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International Concert Season 2017-2018



Photo by Peter Rigaud

Dresden Philharmonic
Thursday 24 May 2018

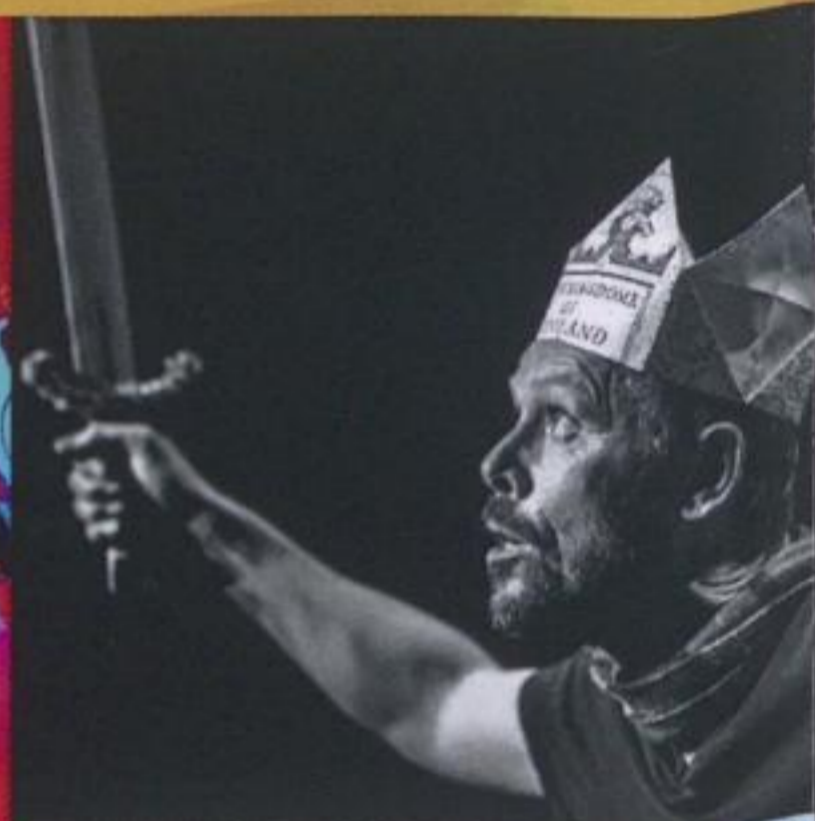
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INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SEASON 2017-2018

Thursday 24 May 2018

Dresden Philharmonic

Michael Sanderling conductor
Arabella Steinbacher violin

Tchaikovsky Polonaise from Eugene Onegin
Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto

Interval of 20 minutes

Shostakovich Symphony No. 5

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Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

(1840 - 1893)

Polonaise from Eugene Onegin, Op. 24

The best-known and most successful of Tchaikovsky's operas, *Eugene* (or *Yevgeny*) *Onegin* is based on a verse novel by the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837). It was Elizaveta Lavrovskaya, a well-known contralto of her day, who, in May 1877, first suggested the subject. According to Tchaikovsky himself, in a letter to his brother, Modest, he first thought the idea incredible and said nothing. But thinking about it later over a meal he quickly warmed to the idea, managed to get hold of a copy, and sat up all night drafting a scenario. By the beginning of February 1878 the score was finished, and the opera was given its first complete performance by staff and students of the Moscow Conservatoire in March the following year.

Many of those around Tchaikovsky were highly sceptical about Pushkin's original having operatic possibilities, and he remained aware of its undramatic qualities, even as he continued to work enthusiastically on the score: "This opera will, of course, have no powerful dramatic movement but, on the other hand, the human side of it will be interesting – and, moreover, what a wealth of poetry there is in all this!" he wrote to his patroness Nadezhda von

Meck. Perhaps in recognition of this, he wanted the work to be described not as an opera, but as 'Lyrical scenes in three acts'.

