



CONCERT PROGRAMME
FRIDAY 1 APRIL 2022

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ANJA BIHLMAIER CONDUCTS

GALINA USTVOLSKAYA Suite for Orchestra

MENDELSSOHN Violin Concerto
with Clara Jumi-Kang, violin

SCHUMANN Symphony No. 2

Presented by Paul Herriott, RTÉ lyric fm

FRIDAY 8 APRIL, 7.30pm

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PROGRAMME

MILHAUD	<i>La création du monde</i>
RAVEL	Piano Concerto in G
WEILL	Suite from <i>The Threepenny Opera</i>
GERSHWIN	<i>An American in Paris</i>

Leonard Slatkin conductor

Lise de la Salle piano

Presented by Paul Herriott, RTÉ lyric fm

FRIDAY 1 APRIL 2022, 7.30pm

NATIONAL CONCERT HALL



Live-streamed on the NSO's YouTube channel and
broadcast live on RTÉ lyric Live on RTÉ lyric fm

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La création du monde

Darius Milhaud's influence went well beyond his native France where he was famously a member of Les Six, that coterie of composers united in protest against the dominance of Wagner and refusing the voguish impressionism of Debussy and Ravel. Collectively, they carved out a place for Modernism in early 20th-century French music.

Arguably of greater, if less qualifiable, importance, was Milhaud's influence on a dazzling array of students who flocked to him from Europe, Scandinavia and the United States. Among those who gained later prominence were the composers György Kurtág, Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Philip Glass. No less prominent, in their own very different musical worlds, were the jazz pianist Dave Brubeck (who named his son after Milhaud) and prolific songwriter Burt Bacharach.

The influence on Brubeck (and a host of other jazz musicians and composers) shouldn't surprise. Milhaud was an early convert to jazz music, having first encountered it on a visit to London in 1920 and subsequently, more authentically, in New York's Harlem district two years later. The shock of the new compelled the ever-receptive Milhaud to incorporate jazz in his own music.

A perfect opportunity presented itself on his return home in 1922 with a commission from Ballets Suédois, the Paris-based company that gamely rivalled Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes for innovation in the first half of the decade. The result was *La création du monde* (The Creation of the World).

With Paris at the ecstatic height of its infatuation with jazz, Milhaud borrowed from the new American form with a ready appreciation of, and relishable appetite for, its vivid colour palette and infectious rhythmic energy, dexterously bending them into traditional orchestral forms. Based on African creation myths, in *La création du monde* Milhaud produced the first major jazz-inspired, jazz-accented work by an established classical composer. As he himself commented: 'This is a work making wholesale use of the jazz style to convey a purely classical feeling'.

The choice of an alto saxophone for the opening theme, and of a double-bass for the section immediately following (essentially a Baroque prelude and fugue in new clothes), stakes Milhaud's jazz credentials to the table. Cast in six, through-played sections, *La création du monde* plunders the full arsenal afforded by jazz music's freer way with rhythm, phrasing, dynamics, colouring and emotional heft to produce a thrilling, contemporary take on ancient myths brilliantly fashioned for an era in which the 20th century, in all its multi-voiced modernity, was beginning to assert its own voice. Milhaud's seminal work proved to be the template that ushered in George Gershwin's era-defining *Rhapsody in Blue* within the year.

Michael Quinn © National Symphony Orchestra

MAURICE RAVEL 1875-1937

Piano Concerto in G

i. *Allegrement*

ii. *Adagio assai*

iii. *Presto*

Ravel's two piano concertos (Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, and Piano Concerto in G) were finished in 1930 and 1931 respectively and were to be his final major works. The G major concerto was first performed in Paris in 1932 by Marguerite Long, to whom it is dedicated, with Ravel himself conducting the orchestra.

The Concerto's two outer movements are jovial in character and display a strong influence of jazz, which Ravel had encountered in his concert tour of North America in 1928. Syncopation, blues-inflected scales and trombone glissandi are prominent characteristics. The pungent harmonies and crisp, bright scoring add a boldness and brashness to these two adventurous movements. The light-hearted and high-spirited mood is very much in keeping with the composer's view that 'The music of a concerto, in my opinion, should be light-hearted and brilliant, and not aim at profundity

or at dramatic effects.’ Ravel had in fact originally thought of calling the work a *divertissement*. The slow middle movement, on the other hand, is serene and profoundly beautiful and is the emotional heart of the piece. It is imbued with the classical grace and elegance of Mozart.

