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MENDELSSOHN & WAGNER: A ROMANTIC JOURNEY

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Program

Mendelssohn & Wagner: A Romantic Journey

Katara Cultural Village, Opera House

Tuesday, 9 June 2026

7:30pm

Elias Grandy, conductor

Program

Felix Mendelssohn:
(1809-1847)

“Scottish” Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 56

Andante con moto—Allegro un poco agitato

Vivace non troppo

Adagio

Allegro vivacissimo—Allegro maestoso assai

Intermission

Richard Wagner:
(1813- 1883)

Siegfried Idyll, WWV 103

Richard Wagner:
(1813- 1883)

Tannhäuser Overture, WWV 70

Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra Narrative

The Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) is a pioneering cultural institution that proudly represents Qatar on the world stage. Founded in 2007 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the orchestra brings together 78 world class musicians from 28 countries, many of whom have performed with the world’s leading ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Frankfurt Opera, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle Zürich, Teatro Colón, and NDR Radiophilharmonie.

Known for its innovative programming and unique sound, QPO blends Western symphonic traditions with the rich musical heritage of the Arab world, creating performances that are globally resonant and deeply rooted in the region’s cultural legacy.

With more than 500 performances to date, QPO has graced prestigious stages around the world, including La Scala (Milan), Konzerthaus Wien (Vienna), Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (Paris), Santa Cecilia (Rome), the Kennedy Center (Washington D.C.), and the Royal Albert Hall (London).

QPO is a source of national pride and a symbol of Qatar’s commitment to cultural excellence. Driven by a mission to make music accessible to all, QPO continues to break barriers, inspire new generations, and lead the way in shaping a vibrant musical future for Qatar and the region.

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 others. Food and beverages can be consumed in the lobby only.

Composers and Program Notes



Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Most commonly known today as Felix Mendelssohn, a composer of the beginning of the romantic era, Mendelssohn was one of the biggest musical geniuses of the nineteenth century. He was renowned during his lifetime as a keyboard performer, both on the piano and on the organ, as well as a conductor admired by Berlioz and to whom we owe the rediscovery of Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, of Handel's music and of Schubert's Symphony No. 9. Mendelssohn is often described as a child prodigy similar to Mozart and Saint-Saëns. He was born in Hamburg to a rich family interested in art and culture; his grandfather was the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, a main figure of the German Enlightenment.

At age 16 the young Mendelssohn had composed his 12 String Symphonies, his First Symphony, one string quartet and 5 concertos for piano and violin. During his short life (38 years), he left a prolific body of works (symphonies, concerti, oratorios, piano works, chamber music, etc.), but it is truly a core of few great masterpieces—mainly *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, his Italian and Scottish Symphonies, his *The Hebrides Overture*, his *Violin Concerto* and his *String Octet*—that lies underneath his present notoriety. Unfortunately, the extent to which Mendelssohn is known is often limited to these few compositions whilst it overshadows his many other beautiful works. Among those, we mention *The Variations Sérieuses*, Op. 54, a true pianistic masterpiece of the nineteenth century that deploys all of Mendelssohn's genius, the seven string quartets and more particularly Opus 44 and Opus 80, the two piano concertos Op. 25 and Op. 40, the violin and cello sonatas and the relatively unknown

Second Piano Trio, Op. 66 in C Minor, which concurs in beauty with his famous antecedent (Op. 49 in D Minor).

In the above-mentioned trios, we find the same sonorities of the Violin Concerto, those of Mendelssohn at the peak of his art: profound, romantic and magnificently blending the Classical heritage with German Romanticism. A contemporary of Liszt, Wagner and Berlioz, Mendelssohn was sometimes criticized for his correct, neat music, always evading the taking of risks. But it undoubtedly attains a rare elegance, and an extreme finesse of style, obtained by very sober means. Mendelssohn was a great symphonist; his orchestral sonorities are always very colorful. He also was a master of the scherzo that we come across, always very bright and lively, in his octet, quartets and trios, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Walpurgis Night* and in concerto finales. Despite his little success with his early attempts in the opera genre, Mendelssohn excelled in vocal music, especially in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in his Psalms (particularly the Psalm 42, Op. 42), in his Second Symphony and in the oratorios *Elijah* and *St. Paul*.

“Scottish” Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 56

The “Scottish” Symphony is one of Mendelssohn’s most famous orchestral works. Inspired by the composer’s first visit to the United Kingdom and completed twelve years later in 1842, it bears the number 3 although it was the fifth and last, he wrote. The symphony was since its creation a frank success applauded by audiences and by Queen Victoria to whom it was afterwards dedicated.

The Romantics have always considered the British Isles, and more particularly the Scottish one, as lands of legends and myths where reality and fiction interlace a vision spurred by their inhospitable, misty landscapes, where scattered old castle ruins evoke a splendid medieval past and stir the mystery and inspiration. Felix Mendelssohn shared this affinity with the Britannic world and his *Scottish Symphony*, as well as *The Hebrides* concert overture (Op. 26), bear witness to his fascination for these Nordic lands.

The ambiance of Scottish misty lands is reflected in the symphony, as well as their vastness. The composition’s emotional range is wide, rendered by a grand, dark and stormy first movement, followed by a joyous, brief *vivace*, a slow, strained third movement and a finale inspired from Scottish folk dance. Unusually, Mendelssohn marked the movements to be performed without break. The first movement starts with an *andante con moto* introduced by the slow violas that plunges the listener in a dark, brumous ambiance. The following *allegro un poco agitato* enlightens the music gradually. It starts with a first *pianissimo* theme in the strings to make room for a second lyrical one, a melodic discovery that deploys *cantabile*. Along the development, Mendelssohn evokes a storm before the music settles again fading into a typically Nordic tonal atmosphere.

The second movement takes the form an F Major Scherzo, light and joyful. It comes rhythmically and melodically animated in the style of Scottish folk music, using the notes of the pentatonic scale and the characteristic Scotch snap rhythm. A clarinet theme reminds one of bagpipes. The entire movement runs at a vertiginous speed, constantly testing the dexterity of the woodwinds and strings and excelling at changing color to end in a subtle *pianissimo*.

In Mendelssohn’s Third the slow movement follows the scherzo rather than first movement. The *adagio cantabile* conveys in A Major his profound, interrogative meditations. The ambiance reminds one of the first movement. The violins expose a long melody over the bass strings’ pizzicato background. The development is marked by the distant calls of the horns, who take over the movement’s second part with a solemn theme. They are progressively joined by the orchestra in a powerful dramatic build-up. Intense and superb, the *adagio* shimmers under its rich inspiration, which Mendelssohn reports to have found in the contemplation of the rocky wall of Holyrood, the ruins of the palace where the unfortunate Queen Mary lived.

From its beginning the finale announces itself as a heroic allegro: powerful, warring and tormented like a real Scottish storm. Its heroic accents start with neat string playing followed by the violins attacking a highly rhythmic first theme, and a second one entrusted to the woodwinds. Just when the symphony seems to be moving towards its inevitable conclusion, Mendelssohn reprises the themes of the first movement’s introduction, *pianissimo*, to then introduce a choral playing of horns that is immediately joined by the rest of the orchestra. This creates a powerful effect that guides the symphony towards a triumphing apotheosis.

Mendelssohn’s Third Symphony is a musical painting. It is more the rendering of a landscape than a historical illustration. It showcases Mendelssohn’s impressive portrayal talents. The traveler’s grandiose composition offers a recollection of old impressions set a new, brought back to present by the final A major permutation—contrasting with the A minor finale—of the opening theme.



Richard Wagner (1813- 1883)

Richard Wagner was not only one of the greatest German composers of the nineteenth century; his gifts as dramatist, stage director, philosopher as well as a conductor and music theorist made of him an unrivaled figure in the history of his time. Wagner's influence was immense over occidental music, and more particularly in the opera field that he revolutionized both in form (poetic-musical synthesis), dramaturgy, musical writing (continuous-music, leitmotiv, chromaticism, harmony as the drama's central constructing element) and in orchestration (brass, unprecedented ampleness). Richard Wagner's oeuvre is monumental not in number but in proportions and in intensity. His music emerged as a precursor of atonality and has inspired many composers, including Bruckner, Mahler, Debussy and Schoenberg.

Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig on May 22, 1813. His father, a municipal clerk, died six months after he was born. One year later his mother married an actor named Ludwig Geyer, who passed to Wagner his passion for theatre. After an early ambition to become a playwright, Wagner came to discover music at age 15 when he entered the University of Leipzig (1831). Among the composers who had a notable influence on him we mention Ludwig van Beethoven. Despite several financial difficulties, unsuccessful operas—*Das Liebesverbot*, 1836; *The Flying Dutchman*, 1843, and even *Tannhäuser*, 1845—wandering relocations and revolutionary involvements, Wagner evolved to become the biggest conductor of his era. He conducted with great success the operas of Mozart, Bellini, Weber and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony—an entirely enigmatic composition then—and laid the foundation of modern orchestra conducting.

In 1850 the premiere of *Lohengrin* by Franz Liszt, his unwavering friend, augmented his prestige. Installed in Zurich, Wagner worked together on theoretical essays (such as *Art and Revolution* and *The Artwork of the Future*, both 1849) and on the project that was later to lead to the creation of the tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. He spent the year 1852 writing poems but interrupted the musical writing to compose *Tristan and Isolde* (1859). Despite his new success in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Munich, 1868), Wagner's financial situation became unbearable. Only then he received from Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, capital support that allowed him to realize his dreams. That was how he created in 1876 the Bayreuth Festival Theatre, which he dedicated solely to the performance of his operas. In August 1876 *The Ring of the Nibelung* cycle opened there in the presence of Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Bruckner, Mahler, Tchaikovsky and even Emperor William I. In 1882 followed the performance of *Parsifal*, Wagner's last opera. By 1883, Wagner was an old man. He died of a heart attack during a stay in Venice.

The Bayreuth Festival survived his creator; it celebrates his genius still. The Bayreuth stage was conceived to be a magical space where the chemistry of all arts operates (poetry, music, theater and dance) with the help of the setting, costumes and stage lights, to awaken the psychic energies that lie in everyone and to kindle a communion of everyone's senses. This is the ideal work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) that Wagner aspired to through this theoretical writings. If Verdi conceived of opera as a human drama focused on the voice, Richard Wagner advocated a reformed musical theatre in which mythological or legendary characters are caught up in forces larger than themselves, a musical score focused on the orchestra as the driving force of the drama rather than as a mere accompaniment to the singers. Obsessed all his life by the idea of founding a new school, Wagner planned beyond the conventions of opera as simple entertainment. He considered the lyrical scene as the place of a sacred initiation.

Siegfried Idyll, WWV 103

Through the *Siegfried Idyll* we hear an intimate reflection of Richard Wagner's love for his second wife, Cosima, and his son Siegfried. Wagner wrote the symphonic poem as a birthday gift and never intended to make it public. Luckily, his debts pressured him to publish it to raise funds. Cosima wrote in her diary, The secret treasure is to become public property. May the pleasure others take in it match the sacrifice I am making.

On Christmas morning in 1870—the day after her birthday—Cosima was awakened in Wagner's villa by 13 musicians from the Tonhalle Orchester Zürich playing what was then called Tribschen Idyll with Fidi's birdsong and the orange sunrise, as symphonic birthday greeting. Presented to his Cosima by her Richard. Tribschen was the location and name of the villa, now part of Lucerne. Fidi was the Wagner's pet name for Siegfried, who was born in 1869. The sunrise was what Cosima called the incredibly beautiful, fiery glow of the morning sun on the wallpaper.

