



CONCERT PROGRAMME
FRIDAY 8 APRIL 2022

NCH NATIONAL
CONCERT HALL \ AN
CEOLÁRAS NÁISIÚNTA



GOOD FRIDAY

HANDEL *Messiah*

Nicholas McGegan, conductor

Máire Flavin, soprano

Catherine Wyn-Rogers, alto

James Oxley, tenor

Stephan Loges, bass

National Symphony Chorus (David Young, Chorus Director)

Presented by Paul Herriott, RTÉ lyric fm

FRIDAY 15 APRIL, 3.30pm

BOOKING telephone 01 417 0000 • online nch.ie



All concerts will be available on the NSO's YouTube channel



PROGRAMME

GALINA USTVOLSKAYA	Suite for Orchestra
MENDELSSOHN	Violin Concerto
SCHUMANN	Symphony No. 2

Anja Bihlmaier conductor

Clara-Jumi Kang violin

Presented by Paul Herriott, RTÉ lyric fm

FRIDAY 8 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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Sports Suite (Suite for Orchestra) 1959

- i. *Allegro*
- ii. *Moderato*
- iii. *Cantabile*
- iv. *Vivace*
- v. *Vivace*
- vi. *Vivace*
- vii. *Moderato*
- viii. *Allegro*
- ix.x *Allegro moderato*

Galina Ustvoskaya was hardly known in her native Russia until the era of *glasnost* (or “transparency”) ushered in by Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s, and almost totally unheard-of outside the Soviet Union. She was born, and spent almost her entire life, in St. Petersburg, where she studied at the Conservatory from the age of eighteen. She was a favourite pupil of Dimitri Shostakovich, who is believed to have proposed marriage to her, and with whom she had a platonic musical relationship in the early years of their association: each quoted the music of the other in their compositions. Shostakovich said “I am convinced that her music will achieve world fame” and in fact once even said “It is not you who are under my influence, but I who am under yours”.

However, as Ustvoskaya’s musical development progressed, she utterly rejected Shostakovich’s influence, stating in 1994 “Never once was Shostakovich’s music close to me”. In fact, she insisted that “There is no link between my music and that of any other composer, living or dead”.

Ustvoskaya’s musical style is characterised by a deep spiritual anxiety: although she was not a practising Christian, her works are profoundly “spiritual but not religious”, attempting to work out her relationship with God. The style is also remorseless in exploiting tragic pathos. Four of her five symphonies include religious texts, bearing witness to what she called

“the tremendous power and aspiration to God” – but one which was both positive, in its aspiration, and negative, in its typically Russian nihilism. It has been likened to “a laser beam capable of piercing metal”, a “scream into space”.

Whether it is large-scale, for symphony orchestra, or a work for trio or a piano sonata, it is all “symphonic” in scale, ranging from *pppp* (pianissimo) to *ffff* (fortissimo), often in a very short space of time, and demanding utmost physicality on the part of performers, especially in her six piano sonatas.

It’s possible that, like Shostakovich himself, Ustvoskaya submitted to the cultural *diktats* of the Soviet regime simply in order to survive the salt mines. To oblige the Soviet insistence on “socialist realism” she wrote the symphonic poem “Hero’s Exploit” which won second prize in a nationwide competition to mark the 40th anniversary of the Soviet regime (no one received first prize). The concert programme for the premiere stated, “This is not a tale about any event in the [civil] war, but the psychological portrait of one of its unknown heroes. The composer strives to show the inner world of this hero, to show how determination to accomplish an exploit is born and matures in his soul. The hero achieves a spiritual clarity by taking a decision which required so much courage.” She also wrote another symphonic poem, “Lights in the Steppe”, dedicated “to the glorious Soviet youth, achieving feats of labour in the Virgin Lands”, commissioned to mark the 40th anniversary of the Leninist Young Communist League (the Komsomol).

Ironically, it was at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union that Ustvoskaya stopped composing in 1991, at the age of seventy-two and continued to live like a hermit in St Petersburg.

Because she was such an uncompromising individual, she only acknowledged twenty-one of her works, rejecting all those she had composed under Soviet influence. The “Suite for Orchestra” (1959) was one of three suites for young people, and was originally entitled “Sports Suite”, the others being “Young Pioneers’ Suite” (1953) and “Children’s Suite” (1955), both of which she later disowned.