The first movement opens with a dance-like theme on the piccolo against rapid bitonal arpeggios on the piano, immediately setting a scintillating mood of gaiety. This tightly controlled opening foray is balanced by a more improvisatory and leisurely theme introduced by the solo piano, its ornamentation suggestive of the Spanish folk idiom much loved by Ravel. Both themes are extensively developed and elaborated leading to the cadenza, a short reflective rumination, devoid of the normal expectations of flashy bravura and virtuoso scales in double octaves. The exciting and spirited coda, however, restores the energetic tone of the movement’s opening.

Ravel has said that the long cantilena given to the soloist at the start of the second movement was inspired by the *Larghetto* of Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet. It conjures up a nocturnal mood of stillness and serene resignation. Flute, oboe and clarinet enter the texture almost imperceptibly, leading the piano to create a florid tapestry of arabesques in the right hand against the original simple accompaniment in the left. This elaboration leads to a somewhat unexpectedly dissonant climax. The languorous main theme now returns; its yearning tone intensified in the dark sonority of the cor anglais, while the piano continues to weave its spellbinding filigree. The movement dissolves into absolute stillness.

The final short *Presto* movement is a type of *moto perpetuo* that never pauses for breath. The virtuoso piano figurations are countered by a series of musical ideas flashing by at breakneck speed: raucous squeals from the E-flat clarinet and piccolo, drum rolls, brass fanfares, trombone slides and bassoon passages at virtually impossible speeds. The exuberant carnival or circus atmosphere is sustained right to the final drum roll.

John Buckley © RTÉ

The Threepenny Opera Suite

- i. Overture
- ii. *The Ballad of Mack the Knife*
- iii. *The Instead-of Song*
- iv. *The Ballad of the Easy Life*
- v. *Polly's Song*
- vi. *Tango-Ballad*
- vii. *Cannon Song*
- viii. *Threepenny Finale*

With works like *The Threepenny Opera*, *Lady in the Dark* and *Street Scene*, Kurt Weill helped shape, and give a conscience to, 20th-century musical theatre. His greatest, certainly most abiding, achievement, *The Threepenny Opera* – a ‘play with music’ based on John Gay’s 18th-century English ballad opera, *The Beggar’s Opera* – boasts caustically satirical lyrics by the great iconoclastic German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht. It was first staged in Berlin in 1928 just as the Nazis were emerging in a Germany exhausted by its struggle to recover from defeat in the First World War.

After an initially poor reception – such was the shock of the new even to Berlin *fashionistas* of the day – it became a runaway success. By 1933, when Weill and Brecht were compelled to flee Germany by the Nazis’ violent ascendancy to power, it had been translated into 18 languages and performed more than 10,000 times on European stages.

Ever alert to commercial possibilities, Weill, at the behest of conductor Otto Klemperer, quickly set about producing an orchestral Suite from a theatre score that gleefully borrowed from vaudeville, burlesque, cabaret, popular German dance-hall tunes of the day, baroque chorales and jazz to offer a potent commentary on Brecht’s caustic satire of capitalism.

Completed within four months of *The Threepenny Opera*’s first night, the eight-part, through-played Suite had to wait until well after Weill’s early death, a month after his 50th birthday, before it gained a regular, now established, place in the concert hall.

Weill's music retains the power to shock, to surprise, and to seduce, as the Suite reveals. Pivoting around the fulcrum of the exquisitely louche 'Polly's Song' at its centre, the bristling, brass-led 'Overture' sets out Weill's collage-like approach in forthright terms, brilliantly blending the antique and the new. The work's most famous song, the 'Ballad of Mack the Knife' follows. A fearsomely lowering, unsettlingly insinuating updating of a *moritat* – a medieval 'murder ballad' – its grimly sardonic portrait of the vicious Mackie dyspeptically inks in his growing menace and threat with knowing winks and allusive asides.

The buoyantly frivolous 'The Instead-of Song' carries itself with all the brisk brightness of a silent-film short featuring Charlie Chaplin at his silliest, 'The Ballad of the Easy Life' a light, lyrical romantic interlude before 'Polly's Song' innocently introduces more troubling themes.

Those darker hues are worked out in the hyperactive 'Tango-Ballad' where the sensuous, narcotic power of dance substitutes for the more dangerous intoxications of politics. 'Cannon Song' provides a moment of tremulous calm, accented by the dislocating twangs of a banjo and forlorn pleading in the brass, before the percussive, foreboding storm of 'Threepenny Finale'.

Michael Quinn © National Symphony Orchestra

GEORGE GERSHWIN 1898-1937

An American in Paris

Commissioned by the New York Philharmonic in 1928, George Gershwin's 'rhapsodic ballet' *An American in Paris* – inspiration for the 1951 film of the same name – was partly composed in the French capital while he was there on a working holiday.

Like many at the time, Gershwin had developed something of an infatuation with Paris, his visit in 1928 marking his fifth journey there. Inspired by the tumult of a city embracing modernity and re-discovering its vitality after the long degradations of the First World War, it picked up where his

earlier *Rhapsody in Blue* and Piano Concerto in F had left off in fusing the irrepressible candour and colour of jazz music with traditional symphonic form.

Gershwin himself described it as 'the most modern music I've yet attempted' and nearly a century later its impressionistic collage of the sights and sounds of a city in its prime remain instantly recognisable and continue to sound thrillingly contemporary.

Depicting the adventures (and mis-adventures) of a wide-eyed American visitor to Paris, Gershwin's notion of 'a tone poem for orchestra' owed something to a classical lineage prompted by the cartoon playfulness of Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*. The result proved to be a thrilling amalgam of excitable jazz, yearning blues music and symphonic ebullience executed with a degree of chutzpah and charm that wouldn't be heard again in American music until Leonard Bernstein a quarter of a century later.

There's much in *An American in Paris* of the Tin Pan Alley brio and Broadway bravura with which Gershwin made his name. With its propulsive walking theme, the opening carries itself with a bright, bristling expectation of the adventures ahead, Gallic gaiety combining with the sound of French taxi horns punctuating the hurly-burly of the Champs-Élysées.

As our tourist drinks in the sights, he finds his way to the visiting holidaymakers' honeypot of the Left Bank, where he enjoys his first dalliance with an attractive local, albeit prompting an unexpected bout of aching, blues-accented homesickness given voice by a keening, muted trumpet.

A chance encounter with a fellow vacationing American – characterised by a chirpy, cheerful, humour-restoring Charleston – banishes thoughts of home and brings Paris and all its promise back into expectant focus. Brimming over with renewed, unbounded energy, the riotous finale exalts the promise of what the philosopher Rabelais described as 'the great perhaps' and in its intoxicating brilliance offers an inviting reminder of Oscar Wilde's witty dictum: 'When good Americans die, they go to Paris'.



LEONARD SLATKIN CONDUCTOR

Internationally acclaimed conductor Leonard Slatkin is Music Director Laureate of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO), Directeur Musical Honoraire of the Orchestre National de Lyon (ONL), and Conductor Laureate of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO). He maintains a rigorous schedule of guest conducting throughout the world and is active as a composer, author, and educator.

Slatkin has received six Grammy awards and 35 nominations. His latest recording is the world premiere of Alexander Kastalsky's *Requiem for Fallen Brothers* commemorating the 100th anniversary of the World War I armistice. Other recent Naxos releases include works by Saint-Saëns, Ravel, and Berlioz (with the ONL) and music by Copland, Rachmaninov, Borzova, McTee, and John Williams (with the DSO). In addition, he has recorded the complete Brahms, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky symphonies with the DSO.

The 2021-22 season includes engagements with The Orchestra Now, Manhattan School of Music, SLSO, DSO, ONL, Orquestra Simfònica Illes Balears, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, MÁV Symphony Orchestra in Budapest, Carnegie Mellon University, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, Orquesta de València, Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria, and Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra.

A recipient of the prestigious National Medal of Arts, Slatkin also holds the rank of Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor. He has received the Prix Charbonnier from the Federation of Alliances Françaises, Austria's Decoration of Honor in Silver, the League of American Orchestras' Gold Baton Award, and the 2013 ASCAP Deems Taylor Special Recognition Award for his debut book, *Conducting Business*. A second volume, *Leading Tones: Reflections on Music, Musicians, and the Music Industry*, was published by Amadeus Press in 2017. His latest book, *Classical Crossroads: The Path Forward for Music in the 21st Century* (2021), is available through Rowman & Littlefield.

Slatkin has conducted virtually all the leading orchestras in the world. As Music Director, he has held posts in New Orleans; St. Louis; Washington, DC; London (with the BBCSO); Detroit; and Lyon, France. He has also served as Principal Guest Conductor in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Cleveland. For more information, visit leonardslatkin.com.



LISE DE LA SALLE PIANO

A career of already over 15 years, award-winning Naïve recordings, international concert appearances – Lise de la Salle has established herself as one of today's exciting young artists and as a musician of real sensibility and maturity.

