



Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 3 Oct 2025 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 4 Oct 7.30pm

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Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 3 Oct 2025 7.30pm **Glasgow Royal Concert Hall** Sat 4 Oct 7.30pm

'The symphony should be like the world,' declared Gustav Mahler, 'it should embrace everything!' His mighty Seventh Symphony does exactly that: a wild, wonderful journey through Alpine storms, moonlit serenades, dark fairy tales and pure, roof-raising joy. With Oliver Knussen's sonic fireworks and the incredible Francesco Piemontesi in Ravel's sparkling Concerto, plus Music Director Thomas Søndergård on the podium, this evening will be a spectacular opening to the RSNO's 2025:26 Concert Season.

KNUSSEN Flourish with Fireworks Op22 [4'] **RAVEL** Piano Concerto in G Major [21']

INTERVAL **MAHLER** Symphony No7 in E Minor [79']

Thomas Søndergård Conductor Francesco Piemontesi Piano Royal Scottish National Orchestra

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The Glasgow performance will be recorded for the RSNO Archive. Supported by the Iain and Pamela Sinclair Legacy.

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without flash, until the end of each piece.



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Welcome

A very warm welcome to the beginning of the 2025:26 Season. Tonight we welcome back Music Director Thomas Søndergård for his eighth Season with us, alongside the phenomenal pianist Francesco Piemontesi

Although you've not seen us during the summer, the Orchestra has been busy in the studio working on a variety of exciting projects, both classical and film, which will start to appear soon. We recently won the Art & Culture Award at the Inspiring City Awards 2025 in Glasgow for our recording studio, and we are incredibly grateful to have been recognised for our contribution to the city.

Alongside recordings, the Orchestra has been on an extensive Schools Tour, taking our animated film Yoyo & The Little Auk to over 1,500 primary pupils across Scotland, as well as performing at the Opening and Closing concerts of the Edinburgh International Festival and at Fringe by the Sea in North Berwick.

The Orchestra has never sounded as good as it has recently, particularly in the Mahler symphonies performed last Season. Tonight's repertoire will certainly put everyone through their paces but I am certain they're up for the challenge! You'll notice some new and returning faces this Season: Amadea Dazeley-Gaist (Principal Horn), Jason Lewis (Associate Principal Trumpet), Cillian Ó Ceallacháin (Associate Principal Trombone) and Asher Zaccardelli (Assistant Principal Viola). I'm sure you'll join me in giving them a warm welcome to the RSNO.

Tonight's concert is dedicated to the RSNO Benefactors and RSNO Conductors' Circle, in acknowledgement and appreciation of their invaluable support. And I would like to thank you, our dedicated audience, for continuing to support the RSNO. I look forward to sharing the rest of the Season with you.

Alistair Mackie

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Royal Scottish National Orchestra



Formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra, the company became the Scottish National Orchestra in 1950 and was awarded Royal Patronage in 1977. Many renowned conductors have contributed to its success, including Sir John Barbirolli, Walter Susskind, Sir Alexander Gibson, Neeme Järvi, Walter Weller, Alexander Lazarev and Stéphane Denève.

The Orchestra's artistic team is led by Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who was appointed Music Director in 2018. In March 2024, Austrian-born conductor, composer and musician Patrick Hahn became the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor.

The RSNO is supported by the Scottish Government and is one of the Scottish National Performing Companies. The Orchestra performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms. The RSNO has made recent tours to China and Europe.

The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving a 2020 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Chopin's

Piano Concertos (soloist: Benjamin Grosvenor), conducted by Elim Chan, two Diapason d'Or awards (Denève/Roussel 2007; Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight GRAMMY Award nominations. In recent years, the RSNO has increasingly recorded soundtracks for film, television and video games, with notable titles including Horizon: An American Saga (Warner Bros), Life on Our Planet (Netflix), Star Wars Outlaws (Ubisoft) and The Woman King (Sony Pictures). The Orchestra records at its award-winning in-house facility, Scotland's Studio, in Glasgow.

The RSNO believes that music can enrich lives, and aims to inspire, educate and entertain people throughout Scotland and beyond with its performances, recordings and engagement programmes. Supporting schools, families, young professionals and wider communities, the RSNO delivers high-quality initiatives for all ages and abilities.

On Stage

FIRST VIOLIN

Maya Iwabuchi
LEADER
Lena Zeliszewska
ASSOCIATE LEADER
Shlomy Dobrinsky
Tamás Fejes
ASSISTANT LEADER
Patrick Curlett
Stuart McDonald
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Elizabeth Bamping
Lorna Rough

Susannah Lowdon Alan Manson Veronica Marziano Sharon Haslam Fiona Stephen Carole Howat Sian Holding

SECOND VIOLIN

Emily Davis GUEST PRINCIPAL Jacqueline Speirs Marion Wilson Nigel Mason Paul Medd Anne Bünemann Sophie Lang Robin Wilson Kirstin Drew Colin McKee Helena Rose Liz Reeves Joe Hodson

VIOLA

Felix Tanner
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Jessica Beeston
Susan Buchan
Katherine Wren
Lisa Rourke
Nicola McWhirter
Claire Dunn
Maria Trittinger
Francesca Hunt
Beth Woodford
Elaine Koene
David McCreadie

CELLO

Pei-Jee Ng PRINCIPAL Betsy Taylor Kennedy Leitch Yuuki Bouterey-Ishido Rachael Lee Sarah Digger Robert Anderson Gunda Baranauskaitė Elias Rooney Alison Wells

DOUBLE BASS

Nikita Naumov PRINCIPAL Regina Udod Michael Rae Moray Jones Alexandre Cruz dos Santos Olaya Garcia Alvarez Paul Speirs Kirsty Matheson

FLUTE

Katherine Bryan PRINCIPAL Jack Welch Jack Reddick Siobhan Grealy Janet Richardson PRINCIPAL PICCOLO

OBOE

Adrian Wilson PRINCIPAL Peter Dykes Fraser Kelman Henry Clay PRINCIPAL COR ANGLAIS

CLARINET

Timothy Orpen
PRINCIPAL
Massimo di Trolio
Robert Digney
Rebecca Whitener
Duncan Swindells
PRINCIPAL BASS CLARINET

BASSOON

David Hubbard
PRINCIPAL
Matthew Kitteringham
Lucy Gibson
Paolo Dutto
PRINCIPAL CONTRABASSOON

HORN

Amadea Dazeley-Gaist PRINCIPAL Alison Murray Andrew McLean David McClenaghan Martin Murphy

TRUMPET

Christopher Hart PRINCIPAL Katie Smith Jonathan Holland

TROMBONE

Dávur Juul Magnussen PRINCIPAL Cillian Ó Ceallacháin Alastair Sinclair PRINCIPAL BASS TROMBONE

TUBA

John Whitener

TENOR TUBA

Chris Flynn

TIMPANI

Paul Philbert PRINCIPAL

PERCUSSION

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PRINCIPAL
Louise Goodwin
Julian Wolstencroft
Simon Archer
Ewan Millar

HARP

Pippa Tunnell Sharron Griffiths

CELESTE

Lynda Cochrane

GUITAR

Ross Morris

MANDOLIN

John Robinson

Thomas Søndergård

Conductor



Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård has been Music Director of the RSNO since 2018, following six seasons as Principal Guest Conductor, and is Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra. Between 2012 and 2018, he served as Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW), after stepping down as Principal Conductor and Musical Advisor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra.

He has appeared with many notable orchestras in leading European centres, such as Berlin (Berliner Philharmoniker, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Konzerthausorchester Berlin). Munich (Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunk), Zurich (Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich), Leipzig (Gewandhausorchester), Paris (Orchestre National de France), London (London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, London Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra) and Amsterdam and Rotterdam (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic. Rotterdam Philharmonic), and is a familiar figure in Scandinavia, with such orchestras as the Oslo Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony,

Danish National Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony, Finnish Radio Symphony and Helsinki Philharmonic. North American appearances to date have included the symphony orchestras of New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Baltimore, St Louis, Toronto, Atlanta, Montreal, Vancouver, Houston and Seattle, and the LA Philharmonic.

Following his acclaimed debut for Royal Danish Opera (Poul Ruder's Kafka's Trial), he has since returned to conduct Die Walküre, Elektra, Le nozze di Figaro, Il barbiere di Siviglia, La bohème, The Cunning Little Vixen and Il viaggio a Reims. He has also enjoyed successful collaborations with Norwegian Opera and Royal Swedish Opera. His Stockholm productions of Tosca and Turandot (both with Nina Stemme) led to his Bayerische Staatsoper debut, conducting main season and Opera Festival performances of Turandot with Stemme. He made his Deutsche Oper Berlin debut with the world premiere of Scartazzini's Edward II and has since returned for Berlioz's Romeo and Juliet and Strauss' Elektra.

His discography covers a broad range of contemporary and mainstream repertoire, including Nielsen, Sibelius symphonies and tone poems (with the BBC NOW), Lutosławski and Dutilleux cello concertos (with Johannes Moser and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin) and violinist Vilde Frang's celebrated debut recording (with the WDR Köln). With the RSNO on Linn Records Thomas has recorded works by Richard Strauss, Prokofiev, Bacewicz, Lutosławski and Szymanowski.

In 2023, Thomas was a recipient of the Carl Nielsen and Anne-Marie Carl Nielsen's Foundation award for his outstanding contribution to Danish musical life. In 2022, he was decorated with a prestigious Royal Order of Chivalry, the Order of Dannebrog (Ridder af Dannebrogordenen), by Her Majesty Margrethe II, Queen of Denmark.

Scotland's National Orchestra invites you to the

RSNO Centre Tenth Anniversary Winter Party

Sat 1 Nov 2025, 7pm New Auditorium, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall

Join us for a unique celebration of Scotland's National Orchestra marking the tenth anniversary of our New Home in Glasgow.

Enjoy spectacular music performed by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, drinks with canapés showcasing the best of Scottish produce and a charity auction with prizes generously donated by the New York Philharmonic, Kimpton Blythswood Hotel, Moira Patience and many more. The rest of the evening will be spent dancing the night away at our celebratory ceilidh, with music performed by the fantastic RSNO Ceilidh Band.

All funds raised at this event will support the activity of the RSNO.



Oliver Knussen (1952-2018)

Flourish with Fireworks

Op22

FIRST PERFORMANCE

London, 15 September 1988 **DURATION** 4 minutes

Glasgow-born Oliver Knussen was a father figure to the contemporary music community in Britain. When he died in 2018, the composer George Benjamin told *The New York Times* Knussen had 'had a fertilizing and energizing effect on British music for 40 years'.

Knussen's generosity helping other composers might be the reason he wrote little and finished even less. But his limited output was due to his extreme perfectionism and the weight of knowledge in his head; 'it was as if every bar that he wrote was measured against all the music that he knew,' the composer Colin Matthews once wrote. What Knussen did write was precise, rich and cultivated – laboured over meticulously despite often feeling spontaneous.

Knussen's Flourish with Fireworks is a case in point. It was written for the opening concert of the London Symphony Orchestra's 1988/89 concert season, its inaugural performance under new principal conductor Michael Tilson Thomas. Knussen's piece was a triple homage: to his friend and colleague Tilson Thomas; to the LSO, which was the first major orchestra to play Knussen's works in public and in which his father occupied the principal double bass chair; and to Igor Stravinsky, a favourite of both Knussen and Tilson Thomas.

Stravinsky, Tilson Thomas and the LSO also play a structural role in the score, which Knussen described in his own programme note as 'neither more or less than its title'. First, the composer borrows fireworks from Stravinsky's own musical

depiction of incendiary entertainments in his 1908 work Feu d'artifice (listen for the woodwind sparkles and brass rockets heard around 25 seconds into Knussen's piece, though they recur in bigger, broader forms). He then builds his music by braiding the initials LSO (translated into musical notation as A, E flat, G) together with MTT (E, B, B) to form a signature motif.

Don't worry if you can't hear those notes among the melee of music conceived to be festive, though they're probably most clear around 90 seconds in, when plucked out by strings after a whiplash. The motif Knussen forms from them is prodded and examined in a rapid sequence of playful and thrifty variations, many of them consciously written in the style of Stravinsky (and punctuated by more of his fireworks). A series of rockets is fired off in succession towards the end of the piece, with one proving sufficiently effervescent to end the display.

© Andrew Mellor

RSNO Connections

Knussen's father, Stuart, was Principal Double Bass with the then Scottish National Orchestra for a time. Erik, Oliver's uncle, had a remarkable 40-year career with the RSNO, balancing his duties as Orchestra Manager with performing with the Orchestra, first as a double bass player then tuba player. In 1977, Erik also became manager of the 'new' RSNO Centre at Henry Wood Hall.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Piano Concerto

in G Major



FIRST PERFORMANCE Paris, 14 January 1932 **DURATION** 21 minutes

- 1. Allegramente
- 2. Adagio assai
- 3. Presto

Having written nothing for piano since *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (completed in 1917), Ravel embarked on his projected Piano Concerto with great zest, while on holiday in the Basque country during the summer and autumn of 1929, interrupting it only when he received a commission from Paul Wittgenstein. On completing the Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, Ravel returned to the G Major Concerto, but it took him another full year to finish. During its painful gestation, Ravel wrote to a friend, 'I can't manage to finish my Concerto, so I am resolved not to sleep for more than a second. When my work is finished I shall rest in this world ... or in the next.'

Ravel originally told his pupil Marguerite Long that he was writing the Concerto for her. However, he changed his mind and decided that he wanted to appear as soloist himself, practising furiously and working on the studies of Chopin and Liszt, until his friends gently persuaded him that his time of life (his mid-fifties) was hardly a suitable one to be embarking on a virtuoso career. So it was indeed Marguerite Long who gave the first performance in January 1932, with the Orchestre Lamoureux, conducted by the composer. The programme also included Boléro, La Valse, the Rapsodie espagnole and one of the suites from Daphnis et Chloé. In her book, Long recalled her misgivings about the première:

I was not very proud of the performance of that, alas!, for his conducting from a piano score was very uncertain. Happily all went well, and the performance was judged a success. The third movement was encored, and I do not remember having played this work since – whether in France or abroad – without having to encore it.

To his friend, the critic Michel Calvocoressi, Ravel explained:

Planning the two piano concertos simultaneously was an interesting experience. The one in which I shall appear as the interpreter is a concerto in the truest sense of the word. I mean that it is written very much in the same spirit as those of Mozart and Saint-Saëns. The music of a concerto should, in my opinion, be light-hearted and brilliant, and not aim at profundity or at dramatic effects. I had intended to entitle this concerto 'Divertissement'. Then it occurred to me that there was no need to do so, because the very title 'Concerto' should be sufficiently clear.

The Concerto is conceived in a clear-cut Classical style, and it was probably the first major piano concerto since those of Mozart to make consistent soloistic use of wind instruments, with the strings largely reduced to an accompanying role. Some of the wind solos are notorious, such as those for horn and oboe in the middle of the first movement, and the brilliant passagework for bassoons in the finale. The most famous solo is that for the cor anglais in the slow movement. Apart from Mozart and Saint-Saëns, Ravel also acknowledged the influence of Gershwin, whom he had met while visiting the United States several years before. In the Concerto there is a conspicuous use of jazz 'blue' notes and syncopated rhythms, as well as cheeky touches like the trombone slides in the finale. Not surprisingly, the work remains one of the most popular piano concertos of the 20th century.

© Mark Fielding

Listen again to the RSNO

Ravel Piano Concerto in G Major

Plus Pavane pour une infante défunte and Le Tombeau de Couperin

Vanessa Benelli Mosell Soloist Carlos Miguel Prieto Conductor

More information rsno.org.uk/recordings

If you enjoyed Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major, why not try his opera **L'enfant et les sortilèges** (27-28 Mar 2026).

