



ROTTERDAMS
PHILHARMONISCH
ORKEST

Programme Notes

New Year with Trifonov

Thy 12 January 2023 · 20.15

Fri 13 January 2023 · 20.15

Sun 15 January 2023 · 14.15

PROGRAMME

conductor **Lhav Shani**
piano **Daniil Trifonov**

Ludwig van Beethoven 1770 - 1827

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major,
op. 15 (c. 1795/1798)

- Allegro con brio
- Largo
- Rondo: Allegro

intermission

Richard Strauss 1864 - 1949

Ein Heldenleben, op. 40 (1898)

Solo violin: Igor Gruppman

- Der Held
- Des Helden Widersacher
- Des Helden Gefährtin
- Des Helden Walstatt
- Des Helden Friedenswerke
- Des Helden Weltflucht und
Vollendung

Concert ends at around 22.10

Most recent performances by our orchestra:

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 1:

Dec 2015, piano Yevgeni Sudbin,

conductor Stanislav Kochanovsky

Strauss Ein Heldenleben: Feb 2018,

conductor Sir Mark Elder

One hour before the start of the concert, Alexander Klapwijk will give an introduction (in Dutch) to the programme, admission €5. Tickets are available at the hall, payment by debit card. The introduction is free for Vrienden.

Cover: Photo Valentin Lacoste

Photo to the right:

Richard Strauss, portrait photo by Albert Meyer, Berlin c. 1900



Albert Richard Strauss

Here I am!

Self-manifestation, that might be what this concert is all about. Beethoven wrote his *First Piano Concerto* to put his best foot forward with the Viennese public; Strauss's *Heldenleben* is a sort of musical autobiography, ironic or otherwise. The two men 'collide' in Strauss's comment that *Ein Heldenleben* was intended to replace Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*...

Debut

Ludwig van Beethoven, known to us as a composer, actually wanted a different career – as a pianist. He made a lot of progress in that regard, until deafness cut short his career and forced him to put greater emphasis on his compositions. Initially, Beethoven's contemporaries knew him mainly as a pianist, so it surprised nobody when his first major work for the orchestra was not a symphony – that would take another five years – but a piano concerto. Beethoven was then 24 years old. The work he called his *Piano Concerto no. 1* was actually not the first. The piano concerto that we know as the *Second* was written earlier – but partly because that piece was somewhat in the style of Mozart, Beethoven thought it less suitable for his debut. That debut concert performance took place on 29 March 1795 in the Hofburg in Vienna. Beethoven himself was the soloist, Joseph Haydn the conductor, and *toute Vienne* was present. Haydn was

a celebrity and a crowd-puller, but the public also wanted to get to know his headstrong pupil Beethoven, the rascal with the jet-black eyes and often untamed hair. It must have been a performance on a knife edge. The score had been finished at the very last moment; four copyists had to work at breakneck speed to copy out the parts from the manuscript – the ink still wet – and hand them straight to the musicians. Not to Beethoven himself, by the way: he always played from memory, and even improvised. Beethoven's debut piano concerto contains all kinds of idiosyncrasies. The orchestral introduction is actually rather long, and a story in itself. The main theme is nothing more than an octave leap, followed in a simple but effective manner by the scale of C (Beethoven continues to frolic with it throughout the entire introduction). In the rondo it is impossible – for the listener at least – to tell whether it starts with an anacrusis or on the



Berlin 28. März
BERLIN W.
19. 41.
Potsdamer Str. 125.

first beat. It sounds askew – and delightfully mischievous. It reminds us that Beethoven was not just a tragic figure but also full of good humour, particularly in his younger days.

Autobiography

A musical autobiography, that is how Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life) is sometimes described – a work written in 1898 and dedicated to the Concertgebouw Orchestra and its then conductor Willem Mengelberg. And the Hero is obviously Strauss himself. His proud aloofness is depicted right at the beginning with an expansive and swaggering theme that spans almost three octaves, while no fewer than eight horns proclaim his ambitions. Soon enough – and unsurprisingly for a character like this – he makes enemies: a clique of music critics. Fortunately, love offers some consolation. Depicted by a majestic violin solo, one of the most demanding in the orchestral repertoire and played today by the departing leader of the orchestra Igor Gruppman, 'Des Helden Gefährtin' (The Hero's Companion) appears on the scene: his wife. Was Strauss portraying his own wife, the singer Pauline de Ahna? 'Very complicated, a little perverse, a little coquettish, changing from one minute to the next', the composer wrote about her. It turns into a real battle, with numerous opponents, which ends in a stalemate rather than a resounding victory for any of the parties. Proudly, the Hero shows us his 'Works of Peace' – his compositions. Strauss portrays them with quotations from his own works – *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Quixote*, the opera *Guntram*,

the songs *Morgen*, *Traum durch die Dämmerung* and *Befreit* – culminating in the ultimate accomplishment, a fragment from *Also sprach Zarathustra* (you could read the name of the prophet as 'Zarashtraustra'). And the denouement of this hero's existence? Resignation. The Hero leaves the 'field of battle' and withdraws from the world.