She has played with many leading orchestras across the globe: Chicago, Boston, Detroit, Atlanta Symphony Orchestras, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra,

Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Münchner Philharmoniker, Dresden Staatskapelle, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, hr-Sinfonieorchester, Orchestre National de France and Lyon, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale Della RAI di Torino, Rotterdam Philharmonic, St Petersburg Philharmonic, NHK and Singapore Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan, Tokyo Symphony, among many others.

She regularly collaborates with conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Fabio Luisi, James Conlon, Krzysztof Urbanski, Antonio Pappano, Rafael Payare, Karina Kanellakis, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Lioner Bringuier, Fabien Gabel, Marek Janowski, Robin Ticciati, Osmö Vanska, James Gaffigan, Semyon Bychkov, and Dennis Russell Davies.

She performs in the world's most esteemed concert halls – Vienna Musikverein, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Herkulesaal in Munich, Berlin Philharmonie, Tonhalle Zurich, Lucerne KKL, Bozar in Brussels, Wigmore and Royal Festival Halls, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Hollywood Bowl, and festivals – Klavier Festival Ruhr and Bad Kissingen, Verbier, La Roque d'Anthéron, Bucharest Enescu Festival, San Francisco Performances, Chicago Symphony recital series, Aspen and Ravinia Festivals.

Among her critically acclaimed Naïve CDs features an all-Chopin disc with a live recording of the Piano Concerto 2, Op. 21 with Fabio Luisi conducting Staatskapelle Dresden. Her sixth recording, released in celebration of Liszt's Bicentennial, received Gramophone's Editor's Choice. Her last album (2021) *When do we Dance?* presents an odyssey of dances through a whole century.

Born in Cherbourg (France) in 1988, Lise de la Salle started the piano at age four and gave her first concert 5 years later in a live broadcast on Radio France. In 2004, she won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York. She studied at Paris Conservatoire and has worked closely with Pascal Nemirovski. She was long-term advisee of Genevieve Joy-Dutilleux.



NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Patron: Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

Chief Conductor: Jaime Martín

The National Symphony Orchestra has been at the centre of Ireland's cultural life since 1948 when the Raidió Éireann Symphony Orchestra, as it was originally called, was founded.

Today it is a formidable creative force, its presence felt throughout the country in live, year-round performances that celebrate the traditional orchestral, vocal and operatic repertoire and it champions the commissioning of new music alongside crossover projects that embrace the best of stage and screen, popular music and traditional music.

In recent years, the NSO has reached new audiences through its live screenings in concert of cinema blockbusters such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Jurassic Park*, *Ghostbusters* and *Casino Royale* and with its lavish concert tributes to Hollywood icons Gene Kelly, John Williams and Elliot Goldenthal, songwriter extraordinaire Cole Porter and the genius of Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin.

With a long-established international reputation, the NSO has worked with successive generations of world-famous composers from Igor Stravinsky and Karlheinz Stockhausen to Steve Reich and Arvo Pärt.

Among the legendary conductors, soloists and singers with whom it has performed are Wilhelm Kempff, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Josef Szigeti, Martha Argerich,

Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, José Carreras, Mstislav Rostropovich and our own Bernadette Greevy. More recent luminaries include Kiri Te Kanawa, Bryn Terfel, Angela Gheorghiu, Angela Hewitt, Nikolai Demidenko, Maxim Vengerov, Daniel Hope, Tasmin Little and Leonard Slatkin.

Collaborations with Irish artists include, among so many others, Sir James Galway, Mary Black, Lisa Hannigan, Liam O'Flynn, The Riptide Movement, Barry Douglas, John O'Connor, Patricia Bardon, Tara Erraught, Celine Byrne and Ailish Tynan.

Countless world premieres by Irish composers have included Elaine Agnew, Gerald Barry, Ed Bennett, Linda Buckley, Ann Cleare, Rhona Clarke, Siobhán Cleary, Shaun Davey, David Fennessy, Marian Ingoldsby, Brian Irvine, Karen Power, Jennifer Walshe, James Wilson and Bill Whelan.

The NSO's acclaimed catalogue of recordings – on the RTÉ lyric fm, Naxos, BIS, Toccata Classics labels and others – include the complete symphonies of Malcolm Arnold, Rachmaninov, Mendelssohn and Nielsen, and *Composers of Ireland*, a landmark series co-funded by RTÉ and The Arts Council. To date, it has recorded works by established names – Gerald Barry, Seóirse Bodley, Raymond Deane, Aloys Fleischmann, John Kinsella, Seán Ó Riada – and a new generation of remarkable voices, including Donnacha Dennehy, Deirdre Gribbin, Kevin Volans and Ian Wilson.

