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Dresden Philharmonic

Michael Sanderling conductor

Sol Gabetta cello

Brahms

Academic Festival Overture

Elgar

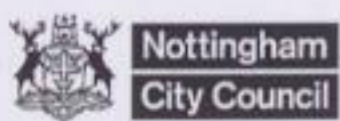
Cello Concerto

Interval of 20 minutes

Beethoven

Symphony No. 3, 'Eroica'

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## Johannes Brahms

(1833-1897)

### Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80


Heavy, serious, melancholy – it's easy to run away with an image of Brahms that does less than justice to both him and his music. He worked on his *Academic Festival Overture* at about the same time as his *Tragic Overture*, and the two works, as he himself acknowledged, represent the opposite sides of his musical personality. The *Academic Festival Overture* is by the Brahms who loved gypsy music, admired Johann Strauss II, and produced such light-hearted works as the *Liebeslieder* (Love-song) Waltzes for four solo voices and piano duet.

It was written as a thank-you present to Breslau University after it had awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1879. The implication of the German title, *Akademische Festouvertüre*, is that this is not so much a contribution to a university knees-up as a jolly overture that just happens to have been written to mark a university occasion. The festivity, in other words, was all Brahms's idea, instead of the "fine symphony" the University was hoping for.

Although never a university student himself, Brahms continued to look back fondly to a period in 1853 when he joined in the social life of students in the town of Göttingen. In the overture he returns to the world of riotous songs and arcane fresher's initiation rituals with evident relish, drawing on four student songs of the period. He described it as "a merry potpourri of student songs à la Suppé", a reference to the overture to Suppé's<sup>1</sup> operetta *Flotte Bursch* in which, like Brahms, he quotes the best-known of all German student songs, 'Gaudeamus Igitur' (So let's enjoy ourselves while we're still young).

Brahms's subdued, minor-key opening shouldn't fool anyone, and probably isn't meant to. He may not be ready to let us in on the joke just yet, but neither is he totally able to suppress a grin. As this section ends, minor turns to major, and the trumpets launch into the first of the four songs. A reminder of the overture's opening is followed by a sweeping string melody, based on a phrase from the second song. Then a nonsense-song appears on two chuckling bassoons. Brahms saves 'Gaudeamus Igitur' for his exhilarating coda, using the largest orchestra he ever employed to add a thoroughly festive sparkle to this rumbustious ending.

<sup>1</sup>Franz von Suppé (1819-1895): He first made his name as an opera conductor in Vienna in 1841. He wrote almost exclusively for the theatre, producing over two hundred stage works, including *Poet and Peasant*, *Light cavalry*, *Pique dame*, *The beautiful Galatea*, and *Boccaccio*, whose overtures remain popular, even though the operettas themselves have become neglected.

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## Sir Edward Elgar

(1857-1934)

### Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85

By the beginning of 1917, with worries over money and health adding to the strain caused by the First World War, Elgar was anxious to leave London and find seclusion in the country. In April his wife Alice found and rented 'Brinkwells', a cottage near Fittleworth in Sussex, deep in the kind of wooded countryside he had always loved. It was here that he conceived, and worked on, three chamber works – his Violin Sonata, String Quartet and Piano Quintet – and the Cello Concerto.

Together, these pieces amplified a strain of haunted longing mixed with sadness and resignation which had always been present in Elgar's music, but which had not surfaced so forcefully before. The pre-war world of Edwardian opulence and swaggering self-confidence was now irretrievable, and comparing the Cello Concerto with the Violin Concerto of 1910 brings out some telling contrasts. The two works use a virtually identical orchestra, but compared with the Violin Concerto's rich scoring, the Cello Concerto is strikingly spare and restrained. This

is partly a matter of balance with the lower-lying solo part, but also indicates just how much Elgar's emotional landscape had changed in the intervening years.

The chamber works have their own kind of enchantment, wistful and eerie by turns. The Cello Concerto adds an unmistakably tragic tone as it appears to confront a profound sense of loss and an uncertain future. The soloist's opening flourish strikes out boldly but immediately falls back, answered by the melancholy slow downward drift of the violas' main theme. The movement's two big climaxes, lasting no more than a few bars, show it to be capable of a certain proud nobility. The second main theme, introduced by clarinets and bassoons, brings a degree or two of greater rhythmic animation, but is still wistful at heart.

The soloist plays a short cadenza-like passage that recalls the concerto's opening as a link to the flickering, scurrying second movement. Like the first it is emotionally ambiguous – it has energy, but also a withdrawn, slightly furtive air.

The *adagio* is a short but profoundly moving elegy, all the more poignant for being in a major key, with its conclusion left open-ended, leading into the finale. This starts with an energetic anticipation of its main theme, but hesitates while the soloist muses on this and another recollection of the opening of the work. The movement eventually gets into its stride and for a while seems to recapture some of the old certainties. Eventually they are overtaken by the *adagio's* sorrow, and a heart-stopping return of the soloist's flourish from the start of the first movement. The last few *allegro molto* bars end the concerto on a note of curt, almost grim, defiance.

"A real large work and I think *good* and alive", Elgar called the concerto. But its life is shot through with the most powerfully understated heartache.



## Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)

### Symphony No. 3 in E flat, 'Eroica', Op. 55

1. Allegro con brio (*quick, with spirit*)
2. Marcia funebre (*funeral march*). Adagio assai (*very slow*)
3. Scherzo. Allegro vivace (*quick and lively*)
4. Finale. Allegro molto (*very fast*)

Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony is one of those works in which Western musical history turns a new and significant corner. When he composed it, between making the first sketches around October 1802 and finishing the score about a year later, Haydn was still working, though he had completed the last of his great series of symphonies eight years before. Beethoven's own two first symphonies, though announcing the arrival of a startling new personality, continued the Mozart/Haydn symphonic tradition. But in the 'Eroica' Symphony he expanded both the emotional range and the scale of the Viennese symphony to an exceptional degree.

It is a big work in its range and depth of thought and emotion as well as its duration. Beethoven's need to work out ideas in music

of unprecedented dimensions and complexity brings us to his original intention to dedicate the work to Napoleon. In 1803 Beethoven, while a loyal Viennese citizen, could nevertheless still plausibly admire Napoleon as the man who brought order out of the chaos of the French Revolution and a champion of liberty who rose from humble origins to challenge the absolutist monarchies of eighteenth-century Europe. About this time he considered moving to Paris, giving a further incentive for the dedication. In May 1804 the French Senate announced Napoleon was to be created hereditary emperor. A few months later Beethoven was still telling his publisher that the title was 'Bonaparte'; it was only after Napoleon's coronation, in December, that he angrily scratched out the words "entitled Bonaparte" on the title page.

The earliest known use of 'Eroica' in connection with the work was when it was first published in October 1806 with the inscription: "Heroic Symphony...composed to celebrate the memory of a great man." No mention of Napoleon there, at least, not directly, and we have no evidence to suggest what might have been going through Beethoven's mind in the meantime. It is doubtful that a tribute to Napoleon would have generated a work of such astonishing force and originality if it had not also drawn on more complex thoughts and ideas. In the summer before beginning work on the 'Eroica' he had been through the emotional crisis brought on by recognition that his encroaching deafness was likely to be incurable. The struggle is movingly charted in the despairing letter to his brothers (which he never sent) known as the 'Heiligenstadt Testament', however he emerged not just triumphant but defiant.

Two whipcrack chords from the full orchestra are all Beethoven needs to set out on this strange, wild journey. A subdued, purposeful theme on the cellos begins moving through the notes of an E flat major chord, but soon lands on a C sharp, which doesn't belong. Its destabilising influence gives an additional push to the music's forward

motion, and has long-term consequences. Later, a tense, dissonant climax gives rise to a new theme, initially on the oboe, in the key of E minor, sounding remote and disorienting. At the point where the music is supposed to come full circle to its starting-point Beethoven cranks up the tension by bringing in a solo horn early with the main theme. And where other composers of his day would be drawing the movement to a close, Beethoven launches into a huge coda which amounts to a second development section<sup>2</sup>, and where that disruptive C sharp (here notated as a D flat, but to all intents and purposes the same note) is shifting the ground under our feet. It's at moments such as these, and even in such an apparently simple move as adding a third horn to the then normal orchestral complement of two, that we can hear the sheer pressure of Beethoven's ideas bursting the banks of the classical Viennese symphony.

