



**FRIDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2021**  
**ST. JAMES'S PICCADILLY, LONDON**

**Conductor** - Chris Hopkins  
**Violin** – Emmanuel Bach

**John Williams**  
Theme from E.T.

**Tchaikovsky**  
Violin Concerto

**Interval** – 15 minutes

**Glinka**  
Overture to Ruslan and Ludmilla

**Myaskovsky**  
Symphony No. 27

# Programme Notes

The warmest of welcomes back to St. James's Piccadilly from all of us at Orchestra of the City. This concert, our first in over 18 months, is a celebration of great music both known and unknown.

## **John Williams: Theme from 'E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial'**

We are taking flight once again with the **Theme from 'E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial'** by **John Williams** from Steven Spielberg's 1982 (1982!) classic sci-fi, and the 6<sup>th</sup> collaboration between the director and composer. As in previous collaborations, Spielberg loved every theme Williams had written and included them all in the film, even editing scenes to better suit the music (the thrilling final chase scene for example). In this short piece, the theme, we get a brilliant mix of the machine (represented from the beginning in 'motoring' quavers that continue almost non-stop), the childlike nature of E.T. and of course the liberating feeling of taking flight.

## **Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto**

- Allegro moderato
- Canzonetta: Andante
- Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

We then move to a firm favourite in the form of **Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto**, in which I'm delighted to be joined by the exceptional multi award-winning violinist Emmanuel Bach.

Like his famous B-flat minor Piano Concerto, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto got off to an inauspicious start. As the Piano Concerto had been brutally dismissed by Rubinstein (possibly intended as the piece's original dedicatee), so too did Leopold Auer, concertmaster of the Imperial Orchestra in St Petersburg, express initial disappointment about tonight's concerto. The premiere in 1881 fell then to the very fine violinist Adolf Brodsky and a very under-rehearsed Vienna Philharmonic under Hans Richter, who by all accounts having run out of time to correct mistakes in the parts and so on, accompanied everything as quietly as possible out of sheer timidity. I can promise you nothing of the sort tonight.

However, as Rubinstein came round to the Piano Concerto, so too did Auer, and in the end, by teaching it to his most remarkably distinguished list of pupils including Heifetz, Elman, Zimbalist, Seidel, Parlow, and more, he ensured the concerto would have a long and popular future. It is true that this concerto demanded new violin techniques, but not impossible ones, and in this regard the concerto was forward looking, ranking among those musical works whose demands initiated new technical abilities and expertise from the performer. Ultimately, as violinists became more accustomed to the technical demands, Tchaikovsky's work has become one of the great showpieces in violin repertoire.

Its fanciful folk-like tunes, colourful Russian orchestration, and pyrotechnics make it a timeless thriller. "I never compose in the abstract," Tchaikovsky explained. "I invent the musical idea and its instrumentation simultaneously." Concept and instrumentation were one. Years later, Auer regretted his early refusal to play the concerto. In the *Musical Courier*, January 1912, he stated, "I have often deeply regretted (my refusal) and before Tchaikovsky's death received absolution from him."

To the three movements, then. The first begins with a beguiling melody and expands into the most substantial movement, equally full of sumptuous melody and virtuosic fireworks. A beautiful second movement full of repose takes us to a barnstorming final movement: dance, perilous passages of fiendish technicality, rustic charm; this movement has it all.

## Interval

### **Glinka: Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila**

After the interval, more musical fireworks with **Glinka's Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila**. The first great forgotten Russian composer of this half, Glinka is known widely for this piece and pretty much this piece alone; the beginning of an opera which is even now only ever occasionally played in Russia. With its heady mix of frenzy and lyricism, the overture has thankfully outstayed the rest of the piece; a great curtain-raiser at least.

### **Myaskovsky: Symphony No. 27**

- Adagio - Allegro animato
- Adagio
- Presto ma non troppo

For our second great forgotten Russian composer, we turn to the last major work of **Nikolai Myaskovsky**, his **Symphony No. 27**.

This piece, virtually un-played in the West since it was written in 1950, is the composer's final symphonic utterance. Against the backdrop of a volatile and repressive regime, it is a sincere and spell-binding work of deeply personal resonance; a reflection on life by one of the great symphonists of all time.

Myaskovsky sits in arguably the most interesting period of Russian, and perhaps all, music; the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More than Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich even, he has one foot in the 1870s sound-world and another in the 1950s. He was a master of his craft, affectionately known as the 'Father of the Soviet Symphony', and whilst in some ways he represents the culmination of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian Romanticism with a capital R, in others he contributes as much as now-better-known composers to the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism. I say 'now-better-known' because in his time he was very much considered an

equal of Prokofiev, Sibelius, Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky and so on; in the 1930s, a CBS audience poll had him in the top 10 in answer to the question 'Which composers will still be among the 'greats' in 100 years?'

