



RSNO

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA



Mahler Six

Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Fri 18 Sep 2026 7.30pm
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
Sat 19 Sep 7.30pm

Supported by **RSNO Benefactors & RSNO Conductors' Circle**

A photograph of a male conductor with grey hair and a beard, wearing a black tuxedo jacket over a white shirt and a light-colored bow tie. He is standing in the center of the frame, holding a baton in his right hand raised high, and his left hand is also raised, gesturing. He is surrounded by orchestra members, including a double bass player to his left and violinists to his right, all in a concert hall setting.

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Mahler Six

Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 18 Sep 2026 7.30pm
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 19 Sep 7.30pm

Music Director Thomas Søndergård conducts two towering masterpieces in one unforgettable Season Opener. Piano superstar Alexander Malofeev shines in Rachmaninov's glittering Fourth Piano Concerto. Composed in exile, it's a work of brooding lyricism, lush orchestration and expressive melodies. After the interval, Mahler's mighty Sixth Symphony is one man's struggle against impossible odds, told in music of soaring emotion and shattering power.

RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No4 in in G Minor Op40 [28']

INTERVAL

MAHLER Symphony No6 in A Minor [82']

Thomas Søndergård Conductor
Alexander Malofeev Piano
Royal Scottish National Orchestra

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**BBC
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The Glasgow performance
will be recorded for future
broadcast on BBC Radio 3

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,
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Welcome

A very warm welcome to the start of the 2026:27 Season!

We are pleased to be back after a busy summer which took us from the BBC Proms and Edinburgh International Festival to an 11-concert schools tour over three days, with a stop at the Rheingau Musik Festival in Germany in between.

Since we last saw you, several recordings from Scotland's Studio have been released, showing the versatility of our players: our album of Saint-Saëns' piano concertos with the inimitable Simon Trpčeski conducted by Thomas Søndergård has come out; *Paw Patrol 3: The Dino Movie* has hit the screens, featuring the RSNO's brass section on its soundtrack; and we have released a lost score by renowned Hollywood composer James Horner, which received its world premiere at The International Ayr Show – you can stream *Skyward Spirit* on all the usual platforms.

Tonight's concert begins with a presentation from James Murphy, Chief Executive of the Royal Philharmonic Society. James is presenting the RPS Ensemble Award, which we were delighted to win in March for the quality and scope of our performances and work. Among the other prize-winners were the Kirkcaldy Orchestral Society, who those of you in Glasgow will have seen performing in the Exhibition Hall as you arrived.

This is the final Season of Thomas Søndergård's tenure as Music Director before he becomes Music Director Emeritus, and what better way to begin than with Mahler's mighty Sixth Symphony. Thomas is joined by the brilliant young pianist Alexander Malofeev, making his RSNO debut.

Finally, I am pleased to welcome two new players to our ranks: Yat Hei Lee joined as Sub-Principal Double Bass over the summer, and this weekend's concerts are the first for our new Associate Principal Bassoon, Matthew Kitteringham. Please join me in welcoming both of them.

Alistair Mackie

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Keep in touch with the RSNO

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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. In May 2026, Giedrė Šlekytė was announced as the RSNO's Music Director Designate and will formally become Music Director from the beginning of the 2027:28 Season, with Thomas Søndergård taking on the new position of Music Director Emeritus.

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, Scotland's Studio. In 2026 the RSNO was the first professional orchestra since 2014 to be awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Ensemble Award. The award recognises musical ensembles for outstanding quality and scope of performances and work.

