

THU 6 MAR // 2025

RNCM Symphony Orchestra

Programme



Thu 6 Mar // 7:30pm

RNCM Concert Hall

RNCM Symphony Orchestra

Programme

Patrick Gorry Weight. Pressure. Position
(world première) * (11')

Ludwig van Beethoven Piano Concerto No 5
in E flat major Op 73 'Emperor' (38')

INTERVAL

Sergei Prokofiev

Romeo and Juliet Op 64 (excerpts) (42')

Andrew Manze, Benjamin Huth * *conductors*

Siyi Dai *piano*

RNCM Symphony Orchestra

PROGRAMME NOTES

PATRICK GORRY

Weight. Pressure. Position
(world première)

Inspired by the experimental, genre-defying choreography of Crystal Pite, *Weight. Pressure. Position* attempts to apply a choreographic method to orchestration and composition. The orchestra is treated here more like a body, and much of the material at hand is either derived from the physicality of dance or distorted versions of rhythmic and structural tropes from various forms of electronic dance music and, in particular, 90s techno and late 80s acid house.

One could imagine the orchestra a lonesome dancer, rehearsing and moving towards a completed routine. A determined excursion, broken by contradictory movements from rogue limbs, filled with focused actions unexpectedly breaking out into unwanted convulsions. Arriving at the now finished, manic dance, the performer collapses in exhaustion: only to rise again with a second wind. A final, ecstatic burst of energy with what little breath and willpower they have left marks the end of what their body can handle. This sort of drama, baked into the physicality of dance as an art, is what this piece hopes to harness in sonic form.

Programme notes by Patrick Gorry.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Concerto No 5 in E flat major
Op 73 'Emperor'

Composed in 1809 during the Napoleonic siege of Vienna, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 5 stands as a monumental achievement in the piano concerto repertoire. By this time, Beethoven's deafness had advanced significantly, preventing him from performing the work himself. Instead, he wrote for the next generation of pianists, expanding the concerto form into a symphonic dialogue between soloist and orchestra.

The opening is both commanding and unconventional: three bold orchestral chords, each met by an elaborate, virtuosic response from the piano. This grand introduction leads into a movement of heroic energy, where Beethoven balances power and lyricism with masterful precision. The second movement provides a striking contrast; its serene, hymn-like theme unfolds with delicate beauty, as the piano and orchestra engage in a meditative, almost poetic conversation. A soft bassoon passage then slides into a single sustained note with the piano whispering a reply that bridges into the final movement, a vibrant and rhythmically charged rondo, brimming with exuberance and celebratory spirit.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Nicknamed '*Emperor*', likely by an early publisher rather than Beethoven himself, this concerto is a defining work of Beethoven's 'heroic' period. It is written in E flat major, a key Beethoven often associated with bold, triumphant expression (as seen in his *Eroica* Symphony and other major works). Premiered in 1811 in Leipzig, the work remains one of the most celebrated and frequently performed concertos, a testament to Beethoven's genius in fusing symphonic grandeur with pianistic brilliance.

PROGRAMME NOTES

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Romeo and Juliet Op 64 (excerpts)

The Montagues and the Capulets

Juliet as a Young Girl

Masks

Romeo and Juliet (Balcony Scene)

Death of Tybalt

Romeo and Juliet Before Parting

Romeo at Juliet's Tomb

The Death of Juliet

Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* stands as one of the most celebrated ballet scores of the 20th century, yet its path to success was anything but smooth. Composed in 1935, the ballet was initially commissioned by the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad but soon transferred to the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. However, the Bolshoi dancers struggled with its complex rhythms and bold harmonies, deeming the score 'undanceable'. Further controversy surrounded Prokofiev's early idea to alter Shakespeare's tragic ending—he originally envisioned Romeo arriving in time to save Juliet, as 'living people can dance, but the dying cannot'. Eventually, he abandoned this idea, and after multiple revisions, the ballet received its first full performance in Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1938. The Russian première followed in 1940 at

the Kirov Theatre, cementing its place in the repertoire.

Even before the ballet reached the stage, Prokofiev had repurposed its music into three orchestral suites, allowing audiences to experience its dramatic richness in concert form. These suites do not follow the ballet's chronological order but instead arrange key moments for maximum musical impact.

The excerpts performed tonight draw from these suites, highlighting the contrast between the work's grandeur, lyricism, and intensity.

Though originally met with scepticism, *Romeo and Juliet* has since become one of Prokofiev's most enduring works. His music brings Shakespeare's timeless story to life with striking immediacy, blending romance, humour, and tragedy in a way that continues to captivate audiences worldwide.



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BIOGRAPHIES

ANDREW MANZE (CONDUCTOR)

Andrew Manze is widely celebrated as one of the most stimulating and inspirational conductors of his generation. His extensive and scholarly knowledge of the repertoire, together with his boundless energy and warmth, mark him out. He held the position of Chief Conductor of the NDR Radiophilharmonie in Hannover from 2014 until 2023. Since 2018, he has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. In April, he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, starting from September 2024.

Manze's time as Chief Conductor in Hannover saw him lead the orchestra in highly successful tours to China in 2016 and 2019, as well as a return to Japan in 2022. Manze and the orchestra made a major series of award-winning recordings for Pentatone, focused on the works of Mendelssohn and Mozart. The first recording in the Mendelssohn series won the Preis der Deutschen Schallplatten Kritik. Manze has also recorded a cycle of the complete Vaughan Williams symphonies with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for Onyx Classics to critical acclaim.

In great demand as a guest conductor across the globe, Manze

has long-standing relationships with many leading orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw, the Munich Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphoniker, Oslo Philharmonic, Finnish Radio, Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, RSB Berlin, and the Dresden Philharmonic among others. In the 24/25 season, Manze will also make débuts with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, and return to the Hallé Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the Salzburg Festival.

In North America, Manze has been a regular guest at the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York City, and in recent seasons has conducted the Boston Symphony, New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics. The 22/23 season saw Manze make his operatic début with the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, conducting performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* alongside Schoenberg's *Erwartung*. Other highlights of recent seasons include débuts with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic and Swedish Radio Orchestras.

From 2006 to 2014, Manze was Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Helsingborg

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BIOGRAPHIES

BENJAMIN HUTH (CONDUCTOR)

Symphony Orchestra. During this time he made a number of recordings with them including Beethoven's *Eroica* (Harmonia Mundi) and a cycle of Brahms' symphonies (CPO). He was also Principal Guest Conductor of the Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra from 2008 to 2011 and held the title of Associate Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra for four seasons.

After reading Classics at Cambridge University, Manze studied the violin and rapidly became a leading specialist in the world of historical performance practice. He became Associate Director of the Academy of Ancient Music in 1996, and then Artistic Director of the English Concert from 2003 to 2007. As a violinist, Manze has released an astonishing variety of recordings, many of them award-winning.

Manze is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, Visiting Professor at the Oslo Academy, and has contributed to new editions of sonatas and concerti by Bach and Mozart, published by Bärenreiter, Breitkopf and Härtel. He also teaches, writes about, and edits music, as well as broadcasting regularly on radio and television. In November 2011 Andrew Manze received the prestigious 'Rolf Schock Prize' in Stockholm.

Benjamin Huth (Mills Williams Junior Fellow in Conducting) studied Church Music and Conducting in Leipzig and Detmold. He worked as an assistant at the theatres in Leipzig and Cologne, and with the Academic Orchestra Leipzig. In 2020, he became a repetiteur at the Landestheater Detmold and, in 2022, he was promoted to Second Kapellmeister. During his time in Detmold, he conducted several productions including *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Das Land des Lächelns*, *Die lustige Witwe*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and many more. He was also assistant conductor of the Detmold Orchestra Society and the Free Symphony Orchestra.

Benjamin has guest conducted at the Filarmonica Mihail Jora Bacau, Philharmonie Südwestfalen, Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, and Vogtland Philharmonie Greiz-Reichenbach. He has participated in masterclasses with Mark Heron, Johannes Schlaefli, and Ekhart Wycik. In 2021, he won second prize at the IX Concorso Internazionale per Direttori D'Opera 'Luigi Mancinelli'.

Before winning the Fellowship at RNCM, Benjamin worked at Theatre Plauen-Zwickau.

BIOGRAPHIES

SIYI DAI (PIANO)

Siyi Dai began studying the piano at the age of four and, at eleven, gained admission to the Music School attached to the Xinghai Conservatory of Music. After completing her studies, she was awarded a scholarship to pursue a Bachelor of Music at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM), studying under Professor Bingbing Li. She graduated in 2022 with First-Class Honours. That same year, she continued her studies at RNCM, undertaking a Master of Music under Professor Graham Scott. She completed her degree in 2024, earning a Distinction in Music Performance and Music Education.

Siyi has achieved success in numerous competitions. She won First Prize in the RNCM Concerto Competition and is performing in tonight's event with the RNCM Symphony Orchestra as a result. She also claimed First Prize in the RNCM Piano Duo Prize and the Sixth Hong Kong International Piano Competition. Additionally, she was awarded Second Prize in the Yamaha Music Europe St Columb's Hall Concerto Award, Third Prize in the Mark Ray Recital Prize, and the Piano Prize in the Bessie Crowshaw/Frost Brownson Song Cycle Prize.

PATRICK GORRY (COMPOSER)

Patrick Gorry (2003) is a Manchester-based electroacoustic composer and performer, exploring complex instrumental music that grapples with the physicality of performance and its interactions with live processing.

Gorry's recent project, the modular cycle *Overdetermination*, deals with modular composition and collaborative working relationships, working extensively with emergent genre-bending violinist Sean Morrison and new music clarinettist Yu ting Cao. This work has extended to a collaboration with internationally renowned clarinettist Heather Roche for his piece *Aimless perambulation in Sierpinski's triangle*.

As a performer, Gorry engages with solo electric guitar improvisation, playing in grassroots venues such as Café Blah and the Anthony Burgess Centre. In addition, Gorry performs with experimental rock band Signifying Nothing, playing around the UK, notably The Wardrobe in Leeds. In November 2024, the band self-released and produced their debut album, *An idiot, full of sound and fury*.

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Joe Steel
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Saulo Da Silva
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Yijie Guan
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FLUTES

Sofiia Matviienko
Matthew Jones
Natalie Ngai (piccolo)

OBOES

Yicheng Meng
Yanyan Peng
Becky Corcoran (cor anglais)

CLARINETS

Abigail Martin
Yuxuan Wang
Anthony Arias (bass clarinet)

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Aaron Lo

BASSOONS

Leonardo Bizzotto
Julie Beech
Zhicheng Cao
(contrabassoon)

HORNS

Barry Lo
Cecily O'Brien
Liaocheng Cai
Yuan Zhang
Jason Cheung

TRUMPETS

Alexander Browne
Sean Molloy
Ainslee Farrar (cornet)

TROMBONE

Joe Heartfield
Tate Cassells
Malachy Cullen

TUBA

Jiaming Yang

TIMPANI

Michael McKeague

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Arthur Barras
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