Antihero

It is quite something, singing your own praises for 45 minutes. It is quite something that, with his unflinching modesty, Strauss intended *Ein Heldenleben*, the

Strauss's own *Don Quixote* could be a hint). 'I am no hero,' Strauss said when discussing *Ein Heldenleben* with his friend, the writer Romain Rolland, 'I have not got the necessary strength; I am not cut out for battle; I prefer to withdraw, to be quiet, to have peace.' Strauss's biography confirms this: he was anything but a heroic revolutionary, never ran counter to opinions or 'zeitgeist' but fell in line with them whenever possible. Strauss was a typical bourgeois, a happily married man who preferred simply plying his trade as a composer at his villa

A majestic violin solo, one of the most demanding in the orchestral repertoire and played today by the departing leader of the orchestra Igor Gruppman

original title of which was 'Held und Welt' (Hero and World), to replace Beethoven's *Eroica* in the concert hall, admitting that although there was no funeral march, it was in the same key (E flat major) and had a large number of horns to indicate its heroic nature. Just as well, otherwise it could have been taken as pure irony. Even today, some listeners hear self-praise and delusions of grandeur in this large-scale music; they take Strauss's comment 'I find myself just as interesting as Napoleon or Alexander the Great' literally. Others feel that this master of the orchestra was merely guilty of good-natured, typically Bavarian self-mockery. They see Strauss's Hero as a sort of antihero, a composer battling against his critics, in the same way as *Don Quixote* 'tilted at windmills' (the quotation from

in the Bavarian Alps. But perhaps he did not always feel comfortable with that. There was a strange contradiction in the man's character. His genius enabled him to write magnificent works. Strauss's mastery of the largest instrumental medium ever, the symphony orchestra, was unmatched. In order to blossom, his late-romantic idiom, harmonically the most extensive in the history of music, demanded large-scale works, broad theatrical gestures. And yet here was a man that would rather play card games with his family. It is entirely possible that Strauss wanted to use the irony of *Ein Heldenleben* to express this strange duality.

Stephen Westra

Lahav Shani - chief conductor

Born: Tel Aviv, Israël

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

Before: principal guest conductor Vienna Symphony Orchestra from 2017 to 2020

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

Daniil Triřonov - piano

Artist in Residence with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra 2022–2023

Born: Nizhniy Novgorod, Russia

Education: Gnessin School of Music Moscow with Tatiana Zelikman; Cleveland Institute of Music (piano and composition)

Awards: Chopin Competition Warsaw (2010); Tchaikovsky Competition Moscow; Franco-Abbiati Award (2013); Musical America's Artist of the Year (2019)

Breakthrough: 2011, First Prize Arthur Rubinstein Competition Tel Aviv, also Phina Salzman Prize, Chamber Music Prize and Audience Favorite Prize

Solo-appearances: Berlin Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, symphony orchestras of Boston, Chicago, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic

Recitals: Carnegie Hall New York, Wigmore Hall London, Musikverein Vienna, Suntory Hall Tokyo, Salle Pleyel Paris

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2016



Photo: Dario Acosta

Agenda

Sun 12 February 2023 • 10.30

Music for Breakfast No. 3

with **Charlotte Sprenkels** (Harp),

Veronika Lénártová (Viola), and

colleagues from the orchestra

Chamber Music by **Mozart**,

Takemitsu, **Ibert** and **Debussy**

Thu 24 February 2023 • 20.15

Sun 26 February 2023 • 14.15

conductor **Lahav Shani**

mezzosoprano (Judith) **Claudia**

Mahnke

baritone (Bluebeard) **Johannes**

Martin Kränzle

Ligeti Atmosphères

Bartók Duke Bluebeard's Castle

Thu 9 March 2023 • 20.15

Fri 10 March 2023 • 20.15

Sun 12 March 2023 • 14.15

conductor **Jordi Savall**

Rebel Les élémens

Marais Airs pour les Matelots et les

Tritons

Händel Water Music

Rameau Selection from Les Indes

Galantes and Hippolyte et Aricie

Fri 17 March 2023 • 20.15

Sun 19 March 2023 • 14.15

conductor **Timur Zangiev**

violin **Kristóf Baráti**

Gubaidulina Fairytale Poem

Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 1

Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2

Sun 26 March 2023 • 10.30

Music for Breakfast No. 4

with **Julien Hervé** (Clarinet), **Noëmi**

Bodden (Violin), and colleagues from

the orchestra

Chamber Music by **Ravel**, **Fauré** and

Debussy

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 Torrença

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 Yí Dou

Bob Bruyn

Letizia Sciarone

Eefje Habraken

Maija Reinikainen

Wim Ruitenbeek

Babette van den Berg

Melanie Broers

Viola

Anne Huser

Roman Spitzer

Galahad Samson

Kerstin Bonk

Lex Prummel

Janine Baller

Francis Saunders

Veronika Lénártová

Rosalinde Kluck

León van den Berg

Olffe van der Klein

Cello

Emanuele Silvestri

Joanna Pachucka

Daniel Petrovitsch

Mario Rio

Gé van Leeuwen

Eelco Beinema

Carla Schrijner

Pepijn Meeuws

Yí-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

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

Danny van de Wal

Percussion

Ronald Ent

Martijn Boom

Adriaan Feyaerts

Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels