

Southampton Music Hub presents

SYO

Southampton Youth Orchestra

Russian Masterpieces

Tchaikovsky - The Nutcracker Suite

Rachmaninoff - Piano Concerto No.2

Tchaikovsky - Symphony No.5

Christopher Braime- Conductor

Thomas Luke - Piano

Wednesday 22 December, 7.30pm

Turner Sims Southampton

Good evening, and welcome to Southampton Youth Orchestra's first concert of the season.

It is a night to celebrate the talent that Southampton Music Services continue to discover, develop and support, and Southampton Youth Orchestra are honoured as always to be able to showcase the hard work and talent of some of Southampton's finest young musicians.

We are also honoured to be sharing the stage with pianist Thomas Luke, winner of the keyboard category in BBC Young Musician of the Year 2020. Thomas is a very busy young virtuoso with a glittering career ahead of him and we're delighted to be performing with him tonight.

I'd also like to thank Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras, who have supported us financially and morally throughout this difficult last couple of years, ensuring that SYO has a post-Covid future. Their involvement in the rehearsal process this week has been invaluable and we cannot thank them enough for their tireless and selfless work.

It remains only to thank each and every member of tonight's audience for supporting us tonight, and to wish you all a most enjoyable evening.

Kevin Withell

Assistant Director of Southampton Youth Orchestra



FSYO is a charitable organisation on whose aim is to support the ensembles that are part of the Southampton Youth Orchestras pyramid (Acorn, Elgar, SYS, SYCS and SYO). The FSYO committee is made up of parents of current players and the Musical Directors. Members also help out at rehearsals and concerts by selling tickets, administering raffles, programmes sales and by providing refreshments.

Thank you for all of your ongoing support. By buying tickets to concerts, programmes, raffle tickets, calendars, t-shirts and hoodies, you are helping us to raise funds to support the orchestras. The money raised means that we are able to provide new music, instruments, equipment, tuition, special sectional support and give financial backing for tours and residential weekends. There are many ways that you can help support us through the year, from shopping via easyfundraising.org.uk or via Amazon through their fundraising arm, smile.amazon.co.uk (just remember to nominate the Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras as your chosen charity). It doesn't cost you anything, but when you click through them to make your online purchases they make a donation to FSYO. We also collect your unwanted and used printer cartridges, just bring them along to rehearsals.

The Friends are a support partner of the Southampton Music Hub. After a period of cuts in Government funding, the funding through the Hub has remained the same and will stay the same next year. What will happen to this funding in the longer term is not clear but the Friends will continue to support the orchestras.

Do feel free to contact the friends on info@fsyo.org.uk if you have any feedback, suggestions or you would like to volunteer to help in any way and do please visit the website (www.fsyo.org.uk), our Facebook page (Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestra) or follow us on Twitter (@friends_sy).

If you would like to join us please contact us at membership@fsyo.org.uk .

Yours,

Jason McKenzie (Chair—FSYO)

Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras Registered Charity no. 283789
www.fsyo.org.uk

Programme

Tchaikovsky – Nutcracker Suite

- I – Miniature Overture
- II – Danses caractéristiques
 - a. March
 - b. Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy
 - c. Trepak
 - d. Arabian Dance
 - e. Chinese Dance
 - f. Reed Flutes
- III – Waltz of the Flowers

Rachmaninoff – Piano Concerto No.2 in C minor

- I – Moderato
- II – Adagio sostenuto
- III – Allegro scherzando

INTERVAL

Tchaikovsky – Symphony No.5 in E minor

- I – Andante – Allegro con anima – Molto piu tranquillo
- II – Andante cantabile
- III – Valse: Allegro moderato
- IV – Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace – Meno mosso

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky – The Nutcracker Suite, Op.71a



Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* is a ballet composed in 1892, based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's Christmas fairy tale *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* – the story of a young girl's favourite toy which comes to life to defeat the evil mouse king before honouring her with a celebration of toys and traditions from around the world. The ballet itself wasn't an immediate success, however Tchaikovsky had already arranged an eight-movement concert suite which was very well received by audiences.

The opening *Miniature Overture* is notable in its exclusion of lower strings, instead sharing the running semi-quavers that accompany the childishly joyful melody between divided violins and violas.

The first of the 'Character Dances' is the March of the Toy Soldiers, combining faux-militaristic rhythms with light, playful tunes. *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* is one of the most famous movements of the ballet – recognisable for the magical glittering sound of the celesta and the comedically low but somehow graceful bass clarinet. *Trepak* is an energetic Russian dance, depicting acrobatic candy canes choreographing exciting stunts with Cossack dancing. *Arabian Dance* accompanies the arrival of the gift of coffee from Arabia, while *Chinese Dance* introduces the celebration of Chinese tea. Danish shepherdesses finish the multi-cultural celebration with a performance on their *Reed Flutes*, before the Nutcracker Prince takes the young girl's hand to finish off the magical night with a waltz.

Sergei Rachmaninoff – Piano Concerto No.2 in C minor, Op 18

Although this work has become one of the world's best-loved and most performed concertos, the circumstances around the composition of Rachmaninoff's 2nd piano concerto illustrate a very dark and unhappy period in the composer's life.



The premiere of Rachmaninoff's first symphony in 1897 was a disaster – the orchestra was under-rehearsed, the conductor was drunk, the audience and critics were unappreciative and Rachmaninoff left the concert hall before the end of the performance. Rachmaninoff spiralled into a state of manic depression. He scraped a living by giving piano lessons, but was unable to compose for almost three years. It was only an assistant conductorship at a Moscow operatic society that kept him involved in making music, but even this had a shadow cast over it as his initial engagement to the woman he would eventually marry was thwarted by her parents and the church.

In early 1900, Rachmaninoff began hypnotherapy sessions to combat his depression, which began to show a positive effect. Within a few months, he began to feel a desire to compose once again, and his 2nd Piano Concerto was completed in April 1901, bringing instant success and an end to Rachmaninoff's three-year depression.

A series of increasingly tense F minor chords on the piano open the concerto, before the soloist steps back into an accompanying role while strings and clarinet introduce the opening passionate melody. The orchestra develops the theme before the piano finally takes over and allows the soloist centre stage, developing the opening theme alongside a march-like motif climaxing in a brief but exciting coda. It is testament to Rachmaninoff's deeply humble musicality that one of the world's greatest pianists allows the orchestra so much of the spotlight in this first movement.

The second movement begins with a expressive build-up of slow, quiet chords in the strings and woodwind, before the piano introduces a flowing triplet-quaver pattern which will accompany most of the movement. Once again, Rachmaninoff allows the themes to be introduced by the orchestra, this time by flute and clarinet. The movement gradually builds, the accompanying triplets becoming semi-quavers, growing in volume and depth towards a short cadenza which relaxes into a recapitulation of the opening melody, gradually fading away until the solo piano is left on its own to play out the closing bars.

The finale begins with a quietly intense march theme, building through the orchestra to set the stage for a virtuosic entry on the piano. Whereas the first two movements showed equality in the roles of the orchestra and piano, the third movement finally allows the soloist to burst onto the scene and dominate the music. Rich melodies and brusque marches accompanied by the orchestra give way to flourishing cadenzas. This movement really is Rachmaninoff's forceful self-reinstatement as a performer; assertive, confident and virtuosic – it's no coincidence that the final coda of the concerto is marked *risoluto* (resolutely).

Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky – Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64



'If Beethoven's Fifth is Fate knocking at the door, Tchaikovsky's Fifth is Fate trying to get out.'

After a period of self-doubt and a crippling fear of ever-blank manuscript, Tchaikovsky's initial sketches for his fifth symphony were accompanied by the words 'a complete resignation before the inscrutable predestination of fate'. This feeling is noticeably present throughout the first movement, which opens with a heavy, exhausted *fate* motif which will reappear in some form or another in each of the four movements of the symphony. A sombre march makes up the opening theme of the first movement, followed by a second theme of unsettled tempos and contrasting sections of the orchestra. The fateful march finally returns, this time with the full force of the symphony orchestra,

ultimately fading away in painful resignation.

The second movement opens with a delicate progression of string chords, building towards a gentle horn solo, joined by the clarinet and finally handing over to the cello section, accompanied by an expressive dovetailing of woodwinds. The melody develops in texture and richness, reaching a peak before yielding to a second theme which builds in intensity before the *fate* motif twice interrupts the music, before dying away to finish how the first movement started; two clarinets accompanied by barely audible strings.

The third movement is a waltz based on a melody Tchaikovsky had heard on the streets of Florence several years earlier. The movement is gentle and unassuming, though not without moments that leave the listener rhythmically off-centre Tchaikovsky meanders gently through various developments, finally but briefly revisiting the symphony's *fate* motif - this time as a quiet minor-key waltz.

The final movement sees Tchaikovsky break away from his resignation to fate and, like Beethoven in *his* fifth, begins to explore triumph instead of resignation. The *fate* motif that has appeared in every other movement is now a fully-fledged theme. Another march-like theme appears, this time much more ferocious than the last. The development of the march concedes every now and again to a revisitation of the *fate* theme. The symphony feels like it's heading towards a blistering end, before an overtly major *fate* theme returns one last time, full of brass fanfares and extravagant flourishes from wind and strings, as a glorious finale emphatically rejects the fear of fate.

Christopher Braime – Conductor



Christopher Braime was born in 1983 and was awarded a Foundation Scholarship to study oboe and conducting at the Royal College of Music. He is active as a conductor throughout the UK and Europe.

Christopher is Musical Director of the London Gay Symphony Orchestra, the Putney Choral Society, and the Southampton Youth Orchestra; in January 2019 he also became Musical Director of the Symphonic Wind Orchestra of North London.

Christopher recently made his debut at Symphony Hall Birmingham, conducting the Birmingham Schools Symphony Orchestra and is active as a guest conductor, he has worked with the Farnborough Symphony Orchestra, the Redhill Sinfonia, the Suffolk Sinfonia, the Kensington Philharmonic Orchestra and the Petersfield Orchestra. In 2013, he made his European conducting debut with the Orquestra do Algarve, Portugal, and has recently conducted in Germany and Amsterdam. In the 2019/20 season he will be returning to the Suffolk Sinfonia where he maintains a very happy guest conducting relationship with the orchestra.

Christopher has worked with some of the most outstanding young soloists of this generation including the cellist Jamal Aliyev, horn player Joel Ashford the baritones Huw Montague-Rendall and Edward Jowle, Soprano Jessica Gillingwater and the saxophonist Huw Wiggin. With the pianist Simon Ballard he also gave the first public performance in the UK of the Leroy Anderson Piano Concerto.

Christopher is still active in the field of teaching, he was a Music Appreciation lecturer for the charity Open Age, based in West London, and conducts at the Mary Ward Adult Education Centre. Considering musical training and communities essential, he also conducts the Gustav Holst Community Orchestra, an adult training orchestra based in Primrose Hill. He was also a consultant on the Royal College of Music's "Rhythm for Life" project where RCM students explored the skills required when working with older adult learners, and recently wrote guidance for the RCM on the subject.

Christopher was formerly Musical Director of the Imperial College String Ensemble, the Pelly Concert Orchestra, Grosvenor Light Opera Company and Worthing Youth Orchestra.

Thomas Luke – Piano

Widely praised for his exceptional musicality and depth of interpretation, Thomas Luke is an award-winning 18-year-old pianist whose performances have been broadcast on national television and radio.



Thomas was the keyboard category winner of the prestigious 2020 BBC Young Musician competition. He has also recently been awarded first place in the 2021 Iris Dyer Piano Prize at the Junior Royal Academy of Music, and been recognised by the Vienna International Music Competition as possessing "outstanding talent, a remarkable musicality and a very accomplished technique".

Thomas began piano lessons at the age of four and currently studies with Eleanor Hodgkinson at the Junior Royal Academy of Music in London. Thomas has been the recipient of the Richard Toeman Memorial Award for Young Pianists and a Robert Lewin Scholarship from Awards for Young Musicians.

Alice Ren – Leader



Alice started violin lessons thirteen years ago, at the age of 5. After moving to Southampton in 2011, Alice's first step into the Southampton Youth Orchestras pyramid began with Elgar Strings. Within five years, she had progressed through all of the orchestras in the pyramid, including SYCS, which she led for a term. Alice successfully auditioned for SYO in 2016, making her one of the orchestra's longest-serving members.

Alice has enjoyed playing a huge variety of repertoire with SYO over the last few years. Notable highlights include the Dvorak Cello

Concerto played with solo cellist Jamal Aliyev (November 2016), as well as the iconic and unforgettable Beethoven's 9th Symphony in Romsey Abbey (July 2019). Alice also stepped up from the co-lead seat to lead SYO in the Pyramid Concert in March 2019, and the SYO directors are delighted that she's accepted the seat full-time this year.

Aside from her musical interests, Alice also enjoys baking and reading books about science. She hopes to study molecular biochemistry at university next year, where she will continue to take part in orchestras and musical activities.

Southampton Music Hub

The Southampton Music Service is the lead partner for the Southampton Music Hub. Over 30 music and arts organisations are represented within the Southampton Music Hub partnership. The group (established in September 2012) work collaboratively to bring a high level of music provision, expertise, access and resource to communities and young people in Southampton.



Our aim is to support schools and colleges in delivering the National Plan for Music Education and provide opportunities for young people to engage in a rich programme of music making. This is an exciting time for all involved and we look forward to seeing music in Southampton continue to thrive and ensuring our young people can take fond musical memories with them into their future lives.

Southampton Music Service

In March 2011, the Southampton Music Service was judged by the Federation of Music Services as being in the top category of Music Services in the country. SMS has maintained the level of excellence and access to music activity that our community has come to expect. SMS seeks every opportunity to promote and develop the musical potential and personal development of all young people in the City and region of Southampton.

In addition to the specialist instrumental lessons and curriculum support we deliver in schools, SMS also provides an impressive range of choirs, bands and orchestras to support musical progression.

Any young musician interested in joining a Southampton Music Service ensemble or starting lessons for the first time should contact the music service at music@southampton.gov.uk or call 02380 833648

Southampton Hub website www.southamptonmusic hub.org

Twitter <https://twitter.com/MusicHubSouth>

If you are age 8-18 and would like to join a student focus group to help shape future Hub activity, please contact us.

Next Concert

Southampton Youth Orchestra: German Masters

Saturday 23 April, 7.30pm

Thornden Hall

Beethoven – Coriolan Overture

R. Strauss – Horn Concerto No.1

Schubert – Symphony No.9 ‘The Great’ in C major

Kevin Withell – Conductor

Charlie Mann – French Horn