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Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra

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# QPO PRESENTS: BERLIOZ' SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

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# Programme

## QPO Presents:

### Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*

Qatar National Convention Centre, Auditorium 3  
Tuesday, 17 September 2024,  
7:30pm

Elias Grandy, conductor

## Programme

### Sergei Prokofiev: (1891-1953)

#### **Symphony No.1 in D Major, Op. 25**

- Allegro
- Larghetto
- Gavotta: Non troppo allegro
- Finale: Molto vivace

### Igor Stravinsky: (1882-1971)

#### **Jeu de Cartes (The Card Game)**

- First Deal (Première donne)
- Second Deal (Deuxième donne)
- Third Deal (Troisième donne)

## INTERMISSION

### Hector Berlioz: (1803-1869)

#### **Symphonie Fantastique: An Episode in the Life of an Artist, Op.14**

- Reveries - Passions
- A Ball
- Scene in the Country
- March to the Scaffold
- Dreams of a Witches' Sabbath

Out of respect for the musicians and fellow audience members please silence your mobile phones. Applause between movements is not customary. Please also refrain from flash photography. Seating begins 30 minutes before performances. Latecomers cannot be seated during the concert. Children 6 and over are welcome at Philharmonic concerts. The Philharmonic retains the right to expel anyone disturbing other. Food and beverages can be consumed in the lobby only.





# Composers and Programme Notes



## Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Born in Sontsovka (Ukraine) on 23 April 1891, Prokofiev received his first musical lessons from his pianist mother. At age six he started writing small piano pieces and by age nine he wrote *The Giant*, an opera for children soon to be followed by three other operas. In 1904 Prokofiev joined the Saint Petersburg Conservatory to continue his pianistic training and to study composition with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1914 he obtained his diploma and the Anton Rubinstein prize for his First Piano Concerto. From this first Russian phase we mention his *Visions Fugitives*, a cycle of short piano pieces (1915-1917).

Prokofiev emerged fast as an anti-romantic composer of audacious harmonies and rhythms. A pianist prodigy, his piano playing was characterised by power and ardour, by a strong articulation and an art at hammering the chords. He became acclaimed as composer and pianist in the worlds of pre-revolutionary Russia and later under the Stalinist Soviet Union. After several travels around Europe, a first encounter with Diaghilev—the impresario of Russian ballets—and a commission to create the ballet *Ala and Lolli* which will never see the light of day, the composer immigrated to the United States. In 1920 his opera *The Love for Three Oranges* was premiered in Chicago under his baton and the following year his ballet *Chout* (1921) was created by Diaghilev in Paris. In 1927-1928 two years in Paris brought the creation of *The Leap of Steel* followed by *The Prodigal Son* and allowed Prokofiev to have many enriching encounters with eminent artistic figures such as Picasso, Matisse, Poulenc, and Ravel.

After Diaghilev's death the composer returned to Russia in 1932. The sensationally gifted young pianist-composer had become a mature, accomplished composer. He composed after the war his most popular works such as *Peter and the Wolf* (1936), the film music *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (1939), the opera *War and Peace* (1952) and the Symphonies Nos. 5, 6 and 7. Like most other Soviet-era composers, his creative life and his music came to suffer under the force of official Party strictures. He was condemned for the anti-people and anti-conformist orientation of his music. But despite the harmful personal and professional effects of such outside influences, Prokofiev managed to continue, until the end of his career, to produce music marked by a singular skill, inventiveness, and confidence.

Prokofiev's major compositions include his seven symphonies and more particularly the three war symphonies written between 1939 and 1943, his five piano concertos and his Toccata. His most popular pieces such as *Peter and the Wolf* (1934), the ballets *Romeo and Juliet* (1938) and *Cinderella* (1944), the opera *War and Peace* (1952), the powerful Fifth Symphony (1944), the March from *The Love for Three Oranges* (1920) and the suite *Lieutenant Kijé* (1933) are not piano works. But his about 30 opus works for the piano are not less important. Beside many other works, he composed a cycle of five thrilling piano concertos and nine completed piano sonatas. His style combines harmony—sometimes dissonance—with polyphony and rhythmic drive. The best word to label his compositions is "originality." Built of violent contrasts and animated with vivid sensitivity and profound sense of melody, Prokofiev's music stands among the best productions of the first half of the twentieth century.