Other major recordings include Robert O'Dwyer's Irish language opera *Eithne* (in partnership with Irish National Opera), José Serebrier's *Symphonic BACH Variations* and *Mary Black Orchestrated*. Film and television scores include composer-conductor Michael Giacchino's *Lost in Concert* and directors John Boorman's *Queen and Country* and Lenny Abrahamson's *The Little Stranger*.

Work in the world of opera includes the world premiere of Gerald Barry's *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (co-commissioned by RTÉ and English National Opera) and collaborations with Wide Open Opera: the Irish premieres of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and John Adams' *Nixon in China*, and a concert presentation of Raymond Deane's *The Alma Fetish* in association with the National Concert Hall.

The orchestra's extensive educational work includes its *Music in the Classroom* programme for primary and second level students, and a young musicians' mentoring scheme.

Broadcasting regularly on RTÉ, it reaches vast international audiences through the European Broadcasting Union.

Find out more at www.nch.ie

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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 Sebastian Liebig †
 Orla Ní Bhraoin °
 Catherine McCarthy
 Ting Zhong Deng
 David Clark
 Anne Harte
 Brona Fitzgerald
 Claudie Driesen
 Karl Sweeney
 Molly O'Shea
 David McElroy
 Sarah Perricone
 Jennifer Murphy

2nd Violin

Thomas Jackson
 Elizabeth McLaren ‡
 Joanne Campbell °
 Mary Wheatley
 Rosalind Brown
 Paul Fanning
 Dara O'Connell
 Melanie Cull
 Evelyn McGrory
 Elena Quinn
 Jenny Burns Duffy
 Magda Kowalska

Viola

Alexander Koustas
 Francis Harte °
 John Murphy

Neil Martin
 Cliona O'Riordan
 Margaret Clark
 Nathan Sherman
 Anthony Mulholland
 Aoise O'Dwyer
 Thomas McShane

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Martin Johnson •
 Una Ní Chanainn
 Ailbhe McDonagh
 Yue Tang
 Niall O'Loughlin
 Anne Murnaghan
 Paula Hughes
 Davide Forti

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Dominic Dudley
 Aisling Reilly
 Waldemar Kozak
 Helen Morgan
 Jenni Meade
 Edward Tapceanu

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 Riona Ó Duinnín ‡

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Sinéad Farrell †

Oboe

Matthew Manning •
 Ruby Ashely

Cor Anglais

Deborah Clifford †

Clarinet

Matthew Billing †
 Seamus Wylie

Bass Clarinet

Patrick Burke

Saxophone

Kevin Hanafin
 Fintan Sutton
 Darren Hatch

Bassoon

Greg Crowley •
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Horn

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 Hannah Miller
 Bethan Watkeys †
 Liam Duffy
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William Palmer
 Darren Moore
 Eoin Daly
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Jason Sinclair •
 Gavin Roche ‡

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Kieran Sharkey

Tuba

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Timpani

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Richard O'Donnell
 Bernard Reilly •
 Jose Antonio
 Moreno Romero
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 Kevin Corcoran

Harp

Andreja Malir •

Guitar

Jimmy Smyth

Piano

Fergal Caulfield

Bandoneon

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- † Principal
- ‡ Associate Principal
- ° String Sub Principal
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NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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FRIDAY 6 MAY, 7.30pm

JOANA CARNEIRO conducts

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN *Helix*

MAHLER *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*

with Tara Erraught, mezzo-soprano

STRAVINSKY *Petrushka* (1947 version)



FRIDAY 13 MAY, 7.30pm

DMITRY SINKOVSKY countertenor/violin/conductor

Programme includes works by

REBEL, VIVALDI, HANDEL, MOZART

Luca Pianca, lute



FRIDAY 20 MAY, 7.30pm

GERHARD MARKSON conducts

CLARA SCHUMANN Piano Concerto

BRAHMS *Ein deutsches Requiem*

Alexandra Dariescu, piano • Jennifer Davis, soprano

Ben McAteer, baritone • National Symphony Chorus



FRIDAY 27 MAY, 7.30pm

JAIME MARTÍN Chief Conductor

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SCHUBERT Selected Lieder

with Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano

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