He was born in April 1881 (the year Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto is premiered, a year before Wagner's Parsifal opens and four years before the premiere of Brahms's 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony) and died mid-1950 (the year in which John Cage's String Quartet is premiered, Nat King Cole is No. 1 in the charts with 'Mona Lisa', and a year after Miles Davis starts releasing 'Birth of the Cool'). He was the son (one of five) of an engineer officer in the Russian army and after his mother died, was brought up by his aunt who was a singer in the St Petersburg Opera. Heading towards a military career, by his own account, he heard a performance of Tchaikovsky's 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony when he was 15 which was so profound an experience that it inspired him to follow his musical urges and become a composer instead.

It wasn't quite that easy though; he had six years of training to get through first and his father Yakov wasn't about to let him give up on the military career just yet; in any case Borodin and Cui had side-by-side careers, so if he wanted to do the music thing maybe he could do that on the side too. Zipping forward to 1949, one thing that strikes me as being particularly touching about this last symphony is how in many ways it comes full circle and acknowledges that presence of Tchaikovsky deep-rooted in his psyche over half a century later; in general terms in the lyrical vein running through the symphony, as well as in the specific such as the sombre solo bassoon opening (à la Tchaikovsky 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony).

He finished engineering training when he was 21 and then prepared to enter St Petersburg Conservatory, where he was a student of Liadov and Rimsky-Korsakov. There, he became great friends with Prokofiev and they remained so even through all the turmoil that was to come. Later he served in World War One, was severely wounded and suffered from PTSD; his older brother died; his father was murdered in 1921 by Red Army zealots... so we can safely say that generally he had a pretty brutal youth. After the war he went back to Moscow to teach many students including Kabalevsky, Khatchaturian and Shchedrin and, compared to his contemporaries, rarely left.

Another interesting aspect of this symphony is that Myaskovsky seems to have considered it a piece which would only be heard posthumously. He knew he was ill and he was still tweaking the 26<sup>th</sup> symphony. When this 27<sup>th</sup> was being trailed in piano-duet form (as would often happen before final score was drafted) one of the pianists, conductor Alexander Gauk, asked if he could have the score to write out orchestral parts so they could play it in concert soon, to which Myaskovsky answered: "You will play it afterwards"; Gauk said he didn't realise the significance of the words until later. He also held onto the work for a long time before revealing it to the Moscow Composers Union; there was no hurry to have it performed publicly.

Following as it does the 1948 Zhdanov doctrine, in which he was singled out for state criticism alongside Shostakovich, Khachaturian and Prokofiev and had seen colleagues publicly removed and exiled or worse by Stalinist forces, it's not hard to understand why he kept this deeply personal work, with its strong undertones of resistance in the last movement, close to his chest.

It is a bit of a mystery though why his music isn't better known now. Reasons might include the natural what I'd call 'canonic saturation' (i.e. we as a society put music into boxes and there is a limit to how much music is retained over time in each box). Myaskovsky is knocking around with Shostakovich (whose own output is essentially reduced to less than a dozen works in the programming of major orchestras), Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff and, being both modernist and romantic, the hang-over of Tchaikovsky and the 'mighty handful' (none of whom incidentally I think come close to Myaskovsky in quality or quantity of output.) He also treads an interesting line between a continuation of 19<sup>th</sup> century grand symphonic writing (see Rachmaninoff) and a break into new sounds (see Prokofiev): in our symphony from the end of his life, we're definitely leaning towards the former. He died only two years after that awful 1948 denouncement (whereas Shostakovich for example out-lived Stalin); perhaps another reason for a period of silence after his death which stifled any longer-term development.

Since we await proper re-evaluation of most 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian composers of this time except Shostakovich and Prokofiev, you can see how he'd fall through the historical cracks, although given he represents perhaps the most significant thread that binds this whole period together from the old to the new, it is still surprising. He also wrote 27 symphonies; that's a lot for programmers to sift through; when you can look at rehabilitation programming: are you going to try 7 Prokofievs, 3 Khachaturians, 15 Shostakovichs, 4 Kalinnikovs or 27 Myaskovksys? Who's got time for that? Until now.

*Programme notes by Chris Hopkins*



## Chris Hopkins – Conductor

Equally at home on the concert stage as in the pit, conductor and pianist **Chris Hopkins** is engaged on a wide range of projects across many disciplines. He is a frequent face at the London Coliseum and currently conducting the 5\* new production of *HMS Pinafore* at English National Opera until 11 December. Following from the success of his ENO debut conducting *Iolanthe*, he has since returned to conduct the *Magic Flute* and the most recent revival of the legendary production of *The Mikado*. Recently appointed principal conductor of the renowned English Sinfonia, previously he has worked at the Royal Opera House and Glyndebourne Opera, with Opera de Paris, Grange Festival Opera, English Chamber Orchestra, Royal Ballet Sinfonia, Crash Ensemble, WNO, NI Opera, HGO, Opera Holland Park, Wide Open Opera, Garsington Opera, Grange Park Opera, Opera Danube, London Mozart Players, and appeared at many festivals including Aldeburgh, Presteigne, Cubitt Sessions and Latitude. He has performed throughout the UK, in the US, Asia and extensively in Europe, as well as live, and recorded appearances on BBC 1, Classic FM and BBC Radio 2, 3 and 4.

A long-term advocate for British music, Chris was the first postgraduate from the Centre for the History of Music in Britain, the Empire and the Commonwealth (CHOMBEC) before continuing his studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Leverhulme and Elton John scholarships. He has premiered works by composers including Colin Matthews, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, David Matthews, Rob Keeley, Thomas Hyde, Detlev Glanert, Gilad Hochman and the Pet Shop Boys. He continues into a twelfth season as Musical Director of Orchestra of the City.

Chris was honoured in 2013 to be made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.





## **Rebecca Saunders – Leader**

Rebecca began learning the violin at the age of four and won a specialist music scholarship to Wells Cathedral School three years later. She subsequently studied at the Junior Department at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she was leader of the Junior Guildhall String Ensemble, winner of the Principal's Prize, and a finalist in the Lutine Prize competition. She also performed with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and the National Youth Chamber Orchestra.

Rebecca studied Economics at Cambridge University, where she led Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra and performed Wieniawski's Concerto No.1 with Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra. Following university, she joined Orchestra of the City as a founder member and co-Leader.

In 2006, Rebecca moved to New York to pursue an MBA at Columbia University and became Principal Second Violin in the Musica Bella Orchestra of New York, with whom she performed the Bruch Violin Concerto. She has been the leader of Orchestra of the City since returning to London in 2008. Rebecca works as a retail consultant and is a Trustee of Orchestras Live.



## **Emmanuel Bach - Violin**

As a young British-born soloist, Emmanuel is fast gaining recognition in the UK and abroad. Winner of the Royal Over-Seas League Strings Competition 2018, he has performed as co-soloist with Anne-Sophie Mutter in JS Bach's Double Concerto and played on stages including Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields, St James' Piccadilly and St George's Bristol. He was a Selected Artist on the Countess of Munster Trust Recital scheme

2017-20 and is an artist on Talent Unlimited. Emmanuel has played solo concertos in the UK and abroad, including Brahms, Bruch No.1 and Scottish Fantasy, Lalo Symphonie Espagnole, Mendelssohn, Paganini No.1, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky and others. Maxim Vengerov described his playing of the Brahms Concerto as 'a superb rendition, a deep and emotional performance.' Emmanuel's playing has taken him to Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and South Africa, touring there several times. His awards include: winner Una Clark Competition, JS Bach prize winner and semi-finalist in the 38<sup>th</sup> Premio Lipizer, winner 'Best Interpretation of a Contemporary Work (Boulez Anthemes I) at the Mirecourt International Competition, two nominations for

'Best Upcoming Artist' at the KKNK National Arts Festival in South Africa and an English-Speaking Union Scholarship. He has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 as a soloist and chamber musician and performed live on Radio 3's World Music Day.

As a soloist, he has worked with conductors including: David Hill MBE, Jonathan Willcocks, Maxim Vengerov, Darrell Davison, Roy Stratford, Rob Hodge and John Traill. As a chamber musician, Emmanuel held a Full Fellowship on the Yale Summer School at Norfolk Festival, USA, working with the Emerson, Artis and Brentano Quartets. He held an Edison Fellowship at the British Library, London, researching historic violin and chamber music recordings. In his role as teacher, he has coached young musicians on Pro Corda as a Leverhulme Fellow.

Emmanuel has benefitted from masterclasses with eminent musicians such as Pierre Amoyal, Miriam Fried, Shlomo Mintz, Maxim Vengerov, Dong-Suk Kang and others. His teacher was Natasha Boyarsky, with whom he studied while reading Music at Magdalen College, Oxford, gaining a Double First. He then took a Masters as a scholar at the Royal College of Music, and an Artist Diploma latterly studying with Radu Blidar. He has also studied with Ben Sayevich and Felix Andrievsky. CD releases include 'Bach to the Future' (2015, Salon Music) 'Musical Mosaics' (2018, Willowhayne Records) and 'Lennox in Paris' (2021, Willowhayne Records). He is grateful for support from Talent Unlimited, the English-Speaking Union, the Tompkins Tate Trust, Joan Conway Bursary, Woking Young Musicians' Trust, HR Taylor Trust and Worshipful Company of Drapers.

