



ROTTERDAMS
PHILHARMONISCH
ORKEST

Programme Notes

Bruckner 9 with Lahav Shani

Thu 24 November 2022 · 20.15

Fri 25 November 2022 · 20.15

PROGRAMME

conductor **Lahav Shani**
piano **Yefim Bronfman**

Ludwig van Beethoven 1770-1827
Piano Concerto no. 3 in C minor,
Op. 37 (1797/1808)
• Allegro con brio
• Largo
• Rondo: Allegro

intermission

Anton Bruckner 1824-1896
Symphony no. 9 in D minor
(1887-1896)
• Feierlich, misterioso
• Scherzo: Bewegt, lebhaft - Trio:
Schnell, Scherzo da capo
• Adagio: Langsam; feierlich

Concert ends at around 22.25

Most recent performances by our orchestra:

Beethoven Piano Concerto no. 3:
Sep 2018, piano Daniel Barenboim,
conductor Lahav Shani
Bruckner Symphony no. 9: Mar
2017, conductor Valery Gergiev

One hour before the start of the
concert, Emanuel Overbeeke will
give an introduction (in Dutch)
to the programme, admission
€5. Tickets are available at the
hall, payment by debit card. The
introduction is free for Vrienden.

Cover: Photo Niko Cingaryuk

A long time coming

Seven years elapsed from the time that Beethoven first began sketching his Third Piano Concerto to the date the piece was premièred – and even then, the composer had not yet fully committed the solo part to paper. Bruckner too worked for seven years on his Ninth Symphony. But in contrast to Beethoven he would not manage to complete that work.



*Bruckner's arrival in heaven.
Silhouette by Otto Böhler, around 1900.*

Turbulent piano concerto

At the end of 1802, Ludwig van Beethoven enthusiastically revealed to his friends that he was taking his music down a new path. This heralded the heroic middle period of his music, the prime example being the *Third Symphony*, 'Eroica'. The *Third Piano Concerto* also belongs to that 'new path': it is more of a symphony with piano. It begins with an extensive orchestral introduction lasting some 110 bars, without a single note on

the piano. At that time, this was both daring and unprecedented. The composition of the concerto was spread over a long period. The first sketches were made in 1796. At the première in 1803 Beethoven played most of the work from memory; he had not yet written out the entire piano part. It would take him another year to get round to that. And the virtuoso cadenzas would have to wait to 1809, around 14 years after the initial sketches.

The day of the première, 5 April 1803, was a hectic one. Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries recalled later that Beethoven summoned him at five in the morning. He found the composer in bed, buried under a mound of paper and still feverishly writing down some of the parts for that evening's concert. As well as the *Third Piano Concerto*, the programme included the oratorio *Christus am Ölberge*, the First and Second Symphonies and some other pieces that were ultimately removed from the overloaded programme. The rehearsals began at eight in the morning in the presence of Prince Lichnowsky. As noon approached, things were going really badly. The musicians were exhausted, so the Prince ordered in large hampers of food to boost morale. And it worked. The rehearsals continued throughout the afternoon and the concert began at six. Beethoven asked his pupil Ignaz Seyfried to turn the pages during the piano concerto. 'But heaven help me!' Seyfried later observed, 'That was easier said than done. I saw almost nothing but empty pages; at the most, on one page or another, he had scribbled down a few Egyptian hieroglyphs - wholly unintelligible to me - that only he could decipher. In fact, he played nearly all of the solo part from memory, since he had not had time to set it all down to paper. He gave me a secret glance whenever he was at the end of one of the invisible passages, and my scarcely conceivable anxiety not to miss the decisive moment amused him greatly.'

The concerto begins in typical Beethoven fashion, with a simple theme of four bars full of foreboding. But what Beethoven does with this theme is extraordinary. The first movement is packed with drama, yet introspective. And



the piano, after those 110 bars of silence, pounces in revenge. After the impressive cadenza the piano is ever-present until the final bar of the coda. A melodious Largo then follows, with fabulous arabesques on the piano that provide a sort of rustling accompaniment to long suspenseful orchestral passages. Despite its C minor key signature, the Rondo is exceptionally lively and spiky, full of sudden twists and turns and unexpected accents. The concerto ends with a greater sense of drama and drive, in the manner of Mozart's Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491, Beethoven's favourite concerto.

Bruckner's farewell to the world

Whilst Anton Bruckner was working on his *Ninth Symphony*, he begged God every day for the strength to complete it. We know that from the memoirs of Richard Heller, the doctor who treated Bruckner until his death. The composer worked stubbornly for seven years, from 1889 to 1896, on his *Ninth*, with an attitude of 'If He takes the pen from my hand, let it be His responsibility'. Until that fateful day on 11 October 1896, when returning from his morning walk, Bruckner passed away peacefully, leaving behind the greatest unfinished symphony since that of Franz Schubert.

Bruckner's *Ninth Symphony* is often referred to as one of the most important links between 19th and 20th century music, because it took the revolutionary innovations of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* to even greater heights. The pounding rhythms of the Scherzo seem to anticipate Stravinsky and Bartók, while the large leaps and piercing dissonances point towards the Second Viennese School of

Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern.

In the hectic last two years of his life Bruckner tried to finish the Finale of his *Ninth Symphony*, but God summoned him first. So, in common with many unfinished works, the *Ninth* has taken on a life of its own and several

He found the composer in bed, buried under a mound of paper and still feverishly writing down some of the parts for that evening's concert.

attempts have been made to complete it. From the sketches of the Finale that remain it can be seen that Bruckner's musical spirit was still wide awake and full of imagination, in spite of his failing health. In his mind, the immense fourth movement would have surpassed even that of the *Eight* in magnitude, with a fugue and quotations from his *Te Deum*. All the same, there is something satisfying and comforting about ending with the Adagio.

Angst and the awareness of death pervade the three finished movements. As in Mozart's unfinished Requiem, the first movement is dominated by a dark D minor. After a soft D in the strings and woodwind, the horns herald impending doom. There are cries of desperation in remote keys and restless modulations in the strings and oboes. The intensity increases in bold harmonies and the orchestra reaches the main theme in a loud unison (all the instruments playing the same note). This is followed by new theme complexes, relieved regularly by the earlier desperate outcry and mysterious pizzicato (notes plucked on stringed

instruments). The movement ends with an expansive open fifth (a chord that spans five tones) in the manner of Mozart's *Requiem*.

The Scherzo has macabre overtones thanks to the unsettling pizzicato on the first violins and cellos. Mysterious chords float over a

41-bar sustained bass tone in C sharp. A mighty stamping in the orchestra and misplaced cheerfulness in the oboe follow, but 'the joke' ends with a rictus grin in D minor. The Trio begins with fairy music in the style of Mendelssohn. But the devilish Scherzo comes racing along behind it.

The Adagio is Bruckner's heartrending farewell to this world and to life, beginning with anguished intervals of the minor ninth (a chord that spans nine tones). Mysterious harmonies are played by the Wagnerian tubas, including a melody that seems to hark back to Wagner's *Parsifal*. But the genuine quotations are from Bruckner himself, from the *Miserere* in his *Mass in D*, and later, after a desperate dissonant climax, from the Adagio of the *Eighth Symphony* and the first theme from the *Seventh*. Then, finally, peace is restored at the end of this turbulent farewell.

Clemens Romijn

Lahav Shani - chief conductor

Born: Tel Aviv, Israel

Current position: chief conductor Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra; music director Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

Before: principal guest conductor Vienna Symphony Orchestra from 2017 to 2020

Education: piano at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music Tel Aviv; conducting and piano at the Academy of Music Hanns Eisler Berlin; mentor: Daniel Barenboim

Breakthrough: 2013, after winning the Gustav Mahler International Conducting Competition in Bamberg

Subsequently: Staatskapelle Berlin, Berlin State Opera, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2016



Photo: Olivia da Costa



Photo: James Estrin

Yefim Bronfman - piano

Born: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Education: Rubin Academy, Tel Aviv with Arie Vardi, Juilliard School, New York with Rudolf Firkušný, Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia with Leon Fleisher, Marlboro School of Music with Rudolf Serkin

Awards: Avery Fisher Prize 1991, Grammy Award 1997, Jean Gimbel Lane Prize 2010, honorary doctorate Manhattan School of Music 2015

Breakthrough: 1975: debut with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra under Zubin Mehta

Subsequently: solo-appearances with all major international orchestras with conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Riccardo Chailly, Riccardo Muti, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle and Esa-Pekka Salonen; chamber music with Martha Argerich, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Isaac Stern, Pinchas Zukerman and many others