Pushkin began his novel as a satire on the manners of Russian high society in the 1820s but, predictably, it was the emotional predicament of the two central characters – the bored socialite Onegin, and Tatyana, the dreamy elder daughter of a country family – that held Tchaikovsky's interest. Tatyana falls passionately in love with Onegin only to be coldly spurned. Onegin quarrels with his friend Vladimir Lensky, who is engaged to Tatyana's younger sister, Olga, and to his horror kills him in the resulting duel. Two years later he meets Tatyana again. She is now married to the elderly Prince Gremin, and this time it is Onegin who makes a futile declaration of love. Tatyana sorrowfully insists that she will stay faithful to her husband, and bids Onegin goodbye for ever.

The Polonaise¹ begins Act 3, set in the St Petersburg mansion where Onegin and Tatyana have their tragic final meeting. After a brief fanfare-like introduction, the main theme sets off, with the fanfare idea providing an accompaniment figure. The quieter middle section begins with a new woodwind theme, followed by a more subdued-sounding melody for the bassoons and cellos. The main theme then returns for a stately conclusion.

¹ polonaise: a stately processional dance, originating in Poland. Its characteristic three-in-a-bar rhythms have been used by many composers, but are most closely associated with Chopin.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 35

1. Allegro moderato (*moderately quick*)
2. Canzonetta. Andante (*walking pace*)
3. Finale. Allegro vivacissimo (*quick and very lively*)

To put the aftermath of his catastrophic marriage in 1877 behind him, Tchaikovsky spent several months travelling in Western Europe. On his way home from Italy he stayed for a month in Clarens, Switzerland, where he was joined by his brother Modest and Yosif Kotek, a young violinist who had attended his theory classes at the Moscow Conservatoire, and to whom he felt strongly attracted.

Among the music Kotek had with him, and which he and Tchaikovsky played through together, was *Symphonie Espagnole*, for violin and orchestra, by the French composer Edouard Lalo (1823-1892). Tchaikovsky was immediately taken with it, and this seems to have been the stimulus for writing a concerto of his own, which he sketched in just over two weeks.

He offered both the dedication and the first performance to the great violinist and teacher Leopold Auer, who turned it down, on the grounds that the solo part was unplayable. Instead, another leading player, Adolf Brodsky, gave the premiere in Vienna, in December 1881. It provoked a sharply divided reaction from the audience, and from the critic Eduard Hanslick² one of the most scathing press notices Tchaikovsky ever received: "For a while it moves along well enough... but soon roughness gets the upper hand and remains in charge. It is no longer a question of the violin being played, but of it being yanked about and torn to shreds." In the finale he could hear only "the brutish, grim jollity of a Russian church festival. We see nothing but common, ravaged faces, hear rough oaths and smell cheap liquor." He finally condemned the concerto as music which "audibly stinks". To the end of his life Tchaikovsky was able to recite Hanslick's review from memory.

The first movement begins with an introduction which contains strong hints of the main theme which the solo violin plays in full on its first entry. This then moves seamlessly into the buoyant and springy second theme, and it is the continuity between the two themes which helps to establish the music's genial character.

Tchaikovsky wrote the introspective Canzonetta as a substitute for the original slow movement, about which he, Modest and Kotek all had reservations. Nadezhda von Meck found the replacement "... full of poetic dreaming, secret desires, and deep sadness..." The gentle woodwind passage which opens the movement returns to close it, sinking deeper into a reverie, until the finale jolts us awake.

After a brief cadenza-like passage the soloist launches into the vigorous dance-like main theme. The second theme, with its drone bass, has a strong rustic flavour (Hanslick was right about that, at least), which takes on a more delicate quality when it is played by solo winds. But it is the first theme's carefree earthiness which brings the concerto to its exhilarating close.

² Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904): The leading Viennese music critic from 1854. He is known for his opposition to Wagner, Liszt and Bruckner, and his defence of Schumann and Brahms, but his views were not so clear-cut as that suggests.



Dmitri Shostakovich

(1906 - 1975)

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47

1. Moderato – allegro non troppo – poco sostenuto – moderato (*moderate pace – not too quick – somewhat sustained – moderate pace*)
2. Allegretto (*fairly quick*)
3. Largo – poco più mosso (*slow – a little more movement*)
4. Allegro non troppo – allegro (*not too quick - quick*)

Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony is a pivotal work in his output in more ways than one. It represents a turning-point in his development as a composer, and it has become the focus for the whole debate over his relationship to the Soviet regime.

