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A Celebration of Dvořák

25-27 Sep 2024



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A Celebration of Dvořák

Wednesday 25 September, 7.30pm, Perth Concert Hall
Thursday 26 September, 7.30pm, The Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Friday 27 September, 7.30pm, City Halls, Glasgow

DVOŘÁK Carnival Overture

DVOŘÁK Cello Concerto

Interval of 20 minutes

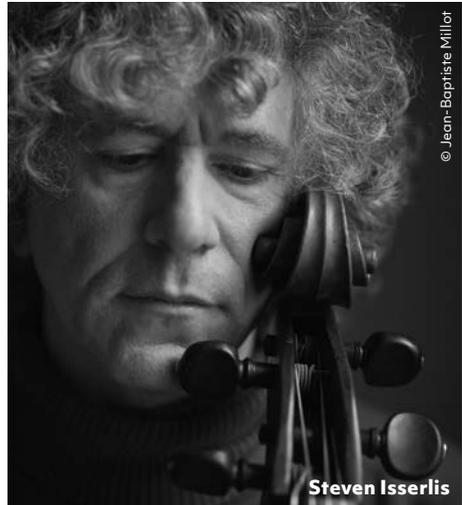
DVOŘÁK Symphony No 8

Maxim Emelyanychev Conductor

Steven Isserlis Cello



Maxim Emelyanychev



Steven Isserlis

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Tijmen Huisingh
Aisling O'Dea
Amira Bedrush-McDonald
Tom Hankey
Wen Wang
Catherine James
Serena Whitmarsh

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Adam Richardson

Piccolo

Marta Gómez

Oboe

Robin Williams
Katherine Bryer
Fraser Kelman

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Craig Anderson

Timpani

Stefan Beckett

Percussion

Iain Sandilands
Alasdair Kelly
Colin Hyson

Trombone

Duncan Wilson

Harp

Eleanor Hudson

Maximiliano Martín
Principal Clarinet



WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Carnival Overture, Op 92, B169 (1891)

Cello Concerto in B minor, Op 104, B191 (1895)

Allegro

Adagio, ma non troppo

Finale: Allegro moderato — Andante — Allegro vivo

Symphony No 8, Op 88, B163 (1889)

Allegro con brio

Adagio

Allegretto grazioso — Molto vivace

Allegro ma non troppo

Passion, positivity, boundless vitality: though you couldn't claim that every note of his music conveys joy and optimism, Antonín Dvořák nonetheless represents an unusually warm, outward-looking figure in classical music – and an appropriately celebratory one with which to launch the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's new Season.

From his early years in rural Bohemia to the international fame and adulation of his later life, he brought together the earthy rawness of his homeland's folk traditions – which he'd been immersed in as a child – with the rigours and sophistication of classical forms. The results were fresh, distinctive and captivating – at least fellow composer Johannes Brahms seemed to think so, encouraging German publishing house Simrock to take the younger man on, to enormous success.

Some of that success, no doubt, was down to Dvořák's remarkable and seemingly effortless ability to be both radical and conservative. With its generous invitation to rustic folk ideas to take up residence in the refined world of the classical concert hall, you could never accuse his music of being backward-looking – but Dvořák was careful, too, not to shock his listeners too deeply, nor make them fundamentally question their assumptions about what they were hearing. The results are deeply melodic, rich and colourful, across a broad and varied legacy of symphonies, concertos, tone poems, operas, chamber works, religious music and lots more – and we'll experience a cross-section of some of that this evening.

By the time he completed tonight's colourful opener, the *Carnival Overture*, in September 1891 at the age of 50, Dvořák was already an established and much-lauded figure. His own description sums up the piece beautifully:



Antonín Leopold Dvořák

Some of that success, no doubt, was down to Dvořák's remarkable and seemingly effortless ability to be both radical and conservative.

'The lonely, contemplative wanderer reaches the city at nightfall, where a carnival is in full swing. On every side is heard the clangour of instruments, mingled with shouts of joy and the unrestrained hilarity of people giving vent to their feelings in their songs and dance tunes.'

And although *Carnival's* music might at times bring to mind the *Slavonic Dances* that had first made Dvořák's name more than a decade earlier, the composer had grander ambitions for this glittering showpiece. He originally intended it as the central panel in a trilogy of concert overtures that he entitled *Nature, Life and Love*. Perhaps not surprisingly, *Carnival* embodies life, with the gentler *In Nature's Realm* serving as its predecessor, and the far darker *Othello* forming the trilogy's dramatic conclusion. Although he cunningly wove the three pieces together with a recurring theme, ultimately he published them separately – though you may

also detect the composer's love for the natural world in the carefree, pastoral interlude that interrupts *Carnival's* wild, whirling energy.

Indeed, it's a stomping, folk-like tune that could have come straight from one of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* that opens the piece, with distinctive contributions from a tambourine (an unusual instrument in the composer's output). Dvořák switches teasingly between the brighter major and darker minor with his dancing melody – a distinctive feature of Bohemian folk music – before a more lyrical melody soars in high in the violins. The cor anglais is prominent in the piece's gentler, more thoughtful central section, but Dvořák omits his earlier lyrical tune when his stomping dance returns, propelling the piece to a wild, rhythmic conclusion.

Dvořák conducted the first performance of his *Carnival Overture* (as part of his original *Nature, Life and Love* trilogy) on 28 April 1892

in Prague, the evening before he set off for a new life in America. He also included the piece in the first concert he later conducted in New York's Carnegie Hall.

He'd been tempted across the Atlantic by the wealthy philanthropist Jeannette Thurber, who'd established the pioneering National Conservatory of Music in New York – and who offered Dvořák the astronomical sum of \$15,000 a year to serve as the institution's Director. Nonetheless, he wasn't convinced about leaving Europe. In the end, it was put to a family vote, and the decision was taken to head west.

He wrote his single Cello Concerto in New York, in 1895, during his third year as Director of the Manhattan Conservatory. He'd greatly enjoyed his first two years in the role, as he demonstrated in the awe and wonder of his 'New World' Symphony and the warm contentment of his 'American' Quartet. By his third year, however, he found himself increasingly missing Bohemia. It was a situation made worse by some worrying news: his sister-in-law, Josefina Kaunitzová (née Čermáková), was gravely ill. Some 30 years earlier, the young Dvořák had been passionately in love with Josefina, then one of his piano pupils. When she didn't return his affections, however, he eventually married her younger sister Anna. But it's widely believed that his feelings hardly changed across the intervening decades.

Nonetheless, it was an American inspiration that prompted Dvořák to write his Cello Concerto in the first place. Earlier in his career, the eminent Czech cellist Hanuš Wihan had badgered the composer repeatedly for a concerto, but Dvořák had always declined, unconvinced by the cello's suitability as a concerto instrument. But when in March 1894

he heard the Second Cello Concerto by Victor Herbert, one of his Conservatory colleagues, he was immediately inspired, writing his own piece in just three months between November 1894 and February 1895. Nor did he forget about the ailing Josefina: he incorporated a quotation from his song 'Leave Me Alone' ('Kéž duch můj sám'), one of her favourites, into his Concerto's lyrical slow movement.

Dvořák eventually returned to Bohemia in April 1895, and just a month later, Josefina died. In response, the composer threw himself back into his Cello Concerto, replacing its original celebratory ending with a quiet memory of his song 'Leave Me Alone'. When Wihan, the work's dedicatee, demanded a showy solo cadenza to demonstrate his exceptional skills in the final movement, Dvořák refused, even going as far as emphasising his wishes in a note to his publisher: 'I must insist that my work be published just as I have written it. I give you my work only if you promise me that no one – not even my esteemed friend Wihan – shall make any alteration in it without my knowledge and permission, also that there be no cadenza such as Wihan has made in the last movement.'