The genre of the orchestral funeral march was a musical legacy of the French Revolution. We need not assume that the 'Eroica' Symphony's second movement commemorates the death of an individual. Before the symphony can arrive at its celebratory finale it needs the psychological balance of sombre tragedy and playful exuberance represented by the middle two movements respectively. The march's opening is quietly solemn, but rises repeatedly to peaks of tragic grandeur. At the end, the main theme breaks apart into small phrases as the movement stutters to a close.

In spite of the scherzo's edge-of-audibility start we can sense a tremendous current of energy, so its eventual loud eruption is both an unexpected jolt and a confirmation of what we have been expecting. In the central trio section the three horns take centre-stage. The effect for Beethoven's audiences must have been electrifying, and it is still a thrilling moment.

The finale itself is a set of variations on a theme from the finale of Beethoven's score for the ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*, composed in 1801.

After the opening flourish, he plays with our expectations by basing the first three variations on the bass of the theme. Only after that do we get the theme itself. In spite of the sectional nature of variation form, this music has an epic sweep to its unexpected slowing-up, followed by a hell-for-leather coda.

Prometheus is the figure in Greek mythology who steals fire from the gods to bring enlightenment to mankind through knowledge and art. In his challenge to the arbitrary rule of the gods Beethoven no doubt saw parallels with Napoleon's championing of republicanism against the absolute monarchs of the old order (until he became one himself, that is). In the end the 'Eroica' Symphony has as much, if not more, to do with his own struggle to realise his artistic path, and his resolve to "take Fate by the throat".

<sup>2</sup>development section: in a piece of music based on 'sonata form', the music has moved from the key it started in to a contrasting one. In the 'development section' it moves back to its starting-point. This passage can be as direct or as far-ranging as the composer thinks appropriate.

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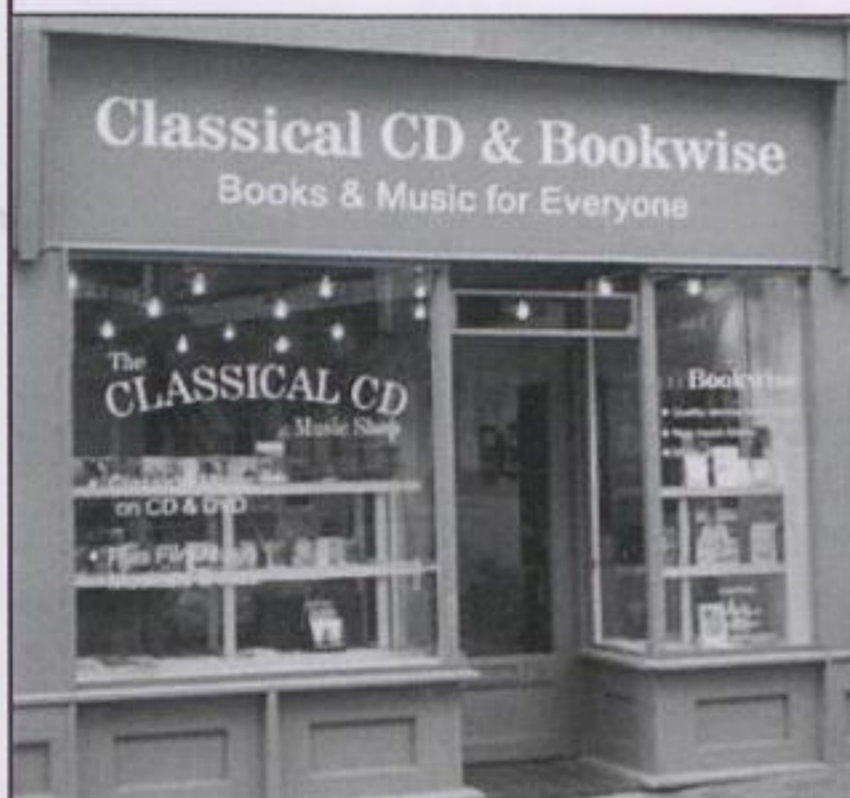
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Photo by Nikolaj Lund



## Michael Sanderling

Michael Sanderling has been Principal Conductor at the Dresden Philharmonic since 2011. The success of his relationship with the orchestra means that they will now continue to work together until at least 2019.

He is also a sought-after guest conductor in some of the world's greatest music centres and directs renowned orchestras such as the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo, the Berlin Konzerthausorchester, the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokio, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Germany's great radio orchestras.

Born in Berlin, Michael Sanderling is a rare example of someone who has gone from being an orchestral musician to the top league of conductors. In 1987, aged 20, he became a cello soloist at the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Kurt Masur and from 1994 to 2006 he filled the same position at the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. As a soloist, he gave

guest performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestre de Paris, to name but a few, and as a passionate chamber musician he was a member of the Ex Aequo trio for eight years.

It was at a rehearsal of the Berlin Chamber Orchestra in 2000 that he first stood at the conductor's desk. Familiar with a conductor's work from his childhood as the son of the legendary Kurt Sanderling, Michael assumed more and more conducting jobs and was appointed principal conductor and art director of the renowned Kammerakademie Potsdam in 2006. He was successful as an opera conductor with Philip Glass's *The Fall of the House of Usher* in Potsdam and with a new production of Sergei Prokofiev's *War and Peace* at Cologne Opera. As a cellist and conductor he has made CD recordings of works by Dvořák, Schumann, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky and others. However, it has now been a long time since he last performed as a cellist.

Working with young musicians is very close to Michael Sanderling's heart. He teaches as a professor at Frankfurt University for Music and Performing Arts and co-operates regularly with the Bundesjugendorchester, the Jerusalem Weimar Youth Orchestra, the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie and with the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra. From 2003 to 2013 he was associated with the Deutsche Streicherphilharmonie as its principal conductor.

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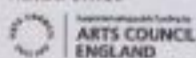
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## Sol Gabetta

Sol Gabetta made her internationally acclaimed debut with the Wiener Philharmoniker and Valery Gergiev after winning the Crédit Suisse Young Artist Award in 2004. Born in Argentina, she won her first competition at the age of ten, soon followed by the Natalia Gutman Award as well as commendations at Moscow's Tchaikovsky Competition and the ARD International Music Competition in Munich. A Grammy Award nominee, she received the Gramophone Young Artist of the Year Award in 2010 and the Würth-Preis of the Jeunesses Musicales in 2012.

Following her highly acclaimed debut with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle at the Baden-Baden Easter Festival in 2014, Gabetta performed with the Staatskapelle Berlin in December 2014. Other highlights for the 2014/15 season included her debut with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, a European tour with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski as well as recitals across Europe with Bertrand Chamayou, with whom she released a recital CD, *The Chopin Album*, in February.

Gabetta's performances include appearances with leading orchestras and conductors worldwide including the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Orchestre National de France, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Bamberger Symphoniker, Tonhalle Orchestra Zürich, Bolshoi

and Finnish Radio Symphony orchestras and The Philadelphia, London Philharmonic and Philharmonia orchestras. Gabetta collaborates very extensively with conductors Giovanni Antonini, Mario Venzago, Pablo Heras-Casado and Thomas Hengelbrock.

She was artist in residence at the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival in summer 2014, with past residencies at the Philharmonie and Konzerthaus Berlin. She is a regular guest at festivals such as Verbier, Gstaad, Schwetzingen, Rheingau, Schubertiade Schwarzenberg and Beethovenfest Bonn.

Sol Gabetta is a committed chamber musician, performing worldwide in halls such as Wigmore Hall in London, Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona and the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, with distinguished partners including Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Baiba Skride and especially Bertrand Chamayou. Her passion for chamber music is evident in the Festival "Solsberg" which she founded in Switzerland.

Sol Gabetta was named Instrumentalist of the Year at the 2013 Echo Klassik Awards, for her interpretation of Shostakovich's Cello Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Lorin Maazel. She also received the award in 2007, 2009 and 2011 for her recordings of Haydn, Mozart and Elgar Cello concerti as well as works by Tchaikovsky and Ginastera. Sol Gabetta holds an extensive discography with Sony and has released a duo recital with Hélène Grimaud for *Deutsche Grammophon*.

Thanks to a generous private stipend by the Rahn Kulturfonds, Sol Gabetta performs on one of the very rare and precious cellos by G B Guadagnini dating from 1759. Sol Gabetta has taught at the Basel Music Academy since 2005.



## Dresden Philharmonic

The Dresden Philharmonic is the orchestra of Dresden, the State Capital of Saxony. Since 2011, Michael Sanderling has been its Principal Conductor, following Kurt Masur, Marek Janowski, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and others in this position. The Dresden Philharmonic continues the tradition of the Ratsmusik, the city council's musicians who were first mentioned in the fifteenth century and had grown into an orchestra by the early nineteenth century. Since 1870, the year when Dresden got its first great concert hall, the Philharmonic's symphony concerts have been an established part of the city's concert life. The Dresden Philharmonic has ever since been a concert orchestra with regular ventures into the fields of opera concertante and oratorios. It is housed in the Palace of Culture in the middle of the Old Town. The listed shell of the building will be built-in with a new, ultra-modern concert hall by 2017. Until then, the Philharmonic performs concerts for large orchestra mainly in the Albertinum and the Schauspielhaus.

The Dresden Philharmonic offers great musical and stylistic variety. On the one hand, the orchestra has been able to retain its very own "German" sound in the Romantic repertoire. On the other hand, it has developed flexibility of sound and style for Baroque and Viennese Classic music as well as for modern works. Renowned conductors and composers headed the orchestra early on, from Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák and Richard Strauss to

Erich Kleiber and Knappertsbusch, Previn and Marriner, to Andris Nelsons and Kristjan Järvi. Premieres remain an important part of the orchestra's programme today.

The Dresden Philharmonic joins the Dresden Kreuzchor for the Christmas and Easter Bach performances at the Kreuzkirche. For the great choral symphonies the orchestra can rely on the Dresden Philharmonic Choir as an excellent partner. Another important tradition is chamber music and chamber symphonies performed by the Dresden Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, all of whose musicians come from the Dresden Philharmonic.

Not only does the Dresden Philharmonic enjoy an extraordinarily large number of regular subscribers; with its family programmes, film music concerts etc. it does a great job in introducing classical music to new groups of listeners. Guest performances all over the world are testimony to the high renown the Dresden Philharmonic enjoys in the world of classical music. Another remarkable aspect is the Philharmonic's impressive discography which started to develop in 1937. Currently, a new cycle is being recorded for the Sony Classical label, with Principal Conductor Michael Sanderling pairing a selection of Dmitri Shostakovich's symphonies with Beethoven's symphonies.

## Dresden Philharmonic

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 Jeanine Thorpe  
 Heide Schwarzbach  
 Christoph Lindemann  
 Marcus Gottwald  
 Ute Kelemen  
 Antje Becker  
 Johannes Groth  
 Alexander Teichmann  
 Annegret Teichmann  
 Juliane Ketschau  
 Thomas Otto  
 Eunyong Lee  
 Deborah Jungnickel

### 2nd Violin

Markus Gundermann  
 Michael Dinnebier\* \*\*  
 Adela Bratu  
 Denise Nittel  
 Reinhard Lohmann  
 Steffen Gaitzsch  
 Matthias Bettin  
 Andreas Hoene  
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 Hanno Felthaus\*  
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 Eva Maria Knauer  
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 Ulf Prella\*  
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 Undine Röhner-Stolle\*  
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 Ulrich Hermann\* \*\*  
 Michael Lang  
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 Hanno Westphal\*  
 Torsten Gottschalk  
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 Csaba Kelemen  
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