumbustious Bohemian village dance.

Programme Notes © Wendy Thompson

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

Roman Simovic

Director



Roman Simovic was born in 1981 and began his music education in Lvov, Ukraine. After continuing studies with his father, conductor Igor Simovic, he attended the Cetinje Music Academy and later the Academy of Music and Arts in Novi Sad, and the Moscow State Conservatorium where he gained his Master's

degree. In 2010 he became Leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, having previously been Leader of Camerata Salzburg. Acclaimed for his playing worldwide, Simovic's performances have taken him across Europe, Russia, Asia, Canada, the US and South America, at venues such as the Bolshoi Theatre (Moscow), Grand Opera House (Tel Aviv), and Prague National Theatre, to name a few.

Roman performs regularly as a soloist with orchestras including the Amadeus Chamber Orchestra (Russia), Bohemian Symphony Orchestra (Czech Republic), Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra (Hungary), Kamerata Bern (Switzerland), Kiev Philharmonia (Russia), Prague Philharmonia (Czech Republic) and Seoul Sinfonietta (Korea), among many others. He has been awarded prizes at numerous international competitions including the Premio Rodolfo Lipizer International Violin Competition (Italy), Sion-Valais International Violin Competition (Switzerland), International Yampolsky Violin Competition (Russia) and the Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition (Poland), placing him among the foremost violinists of his generation.

A sought-after artist, Simovic has been invited to perform at festivals such as the Dubrovnik Summer Festival (Croatia), Kotor Art Festival (Montenegro), the BEMUS and NOMUS Festivals (Serbia), Sion-Valais Festival (Switzerland), Bergen Festival (Norway), Campus de Jordao (Brazil) and the Portogruaro Festival (Italy), collaborating with renowned artists such as Shlomo Mintz, François Leleux, Janine Jansen, Julian Rachlin, Itamar Golan, Rohan de Silva and Edward Grach.

In addition to being an active soloist, recitalist and orchestral player, Roman Simovic is an avid chamber musician and is a founding member of the Rubicon String Quartet with which he continues to record and tour. Simovic has recorded extensively for numerous radio and television networks, and has presented masterclasses in the UK, US, South Korea, Serbia and Montenegro.

Roman plays a J B Guadagnini violin, generously loaned to him by Jonathan Moulds.

LSO String Ensemble

FIRST VIOLINS

Roman Simovic
Leader

Lennox Mackenzie
Elizabeth Pigram
Claire Parfitt
Laurent Quenelle
Rhys Watkins
Iwona Muszynska

SECOND VIOLINS

David Alberman
Thomas Norris
Miya Vaisanen
Belinda McFarlane
Julian Gil Rodriguez
Violeta Vancica

VIOLAS

Paul Silverthorne
German Clavijo
Lander Echevarria
Anna Green
Robert Turner

CELLOS

Rebecca Gilliver
Alastair Blayden
Noel Bradshaw
Daniel Gardner
Eve-Marie Caravassilis

DOUBLE BASSES

Joel Quarrington
Patrick Laurence
Jani Pensola