In January 1936 an article entitled "Muddle instead of music" appeared in *Pravda*. A savage attack on Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, it left him in no doubt of the pressure on him to conform to the principles of 'Socialist realism'. Although definitions of the term were left deliberately vague, the general requirement was for music that was simple, accessible and optimistic. Anything else was liable to be denounced as 'formalist' and 'decadent' (as Prokofiev is said to have observed sarcastically, this meant, in effect, anything that was not instantly understood at the first hearing).

Stalin's purges were gathering momentum, and Shostakovich was apparently faced with an impossible choice between artistic integrity and sheer survival. He knew that the appearance of his next major work would be closely watched by both the authorities and his colleagues, and the tremendous act of courage involved in producing his Fifth Symphony should never be underestimated.

It is usually said to have been written between April and July 1937, though a piano sketch of the last movement is dated September. Its first performance in Leningrad (St Petersburg) in November was an unprecedented triumph for the composer, greeted with an ovation that continued for over forty minutes. It was accepted by the authorities as a vindication of their ideology and a sign that Shostakovich had submitted to their requirements. With its straightforward design, clear-cut themes and rousing finale he both achieved a genuine popular success and restored his official standing in one go.

But what had he actually done? The Fifth Symphony certainly marks a deepening and maturing of his creative powers. It is tautly constructed on classical lines – it is his first four-movement symphony since No. 1 – and is economical in both its material and the orchestral forces it requires. This is in sharp contrast to the gargantuan Fourth Symphony, which he had withdrawn during rehearsals the previous autumn. Had he simply caved in to demands, as some commentators later accused him of doing, or is something more subtle going on?

His Fifth Symphony was soon described as "a Soviet artist's practical creative reply to just criticism", though the source of the comment appears not to have been traced. But what kind of a reply? If 'formalism' includes a concern with rigorous musical structure, then the audacity with which Shostakovich placed right under the authorities' noses the very things they seemed to be denouncing is breath-taking. The first movement is full of canonic writing³ – the very opening is a stern canonic dialogue between upper and lower strings – and has a habit of deriving new themes from earlier ones, often by simply speeding them up or slowing them down. Whether or not this kind of concentrated structural thinking came under the heading 'formalist errors', it was integral to Shostakovich's creative personality.

Notably, the first movement's lyrical themes have a tendency to turn brutal. The long violin melody heard near the start, descending then arching expressively upwards, becomes the basis of the strutting, arrogant march whose appearance provokes the first movement's climax. This is a world where nothing can be trusted. Similarly, the second movement, a lumbering waltz spiked by the occasional four-beat bar, is shot through with an irony worthy of Mahler, who was a powerful influence on Shostakovich at the time. The violin solo in the trio section is all grace and elegance on the surface, but this is only a thin disguise for the bitter sarcasm underneath.

"I think Soviet tragedy as a genre has every right to exist", Shostakovich wrote in an article shortly before the first Moscow performance of the Fifth Symphony in January 1938. There is no mistaking the tragic atmosphere of the third movement. It begins in a tense, icy stillness and builds to a heart-rending climax whose scoring – clarinets slowly trilling at the bottom of their range, the cellos lamenting at the top of theirs – reinforces the powerful sense of sheer grief. The music clearly struck a chord with the Leningrad audience, many of whom openly broke down and wept.

The finale has every appearance of being just the kind of triumphant apotheosis the Soviet authorities expected. But immediately before work on the Fifth Symphony Shostakovich composed his *Four Romances*⁴ on Poems by Pushkin, Op. 46, for baritone and small orchestra. The symphony's finale makes two references to the first song, though their significance would not have been generally recognised at the time, since the songs had not yet been performed. The opening notes of the finale's first theme refer to Pushkin's "barbarian-artist" who "blackens over a picture of genius". In the poem "the alien paints" eventually "flake off like old scales" to reveal the original picture. At the end of the central quiet section of the symphony's finale an undulating string and harp figure emerges, taken from the song's last verse: "Thus do delusions fall away/From my worn-out soul,/And there spring up within it/Visions of original, pure days." (translation by Gerard McBurney). A radiant vision – but as the music regains momentum, the "barbarian-artist" theme returns and drives the finale towards its conclusion.

