

Programme Notes

Hilary Hahn plays Dvořák

Thu 29 September 2022 • 20.15

Fri 30 September 2022 • 20.15

PROGRAMME

conductor **Lahav Shani**

violin **Hilary Hahn**

Jörg Widmann 1973

Con brio [2008]

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Con brio [2008]

Antonín Dvořák 1840-1904

Violin Concerto in a minor, op. 53
[1879]

- Allegro ma non troppo
- Adagio ma non troppo
- Finale: Allegro giocoso ma non troppo

intermission

Johannes Brahms 1833-1897

Symphony no. 1 in c minor, op. 68
[1855-76]

- Un poco sostenuto - Allegro
- Andante sostenuto
- Un poco allegretto e grazioso
- Adagio - Allegro non troppo ma con brio

Concert ends at around 22:20

Most recent performances by our orchestra:

Widmann Con Brio: first performance

*Dvořák Violin Concerto: Mar 2016,
violin Josef Špaček, conductor Jiří Bělohlávek*

*Brahms Symphony no. 1: Oct 2020,
conductor Lahav Shani*

Cover: Photo Yoal Desurmont.



Jörg Widmann. Photo Marco Borggreve.



The ghost of Beethoven

This is a game with the Great Absentee. His name is Beethoven: he stimulated Jörg Widmann, but proved a hopeless deterrent to Brahms.

Compose a work for us that connects with Beethoven's Seventh and Eighth. Such was the exceedingly polite request that conductor Mariss Jansons made to the German composer Jörg Widmann back in 2008. The composer immediately decided that such a piece should be titled *Con brio*, 'with fire', because this was the musical term so often inscribed by Beethoven at the top of his compositions. Widmann also chose the same orchestral composition as Beethoven: 'Beethoven creates this unbelievable din with just two horns, two trumpets and timpani.' Widmann also copied the 'engineering skills' of Beethoven: 'I'm much more interested in sharp juxtapositions and breaks than in seamless transitions.' And he listened carefully to Beethoven the architect. 'Up to now I had been a composer who allowed himself to be led', whilst this time, like Beethoven, he carefully planned the work in advance. And in common with Beethoven: with *Con brio* did Widmann write tonal music? A bit. Beethoven's Seventh and Eighth are in the keys of A major and F major, whilst his 21st century colleague plays on these with the major third F-A derived therefrom.

Folk music

'A humble Czech musician.' So has Antonín Dvořák always described himself. An interesting observation, because it suggests both modesty and pride. With the description 'humble' he meant that his success never went to his head, not with his breakthrough with the Slavonic Dances, not when he became world famous. He remained an ordinary man, never disguising his background as the son of a butcher. Dvořák's pride is reflected in the word 'Czech'. This is where he wanted the emphasis to lie. Bohemia, in the clutches of the Austrian Empire, was back then a land to which its German-speaking neighbours in particular looked down upon. It was inconceivable that in a land like that there would be people who knew about composing... and Dvořák wanted recognition for his country and its culture. And that's how he became one of the greatest Czech composers of all time. Dvořák gulped down the fresh, clear, compelling, warm-blooded folk music, it saturates almost every note he ever wrote. He composed his Violin Concerto shortly after his breakthrough, when his friend Brahms recommended him to the big German publishing house Simrock. Dvořák composed his concerto quite quickly, between

July and September 1879, whilst staying at Castle Sychrov in the district of Liberec in the north of what is now Czechia (a place he visited often as he was friends with the castle's accountant). He dedicated the work to violinist Joseph Joachim. However, he received little in the way of compliments by return. Joachim thanked him by letter, but was rather critical of the work. Why did the tuttis break off so abruptly? Why were the first two movements linked to each other? Why was there no reprise in the first movement? And why did the theme recur so frequently in the final movement? Dvořák performed a drastic rewrite of the concerto, leaving no bar unchanged, yet completely ignoring the criticisms of Joachim. Having sent the revised version to the violinist, it would be two years before he heard anything in reply. Again,

Brahms' Symphony no. 1 is a huge adventure: a long, perilous journey from the titanic battle at the beginning to victory in the finale.

criticism – something that really hurt Dvořák. The work was premiered with the violinist František Ondříček. Joachim never performed it.