“Sports Suite”, to give it its original name, is in eleven very short movements, ranging in duration from 33 seconds to 2 minutes and ten seconds, and lasts only twelve minutes overall. As its title suggests, it is very animated and energetic, with her customary forcefulness and intellectual as well as musical vigour. It was first performed in October 1961 by the Leningrad Philharmonic.

Richard Pine © National Symphony Orchestra 2022

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

Violin Concerto in E minor

i. Allegro molto appassionato

ii. Andante

iii. Allegretto non troppo; Allegro molto vivace

Mendelssohn was just 13-years-old when he wrote his first concerto for violin (accompanied by strings) following it a year later with a double concerto pairing the violin with piano. His second solo concerto for the instrument far outstripped those juvenile works in technical accomplishment and sheer lyrical luxuriousness. First heard in Leipzig in March 1845, it was to be the last of his large works for orchestra. Less than three years after its premiere, Mendelssohn would be dead at the all too early age of 38 from a series of fatal strokes brought about by exhausting European tours as a conductor, pianist and organist.

Although it took six years to complete, the concerto’s fleet, fluid signature shows no sign of its lengthy gestation and was to prove hugely influential for successive generations of composers and to become the most alluring of prospects for violinists and audiences.

The idea for a mature violin concerto had occurred to Mendelssohn in 1838 as a showcase for his childhood friend, Ferdinand David. Three years earlier, Mendelssohn had been appointed principal conductor of the venerable Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and one of his first decisions

was to appoint David as its concertmaster. A capable composer himself, he was to prove crucial to the concerto's development across countless revisions and an articulate champion of it at its premiere.

Coincidentally, the second person to perform the concerto was another Mendelssohn protégé and one of the great violin talents of the 19th century, the then 14-years-old Joseph Joachim.

In the summer of 1838, Mendelssohn wrote to David of his intentions: 'I should like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor sticks in my head, the beginning of which will not leave me in peace'.

There was to be little tranquillity in the years during which the concerto was meticulously formed and re-formed. The result, however, gives lie to the inherited opinion that Mendelssohn's inspiration declined as he got older (the mighty oratorio *Elijah*, first performed in 1846 a decade after it was first conceived, also offering eloquent testimony to his continuing innovation and invention).

Despite the warmth of the reception at its first performance, the Violin Concerto fell out of fashion in the first half of the last century, being re-discovered by Yehudi Menuhin in 1951. Today, its place in the repertoire is unassailable as an acknowledged masterpiece and one of the high-watermarks of the Romantic era.

The concerto is marked by a becoming sense of poetic fantasy, one that draws soloist and orchestra into a bewitching dialogue characterised by melodic invention and lyrical beauty of the highest order, and orchestration that is liquescently elegant despite its fastidious detailing.

Structured in three movements, played without pause, it opens with a striking moment of unfettered ecstasy, the soaring, nightingale-like voice of the violin singing a stratospherically high song above the orchestra before it joyously takes up the theme. The movement's second subject is contrastingly subdued, more reflectively intimate after the preceding display of emotion – a brief interlude before the effusiveness as the opening theme returns.

The middle movement *Andante* also carries itself with a lyric-like immediacy that calls to mind Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* for solo piano. Even

so, it carries itself with a demonstrably loftier demeanour, clouds gathering midway through as trumpets and timpani darken the mood.

The buoyant finale finds Mendelssohn at his most nimble and high-spirited and is distinguished by a brilliant theme introduced by the violin and a light, effervescent mood that disguises the electrifying virtuosity called upon from the soloist.

Michael Quinn © RTÉ

ROBERT SCHUMANN 1810-1856

Symphony No. 2 in C, Op. 61

i. *Sostenuto assai – Allegro ma non troppo*

ii. *Scherzo – allegro vivace*

iii. *Adagio espressivo*

iv. *Allegro molto vivace*

Although numbered as Schumann's second, this work was in fact the third of the composer's four symphonies. He drafted the work in December 1845 and spent 1846 orchestrating it, while he struggled with bouts of self-doubt. It came at a time when Schumann was moving away from composition predominantly involving the piano and back to the symphonic form.