What was happening in 1932?

- **1 Mar** The infant son of the aviators Charles and Anne Lindbergh was kidnapped from the family home in New Jersey, and found dead on 12 May; the US media described it as 'the crime of the century'
- **19 Mar** The Sydney Harbour Bridge, nicknamed The Coathanger, opened
- **22 Mar** The first *Tarzan* movie, starring Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O'Sullivan, opened in New York
- **11 Apr** Paul von Hindenberg was reelected President of Germany, defeating Adolf Hitler
- **14 Apr** At Cambridge University, Cockcroft and Walton focused a proton beam on lithium and 'split the atom'
- **20-21 May** Amelia Earhart flew from the US to Northern Ireland in 14 hours 54 minutes and became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean
- **6 Aug** The first Venice Film Festival opened
- **3 Oct** Iraq became an independent kingdom under Faisal, ending the British mandate
- **6 Nov** In the German federal elections, the Nazi Party lost 34 seats and failed to form a coalition government
- **8 Nov** Democrat Franklin D Roosevelt became US President, promising a New Deal and the repeal of Prohibition

Francesco Piemontesi

Piano



Swiss-Italian pianist Francesco Piemontesi, a native of Locarno, has over the years gained a reputation as one of the leading interpreters of the German Classical and Romantic repertoire. He appears as a regular guest with many of the world's leading orchestras in concert halls and music festivals around the globe, and was Artistic Director of the Settimane Musicali di Ascona from 2012 to 2024.

With his subtle but mesmerising interpretations of Schubert's piano sonatas as well as the solo works and piano concertos of Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and Liszt, he has been acclaimed internationally by critics and audiences alike. His playing is characterised by sensitivity, intimacy and poetry, but also by power and brilliance. Above all, it is important to him to illuminate the scores from within: 'Making music is like a second language for me. It feels like an existential necessity. I don't want to entertain the audience, I want to let them participate in the deep dimensions of music.' Among his many important musical influences, he highlights his distinguished teachers Arie Vardi and Alfred Brendel, but above all French concert pianist Cécile Ousset.

The 25/26 season includes premiering Beat Furrer's Piano Concerto (dedicated to Francesco) with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, as well as further solo appearances in Europe with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and RSNO; in North America with the Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Baltimore and Toronto Symphony orchestras; and with the Seoul Philharmonic.

A consummate recitalist, Francesco has recently appeared at the Auditorium Lyon, Prague's Rudolfinum Dvořák Hall, Tonhalle Zürich, Schubertiade Festival, and La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland. This season he performs at Vienna's Musikverein, Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and London's Wigmore Hall, where he is a regular favourite.

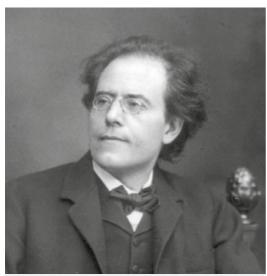
Francesco's musical artistry is documented on numerous recordings that have received awards and critical acclaim, such as Schubert's last Piano Sonatas, Debussy's *Préludes*, Mozart Piano Concertos with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Andrew Manze, and two of the most demanding pieces of the piano literature: Liszt's *Transcendental Études* and B Minor Sonata.

In 2024, Francesco collaborated with director Jan Schmidt-Garre to create the documentary *The Alchemy of the Piano*. Filmed over one year, he talks with some of the world's leading performers, including his mentor, the late Alfred Brendel, Maria João Pires, Stephen Kovacevich and Sir Antonio Pappano.

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Symphony No7

in E Minor



FIRST PERFORMANCE
Prague, 19 September 1908
DURATION 79 minutes

- 1. Langsam Allegro risoluto, ma non troppo
- 2. Nachtmusik I
- 3. Scherzo
- 4. Nachtmusik II
- 5. Rondo Finale

Gustav Mahler was anxious about the premiere of his Symphony No7, which he was due to conduct in Prague on 19 September 1908. So worried, in fact, that – according to his wife Alma, at least – he became physically ill, took to bed when not rehearsing or revising parts, and avoided even his closest friends who were there to celebrate the grand unveiling.

Three years earlier, when he'd finished writing the Symphony – the score is precisely dated 15 August 1905, though he tinkered with the orchestration and made minor changes into the beginning of 1906 – things had been so different. There were no doubts as to Mahler's stature as one of Europe's – and therefore the world's – most accomplished musicians. He was revered as Director of the Vienna State Opera (and also of its house band, the Vienna Philharmonic) and was gaining increasing international recognition in the area he valued most – as a composer. He adored his wife Alma, and their second daughter, Anna Justine, had been born the previous June. Even his composing was flowing effortlessly - well, almost. While he was in his beloved composing hut in Maiernigg, near Austria's Wörthersee, in the summer of 1904, he put the finishing touches to his Symphony No6 and also sketched out what would become No7's second and fourth movements. The following summer, he completed the rest of No7 – after a quick trip to the Italian Dolomites to overcome temporary writer's block

So what had changed by 1908? For Mahler, almost everything. A concerted campaign against him in Vienna had forced his resignation from the State Opera in March 1907 – partly fuelled by opposition to his new approaches and high standards, and partly the result of continuing anti-Semitic prejudice (despite Mahler's conversion from Judaism to Catholicism in 1897, expressly to secure the Viennese appointment).

Furthermore, his first daughter – Maria Anna – had died of scarlet fever in July 1907 at the age of four, and Mahler himself was diagnosed with an incurable heart condition (he would die from a related illness in 1911, aged 50).

Against that backdrop of professional turmoil and personal tragedy, Mahler also knew that revealing the daring, forward-looking Symphony No7 to the world would be a highly risky endeavour. As it turned out, he was right to be concerned. The audience reaction at its first performance was polite but rather cool, while critics complained it was bewildering, baffling and made no sense at all. The Seventh remains probably the thorniest of Mahler's symphonies even for 21st-century listeners: the composer himself ruefully observed that it would take the world some time to come to terms with his music

What is it about the piece that makes it so challenging? For a start, it lacks the clear narrative or autobiographical significance of some of Mahler's earlier and later symphonies, and its musical language is more complex, its harmonies more advanced, its textures sometimes teeming with lines competing for attention (in stark contrast to the ringing clarity of his melody-plus-accompaniment, song-inspired textures of earlier symphonies). Furthermore, its (typically, for Mahler) expansive, five-movement form seems to plunge us headlong into darkness, mystery, even threat before we're apparently rescued by the dazzling brightness of its finale. Not for nothing did Mahler title the second and fourth movements 'Nachtmusik' (literally Night Music). The entire work even gained the nickname 'Song of the Night' (not Mahler's own, and it hasn't stuck).

The five movements in fact follow an immense arch form, with the first and fifth longer and more complex, while the second, third and fourth

are slightly shorter 'character' pieces. After a slow funeral march of an introduction – with a melody sung out balefully in the distinctive tones of a tenor horn – the first movement erupts with energy in its more urgent later music, even if its still centre point is a shimmering, sensuous dreamscape (perhaps one of Mahler's magical evocations of his beloved Alpine landscapes).

The second movement – the Symphony's first 'Nachtmusik' – opens with a slow-moving melody that echoes back and forth between two horns, one nearby and the other distant (and it may make listeners of a certain age recall a certain motor oil advert). Those horn calls develop, however, into music that seems to combine charm and threat, as though its nocturnal monsters are dancing in the shadows on the edge of sleep.

Those monsters come far closer in the spectral grotesquerie of the Symphony's central Scherzo, a macabre dance of death that, it's even been suggested, might be a deranged Viennese waltz, a portrait of the city that Mahler both loved and hated, and which treated him in similar terms. The more enticing, romantic aspects of the night come into focus in the fourth movement, 'Nachtmusik II', in which mandolin and guitar join the orchestral harp in a vivid evocation of a Mediterranean serenade.

Speaking to his Czech Philharmonic musicians during rehearsals for the Prague premiere, Mahler announced his final movement: 'And now comes the DAY!' Kicked off by an alarm clock of boisterous, pounding timpani and raucous brass fanfares, it's a triumphant if noisy reawakening that lurches from idea to idea, its moods constantly shifting as it plummets towards its joyful, if somewhat violent, conclusion.

If early listeners were left rather nonplussed by the Seventh Symphony, one prominent and

particularly pioneering musical figure adored the piece: Arnold Schoenberg. At that time devising his own, more uncompromising, far more challenging innovations that would propel music far beyond traditional tonality, Schoenberg wrote to Mahler after an early performance: 'The impressions made on me by the Seventh are permanent; I am now really entirely yours. I had the feeling of a sensational intensity that moves the listener in such a way as to make them lose their balance, without giving them anything in its place.'

Perhaps it's the Symphony's very darkness and complexity, its refusal to provide easy or succinct answers, that makes it so powerful and so very modern. If it's simply a 'song of the night', then Mahler's hours of darkness are a place of fantasy and wonder as well as threat and danger, and we eventually wake in a place not just of brightness and optimism, but also of disjointedness and confusion. Rather than tracing a literal night-to-dawn storyline, perhaps the Seventh Symphony might be understood as a journey into the darkness of the inner self – another prominent, pioneering figure in turn-of-the-century Vienna, after all, was a certain Sigmund Freud.

© David Kettle

If you enjoyed Mahler's Symphony No7, why not try the **Adagietto** from his **Symphony No5** (13-15 Nov 2025).

The Arts in 1908

In Music

The Unanswered Question by Charles Ives Rapsodie espagnole by Maurice Ravel Passacaglia for Orchestra Op1 by Anton Webern

In Literature

A Room with a View by E M Forster
The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth
Grahame
The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck by Beatrix
Potter
Scouting for Boys by Robert Baden-Powell

In Art

Houses at l'Estaque by Georges Braque
The Kiss by Gustav Klimt
The Doge's Palace Seen from San Giorgio
Maggiore by Claude Monet
The Camden Town Murder by Walter Sickert



EDINBURGH

FRI 24 OCT: 7.30pm

GLASGOW

SAT 25 OCT: 7.30pm

Panufnik Sinfonia Sacra (Symphony No3) Matthew Rooke Tamboo-Bamboo Concerto for Timpani and Orchestra World Premiere Beethoven Symphony No3 Eroica

Anthony Parnther Conductor Paul Philbert Timpani







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Also sprach Zarathustra

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GLASGOW

SAT 15 NOV: 7.30pm



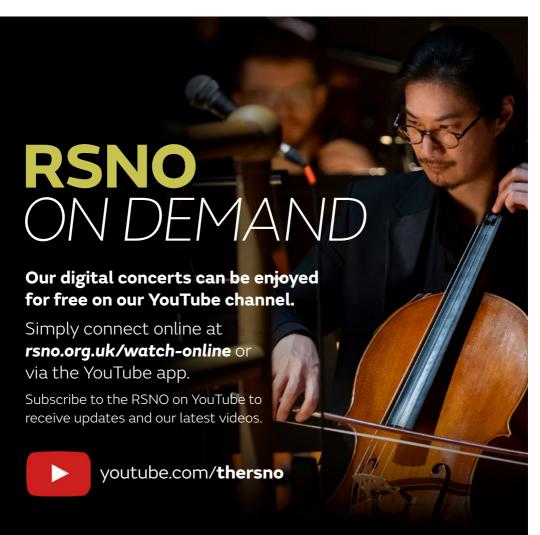
Mahler Adagietto from Symphony No5 James Newton Howard Violin Concerto No2 UK Premiere

Barber Adagio for Strings **R Strauss** Also sprach Zarathustra

Alexander Shelley Conductor James Ehnes Violin Big Noise Govanhill (Glasgow only)

















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