



ROTTERDAM
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA

Programme Notes



Martha Argerich Plays Shostakovich

Thu 28 September 2023 · 20.15

Fri 29 September 2023 · 20.15

PROGRAMME

conductor **Lahav Shani**
piano **Martha Argerich**
trumpet **Alex Elia**
chorus **Laurens Symfonisch**

Henry Balfour Gardiner (1877-1950)
Evening Hymn (1908), orch. Lahav Shani

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)
Symphony of Psalms (1930)
• I (Psalm 38:13-14)
• II (Psalm 39:1-4)
• III (Psalm 150)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)
Piano Concerto no. 1, op. 35 (1933)
• Allegretto
• Lento
• Moderato
• Allegro con brio

intermission

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)
Suite from Romeo and Juliet (1935/1940):
• Montagues and Capulets (The Prince Gives His Order – Dance of the Knights)
• Juliet as a Young Girl
• Scene (The Street Awakens)
• Dance (Dance of the Five Couples)
• Masks
• Romeo and Juliet (Balcony Scene – Love Dance)
• Tybalt's Death
• Dance of the Antilles Girls
• Romeo and Juliet Before Parting
• Romeo at Juliet's Tomb

Concert ends at around 22.45



Most recent performances by our orchestra:

Gardiner Evening Hymn: first performance
Stravinsky Symphony of Psalms: Oct 2013,
chorus Collegium Vocale Gent, conductor
Philippe Herreweghe

Shostakovich Piano Concerto no. 1: Feb
2008, piano Simon Trpceski, trumpet André
Heuvelman, conductor Alan Buribayev

Prokofiev Romeo and Juliet: Dec 2017,
conductor Gustavo Gimeno

*One hour before the start of the concert,
Bart de Graaf 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 Stephen Hocking (Unsplash).



Dmitri Shostakovich as soloist in his *Piano Concerto no. 1*, Moscow, late 1930s.

Between church, theatre and circus

Igor Stravinsky, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Sergei Prokofiev are often mentioned in the same breath as the three Great Russian composers of 20th century music. There is a lot to be said for this claim, but they never formed a trinity: they were each far too idiosyncratic to be lumped together like that. The differences between Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto No. 1* and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* are therefore greater than their similarities – so great, in fact, that the *Evening Hymn* by British composer Henry Balfour Gardiner is perhaps not even the odd one out in this programme.

In the end, some composers are remembered only for one piece of music. An unfortunate fate, but British late-romantic composer Balfour Gardiner brought it upon himself. He was an industrious composer – two symphonies had been well received at the time – but he threw so much away that little remained. *Evening Hymn* is one of the rare survivors. It is a sacred song, based on the old Latin hymn *Te lucis ante terminum* ('To Thee, before the close of the day'). However, for Balfour Gardiner the work stood closer to the old English tradition of choral song than to religion; the work was written years after the composer had parted ways with his religious faith. The lush harmonies of the eight-part choir ensured its place as an evergreen in the English choral repertoire.

David thanks God for being saved from Hell.
Illumination by the Limbourg Brothers (c. 1412)
of Psalm 39 in Les Très Riches Heures du duc de
Berry. Coll. Musée Condé, Chantilly.



■ religious faith or none

Religious music need not always stem from a religious faith. There are various examples of this, such as the Requiem by Fauré (written 'purely for pleasure', according to the composer). A grey area is the *Symphony of Psalms* by Stravinsky, whose recent return to the fold of the Orthodox Faith was only part of the reason behind the composition

For some time already he had been delving into the polyphonic music of the old masters and wanted to write a choral work. When in 1929 he received a commission from conductor Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, he saw a clear opportunity.

In the *Symphony of Psalms* you can clearly hear the enthusiasm with which Stravinsky imbued his fundamental craftsmanship. The notes are tightly arranged and devoid of sentimentality, yet sound inspired – partly through the text that focuses on hope and redemption.

