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25
26

Beethoven, Pekka & Dreamers' Circus

19-21 March 2026

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Beethoven, Pekka & Dreamers' Circus

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Thursday 19 March, 7.30pm The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

Friday 20 March, 7.30pm City Halls, Glasgow

Saturday 21 March, 7.30pm Aberdeen Music Hall

BEETHOVEN Symphony No.7

(Interspersed with folk tunes played by Dreamers' Circus and Pekka Kuusisto)

Interval of 20 minutes after 2nd movement

Pekka Kuusisto director/violin

Dreamers' Circus:

Ale Carr cittern

Nikolaj Busk piano/accordion

Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen violin



Pekka Kuusisto

© Felix Broede



Dreamers' Circus

© Jasper Van

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This concert will be performed on modern instruments with natural trumpets and horns.

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What You Are About To Hear

BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Symphony No.7 in A major, Op.92
(1811-1812)

Poco sostenuto – Vivace

Allegretto

Interval of 20 minutes

Presto – Assai meno presto

Allegro con brio

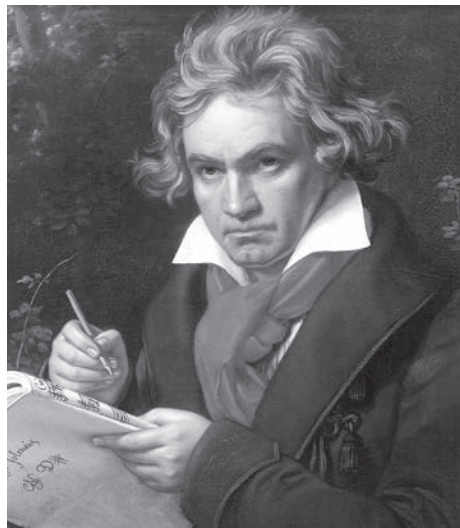
Interspersed between the four movements of Beethoven's Symphony No.7 are Nordic folk tunes played by Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto and his friends and colleagues in Danish/Swedish trio Dreamers' Circus.

'Dance is music made visible,' said legendary 20th-century choreographer George Balanchine. There's no denying that the two distinctive forms are intimately connected, in almost any musical genre you care to imagine – from centuries-old traditional dance tunes to elegant Classical minuets to euphoric nightclub anthems.

One of the bridges between them – the most crucial one, in fact – is rhythm, and it's rhythm that brings together the contrasting musical styles and players in tonight's concert too. Beethoven's Symphony No.7 provides the concert's backbone, and it's a work that seems to focus on rhythm as pure energy, an unstoppable force, something from which all else flows. Later composer Richard Wagner famously described the Symphony as 'the apotheosis of the dance itself: it is dance in its highest aspect, the loftiest deed of bodily motion, incorporated into an ideal mould of tone'.

Interspersed around and between the four movements of Beethoven's Symphony, however, are Nordic folk tunes played by Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto and his friends and colleagues in Danish/Swedish trio Dreamers' Circus: Ale Carr (cittern), Nikolaj Busk (piano/accordion), and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen (violin). Expect surprising similarities, clashes and contrasts, as well as a few diversions along the way too, as tonight's performers immerse you in dance, rhythm and more from the worlds of classical and folk.

Some early listeners, in fact, heard distinctively folksy elements in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. A few saw it as a sequel to the bucolic Sixth, the 'Pastoral' Symphony, imagining happy harvesters making merry. Fellow composer Robert Schumann heard



Ludwig van Beethoven

It's one of Beethoven's most abstract and story-less symphonies – unless that 'story' is about the inner workings of music itself.

a peasant wedding, and Berlioz thought of peasants dancing. Others imagined it depicted a tale from Moorish legend, or a political revolution. In fact, it's one of Beethoven's most abstract and story-less symphonies – unless that 'story' is about the inner workings of music itself. And it's in those terms that Beethoven focuses so clearly on rhythm, deriving from that core musical element a work that feels like a celebration of energy and positivity.

It's ironic, then, that Beethoven wrote it during one of the most difficult periods in his life. His deafness was growing steadily worse, and in 1811 he'd come down with a serious fever, as a cure for which his doctor sent him to the Bohemian spa town of Teplice for several periods in 1811 and 1812. It was during these visits that he worked seriously on his new Symphony.

Beethoven himself conducted its first performance, on 8 December 1813 in Vienna, at a benefit concert for Austrian and Bavarian troops wounded in the Battle of Hanau, an encounter that forced Napoleon's retreat. The concert was one of the high points of the composer's career, proving so popular, in fact, that it was repeated the following January, and again in February. The Seventh Symphony went down well – the audience demanded that Beethoven immediately repeat the second movement – but the concert's wild acclaim really came for another piece. The anti-Napoleon *Wellington's Victory* clearly captured the mood of the moment, but its popularity hasn't survived changes in taste. Even Beethoven seemed aware that the greater work had perhaps been overshadowed by the lesser one: he was furious that the *Weiner Zeitung* newspaper



Danish/Swedish trio Dreamers' Circus: Ale Carr, Nikolaj Busk and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen.

referred to the Seventh Symphony as a 'companion piece' to *Wellington's Victory*.

Nonetheless, the Symphony's energy and positivity must have matched the celebratory mood, too. As must the propulsive rhythmic drive that pushes its music ever onward, even in its not-very-slow 'slow' movement. The Symphony's slowest music, in fact, comes right at the start, in the introduction to its first movement, although the loud chords that interrupt that opening hint at the energy about to be unleashed. The repeated long-short-long rhythm that leads into the movement's main, faster section quickly comes to dominate, as Beethoven plays inventive games with its perky main theme.

The second movement is serious but not slow, its persistent long-short-short rhythm providing an implacable tread that's too

quick to be a funeral march or dirge, even if it has something of that character. This is the movement that the audience demanded to be repeated at the Symphony's premiere, and it's maintained a remarkable life ever since, cropping up in movies as diverse as *X Men: Apocalypse*, *The King's Speech* and John Boorman's eccentric *Zardoz*, often to symbolise a strange mix of nobility and dread, an inescapable unfolding of events.

The third movement is a bright and bouncing scherzo whose unstoppable rhythm is simply a barrage of notes in three time. And if you felt there was any restraint holding back the Symphony's first three movements, Beethoven lets rip entirely in the blazing energy and wild, whirling motion of his finale, which truly seems to race towards its conclusion.

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Director/violin

Pekka Kuusisto



Violinist, conductor, and composer Pekka Kuusisto is internationally recognised for his visionary artistry and creative freedom, establishing him as one of today's most compelling artists. He is Artistic Director of Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor & Artistic Co-Director of Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony, and Chief Conductor designate of Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra from April 2028. He joins the TMSO as Artist in Residence for a two-year term from April 2026, appearing both as conductor and violinist.

This season, Kuusisto continues his work with the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra presenting the renowned DSCH project to Oslo and Copenhagen, while also directing a diverse array of programmes. He takes the stage as both conductor and soloist with the Helsinki Philharmonic, including a tour across Germany and Austria. He also leads three distinctive programmes with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra with soloists such as Anne Sofie von Otter, Ava Bahari, Andreas Brantelid and Katarina Barruk. Kuusisto guest conducts Oslo Philharmonic, Basel Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. He also performs with New Zealand and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, and with the Taipei Symphony Orchestra, where he conducts Nico Muhly's Concerto Grosso. As soloist, he appears with the Royal Stockholm Symphony Orchestra and joins the Konzerthausorchester Berlin performing Dessner's Violin Concerto in a New Year's programme with Joana Mallwitz.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Pekka Kuusisto's Visiting Artist Chair is kindly supported by the Honorary Consulate of Finland, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Biography

Dreamers' Circus



Dreamers' Circus is one of the most acclaimed and adventurous acoustic bands in the Nordic region. Blending Nordic folk with classical lyricism, jazz improvisation, and pop energy, the trio creates a sound that is both rooted and forward-looking.

Since forming in Copenhagen, the group – Nikolaj Busk (piano, accordion), Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen (violin), and Ale Carr (cittern) – has released seven albums, toured internationally, and earned major awards including recognition as a “Special Ensemble” by the Danish Arts Foundation.

With backgrounds spanning folk, classical, and jazz, they bring virtuosity and imagination to every performance. Their latest album *Handed On* reflects on their musical heritage, while their dynamic live shows showcase the playful joy and precision that define their unique sound.

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dreamerscircus.com

Scottish Chamber Orchestra



© Christopher Bowen

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 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in 2023, with Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8 following in 2024.

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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Jay Capperauld

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