[www.emmanuelbachviolinist.com](http://www.emmanuelbachviolinist.com)



## Orchestra of the City

Orchestra of the City was founded in April 2003 by Benjamin Bayl and made its debut at St John's Smith Square in July of that year. In June 2010 Classical Music Magazine listed the Orchestra of the City as one of the top five non-professional orchestras in London. The Orchestra gives talented and enthusiastic voluntary musicians the opportunity to play in an orchestra of the highest standard with challenging repertoire, and is noted for its active and friendly social culture.

When Benjamin Bayl was appointed Assistant Conductor of the Budapest Festival Orchestra in September 2006, the orchestra worked with a number of guest conductors, including Nicholas Collon, Robert Tuohy, Dominic Grier and Sam Laughton. Chris Hopkins was then appointed as the new Music Director of Orchestra of the City, taking up the role in September 2008.

Performing up to 6 concerts per year at London venues including St John's Smith Square, St John's Waterloo, and its regular home, St James's Piccadilly, the orchestra thrives on a diverse range of challenging repertoire including Mahler's Symphony No.5, Walton's Symphony No.1, Holst's The Planets, Shostakovich's Symphonies 5 and 10, Bartok's 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin Concerto, Prokofiev's Romeo & Juliet, Beethoven's 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony and Haydn's The Creation.

Committed to the advocacy of contemporary classical music, in April 2014 the orchestra performed the world premiere of Nedudim ("wanderings") Fantasia-Concertante for mandolin and string orchestra by emerging Israeli composer Gilad Hochman, with mandolin-player Alon Sariel.

Over its formative decade, the orchestra has developed a policy of working with exciting young soloists at the outset of their careers, including Benjamin Grosvenor, Oliver Coates, Gweneth-Ann Jeffers and Charlie Siem, as well as established artists such as Piers Lane, Simon Preston, Guy Johnston and Craig Ogden.

In July 2013, Orchestra of the City celebrated its 10th Birthday at St James's, Piccadilly, with a thrilling programme including Bernstein's Overture from Candide and Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 3. The celebrations continued into their tenth season, which saw an exciting collaboration with Opera Danube – a semi-staged production of Lehar's The Merry Widow at St John's Smith Square – and a succession of orchestral greats including Brahms's Symphony No. 2, Smetana's Ma Vlast and Strauss's Death and Transfiguration. Orchestra of the City is now in its late teens and still going strong.

We would like to thank the following for their continued support of Orchestra of the City:  
Our helpers on the door and everyone at St James's Piccadilly



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# Orchestra of the City

## First Violins

Rebecca Saunders  
Matt Pay  
Harriette Foster  
Gretel Scott  
Eve Rahmani  
Anna Sadnicka  
Catherine Gilfedder  
James Mulligan

## Second Violins

Caroline Ferry  
Ashleena Deike  
Mary Gough  
Nathan Steele  
Clare Corbett  
Antonia Lyne  
Sarah Trotter  
Ellie O'Connor

## Violas

Edward Shaw  
Jess Bishop  
David Coates  
Robin Weil  
Maeve Lynch

## Cellos

Tom Parker  
Andrew Skone James  
Rohan Saravanamuttu  
Maddy Cundall  
Peter Woods  
Lottie McVicker

## Double Basses

Jake Gosling  
Robin Major

## Flutes

Pauline Savage  
Deborah Fether

## Piccolo

Chris Gould

## Oboes

Ben Doak  
Francesca Lamberti  
Roger Smeeton

## Cor Anglais

Ben Doak

## Clarinets

Antonia Stoneman  
Helen McKeown

## Bass Clarinet

Kara Settle

## Bassoons

Alex Platt  
Claire Goddard

## Contra Bassoon

Richard Vincent

## Horns

Matthew Sackman  
Mick Nagle  
Adam Wilson  
Jonathan Stoneman

## Trumpets

Evan Champion  
Anna Hughes

## Trombones

Amelia Lewis  
Nick Young  
Paul Handley

## Tuba

David Carter

## Timpani

Andrew Barnard

## Percussion

Andrew Cumine  
Ben Martin

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## UPCOMING CONCERTS

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

'Secret Symphony' preceded by international superstar pianist **Alexandra Dariescu** playing Franck

*"the groundbreaking Romanian pianist...who is championing storytelling, inclusivity and diversity in her visionary piano performances, recordings and patronages."* Classic FM

More concerts to follow in April and July!