Considering that he was suffering from the depression that would eventually kill him, as well as tinnitus, it's remarkable that Schumann wrote this in the positive and cheerful key of C major. It belongs to a period when Schumann was studying music theory with his wife, Clara, which encouraged him towards more forward-looking musical ideas, away from Leipzig where the social life had contributed to his breakdown. "Any sort of disturbance in the simple order of my life throws me off balance", he wrote to Mendelssohn. "Wherever there is fun and enjoyment I must keep out of the way". The nervous breakdown and the tinnitus, as he told Mendelssohn, brought "drums and trumpets sounding in my head". It was partly due to Mendelssohn's intervention that Robert and Clara had left Leipzig.

One of the places where he tried to flesh out the original conception of the symphony brought them to a place adjacent to an insane asylum. This provoked Schumann's terror of dying insane (which he would, ten years later, after attempts at suicide and three years in such an asylum) and they moved to pastoral surroundings on one of the Friesian islands, where he was able to complete the orchestration.

Nevertheless, the symphony has suffered in popularity due to its unconventional structure – it was regarded in conservative musical circles as “dangerously modern”. Schumann conceived of a symphony in the same way as a writer might approach a novel – as an autobiographical account of his emergence as a writer. This disconcerted the conventional audience who expected four movements in strict traditional style, and early audiences were put off by the vigour and storminess of the opening movement. As one modern critic puts it: “It is not the music, but the way we understand the music, that has changed.”

Schumann acknowledged his “drums and trumpets” in the opening motto-fanfare which reappears later in the finale. Even though the opening movement is lively, Schumann considered it “moody” – such was his lack of self-confidence. It's followed by a fast-and-furious Scherzo and a slow movement (*adagio*) which is dreamy and essentially Romantic in style. Then comes a finale in which, Schumann said, “I find myself again”, because he had collapsed with melancholy after completing the *Adagio*.

Overall, we can perhaps detect Schumann's own anxiety that the work displayed his drastic changes of mood. Its composition had been an act of resistance against the demons who haunted him. He saw the work as “music of light and shade, sunshine and shadow”. Predominantly this is a sunny and optimistic work, striving towards health and vigour and exhibiting the *hope* which Schumann saw was his only mode of survival. In the finale he quotes from a love-song that he had written for Clara on their wedding day, six years previously.

The symphony was dedicated to Oscar, the king of Sweden and (at that time) Norway, and first performed at the Leipzig Gewandhaus in November 1856, with Mendelssohn conducting.



ANJA BIHLMAIER CONDUCTOR

Chief Conductor, Residentie Orkest, The Hague

Principal Guest Conductor, Lahti Symphony Orchestra

Anja Bihlmaier's strong musical instinct, abundant charisma and natural leadership have propelled her to the forefront of recently established conductors. In August she assumes the role of **Chief Conductor** of the **Residentie Orkest** in The Hague alongside her position as **Principal Guest Conductor** of the **Lahti Symphony Orchestra**.

Bihlmaier opens the 21/22 season at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw with the Residentie Orkest. She conducts the BBC Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, SWR Symphonieorchester, Finnish Radio Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony, Danish National Symphony, Iceland Symphony, Kammerakademie Potsdam, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Swedish Chamber and Pacific Symphony Orchestras all for the first time, and in addition to the National Symphony Orchestra, returns to Gothenburg Symphony, Orquestra y Coro Nacional de España and Barcelona Symphony, amongst others.

With diverse repertoire ranging from Haydn through to Mahler alongside Sibelius, Bartók, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Louise Farrenc and Mikko Heiniö, Anja Bihlmaier has recently conducted the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken, City of Birmingham Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestras.

Following studies at the Freiburg Conservatory of Music, Anja Bihlmaier won a scholarship to study with Dennis Russell Davies and Jorge Rother at the Salzburg Mozarteum. She was admitted onto the Deutsche Dirigentenforum in 2005.

www.anjabihlmaier.de



CLARA-JUMI KANG VIOLIN

Multi-award winning German-Korean violinist, **Clara-Jumi Kang** is an artist of supreme sophistication, impeccable refinement and poise. Winner of the **Indianapolis International Violin Competition** (2010), **Seoul Violin Competition** (2009) and the **Sendai Violin Competition** (2010), she has carved an international career performing with leading orchestras and conductors across Asia and Europe.