As its title indicates, the work was written for the concert hall and not for the church. Yes, they are psalms, but it is the symphonic setting that is more important. The term 'symphonic' should be interpreted literally here, as 'sounding together', since in terms of its compositional form the *Symphony of Psalms* is entirely detached from the classical symphony as we know it from Haydn, Beethoven and Brahms. Stravinsky was returning to older, pre-classical principles. Inspired by earlier composers such as Palestrina and Bach, he focused on the contrast between high and low, light and dark, heavenly and earthly, vocal and instrumental. In this work, Stravinsky contrasts choral voices against an instrumental ensemble in which he has dispensed with clarinets, violins and violas. The texts come from the Old Testament Book of Psalms – the first half of the Bible in which God is still as bountiful with his punishments as he is with his blessings. Stravinsky accentuates the roughness of the texts with often grim harmonies. Despair reigns for the first two movements of the work: the composer chooses to make the choir and orchestra sound abrasive. But in the third movement the emotional temperature increases. The warmth with which the word 'Alleluia' is characterised has no precedent in the preceding two movements. But Stravinsky does not let the work overheat; it ends in serene stillness.

Soviet circus

The exuberance of Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto No. 1* is at odds with the anguished tone of his celebrated symphonies and string quartets. His body of work documented his long, difficult struggle with the creative restrictions with which the Soviet Union shackled its artists; it produced a lot of tragic-sounding music. However, at the time of this early piano concerto, the composer was more or less free to go about his business. He received praise for the originality of his composition and his performances as a concert pianist, and a blind eye was turned to his flirtation with jazz and variety theatre influences. He discovered such Western influences during his part-time jobs: the young Shostakovich played piano in cabaret clubs and accompanied silent films in the cinemas. This kind of entertainment music would always remain one of his frames of reference. Even his bruising Soviet symphonies, with their hysterical-joyful outbursts, are full of such influences. The *Piano Concerto no. 1* is inclined towards circus music in places, partly characterised by a capricious solo trumpet. In fact, the original plan had been to write a trumpet concerto, but the idea evolved into a double concerto in which the piano ultimately took centre stage. Furthermore, due to the high content of ra-ta-ta-tat rhythms, it is easy to overlook the various references to the classical masters hidden in the music. Right at the start, the piano plays the opening motif of Beethoven's *Appassionata*; there are references later in the work to composers such as Rossini and Haydn.

Russian Shakespeare

Initially, Prokofiev remained free of the Soviet doctrines that would have a vice-like grip on Shostakovich. Prokofiev would spend a large part of his life up to the age of forty-five in the free West, where his biting modernist compositions made a great impression. However, as time went on, he became tormented by homesickness, and

in 1936 he was lured back to the USSR. Then the trap snapped shut: the freedoms and privileges promised him failed to materialise, and to survive he was forced to adopt the mandatory, bombastic Soviet style.

Shortly after his 'homecoming' he wrote what would become an immensely popular ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*. The work would give birth to his later epic style, whilst at certain moments also staying close to the sharp, crackling sound of his earlier works. The original play by Shakespeare – a much-loved dramatist in Russia – is full of unpredictable characters who fitted perfectly with Prokofiev's whimsical idiom.

The young Shostakovich played piano in cabaret clubs and accompanied silent films in the cinemas

Everyone knows the story: two young lovers are kept apart because their respective families are at each other's throats. Various deaths ensue as a result. Prokofiev describes the tensions in an almost cubist manner, with sharp contours and intense colour sounds; he explicitly rejects any soft focus. A perfect example of this can be heard right at the start of the suite being performed in this programme. The rival families are introduced with wrenching, threatening sounds and a dark dance. By contrast, the appearance of the teenage Juliet is signalled by a crystal-clear C-major key. There follow a number of almost character dances – including one by West Indian slave girls owned by Juliet's family – and the intense denouement is introduced by the high-octane duel in which Romeo kills his opponent Tybalt; not just a highpoint of the suite, but a peak in Prokofiev's entire body of work.