Did Shostakovich genuinely believe in this passage as a final triumph, or is it deliberately more ambiguous? In the article quoted earlier, the composer goes on to write about "many masterpieces of musical literature where the stern, inspirational language...can fill the human soul not with weakness and despair, but courage and the will to fight."

³ canon: a compositional technique in which a theme overlaps with a more or less exact copy in another part. A round such as 'Frère Jacques' is a simple example.

⁴ romance: a term widely used in France in the later eighteenth century to mean a song in a short, simple style, and soon taken up in other countries, particularly Italy and Russia.

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Michael Sanderling

Michael Sanderling, one of the most distinguished conductors of our time, has been the principal conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic since 2011. One of the highlights of this time was in April 2017, when the orchestra moved into the newly renovated concert hall at the Kulturpalast. The inaugural performance marking the re-opening of the venue featured songs of Schubert with Matthias Goerne, Julia Fischer performing Brahms's Violin Concerto, and the iconic *Ode to Joy* from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Besides this position, Michael Sanderling is also guest conductor of renowned orchestras such as the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic and the German Radio Symphony Orchestras of WDR and SWR. In a partnership with SONY Classical since 2015, recordings of all the symphonies by Beethoven and Shostakovich are being produced under Michael Sanderling's leadership. As of now, the first three recordings of the series have been released, marking a new chapter in the discography of the Dresden Philharmonic.

Born in Berlin, Michael Sanderling is one of the few people who, after playing in an orchestra, has been able to achieve a highly successful career as conductor. In 1987, at the age of 20, he became solo cellist of the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig under Kurt Masur and, from 1994 to 2006, he held the same position in the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. As a soloist, he gave guest performances with ensembles including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Orchestre de Paris.

Michael Sanderling first graced the conductor's stand at a concert of the Kammerorchester Berlin in 2000. Having been familiar with the art of conducting from a young age, as son of the legendary Kurt Sanderling, Michael Sanderling took on more and more conducting roles, and was named the Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Kammerakademie Potsdam in 2006.

As an opera conductor, he has enjoyed success with Philip Glass's *The Fall of the House of Usher* in Potsdam, and with a new production of Prokofiev's *War and Peace* at the Cologne Opera. As cellist and conductor, he has recorded works by Dvořák, Schumann, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky and many others.

One of Michael Sanderling's passions is working with young musicians. He teaches at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Frankfurt/Main and regularly works with the National Youth Orchestra of Germany and youth orchestras of Weimar and the Schleswig-Holstein-Festival. From 2003 to 2013, he was the principal conductor for the Deutsche Streicherphilharmonie (Youth String Orchestra).

In 2017, the Kurt Masur Academy – The Orchestra Academy of the Dresden Philharmonic, was founded thanks to the commitment of Michael Sanderling and the close relationship of Kurt Masur with the Dresden Philharmonic. It welcomes young international musicians and contributes to passing on the characteristic tonal culture of the history-steeped orchestra to emerging young talent. This new institution will help ensure the future of the orchestra thanks to its academy musicians.

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Arabella Steinbacher

Arabella Steinbacher is celebrated as one of today's leading violinists worldwide, praised as "queen of the evening" for her "brilliant playing", "extraordinary sound" and "softly blossoming tone", to cite recent press reviews.

Known for her extraordinarily varied repertoire, she plays, in addition to all major Classical and Romantic Violin Concertos, also those of Bartók, Berg, Glazunov, Katchaturian, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Schnittke, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Szymanowski, Hindemith, Hartmann and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Offertorium* to name a few.

Arabella Steinbacher frequently plays internationally with all major orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig, Orchestre National de France, Vienna Symphony, NHK Symphony Orchestra and has performed with conductors such as the late Lorin Maazel, Christoph von Dohnányi, Riccardo Chailly, Herbert Blomstedt, Christoph Eschenbach and Charles Dutoit. Her debuts at the Salzburger Festspiele in 2013, at the 2009 BBC Proms in London and at Carnegie Hall in 2011 have been praised by international press.