Dvořák's love for folk music is evident in the finale of the concerto, which has the feel of a Slavonic rhapsody. The vivid furiant bleeds through this sparkling music, occasionally interspersed with more pensive *dumka* themes, as he would later depict them in his even more fiery *Dumky* Trio. Whilst composing this work, Dvořák must have had his Slavonic Dance No. 8 stuck in his head, which he composed just

a year earlier; the concerto's final theme shares many similarities with the earlier work.

In the footsteps of Beethoven

Great, greater, greatest: the genius of Brahms sometimes suffered under the greater genius that was Beethoven. It was a burden that Brahms acutely felt. Just 21 years old, Brahms had been welcomed into musical circles as someone – in the words of Schumann – 'destined to express the spirit of the times to the most exalted of heights'. In other words, here was finally a composer worthy of following in the footsteps of Beethoven. Ever since, Brahms has been referred to as Beethoven's successor. A great compliment, but Brahms was far from happy. He kept hearing 'the footsteps of Beethoven following behind.' It didn't help that, as small and stocky as he was, he also

bore a physical resemblance to his 'predecessor'. 'There are mules in Vienna that take me for a second Beethoven,' he grumbled. But a time came when he could no longer avoid it: Follow on from Beethoven. You must write us a symphony, demanded Vienna, the musical heart of Europe. Since Schumann's Fourth no decent symphony had been premiered – not in Vienna, not in the German-speaking countries, not anywhere in Europe. There was much loud speculation about what a 'continuation' of Beethoven would sound like... And how did Brahms respond? He did nothing. Or at least, that's

how it seemed. For years he diligently avoided working on That Symphony: with a piano concerto that was symphonic in scope, with two orchestral serenades, with his Haydn Variations. In the meantime, in his back room, he did indeed toil on a proper symphony. For around twenty years. It had to be worthy of Beethoven, worthy of Schumann's trust and, above all, worthy of his own talents...

On 4 November 1877 the world finally got to hear Brahms' Symphony No. 1, for the sake of precaution in the relative anonymity of Karlsruhe. The composer had by then reached the age of 44. The reception was lukewarm. However, thankfully, when the work was performed about six weeks later in Vienna, Brahms's home city, its success was assured. To much relief, conductor Hans von Bülow expressed the view that no other composer had come so close to 'the brilliant work of Beethoven'. Indeed, Brahms's First does contain all the qualities of a Beethoven symphony, and not just because it was written in Beethoven's favourite key of C minor. It seems to have been carved from a single block of marble, boldly playing on themes and motifs, whilst retaining a very strict control over the whole. The emotions and the brain work in perfect harmony. The work is a huge adventure: a long, perilous journey from the titanic battle at the beginning to victory in the finale, in exactly the same way as a Beethoven symphony, especially numbers 5 and 9. Von Bülow promptly hailed Brahms's first symphony as 'Beethoven's Tenth'. Intended as a compliment, but Brahms was only moderately pleased: still not rid of that burdensome shadow?!

Stephen Westra

Lahav Shani - chief conductor

Born: Tel Aviv, Israel

Current position: chief conductor Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra; music director Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

Before: principal guest conductor Vienna Symphony Orchestra

Education: piano at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music Tel Aviv; conducting and piano at the Academy of Music Hanns Eisler Berlin; mentor: Daniel Barenboim

Breakthrough: 2013, after winning the Gustav Mahler International Conducting Competition in Bamberg

Subsequently: Staatskapelle Berlin, Berlin State Opera, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2016



Photo: Marco Borggreve

Hilary Hahn - violin

Born: Lexington (Virginia), USA

Education: first violin lessons at age three, lessons with Klara Berkovich in Baltimore, study at Curtis Institute of Music (Philadelphia) with Jascha Brodsky, coaching by Jaime Laredo

Breakthrough: 1996: Carnegie Hall debut, first cd recording

Awards: America's Best Young Classical Musician (Time, 2001), Glashütte Original Music Festival Prize 2014, three Grammy Awards, honorary doctorates from Middlebury College and Ball State University

World premieres: violin concertos by Meyer and Higdon, Two Serenades by Rautavaara, works by Abril, Del Tredici, Muhly, Richter, Silvestrov and others

Initiatives: #100daysofpractice (Instagram), online miniseries with video masterclasses on Bach's partitas, parent- and child friendly Bring Your Own Baby concerts

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 1999



Photo: Dana van Leeuwen

Agenda

Sat 8 October 2022 • 20.30

conductor **Bertie Baigent**

Wagner Meistersinger Overture

Rachmaninoff Vocalise

Dvořák Largo from Symphony no. 9

Bizet Carmen: Suite no. 1

Elgar Sospiri

Ravel Boléro

Fri 14 October 2022 • 20.15

conductor **André de Ridder**

piano **Daniil Trifonov**

Barber Adagio for Strings

Bates Piano Concerto

Roukens Symphony nr. 1

'Kaleidoscopic'

Sun 16 October 2022 • 10.30

Music for Breakfast 1

Chamber music by **Pärt, Ter Veldhuis,**

Martinů and **Ravel**

Thu 27 October 2022 • 20.15

Fri 28 October 2022 • 20.15

Sun 30 October 2022 • 14.15

conductor **Han-Na Chang**

cello **Victor Julien-Laferrière**

Prokofiev Symphony no. 1 'Classical'

Shostakovich Cello Concerto no. 1

Beethoven Symphony no. 3 'Eroica'

Fri 18 November 2022 • 20.15

Sun 20 November 2022 • 14.15

conductor **Adam Hickox**

viola **Laurence Power**

Ravel La valse

Schnittke Viola Concerto

Elgar Enigma Variations

Thu 24 November 2022 • 20.15

Fri 25 November 2022 • 20.15

conductor **Lahav Shani**

piano **Yefim Bronfman**

Beethoven Piano Concerto no. 3

Bruckner Symphony no. 9

Musicians

Chief Conductor

Lahav Shani

Honorary Conductor

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Principal Assistant Conductor

Bertie Baigent

First Violin

Igor Gruppman,

leader

Marieke Blankestijn,

leader

Quirine Scheffers

Hed Yaron Meyerson

Saskia Otto

Arno Bons

Mireille van der Wart

Cor van der Linden

Rachel Browne

Maria Dingjan

Marie-José Schrijner

Noëmi Bodden

Petra Visser

Sophia Torrens

Hadewijch Hofland

Annerien Stuker

Alexandra van

Beveren

Koen Stapert

Second Violin

Charlotte Potgieter

Cecilia Ziano

Frank de Groot

Laurens van Vliet

Tomoko Hara

Elina Staphorsius

Jun Yi Dou

Bob Bruyn

Letizia Sciarone

Eefje Habraken

Maija Reinikainen

Sumire Hara

Wim Ruitenbeek

Babette van den Berg

Melanie Broers

Viola

Anne Huser

Roman Spitzer

Maartje van Rheeden

Galahad Samson

Kerstin Bonk

Lex Prummel

Janine Baller

Francis Saunders

Veronika Lénártová

Rosalinde Kluck

León van den Berg

Olfje van der Klein

Cello

Emanuele Silvestri

Joanna Pachucka

Daniel Petrovitsch

Mario Rio

Gé van Leeuwen

Eelco Beinema

Carla Schrijner

Pepijn Meeuws

Yi-Ting Fang

Double Bass

Matthew Midgley

Ying Lai Green

Jonathan Focquaert

Robert Franenberg

Harke Wiersma

Arjen Leendertz

Ricardo Neto

Flute

Juliette Hurel

Joséphine Olech

Désirée Woudenberg

Flute/Piccolo

Beatriz Da Baião

Oboe

Remco de Vries

Karel Schoofs

Anja van der Maten

Oboe/Cor Anglais

Ron Tijhuis

Clarinet

Julien Hervé

Bruno Bonansea

Jan Jansen

Clarinet/ Bass Clarinet

Romke-Jan Wijmenga

Bassoon

Pieter Nuytten

Lola Descours

Marianne Prommel

Bassoon/ Contrabassoon

Hans Wisse

Horn

David Fernández

Alonso

Wendy Leliveld

Richard Speetjens

Laurens Otto

Pierre Buizer

Trumpet

Alex Elia

Simon Wierenga

Jos Verspagen

Trombone

Pierre Volders

Alexander Verbeek

Remko de Jager

Bass Trombone

Rommert Groenhof

Tuba

Hendrik-Jan Renes

Timpani/ Percussion

Randy Max

Danny van de Wal

Ronald Ent

Martijn Boom

Adriaan Feyaerts

Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels