

A young man with light brown hair, wearing a dark tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a white bow tie, is captured in profile, conducting an orchestra. He holds a baton in his right hand and gestures with his left. The background is a blurred concert hall with warm lighting and other musicians visible.

RSNO

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA

Gershwin & Rachmaninov

Music Hall, Aberdeen
Thu 20 Nov 2025 7.30pm

Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Fri 21 Nov 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
Sat 22 Nov 7.30pm

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Gershwin & Rachmaninov

Music Hall, Aberdeen Thu 20 Nov 2025 7.30pm

Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 21 Nov 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 22 Nov 7.30pm

Rachmaninov's emotionally charged Symphony No3 is packed full of sweeping melodies and the bittersweet memories of the home he left behind. It's the finale in our concert where classical meets jazz. First though, RSNO Principal Guest Conductor Patrick Hahn swaps podium for piano in Antheil's *A Jazz Symphony* and pianist Frank Dupree takes centre stage with his jazz trio in Gershwin's hugely popular Piano Concerto in F.

JOËLLE BROAD Mission Mars [4']

KEITH RAMSEY The Journey Begins [2'] *WORLD PREMIERE*
Both pieces Side-by-Side with Big Noise Wester Hailes

ANTHEIL A Jazz Symphony (1955 version) [7']

GERSHWIN Piano Concerto in F: arranged for Jazz Trio
by Frank Dupree [31']

INTERVAL

RACHMANINOV Symphony No3 in A Minor Op44 [40']

Patrick Hahn Conductor (Side-By-Side, Gershwin, Rachmaninov)
Piano (Antheil)

Frank Dupree Conductor (Antheil) Piano (Gershwin)

Jakob Krupp Double Bass

Obi Jenne Percussion

Big Noise Wester Hailes (Edinburgh only)

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

**BBC
RADIO**



The Glasgow performance
will be recorded for broadcast
on BBC Radio 3 in December

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

If viewing these notes at the concert, please do so considerately and not during performances.

**Please silence all mobile telephones and alerts, and refrain from taking photographs,
without flash, until the end of each piece.**

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Edgardo Rocha Tenor

Andreas Landin Baritone

RSNO Chorus

Stephen Doughty Director, RSNO Chorus

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Welcome

Welcome to you all to this evening's concert, and particularly our Aberdeen audience for the first time this Season.

Tonight we are joined by not one but three soloists – Frank Dupree, Jakob Krupp and Obi Jenne. I'm really looking forward to hearing the trio's take on Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F and seeing these remarkably talented musicians in something so exciting and new. We're also lucky to have Principal Guest Conductor Patrick Hahn playing piano. Patrick is a seriously versatile musician in classical and jazz – even cabaret – and I am certain you will see his flair this evening.

Our Edinburgh audience will hear the young musicians from Big Noise Wester Hailes opening the concert. As always, it is an absolute pleasure to have these brilliant young people with us. Seeing them performing on the concert hall stage is such a joy for audiences and our own musicians alike. I hope you'll join me in giving them a very warm welcome.

We recently announced the emerging composers participating in our Film Composers Lab 2025:26 – Daniel Abrahams, Thomas Booker-Price, Lucy Hackett, Sam Hall and Rachel Mair – ahead of the first workshop this weekend. Film Composers Lab forms part of the raft of projects our dedicated Learning and Engagement team work on throughout the year. You can find out more about their work at rsno.org.uk/join-in.

Finally, I'm pleased to say that our Glasgow performance is being recorded and will be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in December. Please keep an eye on our social channels for the date of when to tune in and listen again.

Alistair Mackie

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Keep in touch with the RSNO

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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

Igor Yuzefovich
LEADER
Lena Zeliszewska
ASSOCIATE LEADER
Tamás Fejes
ASSISTANT LEADER
Patrick Curlett
Cheryl Crockett
Caroline Parry
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Elizabeth Bamping
Lorna Rough
Susannah Lowdon
Alan Manson
Liam Lynch
Veronica Marziano
Stewart Webster

SECOND VIOLIN

Emma Oldfield
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Jacqueline Speirs
Marion Wilson
Emily Nenniger
Paul Medd
Anne Bünemann
Sophie Lang
Robin Wilson
Kirstin Drew
Colin McKee
Helena Rose
Fiona Stephen

VIOLA

Tom Dunn
PRINCIPAL
Felix Tanner
Asher Zaccardelli
Lisa Rourke
Claire Dunn
Katherine Wren
Maria Trittinger
Francesca Hunt
Beth Woodford
David McCreadie

CELLO

Pei-Jee Ng
PRINCIPAL
Betsy Taylor
Kennedy Leitch
Yuuki Bouterey-Ishido
Rachael Lee
Sarah Digger
Gunda Baranauskaitė
Niamh Molloy

DOUBLE BASS

Nikita Naumov
PRINCIPAL
Jamie Kenny
Michael Rae
Moray Jones
Emily Green
Tom Neil

FLUTE

Katherine Bryan
PRINCIPAL
Siobhan Grealy
Adam Richardson
GUEST PRINCIPAL PICCOLO

OBOE

Peter Dykes
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Laura Ritchie
Henry Clay
PRINCIPAL COR ANGLAIS

CLARINET

Timothy Orpen
PRINCIPAL
William Knight
Duncan Swindells
PRINCIPAL BASS CLARINET

BASSOON

David Hubbard
PRINCIPAL
Jamie Louise White
Paolo Dutto
PRINCIPAL CONTRABASSOON

HORN

Amadea Dazeley-Gaist
PRINCIPAL
Alison Murray
Andrew McLean
Martin Murphy
Peter McNeill

TRUMPET

Christopher Hart
PRINCIPAL
Gideon Brooks
Jason Lewis

TROMBONE

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

TUBA

John Whitener
PRINCIPAL

TIMPANI

Tom Hunter
GUEST PRINCIPAL

PERCUSSION

Simon Lowdon
PRINCIPAL
Simon Archer
Colin Hyson
Julian Wolstencroft
Robbie Bremner

HARP

Pippa Tunnell

PIANO/CELESTE

Lynda Cochrane

Patrick Hahn

Conductor



Patrick Hahn is one of the most sought after and exciting conductors of his generation. He was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the RSNO in 2024. He is also General Music Director of the Sinfonieorchester und Oper Wuppertal and Principal Guest Conductor of the Münchner Rundfunkorchester of the Bayerischer Rundfunk (Munich Radio Orchestra). He was Principal Guest Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra between 2021 and 2023.

As a guest conductor in the 2024/25 season, Patrick made his first appearances with the hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Brussels Philharmonic and RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Turin, at the Semperoper Dresden conducting Richard Strauss' *Intermezzo* and Staatsoper Hamburg with Wagner's *Parsifal*. Return visits included the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Vienna Symphony and Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich. He also took part in the Johann Strauss 2025 celebration in Vienna, celebrating the 200th anniversary of Strauss' birth conducting a concert performance of *Der Carneval in Rom*.

Previous seasons' highlights include his debut at Zürich Opera House with Barrie Kosky's production of Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe* and New National Theatre Tokyo with Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, as well as debuts with the Bamberg Symphony and the SWR Symphonieorchester in Stuttgart. Patrick enjoys a regular relationship with Klangforum Wien and the Vienna Symphony, most recently conducting Schoenberg's *Ertwartung* with Dorothea Röschmann at the Vienna Musikverein.

Patrick and the Münchner Rundfunkorchester's explorations and recordings of rarely performed repertoire such as Viktor Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* and Alexander von Zemlinsky's *Eine florentinische Tragödie* have received critical acclaim. Other recordings include Alpha label's Britten and Bruch Violin Concertos with Kerson Leong and the Philharmonia Orchestra, and Beethoven's Piano Concertos 1 and 2 with Olivier Cavé and the Kammerakademie Potsdam.

Aside from his work in classical music, Patrick accompanies himself on the piano singing cabaret songs by the Austrian satirist and composer Georg Kreisler. As a jazz pianist, he received awards from the Chicago Jazz Festival, and the Outstanding Soloist Award from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse as the best jazz pianist of the 37th Annual Jazz Festival.

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Joëlle Broad

Mission Mars

DURATION 4 minutes

Mission Mars was written in 2008, the first year of Big Noise, for a concert with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra string players. It was written for children near the start of their learning and without the need to use music. The musical material is based on the highest and lowest strings on the four different instruments of the string section. By focusing on playing open strings, young players are able to develop their bowing and sound production in an ensemble. For this performance, Joëlle has added extra wind and percussion parts and this is the first time it has been played in this way. The piece finishes with a countdown from 10 before we 'blast off'!

Joëlle Broad

Composer

Joëlle Broad is a musician, teacher, composer, mentor and workshop leader. She learned violin through the peripatetic music service on the Wirral. Participating in a rich experience of youth ensembles and orchestras led to her pursuing music as her career.

Joëlle studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and has worked with many Scottish arts organisations, including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Drake Music Scotland. She was one of the original team members at Big Noise Raploch in Stirling, the first Big Noise programme which began work in 2008, and currently works as curriculum leader (strings) across Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programmes. She is a tutor and mentor for the Benedetti Foundation and was commissioned to compose six pieces for beginner orchestras for the Foundation's 2023 programme.

Joëlle writes music that has musical development at its heart, and is committed to creating pieces that are musically interesting at the early stages of playing. She also teaches violin for the RCS's Junior Department in the primary instrumental programme and runs a violin project at her local school, Dunning Primary. This led to her pursuing music as her career.

Keith Ramsey

The Journey Begins

DURATION 2 minutes

Composed for Big Noise Wester Hailes and the RSNO, *The Journey Begins* receives its world premiere in this performance, marking the first time music by American composer Keith Ramsey has been performed in Scotland. Written for the young string players to perform alongside the RSNO's musicians, the piece takes inspiration from the sweeping soundtracks of great film composers, capturing the excitement and wonder of discovering the joy of music. Designed as a learning experience, the work introduces a variety of string techniques – from pizzicato to a range of bowing styles – allowing young players to explore colour, texture and expression. Like its title, the piece marks the start of a musical journey, full of energy, curiosity and imagination.

Keith Ramsey

Composer

Keith Ramsey is an American composer based in Prague, Czech Republic. A graduate of Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania, where he studied music composition, Ramsey continued his musical training in Central Europe under the guidance of Jiří Gemrot at the Prague Conservatory. His compositions have been performed internationally, including by the Filharmonie Hradec Králové, who premiered his *Symphonic Dances*, and by professional players

at the renowned Vienna Synchron Stage, where his work *Medallion of Saint Paul* was recorded. His choral piece *Psalm 13* has been performed at Vienna's St Stephen's Cathedral.

In addition to concert music, Ramsey has written for film and animation, contributing original music to the short film *Under Pressure*, which toured

multiple international festivals, as well as to the upcoming Czech-produced animated series *Louis the Piglet*. Active in Prague's vibrant music scene, he also performs regularly as a keyboardist with the Filmová Filharmonie, often creating custom synth sounds to authentically recreate the iconic textures of well-known film scores.

Big Noise Wester Hailes



Adam Nabeel Violin
Adeola Abedoye Violin
Alanis Martin Violin
Alfie Thomson Violin
Ava Johnston Cello
Avah Angus Violin
Bella Menzies Viola
Bethany Dowling Violin
Brandon Fraser Cello
Daniel Farmer Cello
Fatima Adli Fadhelalmawa
Double Bass
Fedora Lyinbor Violin
Fikayo Omolewu Viola
James Orman Cello
Jake Thomson Double Bass

Jax Igbinovia Double Bass
Lavinia Fodulu Viola
Leigha-Mai Douglas Cello
Lewis Brudenell Cello
Lewis Macfarlane Cello
Linaz Amin Violin
Lucy Gagliardi Double Bass
Lyle Brown Violin
Mercy Babalola Violin
Mila Menzies Violin
Nathaniel Szatkowski Viola
Olivia Lawrie Violin
Olivia Chiamaka Chiedozie
Chimezie Viola
Orla-Rose Wilson Cello
Perrie Halliday Violin

Pleasant Akin-Adeyemi Violin
Praise Muyezwa Violin
Seyda Tijani Ogoo Cello
Sidrah Hurmat Violin
Sofia Gusaciok Cello
Sophia Menzies Violin
Szymon Nikolajuk Viola
Toni Sogbesan Violin
Zoe Lamiz Dotel Violin



George Antheil (1900-1959)

A Jazz Symphony

1955 version



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Original version: New York, 10 April 1927

DURATION 7 minutes

George Antheil may be a largely forgotten name, but for a brief period in the Twenties he was a vivid and highly engaging musical phenomenon, a boisterous young fellow ‘with bangs, a squished nose and a big mouth with a grin in it – a regular American high-school boy!’ who promoted himself as a musical Futurist, lived the dream in Paris and was friends with Joyce, Hemingway, Fitzgerald and Picasso, and whose general vibe is pretty well summarised by his 1945 autobiography *Bad Boy of Music*. Later on, in the Forties, he reinvented himself as a Hollywood composer and, with the actress Hedy Lamarr, invented a coding system for the radio signals of remote-controlled torpedoes.

Antheil’s greatest success – very much *de scandale* – was his *Ballet Mécanique* of 1924, a massive, cacophonous modernist piece involving a battery of pianola pianos, evidently designed

to cause maximum outrage – and the riotous Paris premiere indeed ‘outsacked the *Sacre* [du printemps]’, as Virgil Thomson put it.

Antheil intended his next big piece, *A Jazz Symphony* of 1925, as ‘synthesized jazz’, a fusion idiom rather along the lines of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* of 1924, a piece which Antheil was sure his own would eclipse. But though the ‘symphony’ (it’s not really a symphony) was received with a standing ovation at its US premiere at Carnegie Hall in 1927, performed by blues pioneer W C Handy’s orchestra of African-American musicians, it was itself eclipsed by the disaster of the rest of the concert, a catastrophic performance of *Ballet Mécanique*, a blow from which Antheil’s reputation never recovered.

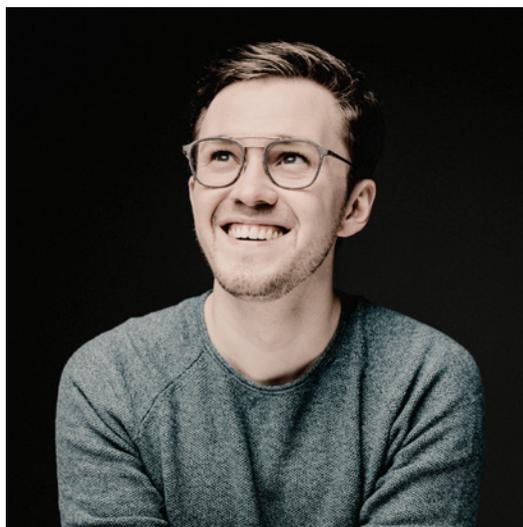
But we still have this exuberant composition, which seems to mash up Stravinsky, Scott Joplin, a mariachi band, a spot of Charleston and a sentimental old-time waltz – among other things – in a joyous and playful piece that has an immense amount of fun with the orchestra (plus two banjos and two pianos). A dirty jazz trumpet slides about over a skewed Stravinskian vamp, the crazy piano part anticipates experimental jazz of the Sixties, and a lot of other improbable things happen too.

This evening’s concert features Antheil’s 1955 reduction of the score for regular orchestra: rather more sober and civilised than the original, but still an authentic glimpse of the wild variety of music in 1920s Paris, brought together in hopeful, riotous cohabitation – before they all decided to go their own separate ways, arguably until Leonard Bernstein had another exhilarating go at the same sort of idea in his opera *Candide*.

© Robert Thicknesse

Frank Dupree

Piano/Conductor



Frank Dupree, winner of the International Classical Music Award and the Opus Klassik, is one of the most versatile pianists and conductors of the new generation. Known for his infectious energy and unbridled enthusiasm, Dupree captivates audiences not only as a soloist, sharing the stage with renowned orchestras worldwide, but also as a player/director, conductor, and the leader of his own jazz ensemble, the Frank Dupree Trio. Since 2023 he has been the Artistic Partner of the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn.

During the 2024/25 season Dupree made his solo debut with the London Symphony Orchestra/Sir Antonio Pappano (Kapustin Piano Concerto No4), Frankfurt Radio Orchestra/Patrick Hahn (Gershwin Piano Concerto in F) and Göteborgs Symfoniker/Santtu-Matias Rouvali (Kapustin Piano Concerto No5). Re-invitations took him to the SWR Symphonieorchester, Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, Dortmunder Philharmoniker (player/director), Munich Symphony, Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie Chemnitz, Göttinger Symphonie and Sinfonieorchester Liechtenstein. In chamber music, he performed at the Alte

Oper Frankfurt, Tonhalle Zürich, Konzerthaus Wien, Brucknerhaus Linz and Concertgebouw Amsterdam.

Dupree is a passionate chamber musician who effortlessly crosses genre boundaries, and the same can be said for his Frank Dupree Trio: together with Jakob Krupp and Obi Jenne he explores the intersection between jazz and classical music. In addition, he continues to develop innovative chamber collaborations, with particularly flourishing artistic relationships with Kian Soltani, Vivi Vassileva, Timothy Ridout, Simon Höfele, Noa Wildschut and Pablo Barragán.

Dupree's current CDs focus predominantly on the works of Ukrainian-born composer Nikolai Kapustin (1937–2020). In 2024 Capriccio released Kapustin's Piano Concertos No2 and No6 with the SWR Symphonieorchester & SWR Big Band. His interpretations of Kapustin's Piano Concertos No4 (Württemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn/Case Scaglione) and No5 (Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin/Dominik Beykirch) have earned him both the International Classical Music Award and the Diapason d'Or. Dupree's interest in contemporary music is reflected in his world premieres, both recorded and on stage, and close collaborations with composers such as Wolfgang Rihm, HK Gruber, Péter Eötvös, Christian Jost and Daniel Bjarnason.

Born in 1991 in Rastatt, Germany, Dupree began piano and percussion lessons at an early age. He later studied piano under Professor Sontraud Speidel and conducting with Professors Péter Eötvös and Hans Zender at the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe. In 2012 he was awarded first prize at the International Hans von Bülow Competition in Meiningen for his performance both as pianist and conductor interpreting Beethoven. He is a Steinway Artist.

Jakob Krupp

Double Bass



Jakob Krupp is equally active in classical, jazz and contemporary music. His international career has taken him to concert halls such as the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Berlin Philharmonie and Wiener Musikverein. He has made guest appearances at festivals such as the Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Berliner Festspiele and Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Highlights of his career include concerts as a jazz soloist with the Staatsorchester Saarbrücken, Dortmunder Philharmoniker and Münchner Symphoniker. During his studies, he became a member of the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, where he worked with conductors such as Jonathan Nott, Ingo Metzmacher and Sylvain Cambreling. In 2019 he was a double bass player in the Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Mainz. He currently collaborates with ensemble reflektor.

Krupp had already become well known in the field of jazz at a young age. He won several prizes at 'jugend jazzt', and also won the concert prize at the Jazztage Dresden. Since then, he has been invited to jazz clubs and festivals throughout Germany, and has shared the stage with artists such as Tony Lakatos, Christof Lauer and Libor Šima.

A graduate of the Internationale Ensemble Modern Akademie, Krupp is a highly regarded interpreter of contemporary music, both as an ensemble musician and as a soloist, for example in projects with Ensemble Modern, Rimini Protokoll, KlangForum Heidelberg and Orchester im Treppenhaus. He has collaborated with composers such as Brian Ferneyhough, Rebecca Saunders and Heiner Goebbels, and has participated in numerous world premieres. In 2022 he was an artist-in-residence at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Krupp grew up in Trier and, after graduating from the Conservatoire de Ville de Luxembourg, studied classical double bass and contemporary music at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt. He has a low bass voice and is active as a singer.

Obi Jenne

Percussion



Drummer Obi Jenne is internationally acclaimed for his distinctive stage presence, brilliant technical skills, and flair for blending disparate musical genres. Concert tours have taken him to major concert halls on all continents, such as the Royal Albert Hall in London, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, KKL Luzern, Teatro Romano di Verona, NCPA Mumbai and all the main concert halls in Germany, as well as to international festivals such as the Jazz Open Stuttgart. He has recorded nearly 100 albums and is a recipient of both the ICMA and the German Record Critics' Award.

Jenne is the leader of the Stuttgart Jazz Orchestra, the Porsche Big Band, Band in the Bix and the cult band Soul Diamonds. He has performed with Dee Dee Bridgewater, Helen Schneider, Lang Lang, Art Farmer, Jimmy Woode,

Benny Golson, Ack van Rooyen, Chuck Berry, Imaani Saleem, The Pointer Sisters, Les McCann, Cécile Verny, Klaus Graf, Olaf Polziehn, David Gazarov, Bill Ramsey, Kenny Wheeler, Katie Melua, Till Brönner, Chaka Khan, and Roby and Tony Lakatos. Jenne is the drummer for the 'German Jazz Masters' with Klaus Doldinger, Wolfgang Dauner, Manfred Schoof and Wolfgang Schmid.

Born in Heidelberg and inspired by jazz and classical music since early childhood, Jenne began studying classical percussion at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Trossingen at the age of 17. His first professional engagements were with almost all of the radio symphony orchestras in Germany, the Ensemble Modern and German Brass. He has served as a percussionist in the Nationaltheater-Orchester Mannheim, and as an academy player with the Berliner Philharmoniker.

Jenne's early interest in jazz and groove music can be traced back to a masterclass with legendary drummer Elvin Jones that he attended when he was 12. This unforgettable experience with such an exceptional musician has influenced Jenne to this day, and he regards the interaction inherent in playing in a band as the highest form of musical fulfilment.

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Piano Concerto in F

Arranged for Jazz Trio by Frank Dupree



FIRST PERFORMANCE

New York, 3 December 1925

DURATION 31 minutes

1. Allegro

2. Adagio – Andante con moto

3. Allegro agitato

George Gershwin stands in history as one of only a very few composers to not only have conquered the worlds of both commercial and classical music, but to have fused those two worlds together with such a degree of effortless class that even the father of the Second Viennese School, Arnold Schoenberg, was won over, declaring Gershwin to be a rare composer ‘whose feelings actually coincide with those of the average man on the street’; and it’s worth knowing that the admiration was mutual, to the extent that Gershwin financed the first recording of Schoenberg’s four string quartets.

Gershwin himself, though, needed a bit of nudging to discover this gift of his. Indeed, if there’s a figure we really have to thank for the existence of the Piano Concerto in F, then it’s Paul Whitehouse, one of the most famous dance band leaders of the 1920s, who in 1923 was so fascinated by the idea of merging the worlds of classical and non-classical that he organised a concert titled *An Experiment in Modern Music*, and asked Gershwin to write a work for it that would meld classical and jazz styles. Gershwin refused, partly due to a too-short deadline. However, Whitehouse, undeterred (or desperate), fed the story of Gershwin writing a jazz concerto to the *New York Times*, forcing Gershwin on board after all. The result was that on 12 February 1924 came the premiere of the one-movement work for piano, jazz band and strings that would take his already-glistening career to an entirely new level of fame and acclaim: *Rhapsody in Blue*, with Gershwin himself at the piano. And in the audience that night was the Director of the New York Symphony Orchestra, Walter Damrosch, who himself was so excited

by what he heard that the following year he commissioned Gershwin to take the idea further, this time bringing jazz to a typical full-size concerto for piano and symphony orchestra.

What Gershwin came up with for Damrosch is a piece of 'crossover' brilliance, sounding both indisputably like a work that deserves its place on the classical concert stage while simultaneously roaring and rasping with the sounds of the Jazz Age. Cast as a traditional three-movement, fast-slow-fast concerto, its opening *Allegro* kicks off initially sounding thoroughly classical, with its pounding timpani, upwards woodwind flourishes and ringing cymbals. Seconds later, though, the brass, strings and clarinets introduce a theme that's clearly imitating the dance hit of the decade: the Charleston. The cross-genre melding continues as the piano enters, because while its theme is clearly bluesy, its initial statement and subsequent treatment feel eminently classical, and as the movement progresses, the solo part becomes as great a vehicle for virtuosic display as any Rachmaninov piano concerto.

The central *Adagio* is equally bluesy, opening with a sultry solo for muted trumpet, accompanied by a trio of clarinets. The final *Allegro agitato* is a high-impact, rhythmically driven, jauntily edge-of-your-seat ride to the finish line, whose various reappearances of melodic material from the earlier movements eventually climax with a grand restatement of the Concerto's opening pounding-timpani idea.

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If you enjoyed Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F, why not try his ***Rhapsody in Blue***, played by Scottish pianist Ethan Loch (27-28 Mar 2026).

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Symphony No3

in A Minor Op44



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Philadelphia, 6 November 1936

DURATION 40 minutes

- 1. Lento–Allegro moderato**
- 2. Adagio ma non troppo–Allegro vivace**
- 3. Allegro**

In the tumultuous years leading up to the Revolution of 1917, Rachmaninov endeavoured to concentrate on his musical activities, taking his wife and family with him as he toured the world conducting and playing:

I was so engrossed with my work that I did not notice what went on around me. Consequently, life during the anarchistic upheaval, which turned the existence of a non-proletarian into hell on earth, was comparatively easy for me. I sat at a writing table or the piano all day without troubling about the rattle of machine guns and rifle shots.

However, when in December 1917 Rachmaninov was offered a concert tour of Scandinavia, he realised that this was perhaps his last opportunity to get his family safely away from Moscow. He was never to return. 'There is no Russia now,' he would say in later years.

Rachmaninov spent the summer of 1934 at his new home, the Villa Senar near Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. There he wrote the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. As usual, he spent the winter months touring, and indeed, March 1935 found him giving a recital in Glasgow's St Andrew's Hall. In Edinburgh he stayed at the Braid Hills Hotel, where he was such a distinguished and high-spending guest that the management obligingly removed a first-floor window to allow a Steinway grand piano to be installed.

Arriving back at the Villa Senar in April 1935, and encouraged by the success of the *Rhapsody*, he was determined to write a new symphony, his third. Five days before leaving Switzerland to go back on the road, he wrote, somewhat disappointedly, to his cousin Sofiya:

I have finished two-thirds of my new symphony, but that last third of the work is still in rough draft. If you take into account that the first two-thirds took seventy days of intense work, for the last third – thirty-five days – there is not enough time. Travels begin and I must get down to playing the piano. So it looks as though my work will be put aside until next year.

The Symphony was indeed completed the following summer and was premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski in November 1936.

In contrast to the humour and light-heartedness of the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, the overall mood of the Third Symphony is sombre and defiant. Like the Second Symphony, the Third opens with a slow introduction, and again, just like the Second, a motto haunts the entire work – here a chant-like theme first heard at the very opening on clarinet, cello and horn. This theme, in various guises and transformations, appears throughout the work.

The slow movement opens and closes with a variant of the motto theme. It is first heard played by the horns with harp accompaniment. A second subject is begun by a solo flute above divided strings. An agitated figure, announced by the violins, leads to an *accelerando*, and for a while this *Adagio* movement becomes an *Allegro vivace*, with springing triplets and ingenious percussion.

The finale begins with impetuous upward-rushing figures, though the mood darkens with a menacing return of the motto theme. A spirited fugato drives the work to an emphatic conclusion.

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