Recent engagements include her return to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC, the Orchestre National de France and the Spanish National Orchestra. Her tours in 2017-18 have taken her to Germany with Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg in late 2017, the UK with Dresden Philharmonic under Michael Sanderling and Asia with WDR Symphony Orchestra and Jukka-Pekka Saraste.

As a CARE International charity ambassador, Arabella Steinbacher continually supports people in need. In December 2011 she toured through Japan commemorating the tsunami catastrophe of the same year. The DVD *Arabella Steinbacher – Music of Hope* with recordings from this tour was later released by the label Nightberry.

Her latest CD release is an album with The Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski featuring Hindemith and Britten violin concertos. Among many international and national music prizes and nominations, she has been awarded the ECHO Klassik twice. Arabella Steinbacher has been recording exclusively for Pentatone Classics since 2009. Earlier recordings include a Mozart album with the Festival Strings Lucerne, an album with sonatas by Richard Strauss and Cesar Franck with pianist Robert Kulek and her last recording by Pentatone Classics in collaboration with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and Charles Dutoit with violin concertos by Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky.

Born into a family of musicians, Arabella Steinbacher played the violin from the age of three and studied with Ana Chumachenco at the Munich Academy of Music from the age of nine. A source of her musical inspiration and guidance is Israeli violinist Ivry Gitlis.

Arabella Steinbacher currently plays the 1716 "Booth" Stradivari, generously loaned by the Nippon Music Foundation.



Dresden Philharmonic

The Dresden Philharmonic can look back on a 150-year-tradition as the orchestra of Saxony's capital, Dresden. Ever since 1870, when Dresden was provided with its first large concert hall, its symphony concerts have been an integral element of the city's cultural life.

The Dresden Philharmonic has remained a concert orchestra to this day, with regular excursions into concert performance and oratorio. Its home is the state-of-the-art concert hall inaugurated in April 2017 in the Kulturpalast building at the heart of the historic district. The principal conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic since 2011 is Michael Sanderling. Besides Kurt Masur, principal conductor in the years 1967–1972, his predecessors have also included Paul van Kempen, Carl Schuricht, Heinz Bongartz, Herbert Kegel, Marek Janowski and Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, amongst others.

The musical and stylistic bandwidth of the Dresden Philharmonic is great. On the one side, the orchestra has managed to preserve its very own "Dresden sound" in the romantic repertoire. And on the other, it has developed a tonal and stylistic flexibility for the music of the Baroque and First Viennese School as much as for modern works.

World premieres continue to play an important part in the programme to this day. Guest performances around the world attest to the high esteem enjoyed by the Dresden Philharmonic in the world of classical music. The Philharmonic's discography, accumulated since 1937 is also impressive. A new cycle of recordings directed by Michael Sanderling and released by the Sony Classical label creates a dialogue between the symphonies of Shostakovich and Beethoven.

en.dresdnerphilharmonie.de

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 Dalia Richter
 Christoph Lindemann
 Marcus Gottwald
 Ute Kelemen
 Johannes Groth
 Alexander Teichmann
 Juliane Ketschau
 Thomas Otto
 Theresia Hänzsche
 Deborah Jungnickel
 Xianbo Wen
 Annekathrin Rammelt
 Eunsil Kang
 Attila János Keresztesi

Second Violins

Markus Gundermann
 Rodrigo Reichel
 Adela-Maria Bratu
 Elisabeth Marasch
 Steffen Gaitzsch
 Matthias Bettin
 Heiko Seifert
 Andreas Hoene
 Constanze Sandmann
 Jörn Hettfleisch
 Dorit Schwarz
 Susanne Herberg
 Hayoung Kim
 Signe Dietze

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Christina Biwank
 Hanno Felthaus
 Beate Müller
 Steffen Seifert
 Steffen Neumann
 Hans-Burkart Henschke
 Andreas Kuhlmann
 Joanna Szumiel
 Harald Hufnagel
 Carolin Krüger
 Susanne Goerlich
 Thomas Oepen

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 Ulf Prell
 Victor Meister
 Rainer Promnitz
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 Stumpff
 Clemens Krieger
 Daniel Thiele
 Alexander Will
 Dorothea Plans Casal
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 Csaba Kelemen
 Björn Kadenbach

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Photo: Benjamin Ealovega



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
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