Michiel Cleij

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

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: Caroline Doutré

Martha Argerich • piano

Born: Buenos Aires, Argentina

Education: with Friedrich Gulda in Austria;
Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, Stefan
Askenase

Awards: Geneva International Music
Competition (1957); Ferruccio Busoni
International Piano Competition Bolzano
(1957); Praemium Imperiale Award (2005),
Kennedy Center Honor (2016)

Breakthrough: 1965, after winning the
Fryderyk Chopin International Piano
Competition Warsaw

Subsequently: soloist with all major
orchestras in the world

Chamber Music: with pianists Stephen
Kovacevich, Alexandre Rabinovich, the
late Nelson Freire and Nicolas Economou,
violinist Gidon Kremer, cellist Mischa Maisky
Festival: honorary president International
Piano Academy Lake Como

Documentary: Martha Argerich –
Evening Talk 2002

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 1969



Photo: Eduardus Lee

Alex Elia • trumpet

Born: Chambave, Italy

Education: bachelor and master at the Conservatoire de la Vallée d'Aoste (Aosta) with Davide Sanson, further study at the Buchmann-Metha School of Music (Tel Aviv)

Awards: Aeolus International Competition for Wind Instruments, Düsseldorf (2013), 25th International City of Porcia Competition (2014)

Career: freelance trumpet player; principal trumpet at the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra since 2018

Chamber Music: Trio all'Opera, with Lorenzo Passerini (trombone) and Marco Cadario (organ)

Solo Appearances: Filarmonica di Milano, Orchestra Antonio Vivaldi, ensemble of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, various international music festivals

As a Teacher: Masterclasses, e.g. at I FIATI, at the Aosta Conservatory and at the international IMMF Festival



Photo: Irene Valentini



Photo: Jan Hordijk

Laurens Symfonisch • chorus

Founded: 2013, in consultation with de Doelen and the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Wiecher Mandemaker

Repertoire: choral symphonic repertoire

Debut: 2013 with Brahms' A German Requiem

Co-operations: Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (Tan Dun: Requiem for Nature (world premiere), Honegger: Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher – the recording, released as super audio cd under the RCO Live label, won the International Classical Music Award), BBC Symphony Orchestra (Howells: Hymnus Paradisi), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (Britten: Ballad of Heroes), Residentie Orkest (Verdi: Requiem), Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century (Beethoven: Symphony no. 9, Fidelio)

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2014

Agenda

Fri 13 October 2023 • 20.15

conductor **Finnegan Downie Dear**
violin **Clara-Jumi Kang**

Adès The Exterminating Angel
Symphony

Britten Violin Concerto

Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition

Music for Breakfast 1

Sun 29 October 2023 • 10.30

Jurriaanse Zaal, de Doelen
with **Karel Schoofs** (oboe) and
colleagues from the orchestra

Blake Suite for two oboes and
cor anglais

Bozza Bergers de Provence

Britten Pan (from: Metamorphoses)

Canteloube Rustiques

Covoni Pandemonio

Fri 3 November 2023 • 20.15

Sun 5 November 2023 • 14.15

conductor **Tarmo Peltokoski**

piano **Yuja Wang**

Bartók Romanian Folk Dances

Bartók Piano Concerto No. 2

Strauss Also sprach Zarathustra

Thu 9 November 2023 • 20.15

Fri 10 November 2023 • 20.15

Sun 12 November 2023 • 14.15

conductor **Maxim Emelyanychev**

piano **Beatrice Rana**

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4

Musicians

Chief Conductor

Lahav Shani

Honorary Conductor

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Principal Guest Conductor

Tarmo Peltokoski

First Violin

Marieke Blankestijn,
concertmeester

Quirine Scheffers

Hed Yaron Meyerson

Saskia Otto

Arno Bons

Mireille van der Wart

Rachel Browne

Maria Dingjan

Marie-José Schrijner

Noëmi Bodden

Petra Visser

Sophia Torrenga

Hadewijch Hofland

Annerien Stuker

Alexandra van

Beveren

Second Violin

Charlotte Potgieter

Cecilia Ziano

Frank de Groot

Laurens van Vliet

Tomoko Hara

Elina Staphorsius

Jun Yi Dou

Bob Bruyn

Eefje Habraken

Maija Reinikainen

Wim Ruitenbeek

Babette van den Berg

Melanie Broers

Lana Trimmer

Viola

Anne Huser

Roman Spitzer

Galahad Samson

José Moura Nunes

Kerstin Bonk

Lex Prummel

Janine Baller

Francis Saunders

Veronika Lénártová

Rosalinde Kluck

León van den Berg

Olfje van der Klein

Cello

Emanuele Silvestri

Eugene Lifschitz

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

Felipe Santos Freitas Silva

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

Percussion

Danny van de Wal

Ronald Ent

Martijn Boom

Adriaan Feyaerts

Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels