

A promotional poster for the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The background is a clear blue sky with several vibrant red maple leaves in the foreground, some in sharp focus and others blurred. The text is white and positioned on the left side of the image.

London **Philharmonic** Orchestra

MOZART

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 20

RACHMANINOFF

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2

ALDO CICCOLINI *piano*

YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 20 IN D MINOR, K466

1. *Allegro*
2. *Romanza*
3. *Rondo: Allegro assai*

The decade that Mozart spent in Vienna from 1781 until his death was when he truly found his own voice as a composer, and nowhere is this new maturity and individuality better shown than in his piano concertos of the period. Altogether he wrote 17 of them while in the Imperial capital, mostly for himself to play at the public and private concerts that helped provide him with financial support, and as such they were the works with which he was most closely associated by his audiences. More importantly, it was with them that he established the piano concerto for the first time as a sophisticated means of personal expression rather than a vehicle for polite public display.

The high point in the series came with the five concertos composed in the period of just over a year from the beginning of 1785. K466 – completed and first performed in February 1785 – is chronologically at the head of this group, but musically speaking it also stands out in many ways. The composer's father Leopold, visiting Vienna at the time, heard the premiere, and a little over a year

later was organising a performance by a local pianist back in Salzburg. He later described the occasion in a letter to his daughter: 'Marchand played it from the score, and [Michael, brother of Joseph] Haydn turned over the pages for him, and at the same time had the pleasure of seeing with what art it is composed, how delightfully the parts are interwoven and what a difficult concerto it is.' One can well imagine the impression the piece made on the composer's home town; there can be few clearer demonstrations of how far he had left Salzburg behind.

D minor is a relatively unusual key for Mozart, and therefore a significant one. Later he would use it both for *Don Giovanni's* damnation scene and for the *Requiem*, and there is something of the same grim familiarity with the dark side, a glimpse of the grave it seems, in the first movement of this Concerto. The opening orchestral section contrasts brooding menace with outbursts of passion, presenting along the way most of the melodic material that will serve the rest of the movement. Even so, it is with a new theme, lyrical but searching and restless, that the piano enters; this is quickly brushed aside by the orchestra, but the soloist does not give it up easily, later using it to lead the orchestra through several different keys in the central

SERGE RACHMANINOFF PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN C MINOR, OP. 18

1. *Moderato*
2. *Adagio sostenuto*
3. *Allegro scherzando*

The second, and most popular, of Rachmaninoff's four piano concertos is the work in which he overcame a long period of creative sterility following the disastrous failure of his First Symphony at its premiere in March 1897 – a failure which it seems was largely due to Glazunov's unsympathetic and incompetent conducting. It is dedicated to Nikolai Dahl, a hypnotist who helped the composer regain (in the words of a cousin) 'cheerfulness of spirit, energy, a desire to work, and confidence in his abilities'. He began writing the Concerto during a stay in Italy in June and July 1900, completed the second and third movements later in the year, and played them at a concert in Moscow in December. The success of this event encouraged him to add the first movement; and the complete work was first performed, with Rachmaninoff again the soloist, in Moscow in the autumn of 1901.

After the portentous *crescendo* of its opening piano chords, the Concerto establishes its prevailing mood of passionate lyricism with its long, dark-coloured first theme. The soloist comes to the fore in the celebrated second subject, with its expressive curves of melody,

development section. The movement ends sombrely, *pianissimo*.

The slow second movement, in B flat major, is entitled '*Romanza*', a vague term used in Mozart's day to suggest something of a song-like quality. In fact this is a rondo, in which three appearances of the soloist's artless opening theme are separated by differing episodes, the first a drawn-out melody for the piano floating aristocratically over gently throbbing support from the strings, and the second a stormy minor-key eruption of piano triplets, shadowed all the way by sustained woodwind chords.

Storminess returns in the finale, though this time one senses that it is of a more theatrical kind than in the first movement. It is another rondo, and although the main theme is fiery and angular, much happens in the course of the movement to lighten the mood, culminating after the cadenza in a turn to D major for the concerto's final pages.

A purely conventional 'happy ending' to send the audience away smiling? Perhaps so, but the gentle debunking indulged in by the horns and trumpets just before the end suggests that Mozart knew exactly what he was doing.

Programme note © Lindsay Kemp

coloured by yielding chromatic harmonies. The development section is a masterpiece of subtle control of pace and purposeful handling of material, above all in the way a tiny figure from the end of the introduction gradually gains in prominence, eventually emerging as a heroic piano counterpoint to the return of the first subject. In general, the recapitulation section is a much altered version of the exposition, with the second subject heard only at half speed on solo horn, accompanied by *tremolando* strings. Writing this movement last, Rachmaninoff must have made a deliberate decision to leave the audience wanting more in the way of a lyrical culmination – knowing that his finale would supply that need.

The E major *Adagio sostenuto* is based on a gentle melody shared by flute and clarinet, in a mixture of 4/4 and 3/2 time, and accompanied by the piano in ingenious cross-rhythms. In the central development section, several increases in tempo lead the way towards successive climaxes, and then to a short piano cadenza which winds down to the restatement of the first idea, now re-scored for all the violins.