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 1984

Agenda

Fri 9 December 2022 • 20.15
Sun 11 December 2022 • 14.15
conductor **Jukka-Pekka Saraste**
clarinet **Christoffer Sundqvist**
Wennäkoski Flounce
Nielsen Clarinet Concerto
Shostakovich Symphony no. 8

Fri 16 December 2022 • 20.15
Sun 18 December 2022 • 14.15
conductor **Jan Willem de Vriend**
soprano **Lucy Crowe**
tenor **Mauro Peter**
baritone **Christopher Purves**
choir **Laurens Symfonisch**
Haydn Die Schöpfung

Thu 22 December 2022 • 20.15
Fri 23 December 2022 • 20.15
conductor **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**
choir **Nationaal Kinderkoor**
Tchaikovsky The Nutcracker

Sun 8 January 2023 • 10.30
Music for Breakfast No. 2
with **Ron Tjihuis** (Cor Anglais), **Carla Schrijner** (Cello), and colleagues
from the orchestra
Chamber Music by **M. Haydn**,
Broemel, **Françaix** and **Vaughan Williams**

Thu 12 January 2023 • 20.15
Fri 13 January 2023 • 20.15
Sun 15 January 2023 • 14.15
conductor **Lahav Shani**
piano **Daniil Trifonov**
Beethoven Piano Concerto no. 1
Strauss Ein Heldenleben

Sun 12 February 2023 • 10.30
Music for Breakfast No. 3
with **Charlotte Sprenkels** (Harp),
Veronika Lénártová (Viola), and
colleagues from the orchestra
Chamber Music by **Mozart**,
Takemitsu, **Ibert** and **Debussy**

Musicians

Chief Conductor
Lahav Shani

Honorary Conductor
Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Principal Assistant Conductor
Bertie Baigent

First Violin
Igor Gruppman,
leader
Marieke Blankestijn,
leader
Quirine Scheffers
Hed Yaron Meyerson
Saskia Otto
Arno Bons
Mireille van der Wart
Cor van der Linden
Rachel Browne
Maria Dingjan
Marie-José Schrijner
Noëmi Bodden
Petra Visser
Sophia Torrenga
Hadewijch Hofland
Annerien Stuker
Alexandra van
Beveren
Koen Stapert

Second Violin
Charlotte Potgieter
Cecilia Ziano
Frank de Groot
Laurens van Vliet
Tomoko Hara
Elina Staphorsius
Jun Yi Dou
Bob Bruyn
Letizia Sciarone
Eefje Habraken
Maija Reinikainen
Wim Ruitenbeek
Babette van den Berg
Melanie Broers

Viola
Anne Huser
Roman Spitzer
Galahad Samson
Kerstin Bonk
Lex Prummel
Janine Baller
Francis Saunders
Veronika Lénártová
Rosalinde Kluck
León van den Berg
Olfje van der Klein

Cello
Emanuele Silvestri
Joanna Pachucka
Daniel Petrovitsch
Mario Rio
Gé van Leeuwen
Eelco Beinema
Carla Schrijner
Pepijn Meeuws
Yi-Ting Fang

Double Bass
Matthew Midgley
Ying Lai Green
Jonathan Focquaert
Robert Franenberg
Harke Wiersma
Arjen Leendertz
Ricardo Neto

Flute
Juliette Hurel
Joséphine Olech
Désirée Woudenberg

Flute/Piccolo
Beatriz Da Baião

Oboe
Remco de Vries
Karel Schoofs
Anja van der Maten

Oboe/Cor Anglais
Ron Tjihuis

Clarinet
Julien Hervé
Bruno Bonansea

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet
Romke-Jan Wijmenga

Bassoon
Pieter Nuytten
Lola Descours
Marianne Prommel

Bassoon/Contrabassoon
Hans Wisse

Horn
David Fernández
Alonso
Wendy Leliveld
Richard Speetjens
Laurens Otto
Pierre Buizer

Trumpet
Alex Elia
Simon Wierenga
Jos Verspagen

Trombone
Pierre Volders
Alexander Verbeek
Remko de Jager

Bass Trombone
Rommert Groenhof

Tuba
Hendrik-Jan Renes

Timpani/Percussion
Danny van de Wal
Ronald Ent
Martijn Boom
Adriaan Feyaerts

Harp
Charlotte Sprenkels