Having made her concerto debut at the age of five with the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, Kang has performed with orchestras including the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Warsaw Philharmonic, Cologne Chamber Orchestra, Kremerata Baltica, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Mariinsky Orchestra, Orchestre National de Belgique, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Orquesta Sinfónica de RTVE and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. In the USA she has performed with orchestras including the Atlanta, New Jersey, Indianapolis and Santa Fe Symphony Orchestras, whilst elsewhere engagements include the NHK Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic, NCPA Beijing Orchestra, KBS Symphony and the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

The 2021-22 season sees the release of Kang's complete Beethoven Violin Sonata cycle on Accentus with pianist Sunwook Kim. She recorded the sonatas during lockdown in the Beethoven anniversary year as a personal homage to the composer after more than 15 years performing the Beethoven Violin Concerto. Her first solo album entitled "Modern Solo" (Decca) featured works including Schubert's "Erlkönig" and Ysaÿe Sonatas, and was followed by Brahms and Schumann Violin Sonatas with Yeol-Eum Son (Decca 2016).

Born in Germany to a musical family, Kang took up the violin at the age of three. She studied with Zakhar Bron at the Lübeck Musikhochschule before being awarded a full scholarship to the Julliard School. She took her Bachelor and Masters degrees at the Korean National University of Arts before completing her studies at the Munich Musikhochschule with Christoph Poppen.

Clara-Jumi Kang currently plays the 1708 "Ex-Strauss" Stradivarius, generously loaned to her by the Samsung Cultural Foundation Korea.

www.clarajumikang.com



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

1st Violin

Elaine Clark (Co-Leader)
Sebastian Liebig †
Orla Ní Bhraoin °
Catherine McCarthy
Ting Zhong Deng
David Clark
Sylvia Roberts
Brona Fitzgerald
Claudie Driesen
Karl Sweeney
Molly O'Shea
David McElroy
Brigid Leman
Jennifer Murphy

2nd Violin

Nicholas Rippon
Elizabeth McLaren ‡
Joanne Campbell °
Rosalind Brown
Paul Fanning
Dara O'Connell
Melanie Cull
Evelyn McGrory
Elena Quinn
Jenny Burns Duffy
Magda Kowalska
Matthew Wylie

Viola

Matthew Maguire
Francis Harte °
Ruth Bebb
Neil Martin
Cliona O'Riordan
Margarete Clark
Anthony Mulholland
Aoise O'Dwyer
Cian MacGarry

Cello

Martin Johnson •
Polly Ballard ‡
Violetta-Valerie Muth °
Una Ní Chanainn
Anne Murnaghan
Eva Richards
Davide Forti
Yseult Cooper-Stockdale

Double Bass

Ben Griffiths
Aisling Reilly
Waldemar Kozak
Helen Morgan
Jenni Meade
Maeve Sheil

Flute

Catriona Ryan •
Riona Ó Duinnín ‡

Piccolo

Kieran Moynihan

Oboe

Rebecca Halliday
Deborah Clifford

Clarinet

Matthew Billing †
Fintan Sutton †

Bassoon

Greg Crowley •
Sinead Frost

Contra Bassoon

Hilary Sheil †

Horn

Bethan Watkeys †
Mark Bennett
Liam Duffy
David Atcheler •
Dewi Jones

Trumpet

William Palmer
Stephen Murphy
Jonathan Sheppard

Trombone

Jason Sinclair •
Gavin Roche ‡

Bass Trombone

Samuel Freeman

Tuba

Francis Magee •

Timpani

Grahame King

Percussion

Bernard Reilly •
Koen Plaetinck
Ronan Scarlett
Kevin Corcoran

Harp

Andreja Malir •

Piano

Fergal Caulfield

- Section Leader
- * Section Principal
- † Principal
- ‡ Associate Principal
- ° String Sub Principal
- Sub Principal 1

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Orchestral Assistant: Andy Dunne
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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 counter-tenor/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

MAHLER *Blumine*

SCHUBERT Selected Lieder

with Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano

MAHLER Symphony No. 1, 'Titan'

Presented by Paul Herriott, RTÉ lyric fm

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All concerts will be available on the NSO's YouTube channel

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NCH presents

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FRI. 27 MAY, 8PM



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Pianist **Izumi** curates and performs a series of improvising chamber music concerts to include **Cora Venus Lunny, Anthony Kelly, Gerry Hemingway** and others.

THURS. 5, TUES. 17 & TUES. 31 MAY, 8.30PM

Tickets for all concerts €17.50

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