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# Valentine's Concert

## Rachmaninov & The Mermaid

Music Hall, Aberdeen  
Thu 12 Feb 2026 7.30pm

Usher Hall, Edinburgh  
Fri 13 Feb 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall  
Sat 14 Feb 7.30pm

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# Valentine's Concert

## Rachmaninov & The Mermaid

**Music Hall, Aberdeen** Thu 12 Feb 2026 7.30pm

**Usher Hall, Edinburgh** Fri 13 Feb 7.30pm

**Glasgow Royal Concert Hall** Sat 14 Feb 7.30pm

What would you do for love? Romeo and Juliet risked everything, and Tchaikovsky poured all of this passion into his music. The Little Mermaid also followed her heart, and Zemlinsky's gorgeous retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairy tale is a colourful – and gripping – masterpiece. Kevin John Edusei conducts, Gillian Moore hosts, and RSNO favourite Makoto Ozone is the soloist in Rachmaninov's dazzling, deliriously romantic *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.

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**TCHAIKOVSKY** Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture [21']

**RACHMANINOV** Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini Op43 [23']

INTERVAL

**ZEMLINSKY** The Mermaid [45']

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**Kevin John Edusei** Conductor

**Makoto Ozone** Piano

**Royal Scottish National Orchestra**

The Glasgow performance will be recorded for the RSNO Archive.  
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**Please silence all mobile telephones and alerts, and refrain from taking photographs, without flash, until the end of each piece.**

# RSNO

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL  
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# Welcome

Thank you for joining us for this very special Valentine's Concert.

We're thrilled to welcome back pianist Makoto Ozone following his performance in 2024 when he blew audiences away with an arrangement of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* alongside the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. Kevin John Edusei, our conductor, joined us during our 2021 Digital Season, so it's a real pleasure to have him back to perform in front of a live audience this evening.

Last week, the RSNO was announced as the winner of the Association of British Orchestras' Innovation Award for the creation of our studio, which now competes internationally for film, TV and videogame soundtrack recordings. You can hear us on the soundtracks for the recent films *Nuremberg* and *Now You See Me: Now You Don't*. I am delighted that we have been recognised by the ABO and our industry colleagues for the transformation and diversification of our space and Orchestra, which has in turn enabled us to fund our extensive community engagement programme.

In fact, a couple of weeks ago we launched the latest addition to the engagement programme – a choir in Dundee dedicated to new parents and carers. It builds on the success of our Buggy Choir in Glasgow, where parents/carers of babies under one join together to sing in a baby-friendly, adult-focused environment. For more information about all our community singing opportunities, head to [rsno.org.uk/singers](https://rsno.org.uk/singers)

This past Wednesday marked the 100th anniversary of the inimitable Sir Alexander Gibson's birth. Sir Alex was a remarkable figure in the Scottish musical landscape and served as Principal Conductor and Music Director of the RSNO for 25 years. His legacy and life's work will be celebrated at our concert, *Felix Klieser Plays Strauss*, next week. I hope to see you there as we remember this brilliant man.

## Alistair Mackie

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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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.

# On Stage

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Lorna Rough  
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Alan Manson  
Liam Lynch  
Veronica Marziano  
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Nigel Mason  
Paul Medd  
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Phil Hague  
Stuart Semple

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Teresa Barros Pereira Romao

# Kevin John Edusei

## Conductor



German conductor Kevin John Edusei is praised repeatedly for the drama and tension in his music-making and the sense of architecture, warmth and stylistic insight that he brings to his performances.

For the 2025/26 season, Edusei is Conductor-in-Residence with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which will include three specially curated programmes at London's Cadogan Hall. He continues to be in high demand in North America, where he debuts with the Atlanta and St Louis Symphony orchestras and returns to the Kansas City, Colorado, Indianapolis and Seattle Symphony orchestras. Other engagements this season include returns to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie and RSNO as well as debuts with the Prague Symphony Orchestra and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León.

Highlights of Edusei's guest conducting in recent years have included his critically acclaimed debut with the New York Philharmonic, and concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands

Radio Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, and with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Musikverein. In 2024 he conducted the Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra in the Opus Klassik Awards ceremony and recently made his Asian debut with the Taiwan Philharmonic.

In 2022 Edusei made his debut at the Royal Ballet and Opera conducting Puccini's *La bohème*, which was streamed across cinemas worldwide, and in 2023/24 he returned for *Madama Butterfly*. Previously he has enjoyed great success with productions at the Semperoper Dresden, English National Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Volksoper Wien and Komische Oper Berlin. During his tenure at the Bern Opera House he led highly acclaimed new productions, including *Peter Grimes*, *Salome*, *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Kátya Kabanová*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde* and a cycle of the Mozart-Da Ponte operas.

Edusei studied orchestral conducting at the University of the Arts Berlin and the Royal Conservatory The Hague. In 2004 he was awarded a conducting fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival by David Zinman, in 2007 he was a prize-winner at the Lucerne Festival conducting competition under the artistic direction of Pierre Boulez, and in 2008 he won the first prize of the Dimitri Mitropoulos Competition in Athens. Edusei is an alumnus of the Deutsche Bank Akademie Musiktheater heute and the Dirigentenforum of the German Music Council. He is the former Chief Conductor of the Munich Symphony Orchestra and Bern Opera House. He resides with his family in Munich.

# Makoto Ozone

## Piano



Makoto Ozone is a unique force in both jazz and classical music, blending sound worlds and a host of influences into his performances. Born in Kobe, Japan, he was self-taught in jazz, under his father's guidance, first on the organ, then piano. He first came to public attention when he gave his solo recital at New York's Carnegie Hall in 1983, following his graduation from Berklee College of Music. Makoto became the first Japanese artist to sign an exclusive contract with CBS and released his first album, *Ozone*, a year after his Carnegie debut.

His stellar career in jazz, which earned him a GRAMMY nomination in 2003, has brought him regularly to the forefront of the international jazz scene, recording and touring with musicians such as Gary Burton, Chick Corea, Paquito D'Rivera, Anna Maria Jopek and Branford Marsalis. In 2004 he formed his own big band in Japan, No Name Horses, which has regularly toured Europe, North America and Asia.

In more recent years, Makoto has expanded into classical repertoire. Having first performed Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in 1996, he now performs concertos by Mozart, Bernstein, Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Rachmaninov with major orchestras. Alongside his performing schedule Makoto composes, with over 300 pieces to his name, many for No Name Horses, as well as a symphony and a piano concerto. His concerto *MOGAMI* received its European premiere in 2024 with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and Duncan Ward.

In the 2025/26 season Ozone tours Europe and Japan with the Tokyo Philharmonic and Myung-whun Chung, and makes his debut with the Colorado and Indianapolis Symphony orchestras, both under Jun Märkl. He also performs with other guest artists at Toronto's Koerner Hall as part of a concert to celebrate 100 years since Oscar Peterson's birth. Ozone makes his London concerto debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra this spring. His trio TRiNFIniTY tours Australia after their hugely successful UK and Europe tour during the 24/25 season.

Makoto has an extensive discography, releasing over 30 albums, as well as performing as a collaborator on many others. His latest album is *TRiNFIniTY* (Universal Music), featuring Shimpei Ogawa on bass and Kunito Kitai on drums.

In 2018 Makoto received the Medal of Honour with Purple Ribbon from the Government of Japan. This is Japan's highest award to individuals who have made significant contributions to the nation's academic or cultural life.

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893)

# Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture

## FIRST PERFORMANCE

Moscow, 16 March 1870

**DURATION** 21 minutes

With its rapturous and instantly recognisable love theme, Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture* is one of the composer's best-known works. Beginning in quasi-ecclesiastical quiet (the theme associated with Friar Laurence) and tussling between the warring motifs of the Montagues and Capulets and the overwhelming passion of the young lovers themselves, the work had a long-drawn gestation, and was twice revised after its premiere in 1870. 'Nothing is more suitable to my musical character,' wrote Tchaikovsky some years later, returning to Shakespeare's play for an unrelated opera. 'No kings, no marches, no boring old grand opera. Just love, love, love!'

The Overture had been suggested to Tchaikovsky by Mily Balakirev, then one of Russia's pre-eminent composers and a member of 'The Five' (including also Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Cui and Mussorgsky), after the 28-year-old composer, yet to make his mark, had dedicated his symphonic poem *Fatum* to him. Once the prevaricating Tchaikovsky had succumbed to Balakirev's piqued badgering – while generous, he was not a man who liked his ideas ignored – the older composer outlined an in-depth scheme, including some bars of music outlining how he himself would open the work. 'Begin straight away – *allegro* – with fierce sword clashes!' he wrote enthusiastically.

Tchaikovsky, who was to find Shakespeare a huge source of inspiration throughout his composing life, ignored such prescriptive suggestions, but Balakirev's energetic and frequently sharp criticism encouraged him

in an increasingly imaginative interpretation and, crucially, helped him develop his ideas on structure. When he sent the composer his first draft in 1870, Balakirev went into rhapsodies over the love theme. 'I want to hug you for it!' he wrote (before proceeding to suggest revisions).

And yet luck was not with Tchaikovsky, still to find public success and privately rattled – albeit probably briefly, given his preference for men – by the surprise marriage of star Belgian soprano Désirée Artôt, to whom he was all but engaged. When the Overture's premiere came, it was overshadowed by a scandal involving the conductor, Nikolai Rubinstein. 'No one said a single word to me about the Overture the whole evening,' wrote a deflated Tchaikovsky.

That summer, abroad, he reworked the opening section – evidence of his developing ability to write evocatively and expansively rather than contain his 'characters' in a musical straitjacket. The second premiere in 1871 was even less successful, and yet Tchaikovsky, dogged by the continuing poor reception of his works, could not let it go. In 1880, with three symphonies, *Swan Lake*, *Eugene Onegin* and another Shakespeare overture, *The Tempest*, under his belt, he rewrote the ending to *Romeo and Juliet*, composing the work's exquisite, shattering coda and refining, definitively, what is now his first acknowledged masterpiece.

© Sarah Urwin Jones

If you enjoyed Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture*, why not try his **Fourth Symphony** [performances on 19-21 Mar 2026].

**Sergei Rachmaninov** (1873-1943)

# Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Op43

## FIRST PERFORMANCE

Baltimore, 7 November 1934

**DURATION** 23 minutes

When Rachmaninov and his family fled Russia in the wake of the Revolution, his composing output dwindled as he poured all his efforts into a more lucrative career as a piano virtuoso. Between 1918 and his death in 1943, Rachmaninov composed just six new pieces. One of them was the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, his brilliant set of variations on Paganini's A Minor Caprice, written in a concentrated burst in 1934 at the Villar Senar, his summer home on the shores of Lake Lucerne. Working non-stop from 'literally morn to night', he premiered the piece on 7 November with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. It was an instant success.

No wonder. This is Rachmaninov at his most sparkling, inventive and economical, conjuring a dazzling array of moods. He was far from the only composer to draw inspiration from Paganini's simple theme, which was published along with a set of variations in his 24 Caprices for solo violin. Liszt and Brahms had also written solo piano pieces based on it, both of which Rachmaninov played. Perhaps he was also fired up by the legend surrounding the 19th-century violin virtuoso, which held that Paganini's breathtaking talent came from selling his soul to the devil. Later, the *Rhapsody* became the score to a ballet telling the Paganini legend, choreographed by Michel Fokine.

Whatever the exact reason, Rachmaninov's imagination was sparked. He immediately surprises the listener with a brief attention-grabbing introduction that leads not to the traditional statement of the theme itself, but instead the pointillistic first variation. After this playful piece of wrong-footing, we hear

the theme in the strings and head into the first batch of variations, which fly by with deft virtuosity. The mood changes in Variation 7 with the introduction of the *Dies irae* – the medieval chant for the Day of Wrath – and we move into even darker territory in Variations 8-10. It shifts yet again with the dreamy Variation 11, while the subsequent variations offer a rollercoaster ride from the balletic grace of the 12th to the heroism of the 14th to the ominous brooding of the 17th.

Most famous of all is the 18th variation, in which Rachmaninov turns Paganini's theme upside down and recasts it in a major key. The result is gorgeous, a sublime moment of reflective beauty that contrasts with the rest of the piece's rhythmic energy. After this, the music hurtles towards the fiendish final variation, which goes out not with a bang but with delightful wit.

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If you enjoyed Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, why not try his **Piano Concerto No1** played by Sir Stephen Hough [performances on 23-25 Apr 2026].

**Alexander von Zemlinsky** (1871-1942)

# The Mermaid



**FIRST PERFORMANCE**

Vienna, 25 January 1905

**DURATION** 45 minutes

- 1. Sehr mäßig bewegt [Moving moderately]**
- 2. Sehr bewegt, rauschend [Very turbulent, like the sound of the sea]**
- 3. Sehr gedehnt, mit schmerzvollem Ausdruck [Very expansive, anguished]**

At the turn of the 20th century, Zemlinsky was in a difficult place. He had begun a romantic relationship with his composition student Alma Schindler, but she broke it off in November 1901 after meeting Gustav Mahler – whom she married just four months later.

*Die Seejungfrau* (The Mermaid) was an expression of Zemlinsky's heartbreak and rejection, based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Little Mermaid*, more recently popularised by the 1989 Disney film.

One of Zemlinsky's most evocative and richly orchestrated works, *The Mermaid* began taking shape in February 1902, with its full orchestration completed in March 1903. Given its roots in an existing tale, *The Mermaid* could easily be thought of as a symphonic poem, but it tends to be billed as a fantasy because it lacks programmatic references to the source material. There was originally a 14-page section in the middle movement titled *In the realm of the Mer-Witch*, but Zemlinsky removed it.

In Andersen's fairy tale, the Mermaid falls in love with the Prince when she saves him from drowning. The Witch makes the mermaid human in exchange for her voice – but if the Mermaid fails to win the prince's love, she will die and turn into sea foam. The Prince marries another, so the Witch says the Mermaid must kill the Prince to save herself. When she jumps into the sea, heartbroken, the Mermaid transforms into a spirit, a 'daughter of the air'. Because of her sacrifice, she is given another chance to regain her immortal soul.

In 2013 musicologist Antony Beaumont edited a new critical edition of the work and speculated that the story of *The Little Mermaid* resonated with Zemlinsky because he might have seen himself as the Mermaid and Alma as the Prince.

The first movement opens with a deep, ominous sea-like soundscape, with the Mermaid's story

told through a series of motifs. As the Prince falls overboard, we hear a turbulent, dramatic storm, before a more lyrical, buoyantly optimistic version of the Mermaid's theme returns.

A dazzling scherzo sits at the heart of *The Mermaid*, showcasing the glittering atmosphere of the ball at the palace – but with a tinge of mystery, and perhaps even tragedy. The final movement sees the Mermaid taking her first tentative steps on land, revisiting themes from earlier in the work.

*The Mermaid* was first performed in January 1905 at the Musikverein in Vienna, in a concert which also included the premiere of Schoenberg's symphonic poem *Pelleas und Melisande*. Its journey since then has been a rocky one, however. After additional performances in Berlin in December 1906 and Prague in November 1907, Zemlinsky withdrew the work. He gave a score of the first movement to his friend Marie Pappenheim – a socialist, writer, librettist and doctor – as a gift. He later took the second and third movements with him to New York after he fled the Nazi regime in Austria in 1938. Along with the rest of Zemlinsky's manuscripts, these latter two movements ended up in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. His wife Louise believed them to be surviving fragments of a symphony, so for many years after Zemlinsky's death *The Mermaid's* score was presumed to be lost or destroyed.

It wasn't until the 1980s that two British PhD students compared the scores in Vienna and Washington and realised they were part of the same work. The first modern performance of *The Mermaid* after its reconstruction was in 1984, and since then it's become one of Zemlinsky's most widely admired works, celebrated for its impressionist style and yearning mood.

## The Arts in 1905

### In Music

*Kindertotenlieder* by Gustav Mahler  
*Introduction and Allegro for Strings* by Edward Elgar  
*La Mer* by Claude Debussy  
*Salome* by Richard Strauss

### In Literature

*Where Angels Fear to Tread* by E M Forster  
*White Fang* by Jack London  
*Kipps* by H G Wells  
*The Tale of Mrs Tiggy-Winkle* by Beatrix Potter  
*Major Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw

### In Art

*Still Life with Geraniums* by Henri Matisse  
*Family of Saltimbanques* by Pablo Picasso  
*The Hungry Lion throws Itself on the Antelope* by Henri Rousseau

### In Architecture

Berlin Cathedral by Julius Raschdorff  
Darwin D Martin House in Buffalo, US by Frank Lloyd Wright

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Raymond and Brenda Williamson  
Margaret Duffy and Peter  
Williamson

### Symphony

Mr John Brownlie  
Mr A Campbell  
Dr K Chapman and Ms S Adam  
Sir Sandy and Lady Crombie  
Mr W G Geddes  
Elizabeth Gibb  
Dr Robert Gibb  
Mr I Gow  
Mr J D Home  
Christine Lessels  
Katharine M E Liston  
Philip Whitely and Robert H Mackay  
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Mrs A McQueen  
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Neil Barton  
Mrs Mary Black  
Miss D Blackie  
Dr C M Bronte-Stewart  
Dr F L Brown  
Mr and Mrs Burnside  
David Caldwell

Ms H Calvert  
Ross Cavanagh  
Myk Cichla  
Terry and Joan Cole  
Dr J Coleiro  
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Mr P Davidson  
Steven J Davis  
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Roderick Wylie

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Mr K Allen  
Dr A D Beattie  
Mrs H Benzie  
Mr R Billingham  
Lord and Lady Borthwick  
John Bradshaw and Shiona Mackie  
Mrs Bryan  
Andrew Burrows  
Mrs C M Campbell  
Miss S M Carlyon  
Amanda Carter-Fraser  
Alan Clevett  
Lady Coulsfield  
Adam and Lesley Cumming  
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J Donald and L Knifton  
Mr John Duffy  
Mr R M Duncan  
Brigadier and Mrs C C Dunphie  
Mrs E Egan  
Mr R Ellis  
Mr R B Erskine  
Dr E Evans  
Dr A Ewing  
David Ferrier  
Kenneth Forbes  
Mr D Fraser

Philip and Karen Gaskell  
Mrs M Gibson  
Mrs M Gillan  
Mrs J K Gowans  
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