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 Choruses 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

FIRST VIOLIN

Igor Yuzefovich
LEADER
Shlomy Dobrinsky
ASSOCIATE LEADER
Tamás Fejes
ASSISTANT LEADER
Patrick Curlett
Oliver Cave
Caroline Parry
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Elizabeth Bamping
Lorna Rough
Susannah Lowdon
Alan Manson
Liam Lynch
Veronica Marziano
Catherine Alsey
Stewart Webster
Gill Risi

SECOND VIOLIN

Gongbo Jiang
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Marion Wilson
Paul Medd
Anne Bünemann
Sophie Lang
Robin Wilson
Kirstin Drew
Colin McKee
Kaylee Bontrager
Fiona Stephen
Liz Reeves
Helena Quispe
Helena Rose

VIOLA

Tom Dunn
PRINCIPAL
Felix Tanner
Asher Zaccardelli
Susan Buchan
Nicola McWhirter
Claire Dunn
Katherine Wren
Maria Trittinger
Francesca Hunt
Beth Woodford
David McCreadie
Henry Justo

CELLO

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

DOUBLE BASS

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PRINCIPAL
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Michael Rae
Yat Hei Lee
Moray Jones
Alexandre Cruz dos Santos
Olaya Garcia Alvarez
Paul Speirs

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Andy Connell-Smith
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Huw Evans
Alastair Sinclair
PRINCIPAL BASS TROMBONE

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Nick Woud
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Tom Hunter

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Simon Lowdon
PRINCIPAL
Stuart Semple
Philip Hague
Colin Hyson
Julian Wolstencroft

HARP

Pippa Tunnell
Sharron Griffiths

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Lynda Cochran

Thomas Søndergård

Conductor



Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård is Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra and the RSNO. The 2026:27 Season marks his final season as Music Director of the RSNO, before becoming Music Director Emeritus in 2027:28. He previously served as the orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor for six seasons. From 2012 to 2018, Thomas was Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, following his tenure as Principal Conductor and Musical Advisor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra.

Thomas has appeared with most of Europe's leading orchestras, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Orchestre National de France, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. A familiar figure across Scandinavia, he has worked with the Oslo Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra

and Helsinki Philharmonic. In North America, his engagements have included the Los Angeles and New York Philharmonics, the Cleveland Orchestra and the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Cincinnati, Baltimore, St Louis, Toronto, Atlanta, Montreal, Vancouver, Houston and Seattle.

The 2026/27 season continues Thomas' work with both the Minnesota Orchestra and the RSNO, alongside guest engagements across Europe. He returns to the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln with Benjamin Grosvenor and to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra with Alina Ibragimova. At the Royal Danish Opera, he conducts performances of Verdi's *Falstaff*, continuing a long-standing relationship with the company.

Opera has formed an important part of Thomas' career. Following his Royal Danish Opera debut with *Kafka's Trial*, he has returned regularly for repertoire including *Die Walküre*, which won the 2022 Reumert Award for Best Opera Production, *Elektra*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *La bohème*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Il viaggio a Reims*. Further operatic collaborations include the Staatsoper Stuttgart, Norwegian Opera, Royal Swedish Opera and Bayerische Staatsoper. At Deutsche Oper Berlin he conducted the world premiere of Scartazzini's *Edward II* and has since returned for Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* and Strauss' *Elektra*.

A committed advocate of Scandinavian repertoire, Thomas has a particular affinity with the music of Carl Nielsen and Jean Sibelius. During the composers' joint anniversary year in 2015, he conducted their works with orchestras across Europe, and in 2019 took part in a concert celebrating Nielsen at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen.

RSNO

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Shostakovich Five

Edinburgh | Fri 2 Oct: 7.30pm
Glasgow | Sat 3 Oct: 7.30pm

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Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Piano Concerto No4

in G Minor Op40



FIRST PERFORMANCE

First version: Philadelphia, 18 March 1927.

Final version: Philadelphia, 1941

DURATION 28 minutes

1. Allegro vivace

2. Largo

3. Allegro vivace

When Rachmaninov emigrated from Russia to the US in 1918, it dramatically altered his career – and the trajectory of his Fourth Piano Concerto. Finding himself in great demand as both a soloist and conductor, he spent the ensuing years focusing almost exclusively on performing. As a result, his compositional output almost entirely collapsed – and by the time he began revisiting sketches for his Piano Concerto No4 in 1925, he hadn't produced a single new work for nearly a decade.

The Concerto – his final completed work in the genre – captures a composer in transition, adjusting to a rapidly evolving musical landscape. The Romantic stylings that had shaped much of Rachmaninov's early successes had been overtaken by the influences of impressionism and serialism, which were dominating the composition scene around him, causing him to question his own place in it. 'I feel like a ghost wandering a world grown alien,' he wrote in 1926. 'I cannot cast out the old way of writing, and I cannot acquire the new. The new kind of music seems to come, not from the heart, but from the head. Composers think rather than feel.'

The compositional process was fraught. Plagued by insecurities and self-doubt, he wrote to Nikolai Medtner, a fellow Russian exile, pianist and composer, 'I have already started (in my mind) to look for cuts.'

The Concerto is restless: its first movement launches into a fiery fury, while the third burns with a frenzied energy before dissolving into a thrilling piano cadenza. The second movement, which holds most of the melodic interest, showcases some of the jazz influences Rachmaninov was no doubt exposed to in New York, surrounded by composers like Gershwin.

At the March 1927 premiere, Rachmaninov performed on piano under Leopold Stokowski with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Unfortunately, the Concerto met with negative reviews, so Rachmaninov was forced to make many further cuts and revisions before it was published in 1928.

In 1941, Rachmaninov turned his attention back to the Fourth Piano Concerto, revising the orchestration and undertaking many significant rewrites, thereby making it the last piece he actively worked on before his death in 1943. The new version was again premiered in Philadelphia, this time with Eugene Ormandy at the helm, and it is this version which is most commonly heard today.

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Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No4

Plus **Piano Concerto No1** and
**Rhapsody on a Theme
of Paganini**

Howard Shelley Piano
Bryden Thomson Conductor

More information
rsno.org.uk/recordings

If you enjoyed Rachmaninov's Fourth Piano Concerto, why not try his **Second Piano Concerto** (performance in Glasgow 14 Nov).

What was happening in 1941?

6 Jan US President Roosevelt outlined his Four Freedoms – speech, worship, from want, from fear – as fundamental global human rights

9 Feb Prime Minister Churchill, in a worldwide broadcast, said to the US, 'Give us the tools and we will finish the job'

1 May *Citizen Kane*, directed by and starring Orson Welles, and frequently voted the best film of all time, premiered in New York

10 May Queen's Hall in London was bombed, resulting in The Proms moving venue to the Royal Albert Hall

24 May German battleship *Bismarck* sank the Royal Navy flagship *HMS Hood* with the loss of all but three crew; on **27 May** the crippled *Bismarck* was sunk with the loss of 2,300 crew

22 Jun Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union and declared war on it – Operation Barbarossa

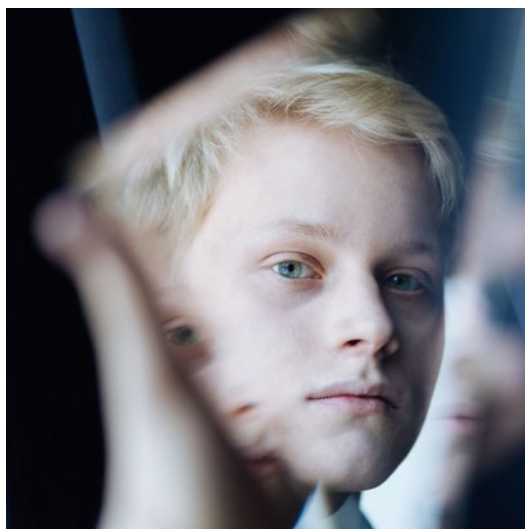
18 Oct *The Maltese Falcon* film noir starring Humphrey Bogart was released

31 Oct Work on Mount Rushmore, featuring huge sculpted heads of presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln, finished due to a lack of funding

7 Dec Japanese aircraft launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, drawing the US into World War II

Alexander Malofeev

Piano



Alexander Malofeev studied at legendary institutions such as the Gnessin Special College of Music and the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. In 2014, at the age of only 13, he won the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians. Quickly hailed by critics as a 'young Russian genius' (*Corriere della Sera*), he has since established himself as one of the most remarkable pianists of his generation.

Malofeev has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, hr-Sinfonieorchester, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He regularly collaborates with renowned conductors including Riccardo Chailly, Myung-Whun Chung, Susanna Mälkki, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Lahav Shani, Alain Altinoglu, Lionel Bringuier, Hannu Lintu, Vasily Petrenko and Andris Poga.

In recent seasons, Malofeev has given concerts and recitals in major concert halls such as the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Teatro alla Scala Milan, Philharmonie de Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées Paris, Vienna Musikverein, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Kurhaus Wiesbaden, Bolshoi Theatre Moscow, Mariinsky Theatre St Petersburg, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Lotte Concert Hall Seoul, Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, Shanghai Oriental Art Center, National Centre for the Performing Arts Beijing and Royal Opera House Muscat.

Malofeev is a frequent guest at international festivals and renowned piano series, among them La Roque d'Anthéron and La Folle Journée in Nantes, Klavierfestival Ruhr, the Master Pianist Series in Amsterdam and at Carnegie Hall New York, Salzburg Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival, Verbier Festival and Tanglewood Festival, as well as the Celebrity Series in Boston.

At the start of the 2026/27 season, he tours with the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala. At the end of the year, he makes his debut with the Berlin Philharmonic under the direction of Kirill Petrenko. Further highlights of the season include his debut as soloist with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and Budapest Festival Orchestra, his performance with the Orchestre National de Paris under the direction of Andris Poga, and an extensive tour of Germany with the Bergen Philharmonic.

Alexander Malofeev is an exclusive artist of Sony Classical. For his solo album *Forgotten Melodies* he was awarded the OPUS Klassik in 2026 for Young Artist of the Year. Born in Moscow in 2001, he now resides in Berlin.

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Symphony No6

in A Minor

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**

Essen, 27 May 1906

DURATION 82 minutes

- 1. Allegro energico, ma non troppo.**
Heftig, aber markig [Intense, but pithy]
- 2. Andante moderato**
- 3. Scherzo: Wuchtig [Powerful]**
- 4. Sostenuto – Allegro energico**

For Gustav Mahler there was a dark saying at the heart of his Sixth Symphony, but what it was exactly he declined to say. For a while he thought about giving it the title 'Tragic' but, probably wisely, decided against it. Mahler's wife Alma reports him as saying that the huge finale tells of 'the hero, on whom fall three blows of fate, the last of which fells him like a tree'. And indeed, in 1907, the year after the Symphony's far from successful premiere, 'three blows of fate' did fall on Mahler: he was forced to resign as conductor of the Vienna Opera; his four-year-old daughter Maria died horribly of scarlet fever; and he was diagnosed as having a potentially fatal lesion of the heart – the condition that was to kill him four years later, at the age of 50. But is that really enough to explain the half-alluring, half-terrifying power of a symphony that seems to peer beyond personal tragedy into a truly epochal abyss? A whole century of suffering and horror seems foreshadowed in its violent march rhythms, its vivid depictions of vanquished hopes and crushed innocence.

In any case, for many there remains something fascinatingly paradoxical about the Sixth Symphony. However violent, pained, desperate or ultimately bleak the emotions it expresses, there is also something exciting, exhilarating, even uplifting about it. It is as though Mahler were at the same time exulting in his mastery, his ability to express what his philosopher-hero Friedrich Nietzsche called 'the artistic conquest of the terrible'. There is a kind of wizardry at work here: the Sixth Symphony is one of those works in which Mahler's command of the orchestra is at its most dazzling. In his handling of the huge forces – including instruments never before used in a symphony (celesta, cowbells, whip, and a large hammer to represent the 'blows of fate'), as well as one of the largest woodwind and brass

sections in the standard repertory – Mahler reveals himself as a Mephistophelean magician as well as a tragic poet.

There's little room here for detailed analysis of a nearly 90-minute symphony packed with incident from start to finish, but a few pointers to key events and leading ideas may be helpful. The long first movement follows the outlines of classical 'Sonata Form'. Two main themes – in this case an intense, driven march tune with pounding low cellos and basses, and an impassioned major key melody (apparently a portrait of Alma Mahler) – are juxtaposed, violently deconstructed, then brought back in something like their original form, leading to a noisily triumphant major key conclusion. But at the heart of the movement comes a vision of something quite different: a passage of magical stillness, with atmospheric contributions from celesta, high shimmering strings and cowbells. Like many of his symphonies, Mahler's Sixth was composed in the summer among his beloved Alps, which he walked daily. In the Symphony's still sections, Mahler tells us, we can hear 'the last terrestrial sounds penetrating into the remote solitude of mountain peaks'.

Mahler was unsure about the order of the middle two movements. Originally the *Scherzo* followed the first movement, but after the Symphony was published Mahler changed his mind, and he placed the *Andante moderato* second, which is the order performed tonight. After the intense drama of the first movement, the *Andante moderato* is like a haven of peace: meditative, songful, a deeper exploration of the Alpine solitude glimpsed at the heart of the first movement. But there is bitterness – perhaps regret, perhaps something more acute – mixed with the sweetness.

More pounding march figures begin the *Scherzo*: the return to the minor mode brusquely negates both the fragile peace of the *Andante moderato* and the major key 'triumph' of the first movement's ending, which with hindsight sounds sadly premature. Now the violence has a grotesque edge. Even the seemingly innocent dance-like Trio theme (introduced on the oboe) has a strange, limping four-plus-three rhythm. This time the ending is hollow, desolate, with fragments of motifs slowly drifting out on double basses, contrabassoon and timpani.

The colossal finale is at the same time a vast summing up of all that has been heard before and an expansion into new, still more awe-inspiring territory. Attempts to sum up the form in textbook terms quickly founder: better perhaps to approach it as a compelling, dramatically changeable musical narrative, by turns weird, desolate, heroically determined, joyously aspiring and catastrophically thwarted. The first two of Mahler's 'three blows of fate' are underlined by the hammer, each one crushing the exaltation that built up earlier. But after the first performance Mahler removed the third hammer blow – whether for superstitious or more practical reasons is hard to guess. In any case, the most devastating stroke of all is left to the end. Tuba, trombones and low horns develop a long grim skeletal threnody, then a full orchestra chord of A minor falls like a gigantic guillotine, leaving vestiges of the march rhythms to tail off into absolute blackness.

© Stephen Johnson

RSNO Connections

The earliest performance of Mahler's Sixth Symphony by the then Scottish National Orchestra was on 7 December 1967, conducted by Alexander Gibson, in a concert which also included songs from the same composer's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* performed by Janet Baker and Thomas Hemsley – a substantial evening. It took place in the 'Concert Hall' in Glasgow, a former cinema in Anderston that became a temporary venue for the SNO after St Andrew's Hall burned down in 1962. The 1967/68 season was the final season in that venue before concert performances moved to the City Halls in Candleriggs.

Malcolm Rayment, in his *Glasgow Herald* review of 8 December, wrote: 'Gibson, who clearly believes thoroughly in the symphony, kept it firmly moving in the three faster movements, and did not dally over the slow one. The orchestra, still maintaining the exceptionally fine form they have shown recently, responded to his direction with playing that was technically assured and thoroughly sensitive to Mahler's idiom.'

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The Arts in 1906

In Music:

Sea Drift by Frederick Delius
Norfolk Rhapsody No1 by Ralph Vaughan Williams
The Wreckers by Ethel Smyth
Maskarade by Carl Nielsen
Symphony No8 by Alexander Glazunov
Pohjola's Daughter by Jean Sibelius

In Literature:

The Man of Property, first volume of
The Forsyte Saga, by John Galsworthy
White Fang by Jack London
Puck of Pook's Hill by Rudyard Kipling
The Railway Children by Edith Nesbit
The Tale of Jeremy Fisher by Beatrix Potter

In Art:

Self-portrait by Umberto Boccioni
Le bonheur de vivre by Henri Matisse
Water Lilies by Claude Monet
Boy Leading a Horse by Pablo Picasso

If you enjoyed Mahler's Sixth Symphony, why not try his **Blumine** (performances in Edinburgh 12 Feb 2027, Glasgow 13 Feb and Inverness 14 Feb).

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