Although the three movements of the Concerto are separate, Rachmaninoff obviously conceived them as a continuous whole,

prefacing the slow movement with a four-bar introduction modulating from C minor to E major, and similarly introducing the finale with a little orchestral march which begins in E major and ushers in a piano cadenza on the dominant of C minor. The first subject of the movement is introduced as a brilliant piano solo; the familiar second subject sets oboe and violas swaying languorously over a syncopated accompaniment. After an accelerating development section, the recapitulation of the first subject is disguised as a short fugato, throwing greater emphasis on the return of the second theme – though its last triumphant return is reserved for the coda.

Programme note © Anthony Burton

ALDO CICCOLINI *piano*



Aldo Ciccolini was one of the great masters of the piano. He worked tirelessly, continuing to perform on the international stage into his late eighties.

Ciccolini was born in Naples and began piano lessons at an early age. He was accepted into the Naples Conservatory aged nine, where he studied piano and conducting and where through his teachers he inherited the teachings of Ferruccio Busoni and Franz Liszt. It was not long however before he left for Paris, where he won the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud International Competition in 1949.

The success that Ciccolini experienced in France unleashed his passion for French music. He became a fervent supporter of French music throughout the world, as evidenced through the first complete works of Érik Satie – which brought him international fame – as well as Ravel and the complete works of Debussy.

With over 100 recordings for EMI-Pathé Marconi and other labels, Ciccolini made an important contribution to increasing awareness of infrequently performed or unjustly neglected pieces, including sonatas by Schubert and Scarlatti, Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage*, and works by Spanish composers. He has also recorded all of Mozart's sonatas.

Recipient of the Officer of the Legion of Honour, Officer of the National Order of Merit, and Commandeur des Arts et Lettres, Ciccolini chose to become a French citizen in 1971 as a symbol of gratitude. The following year he accepted a post as teacher at the Paris Conservatoire which gave him the taste for teaching as a vocation – a vocation he never gave up, as he continued to give masterclasses until the end of his life.

"I will never forget my collaborations with Aldo Ciccolini. I am forever grateful for his unique balance of wisdom and curiosity, of poetry and clarity, all with the greatest integrity. Thank you, dear Aldo."

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN *conductor*

© Hans van der Woerd



In 2012, Montreal-born Yannick Nézet-Séguin added the Music Directorship of The Philadelphia Orchestra to his roles as Music Director of the Rotterdam

Philharmonic Orchestra and long-time Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain (Montreal), where he has served since 2000. In 2016/17 he also became an Honorary Member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. 2017/18 will be his tenth and final season with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and will end with the Orchestra's centenary celebrations in Rotterdam and around Europe. In 2020/21 Yannick succeeds James Levine as the third Music Director of the Metropolitan Opera, New York and remains in post with The Philadelphia Orchestra until at least summer 2026.

Yannick has worked with many leading European ensembles and enjoys close collaborations with the Berliner Philharmoniker, Wiener Philharmoniker,

Bayerischer Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester and Chamber Orchestra of Europe; from 2008–14 he was also Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He has appeared three times at the BBC Proms and at many European festivals, among them Edinburgh, Lucerne, Salzburg and Grafenegg. North American summer appearances include New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, Lanaudiere, Vail, and Saratoga.

Recent Deutsche Grammophon releases include Mendelssohn's Symphonies 1–5 and *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe which won the 2017 ECHO Klassik for Best Opera Recording and a GRAMMY nomination.

Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition and chamber music at the Conservatoire de musique du Québec and choral conducting at the Westminster Choir College in Princeton before going on to study with renowned conductors, most notably the Italian maestro Carlo Maria Giulini. His honours include Musical America's Artist of the Year (2016), Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada's National Arts Centre Award, Prix Denise-Pelletier and Prix Oskar Morawetz.

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world's finest orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history with its present-day position as one of the most dynamic and forward-looking ensembles in the UK. This reputation has been secured by the Orchestra's performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, trail-blazing international tours and wide-ranging educational work.

Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, the Orchestra has since been headed by many of the world's greatest conductors, including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003, and became Principal Conductor in September 2007.

The Orchestra is based at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London, where it has been Resident Orchestra since 1992, giving around 30 concerts a season. Each summer it takes up its annual residency at Glyndebourne Festival Opera where it has been Resident Symphony Orchestra for over 50 years. The Orchestra performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous international tours, performing to sell-out audiences in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti and Tennstedt, to Masur and Jurowski. lpo.org.uk



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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–91)

32:20 **Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K466**

- 01 14:46 Allegro
- 02 09:23 Romanza
- 03 08:09 Rondo: Allegro assai

SERGE RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)

36:01 **Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18**

- 04 11:20 Moderato
- 05 11:57 Adagio sostenuto
- 06 12:44 Allegro scherzando

ALDO CICCOLINI *piano*

YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Pieter Schoeman *leader*

Recorded live at Southbank Centre's **ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL**, London