

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark, textured sweater, is playing a violin. She is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The background is a library or study, with bookshelves and books visible. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the woman's face and the violin.

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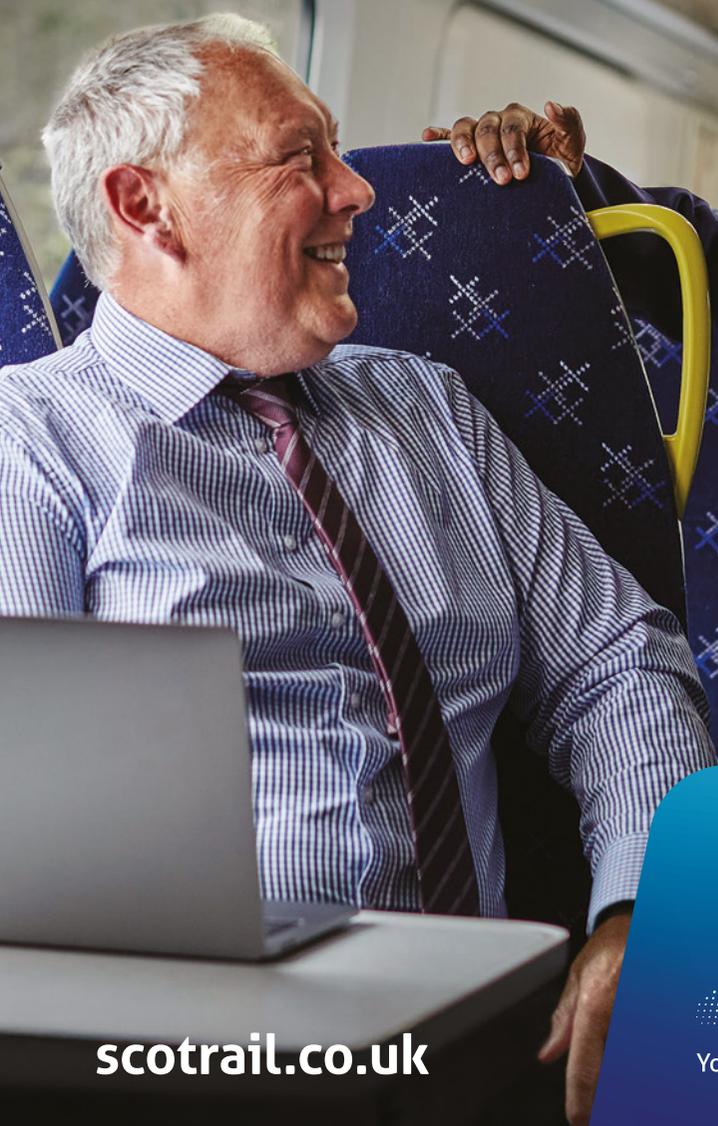
Beethoven's
Violin
Concerto

Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Fri 27 Feb 2026 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
Sat 28 Feb 7.30pm

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Beethoven's Violin Concerto

Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 27 Feb 2026 7.30pm
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 28 Feb 7.30pm

Musician extraordinaire, Jörg Widmann's talents know no bounds. Experience his dynamism tonight as he returns to the RSNO to conduct Mendelssohn's historical thriller of a symphony, his own explosive homage to Beethoven, *Con brio*, and joins the 'extraordinary' (Gramophone) violinist Veronika Eberle in a very personal performance of Beethoven's radiant Violin Concerto.

BEETHOVEN Violin Concerto in D Major Op61 [42']

INTERVAL

JÖRG WIDMANN *Con brio* [12']

MENDELSSOHN Symphony No5 in D Major Op107
Reformation [33']

Jörg Widmann Conductor
Veronika Eberle Violin
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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Please silence all mobile telephones and alerts, and refrain from taking photographs, without flash, until the end of each piece.

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Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony

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Benjamin Britten

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Welcome

Welcome to this evening's performance.

It's a great pleasure to have Jörg Widmann back with us. Jörg first visited in 2020 as a last-minute replacement in our Digital Season created during the Covid-19 pandemic; he proved to be one of the highlights of the series. Jörg really is one of the most creative musicians in the world right now – a man who can do it all! Tonight he conducts Beethoven and Mendelssohn, as well as his own composition, *Con brio*. During lockdown he wrote new cadenzas for each of the Beethoven Violin Concerto movements especially for our soloist Veronika Eberle, who makes her RSNO debut this weekend.

I'm sure many of you in Glasgow will have just been to our community orchestra's pre-concert showcase. All Together Now meet monthly with conductor Robert Baxter and receive coaching from our musicians. This evening they premiered a special commission by Lisa Robertson created in collaboration with the orchestra members. Don't worry if you missed the showcase; All Together Now perform again in April in Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's New Auditorium. For more information on the community orchestra and their performances, head to rsno.org.uk/alltogethernow

Community work is a vital part of what we do, and we are always diversifying the ways in which we reach Scotland's communities. As an example, just this week, to celebrate World Gaelic Week, First Violin Liam Lynch presented the Gaelic-language version of our animated film *Yoyo & The Little Auk* in The Birks Cinema, Aberfeldy, for local school pupils.

Next weekend, the fantastic RSNO Chorus and their director, Stephen Doughty, perform Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil* in Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh and St Aloysius' Church in Glasgow. I hope to see many of you there.

Alistair Mackie

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Royal Scottish National Orchestra



Formed in 1891, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. Awarded royal patronage by Her Late Majesty The Queen in 1977, its special status in the UK's cultural life was cemented in 2007 when it was recognised as one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies, supported by the Scottish Government.

Led by Music Director Thomas Søndergård, 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 tours internationally, most recently visiting 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 cultivated an international reputation for world-class film, television and videogame soundtrack recording. The Orchestra has recorded for BAFTA-winning

series *Silo* (Apple TV) and worked with the likes of GRAMMY Award-winning composer Lorne Balfe on *Life on Our Planet* (Netflix). Other notable titles include *Nuremberg* (Sony Pictures), *Now You See Me: Now You Don't* (Lionsgate), *Horizon: An American Saga* (Warner Bros) and *Star Wars Outlaws* (Ubisoft). The Orchestra records at its bespoke in-house facility 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. The RSNO's engagement offering includes its singing strand, encompassing a Buggy Choir and Chorus Academy in both Dundee and Glasgow and a lunchtime Workplace Choir, which complements the well-established and highly respected RSNO Youth Chorus and RSNO Chorus. The community choruses are designed with the benefits of group singing for health and wellbeing at their core and are open to all.

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LEADER
Lena Zeliszewska
ASSOCIATE LEADER
Tamás Fejes
ASSISTANT LEADER
Patrick Curlett
Caroline Parry
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Lorna Rough
Susannah Lowdon
Alan Manson
Liam Lynch
Veronica Marziano
Joana Rodriguez

SECOND VIOLIN

Cheryl Crockett
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Marion Wilson
Jacqueline Speirs
Emily Nenniger
Anne Bünemann
Sophie Lang
Robin Wilson
Kirstin Drew
Colin McKee
Helena Rose

VIOLA

Tom Dunn
PRINCIPAL
Felix Tanner
Asher Zaccardelli
Susan Buchan
Nicola McWhirter
Lisa Rourke
Maria Trittinger
Francesca Hunt

CELLO

Betsy Taylor
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Kennedy Leitch
Yuuki Bouterey-Ishido
Rachael Lee
Sarah Digger
Robert Anderson
Gunda Baranauskaitė
Joseph Donmall

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Jörg Widmann

Conductor



Jörg Widmann is one of the most remarkable and versatile artists of his generation. He is Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Academy, which has been a central pillar in the field of contemporary music within the festival since its founding by Pierre Boulez in 2004. During the 2025/26 season, he performs worldwide as a clarinetist, conductor and composer, including his third season as Principal Guest Conductor of the NDR Radiophilharmonie. He is also Associate Conductor of the Münchener Kammerorchester and Artistic Partner of Sinfonietta Riga.

Following engagements with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España, one of his main focuses of the 2025/26 season is on the United States: Widmann conducts the Cleveland Orchestra for the first time, as well as the Atlanta and Detroit Symphony orchestras. He also tours South America with the Münchener Kammerorchester.

Widmann gave the world premiere of Mark Andre's Clarinet Concerto *über* at the Donaueschinger Musiktage 2015. Other clarinet concertos dedicated to and written for him

include Wolfgang Rihm's *Musik für Klarinette und Orchester* (1999) and Aribert Reimann's *Cantus* (2006).

Widmann's compositions are performed regularly by conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, Daniel Harding, Kent Nagano, Franz Welser-Möst, Christian Thielemann, Iván Fischer, Andris Nelsons and Sir Simon Rattle, and premiered by orchestras including the Wiener and Berliner Philharmoniker, New York Philharmonic, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris and London Symphony Orchestra. He was Composer in Residence with the Berliner Philharmoniker during the 2023/24 season. The residency culminated in the world premiere of his Concerto for Horn, with Stefan Dohr as soloist and the Berliner Philharmoniker conducted by Rattle.

Widmann studied clarinet with Gerd Starke in Munich and Charles Neidich at the Juilliard School in New York, and later became a Professor of Clarinet and Composition, first at the University of Music, Freiburg and since 2017 as Chair Professor for Composition at the Barenboim-Said Academy, Berlin. In 2024 he was named a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, and received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Limerick in 2023. In 2025 he was elected President of the International Max-Reger-Society.

Widmann studied composition with Kay Westermann, Wilfried Hiller, Hans Werner Henze and Wolfgang Rihm. His works continue to receive many awards, most recently the Bach-Preis der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg and Musikpreis der Landeshauptstadt München.



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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Violin Concerto

in D Major Op61



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Vienna, 23 December 1806

DURATION 42 minutes

1. Allegro ma non troppo

2. Larghetto –

3. Rondo: Allegro

Today Beethoven's Violin Concerto is regarded as one of the Himalayan peaks of the concerto repertoire – which only makes the neglect it suffered in Beethoven's lifetime all the more surprising. It wasn't until the great violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim took up the work in 1844 that its fortunes began to change. But then, its premiere was not well-starred.

The Concerto was played for the first time by its original dedicatee, Franz Clement, at Vienna's Theater an der Wien on 23 December 1806. It is said that Clement more or less sight-read the violin part: even if he was a phenomenal player, that would hardly give him time to master the Concerto's emotional and intellectual complexities. One critic stated that the general verdict was 'that it contains beautiful passages, but ... that the context often seems broken, and that the endless repetition of unimportant passages produces a tiring effect'.

How seriously did Clement take his chosen task? According to one source, in the pause between the first two movements he improvised a jig holding the violin upside down! Whatever Beethoven thought of that, when the Violin Concerto appeared in print, two years later, it bore a dedication, not to Clement, but to Beethoven's close childhood friend Stephan von Bruening.

Perhaps we should have compassion for those bewildered critics, and even for Clement himself. Not only is the Concerto very long indeed by the standards of the Classical era, but technically it is hugely demanding, with an unprecedented amount of exposed high writing for the violin requiring pure tone and extra pressure from the fingers. 'When I composed it', Beethoven told the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, 'I was conscious of being inspired by God Almighty. Do you think I can consider your puny little fiddle when He speaks to me?'

All the same, the first movement begins gently, with a hymn-like theme for woodwind, preceded by five quiet drum-taps on the tonic, D. At first these drum-taps sound like a simple introductory figure, but they turn out to be a significant motif in their own right. The orchestra presents all the main themes, with two powerful fortissimo outbursts. As the second of these subsides the soloist enters, as though in mid-phrase, leading to an exquisite high-pitched version of the first theme. The rest of this movement maintains a fine balance between lyricism and dramatic display – which, it seems repeatedly to ask us, is the real heart of the matter: quiet reflection or resolute action?

In the slow movement lyricism prevails. The rapt, otherworldly quality of this music is enhanced by the muting of the strings and the extreme transparency of much of the orchestral

accompaniment. But at the very end, strings seize on the main theme's opening dotted rhythm and transform it into a jagged fortissimo. A short solo cadenza leads straight into the Rondo finale, and one of Beethoven's most catchy dance tunes. For most of its length the finale is buoyant and good-humoured; but after the climactic solo cadenza there is a moment of mystery as violinist and orchestra lead quietly through a wide range of distant keys before bringing us safely back home. The coda is mostly triumphant display, but with one little deft touch of humour left for the very end.

© Stephen Johnson

If you enjoyed Beethoven's Violin Concerto, why not try his [Symphony No9 Choral](#) [performances on 12 and 13 Jun 2026].

About the cadenzas

It was a great pleasure for me to write new cadenzas for Beethoven's Violin Concerto during Covid, for Veronika Eberle, Sir Simon Rattle and the London Symphony Orchestra. My inspiration was, of course, Beethoven's Concerto itself, but also the individual talents of the musicians involved. Needless to say, the solo violin takes centre stage. However, it is joined by two orchestral instruments – timpani and double bass. The solo violin plays either alone or in duet with one of the other instruments, and occasionally there are veritable chamber-music *terzettos* with all three instruments.

Despite the tonal and formal freedom, it was important to me for everything to revolve around melodic, harmonic and rhythmic material from the Violin Concerto itself. Nothing was to overshadow Beethoven's original, and yet I wanted to create a completely new tonal cosmos in which Beethoven's themes could appear in a different light. Another crucial consideration was to maintain a Beethovenian construction principle to keep the vastly differing cadenzas of the three movements together formally and to connect them as a group. For example, a fragment from the third movement is integral to the cadenza of the first movement, while conversely, the large thematic blocks from Beethoven's first movement radiate into the cadenzas of the second and third movements. I was aiming for a symphonic unity across all movements, so to speak, and carefully 'painted over' the recapitulation of the first movement to blur the classic boundaries between cadenza and orchestral recapitulation, seeking to make it emerge from the cadenza as organically and imperceptibly as possible. The cadenzas are written in my own musical language, but consist almost entirely of material from Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

May listeners hear the Concerto – in all its stark radicalism, its brazen beauty and its love of experimentation – in a new way with these cadenzas: as music of today.

© Jörg Widmann, 2022. Translation: Esther Dubielzig.

Veronika Eberle

Violin



Veronika Eberle's exceptional talent and the poise and maturity of her musicianship have been recognised by many of the world's finest orchestras, venues and festivals, as well as by some of the most eminent conductors.

In the 2025/26 season, Veronika makes her Carnegie Hall debut in a tour of Europe and the USA with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Other notable debuts include the Konzerthausorchester Berlin (Søndergård), Helsinki Philharmonic (Bihlmaier), Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony (Storgårds), Hyogo PAC Orchestra (Ottensamer) and RSNO (Widmann). She also makes returns to the Dresdner Philharmonie (Albrecht), BBC National Orchestra of Wales (Bloch), Gürzenich Orchestra (Bihlmaier) and Brussels Philharmonic (Ono).

Recent highlights include US debuts with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (Canellakis), Boston Symphony Orchestra (Stutzmann) and Cleveland Orchestra (Popelka), and returns to the LA Philharmonic (Rustioni), Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (Nagano) and Budapest Festival Orchestra (Fischer).

Other key collaborations include orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouworkest, Munich Philharmonic, Gewandhaus Orchestra and Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin, as well as conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Bernard Haitink, Daniel Harding, Christian Thielemann, Lorenzo Viotti, Louis Langrée, Robin Ticciati, Paavo Järvi, Alan Gilbert, Heinz Holliger, Sir Antonio Pappano and Andrés Orozco-Estrada. Veronika has worked closely with composers such as Toshio Hosokawa, who dedicated his violin concerto *Genesis* to her, and Jörg Widmann, who composed new cadenzas for Beethoven's Violin Concerto, which Veronika recorded with Rattle and the LSO.

As a dedicated chamber musician, Veronika performs regularly with artists such as Sol Gabetta, Steven Isserlis, Julia Hagen, Beatrice Rana, Nils Mönkemeyer and Dénes Várjon, performing at festivals including Klosters Music, Menuhin Festival Gstaad, Rheingau Musik Festival, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Mozartfest Würzburg, Carinthischer Sommer and Vevey Spring Festival. In the 2024/25 season, she returned to London's Wigmore Hall as Artist in Residence.

Veronika was a Radio 3 New Generation Artist 2011-13 and a Dortmund Konzerthaus 'Junge Wilde' artist 2010-12.

Born in Donauwörth, Veronika was a junior student at the Richard Strauss Konservatorium in Munich with Olga Voitova, later continuing her studies with Christoph Poppen and Ana Chumachenco. She plays the 1693 'Ries' Stradivarius, which is kindly on loan from the Reinhold Würth Musikstiftung.

Jörg Widmann (Born 1973)

Con brio

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Munich, 25 September 2008

DURATION 12 minutes

'The most important thing in my artistic career is to combine tradition and innovation,' German composer Jörg Widmann has said. And with its melding of Beethoven and now – of Classical gestures with a soundscape very much of our own times – you could hardly find a more pertinent description than that of his 2008 orchestral piece *Con brio*.

Born in 1973, Widmann is young enough not to have been overly conditioned by the dogma of the tradition-rejecting post-war avant-garde. His music is entirely at ease with – and very aware of – the centuries of music history that have gone before it, especially that of his own country. But for Widmann, music history isn't just Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, important though they are to his musical world, but also contemporary composers Henze, Rihm, Goebbels (all three of whom taught him) and Lachenmann.

The title of the piece means 'with vigour', and it was a favourite expression marking of Beethoven, seeming to encapsulate the bristling energy and heroism of a certain style of his music. Widmann's own *Con brio* was one of six pieces commissioned by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra for its 2008/09 season, to accompany a complete cycle of Beethoven's symphonies.

And the piece represents a constant, restless interplay between Beethoven's musical language and Widmann's own more contemporary sounds. Sometimes it's Widmann's modernistic gestures that seem to intrude on Beethoven's musical world; at other times it's Beethovenian gestures and sounds that emerge imperceptibly from a more dissonant, colouristic soundscape. The result brings in tongue-in-cheek humour, mischievous wit, and also a kind of febrile energy verging at times on deranged frenzy.

Con brio begins with timpani strokes and decisive orchestral chords, both of which play crucial roles throughout the piece. Instruments are later propelled off by the music's unstoppable energy to generate their own jagged, dissonant lines, or to multiply in filigree detail, or simply to break down into half-heard flutterings, mutterings and breathings. A sudden speed-up kicked off by lyrical woodwind figures propels us towards the work's mysterious, skittering ending, sounding like an enormous machine winding down until it grinds to a halt.

© David Kettle

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Symphony No5

in D Major Op107 **Reformation**



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Berlin, November 1832

DURATION 33 minutes

1. Andante – Allegro con fuoco

2. Allegro vivace

3. Andante

4. Andante con moto

For us lesser mortals, there's always a crumb of comfort in knowing that even the most gifted composers could suffer from moments of doubt. Felix Mendelssohn is a very good case in point. Although blessed with the most amazing compositional fluency, he was nevertheless extraordinarily self-critical. He laboured intensively over a number of his most significant works, refusing to sanction their publication until he was fully satisfied with what he had written.

On some occasions, his reaction was even more extreme. A good example is the so-called *Reformation* Symphony which, despite its numbering and rather high opus number, was in fact his second large-scale symphony. Mendelssohn began drafting the score in 1829 in the hope of completing it in time to celebrate the 350th anniversary the following year of the Augsburg Confession and thereby demonstrate to the world his deep commitment to the Lutheran faith.

A number of issues, however, conspired to delay these plans. One particular drawback took place in Paris in 1830, when conductor François Habeneck offered a trial performance of the work with the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra. But the orchestra condescendingly rejected the score after only one run-through, using the somewhat specious argument that Mendelssohn's music was 'too scholastic and lacking in melody'.

When a further performance that was supposed to take place in London the same year failed to materialise, Mendelssohn decided to revise the score. But even after completing his revisions, there was a further delay, since he had to wait until November 1832 for the work to receive its first public airing in Berlin under the title *Symphonie zur Feier der Kirchen-Revolution* (Symphony in celebration of the Church Revolution).

It is almost certain that Mendelssohn's ego was already bruised by the French rejection of his Symphony. But the rather tepid response to the work following its Berlin performance must have been even more disconcerting. These experiences merely served to discourage him from giving the Symphony a platform elsewhere. Indeed, such was Mendelssohn's negative attitude towards the work that by 1838 he had declared to his friend Julius Rietz: 'I can no longer stand the Reformation Symphony; I would prefer to burn it than any other one of my pieces; it shall never be published.' Fortunately, Rietz ignored the composer's protestations, but nonetheless waited 20 or so years after Mendelssohn's death in 1847 before publishing the score.

From our vantage point, it is difficult to understand why Mendelssohn should have lost confidence in a work which abounds in so many impressive passages, not least the fervent slow introduction to the first movement which displays a contrapuntal richness and nobility whose sound-world presages the radiant opening to his later oratorio *St Paul*. Undoubtedly, its most striking moment is the quotation of the Dresden Amen – a motif that was later used memorably by Wagner in his music-drama *Parsifal* and by Bruckner in his Ninth Symphony.

Equally compelling is the ensuing *Allegro con fuoco*, which generates a level of turbulence that is reminiscent of the closing pages to his overture *Fingal's Cave*, and the reintroduction of the Dresden Amen at the end of the development section is a masterstroke, providing a moment of necessary calm reflection.

The two middle movements are rather different. A light and charming Scherzo, tinged with obvious allusions to the equivalent movements in Beethoven's symphonies, is followed by a slow, lyrical intermezzo *Andante* whose haunting

melody could easily have formed one of the composer's *Songs without Words*.

The Finale returns to the liturgical atmosphere that was conjured up in the Symphony's slow introduction, this time manifested in a harmonised statement of the Lutheran chorale *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A mighty fortress is our God), which through a sequence of variations eventually builds up to a powerful and affirmative apotheosis.

© Erik Levi

If you enjoyed Mendelssohn's Symphony No5 *Reformation*, why not try his **Hebrides Overture *Fingal's Cave*** [performances on 12 and 13 Jun 2026].



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