Despite its stormy drama, the Cello Concerto is often contemplative in tone, with soloist and orchestra equally matched as partners rather than adversaries. Its assertive opening movement gives way to pastoral tranquility in the central slow movement, before Dvořák's otherwise exuberant finale unexpectedly immerses listeners in bittersweet melancholy just before its close.

To close, we jump back a few years in Dvořák's life, to 1889, for a piece that epitomises the deep love the composer felt towards his homeland, its music and its natural wonders. By August of that year – the month that he



Dvořák with his family and friends in New York in 1893

Despite its stormy drama, the Cello Concerto is often contemplative in tone, with soloist and orchestra equally matched as partners rather than adversaries.

began work on his Eighth Symphony – Dvořák was being celebrated across Europe as a successor to Beethoven and an equal of his friend Brahms – and a world away from the overlooked provincial musician whom Brahms had championed earlier in his career.

Even the impetus for the Symphony's composition – Dvořák's election to the Bohemian Academy of Science, Literature and Arts – speaks of mighty accomplishment and a secure, lofty reputation. In many ways, the composer had little to prove. And indeed – in stark contrast to the turbulent emotions and high drama of his earlier Symphony No 7 – in his Eighth, Dvořák instead focused on music of contentment, celebrating the joys of life, his deep sense of wonder at nature, and his abiding love of Bohemian and Slavonic folk music.

He wrote the Symphony while staying at his retreat in Vysoká u Příbramě, a state-sponsored

resort in rural Bohemia. His biographer Otakar Šourek explained that the location provided Dvořák 'a welcome refuge, bringing him not only peace and fresh vigour of mind, but also happy inspiration for new creative work. In communion with Nature, in the harmony of its voices and the pulsating rhythms of its life, in the beauty of its changing moods and aspects, his thoughts came more freely.'

The Symphony he created in these idyllic surroundings went down a storm at its premiere, in Prague's Rudolfinum on 2 February 1890. Its success quickly travelled, too. Dvořák wrote to a friend of its London premiere on 24 April that same year: 'The concert came off wonderfully. After the first movement there was universal applause, after the second it was even louder, after the third it was so thunderous that I had to turn round several times and thank the audience, but, after the finale, the applause was tempestuous. They all clapped so hard,

Dvořák also strove to break new ground in his Eighth Symphony: he even warned his publisher that it would be ‘different from the other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way’.

it was almost unbearable.’ It was also the work that Dvořák submitted as obligatory proof of his skills before receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 1892 – with the result that, for many years, it was known as his ‘English’ Symphony (despite sounding Bohemian through and through).

But though that may give the impression of a composer resting on his laurels, Dvořák also strove to break new ground in his Eighth Symphony: he even warned his publisher that it would be ‘different from the other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way’. That ‘new way’ was in allowing himself greater freedom to conjure evocative atmospheres and moods, to paint overtly pictorial scenes, and to create music of immediate warmth and appeal, rather than adhering to strict academic rules. The result is a fascinating amalgam of symphony and tone poem, one that moulds Dvořák’s evident joy into a compelling symphonic whole.

Those contrasts between convention and freedom are clear from the very beginning of the boisterous, outdoorsy opening movement, whose sombre, hymn-like introduction soon gives way to joyful birdsong in the flute – a theme that goes on to provide the movement’s main melodic ideas. There’s a distinct hint of the orient, or even of Jewish klezmer music, in the slithering clarinet duets of the song-like second movement, and the third movement is a wistful, folksy waltz. A fanfare calls us to attention at the start of the finale – though, as Czech conductor Rafael Kubelik was famous for reminding orchestras: ‘In Bohemia the trumpets never call to battle – they always call to the dance!’ The ensuing music transforms an unassuming melody first heard in the cellos into a raucous village dance, and then on to something even more heroic and triumphant.

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MAXIM EMELYANYCHEV



At the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Maxim Emelyanychev follows in the footsteps of just five previous Principal Conductors in the Orchestra's 49-year history; Roderick Brydon (1974-1983), Jukka-Pekka Saraste (1987-1991), Ivor Bolton (1994-1996), Joseph Swensen (1996-2005) and Robin Ticciati (2009-2018).

Recent highlights have included a US tour and a performance at the London Proms with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and his debuts with the Berliner Philharmoniker, New Japan Philharmonic, Osaka Kansai Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris.

In 2023/24 Maxim's highlights included the following debuts: Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, SWR Symphonieorchester Stuttgart, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, Mozarteum Orchestra at the Salzburg Festival. He returns to the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

He regularly collaborates with renowned artists such as Max Emanuel Cenčić, Patrizia Ciofi, Joyce DiDonato, Franco Fagioli, Richard Goode, Sophie Karthäuser, Stephen Hough, Katia and Marielle Labèque, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Julia Lezhneva, Alexei Lubimov, Riccardo Minasi, Xavier Sabata and Dmitry Sinkovsky.

Maxim is also a highly respected chamber musician. His most recent recording (on Aparté), of Brahms Violin Sonatas with long-time collaborator and friend Aaylen Pritchen has attracted outstanding reviews internationally. With the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Maxim has made critically-acclaimed recordings of Schubert Symphony No 9 – the symphony with which he made his debut with the orchestra – and Mendelssohn Symphonies Nos 3 'Scottish' and 5 'Reformation' both on Linn Records. Their latest recording, of Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8, will be released in November.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Cello

STEVEN ISSERLIS



British cellist Steven Isserlis CBE enjoys an international career as a soloist, chamber musician, author, educator, and broadcaster. Equally at home in music from baroque to the present day, he performs with the world's greatest orchestras, including period ensembles, and has given many world premieres, including Sir John Tavener's *The Protecting Veil*, Thomas Adès's *Lieux retrouvés*, four works for solo cello by György Kurtág, and pieces by Heinz Holliger, Jörg Widmann, Olli Mustonen, Mikhail Pletnev and many others.

His vast award-winning discography includes most of the cello repertoire, including the JS Bach suites (Gramophone Instrumental Album of the Year), Beethoven's complete works for cello and piano, and the Brahms double concerto with Joshua Bell and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. He has received two Grammy nominations, for his recordings of Haydn's cello concertos, and of Martinů's cello sonatas with Olli Mustonen. Premiere recordings include late works by Sir John Tavener (BBC Music magazine Premiere Award). His latest recording, *A Golden Cello Decade 1878 – 1888*, was released in November 2022.

As an author, his latest book is a critically-acclaimed companion to the Bach cello suites, while his two books for children about music are among the genre's most popular ever written and have been translated into many languages. He has also authored a commentary on Schumann's famous *Advice for Young Musicians*. As a broadcaster, he has written and presented two in-depth documentaries for BBC Radio, on Robert Schumann and Harpo Marx.

An insightful musical explorer and curator, he has programmed imaginative series for London's Wigmore Hall, New York's 92nd St Y, and the Salzburg Festival. Unusually, he also directs orchestras from the cello, including Luzerner Sinfonieorchester in 2019 with Radu Lupu in his final public performance.

He was awarded a CBE by Queen Elizabeth II in 1998, in recognition of his services to music. International recognition includes the Piatigorsky Prize (USA) and the Glashütte Original Music Festival Award (Germany). Since 1997, he has been Artistic Director of the International Musicians Seminar, Prussia Cove, Cornwall. He plays the 1726 'Marquis de Corberon' Stradivarius, on loan from the Royal Academy of Music.

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in November 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in November 2023.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, Lorenza Borrani and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Nico Muhly and the late Peter Maxwell Davies.

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An SCO Academy participant performs on Glasgow City Halls' stage with the full Orchestra, May 2024 © Christopher Bowen.

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For more information on how you can become a regular donor, please get in touch with Hannah on **0131 478 8364** or **hannah.wilkinson@scotland.org.uk**

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