## Symphony No. 1 in D Major, Op. 25

Prokofiev's Symphony No. 1 is designated as the *Classical Symphony*—a name given to it by the composer himself—by dint of its numerous Classical inspirations, both in structure and orchestration. Written in loose imitation of the style of Haydn (and to a lesser extent, Mozart), it was composed in D Major. It consists of four movements in a form that Haydn would have recognised: two movements in sonata-allegro form bookending a slow movement and a ternary-form dance movement. The symphony's spirit also recalls Haydn, the jokester who gave us the *Surprise* and *Farewell* symphonies (as well as dozens more that possess equal wit and good humor). The Classical Symphony is a short concise composition of a dozen minutes. It counts—along with Prokofiev's Fifth—among Prokofiev's best-known symphonies.

The opening *allegro* follows the classical sonata structure displaying an exposition, development, and recapitulation. The piece starts exuberantly with a tracery of motifs hard to attribute to a particular epoch. An ironic, derisory theme rises, reminiscent of Haydn. But soon Prokofiev's signature appears and the beautiful classical edifice finds itself streaked by some cunning strokes. The incommensurate development brings all its thoughtlessness and the intended contrast between its aerial atmosphere and the heavy perorations contributes to the humorous sense of the movement. The second movement is a three-section *largo* in the A-B-A form. Its ternary rhythm relates it to a minuet. Its slower pace makes it sound lyrical and soothing, with a graceful balance between regular and irregular, familiar, and unexpected. It is built around two major melodic themes displayed in the form of a high, transparent violin melody over a murmuring accompaniment—typical of the slow movements of Viennese Classic symphonies and divertimenti—but instead of the Mozartian pictures of a blissful serenade, Prokofiev brings up a more furtive mood, almost that of a merry prank. The famous third movement is a very short dancing *gavotta* that ridicules the

professorial world. It is an experiment to reduce the musical elements to the minimum that can deliver the musical content. Prokofiev reaches farther back into the past of the gavotte dance: his movement is built on the gavotte of the French Baroque dance suites. In the trio section the melodic material moves from the strings to the winds—as is common in the trios of Mozart and Haydn—but when Prokofiev returns to the original gavotte theme, he leaves it in the flute and reduces the strings to *faux-galant* pizzicato accompaniment instead of repeating the opening dance exactly as a Classical composer would have done.

The *molto vivace* finale is, like most classical finales, powerful and driving. It is a perfect rondo-sonata with its rumbustious rush towards the end. With its fascinating themes, it resembles to the first movement. Brilliant, vibrant, and virtuosic, it is centered on the D major key but only to make a traditional tonality's last impression sound like something unmistakably new.

Intending to create in his First Symphony an original piece of music in classical style, the modernistic Prokofiev, author of the Piano Concerto No. 1 or the *Sarcasms* for Piano Op. 17, instilled his own spirit in the old style. He intermixed elegantly elements of the old and the new styles to create the overall sense of balance, lightness and brilliance so characteristic to the gallant style without forgetting to make his music sound daring and playful, just as Haydn would have liked it. The piece's innovative tonal language uses modulations to rather dissonant keys. The overall result made of the Classical Symphony one of Prokofiev's most popular works and realised the composer's wish that this symphony "might itself turn out to be a classic."





## Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Igor Stravinsky, a Russian and later a French and American composer, pianist, and conductor, was one of music's truly epochal innovators; no other composer of the twentieth century exerted such a pervasive influence or dominated his art in the way that Stravinsky did during his five-decade musical career., the most important hallmark of Stravinsky's style is, indeed, its changing face.

Emerging from the spirit of late Russian nationalism and ending his career with a thorny, individual language steeped in twelve-tone principles, Stravinsky assumed several aesthetic guises throughout the course of his development while always retaining a distinctive, essential identity.

He first received international fame with three ballets first performed in Paris: *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913).

Stravinsky composed many pieces that involved individual works by earlier composers, a tradition used in the fifteenth century. A fine example is his *Pulcinella* of 1920 where Giovanni Pergolesi contributed to the musical skeleton. He developed this technique further in the ballet, *The Fairy's Kiss* (1928), which was based on music by Tchaikovsky. Later examples of similar musical transformations include Stravinsky's use of Schubert's *Marche Militaire No. 1* in his *Circus Polka* (1942) and *Happy Birthday to You* in *Greeting Prelude* (1955).

## Jeu de Cartes (The Card Game)

While *Jeu de cartes* may not rank among Stravinsky's most significant compositions, it undoubtedly stands out as one of his most entertaining works. The outer framework is based on the action that accompanies the beginning and end of every card game; the work is a ballet in three deals. Each deal commences with identical music.

The libretto was co-authored by Stravinsky and Nikita Malayev, a close associate of his eldest son, Théodore. The work was commissioned in November 1935, completed in late 1936, and had its premiere on 27 April 1937 at the old Metropolitan Opera House in New York, with the composer himself conducting the performance. The European premiere took place on 13 October at the Semperoper in Dresden, under the baton of Karl Böhm with the Staatskapelle Dresden.

Stravinsky's concept of centering the ballet around a poker game emerged after August 1936, as the narrative began to develop. The central figure of the ballet is the cunning Joker, who believes himself to be invincible due to his unique ability to transform into any card.





## Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

Berlioz, the passionate, ardent, irrepressible genius of French Romanticism, left a rich and original oeuvre which exerted a profound influence on nineteenth century music.

Berlioz developed a profound affinity toward music and literature as a child. Sent to Paris at 17 to study medicine, he was enchanted by Gluck's operas, firmly deciding to become a composer. With his father's reluctant consent, Berlioz entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1826. His originality was already apparent and disconcerting – a competition cantata, *Cléopâtre* (1829), looms as his first sustained masterpiece—and he won the Prix de Rome in 1830 amid the turmoil of the July Revolution. Meanwhile, a performance of *Hamlet* in September 1827, with Harriet Smithson as Ophelia, provoked an overwhelming but unrequited passion, whose aftermath may be heard in the *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830).

## Symphonie Fantastique, Op.14

*Symphonie Fantastique* is an epic for a large orchestra. Through its movements, it tells the story of an artist's self-destructive passion for a beautiful woman. The symphony describes his obsession and dreams, tantrums and moments of tenderness, and visions of suicide and murder, ecstasy and despair.

The work's true title was *An Episode in the Life of an Artist-Symphonie Fantastique* was the subtitle—and its explicit link between instrumental music and a narrative story marked the birth of a new genre. To support this programmatic format, Berlioz stretched the symphony to new extremes of structure. For the first time, Berlioz presented five movements, invented thematic unity by using one *idée fixe* appearing throughout the piece, introducing new instrumentations such as valve trumpets and ophicleïdes, and doubling the harp and timpani.

Its debut was in 1830 at the Paris Conservatoire, and caused such a blast that the school's director, Luigi Cherubini, took away all of Berlioz's form students.

The first movement, titled *Reveries—Passions*, "recalls the sickness of the soul, the flux of passion, the unaccountable joys and sorrows he experienced before he saw his beloved; then the volcanic love she suddenly inspired in him, his delirious raptures, his jealous fury, his persistent tenderness, his religious consolations." The *idée fixe*—the object of fixation—represents the Artist's frustration and despair.

Frightening outbursts alternate with moments of the greatest tenderness. It all leads to a moment of complete frenzy and collapse. Next, the artist attends A Ball, and Berlioz sets the scene with a flowing waltz. In *The Scene in the Country*, the artist "broods on his loneliness," contemplating two shepherds and later the distant sound of thunder. Berlioz uses the huge orchestra to create the sense of suspension of time that intimacy can bring. In the fourth movement Berlioz begins to reveal the truly sinister side of his imagination. His own programme notes read, "The Artist, knowing beyond all doubt that his love is not returned, poisons himself with opium. The narcotic plunges him into sleep, accompanied by the most horrible visions."

The macabre final chapter is called *Dreams of a Witches' Sabbath*. His notes suggest "a hideous gathering of shades, sorcerers and monsters of every kind who have come together for [the artist's] funeral." His visions are "strange sounds, groans, outbursts of laughter" with diabolical orchestral effects. Berlioz produced many more masterful compositions but with his *Symphonie Fantastique* he gained vital artistic maturity. The lovesick teenager had become the Artist who had won the heart of his fixation.





*Elias Grandy*  
conductor

Elias Grandy's international profile is rapidly rising by conducting first-class orchestras and opera productions in Europe, America, and Asia.

Hailed by the press as "passionate and full of temperament", "vigorous and equally precise" and praised for his ability to "grasp psychological subtleties under a microscope", the German-Japanese conductor gave recently highly successful debuts with renowned orchestras such as the Vienna Symphony, Osaka Philharmonic and Minnesota Orchestra.

In 23/24 the energetic, charismatic conductor will return to Frankfurt Radio Symphony, National Youth Orchestra of Germany and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Tokyo and gave debuts with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmonica de Buenos Aires and the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken. Furthermore, he took the Robert-Schumann Philharmonie Chemnitz on a tour to Poland as their "conductor in residence" for 23/24 and appeared frequently with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra with whom he enjoys a close relationship for many years.

Elias is equally devoted as an opera conductor, feeling passionately about theatre and musically shaping the narrative of each drama. In recent years he has conducted highly acclaimed productions of *Elektra* and *Carmen* at Minnesota Opera, *Werther* and *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at Frankfurt Opera, *Un ballo in maschera* at Aalto-Theatre Essen, *Carmen* at Opera Nikikai Tokyo and *Rusalka* at Portland Opera. Future engagements include the Semperoper Dresden and reinventions to Frankfurt Opera and Opera Nikikai Tokyo.

Last season he finished his tenure as music director of Heidelberg's Opera and Philharmonic orchestra where he significantly raised the caliber of both, providing thoughtful, innovative programming and burnishing the city's fast-growing reputation as a vital musical hub. Enthusiastic about making music more accessible, he introduced several highly popular concert formats for young people and an educated audience. His final season programme included Prokofjev's *Love for Three Oranges*, Bruckner's *Symphony No.7* and a series of unknown works by female composers.

Born of German-Japanese parents Elias studied cello and conducting in Munich, Basel, and Berlin.

He worked as a cellist in orchestras such as the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Komische Oper Berlin. He started his conducting career as Resident Conductor at Staatstheater Darmstadt and shortly after won the prestigious Sir Georg Solti International Conducting Competition. In 2015 he was named music director in Heidelberg, a position he held until 2023.



# Upcoming Concerts

## Russian Greats: Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky

September 22, 2024 7:30 PM  
Katara Cultural Village, Opera House

Experience an evening of powerful Russian Romanticism with guest conductor Kamoliddin Urinbaev and pianist Fazliddin Husanov. This concert features two monumental works from the late 19th century; and opens with Rachmaninoff's beloved "Piano Concerto No. 2", a work renowned for its lush melodies and emotional depth. Soloist Fazliddin Husanov brings his artistry to this iconic piece, showcasing the interplay between piano and orchestra.

To close the concert, the orchestra presents Tchaikovsky's final symphony, the "Pathétique." This intensely personal work takes listeners on an emotional journey, from passionate heights to introspective lows, concluding with its famously somber finale.

Join us for this celebration of Russian classical music at its most evocative and stirring.

### GUEST ARTISTS:

Kamoliddin Urinbaev, conductor

Fazliddin Husanov, piano

### PROGRAMME:

**Sergei Rachmaninoff:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18

### INTERMISSION

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky:** Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 "Pathétique"

## Heroes and Villains

September 29, 2024 7:30 PM  
Auditorium 3, QNCC

Join conductor Frank Strobel for an electrifying journey through the musical world of cinema's greatest heroes and most notorious villains. This concert celebrates the iconic scores that have defined heroism and villainy on the silver screen.

This programme offers a thrilling exploration of how music shapes our perception of heroes and villains, bringing the epic conflicts and moral complexities of cinema to life through the power of a live orchestra.

### GUEST ARTISTS:

Frank Strobel, conductor



# Musicians



LIONEL SCHMIT



JOO YOUNG OH



VITALII PERVUSHYN



LORENA MANESCU



DMITRI TORCHINSKY



TOBIAS GETTE



MICHAELA LINSBAUER



TAEHYUN KIM



ANNEMARI AINOMAE



DINA LEINI



PAVLO DOVHAN



RALUCA GETTE



ANA MARIA RUSU



FULVIO FURLANÜT



ROLANDA GINKUTE



MAIAS ALYAMANI



REEM KHOURY



GEORGES YAMMINE



ISLAM EL HEFNAWY



SHAZA OWEDA



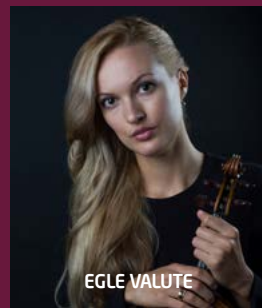
JULIA KORODI



ANNE-CATHRIN EHRLICH



MOHAMED OWEDA



EGLÉ VALUTE



GIOVANNI PASINI



ANCA BOLD



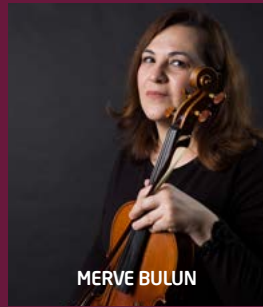
ANDREA MEREUTA



# Musicians



VICTOR SUMENKOV



MERVE BULUN



INES WEIN



ISLAM ABDELAZIZ



KAHRAMAN SEREF



KIRILL BOGATYREV



HASSAN EL MOLLA



ANTON PAVLOVSKY



CHRISTOPH SCHMITZ



HARALD GEORGI



NICOLAS ROJANSKI



GENNADY KRUTIKOV



SANDOR ONODI



MATTEO GASPARI



RADOVAN HETSCH



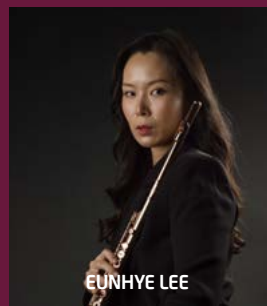
SERGIY KONYAKHYN



ALEKSANDR HASKIN



JIHOON SHIN



EUNHYE LEE



GERMAN DIAZ BLANCO



MOHAMED IBRAHIM SALEH



CLAIRE GLAGO



RONNY MOSER



THOMAS GNAUSCH



SIMONE ZANACCHI



DANIEL HRINDA



YOSHIKO KOYAMA



# Musicians



MIROSLAV STOYANOV



PETER DAVIDA



GIDEON SEIDENBERG



ATILLA SZÜCS



ZSOLT PÉTER



LASZLO FROSCHL



JORIS LAENEN



DANIEL EDELHOFF



PHILIPP REBMANN



TOMOKI KIRITA



DIMO PICTHYALOV



MARK SANCHEZ MARTI



SEBASTIAN ZULUAGA



RICHARD ALBERTO DIAZ



ALEXANDER KAMENAROV



KEE GUAN NG



GEORGI VARBANOV



MARKUS STEINER



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