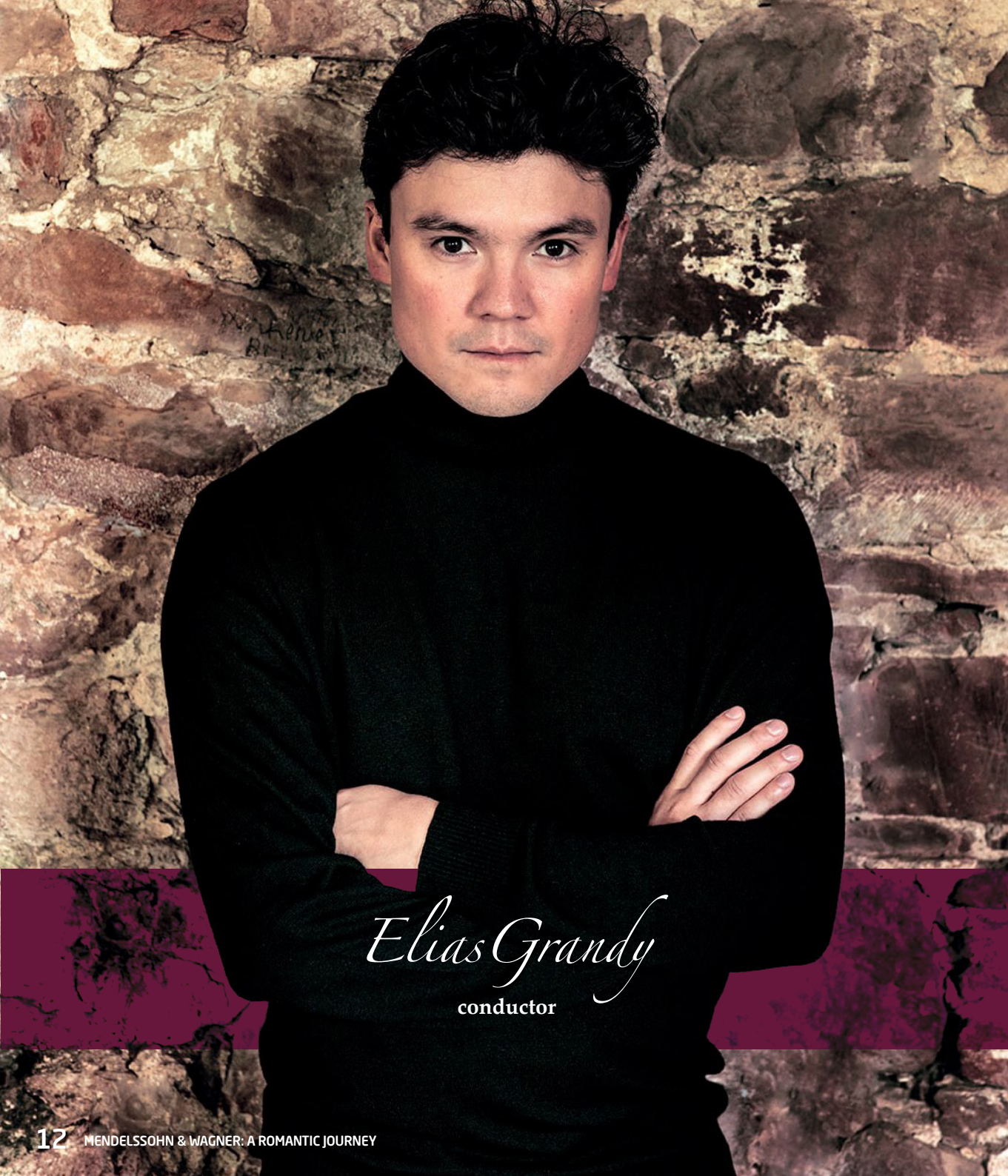
At this time Wagner was writing *Siegfried*, the third of the four music dramas that make up *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, so it's no coincidence that the same themes were used in both. The first theme of the Idyll is sung in Act II of the opera by Brunhilde to her son, Siegfried, after he awakens her from a ring of fire: Ewig war ich, or Eternal I was, eternal I am . . . eternal for your sake. A second theme from the Idyll follows soon after in the opera as Brunhilde imagines her gorgeous son . . . life of the world. A lullaby, written by Wagner in 1868 but similar to *Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf*, was included. And "Fidi's bird," which sang at the time Siegfried was born and continued to reappear early in the morning at the villa, was included as well.

Cosima's diary records the effect of the initial performance: When I woke up I heard a sound, it grew ever louder, I could no longer imagine myself in a dream, music was sounding, and what music! After it had died away, R. came in to me with the five children and put into my hands the score of his symphonic birthday greeting. I was in tears, but so, too, was the whole household; R. had set up his orchestra on the stairs and thus consecrated our Tribschen forever!

Tannhäuser Overture, WWV 70

On January 23, 1883, Cosima Wagner wrote in her diary that her husband believed he still owed *Tannhäuser* to the world. Wagner completed the first version of the opera in 1845 during his tenure as kapellmeister at the royal court of Dresden. No other work in his oeuvre would receive as much constant attention. It seems that Wagner, who considered *Tannhäuser* a watershed work in his output, was never satisfied with any single version of it. The Overture to *Tannhäuser* encapsulates in musical terms the dramatic conflict between the sacred love of Elisabeth and the profane love of Venus.

For a series of orchestral concerts of his music in Zurich in 1853, Wagner wrote a grandiloquent synopsis of the Overture's emotional progression, which reads in part: "At first the orchestra introduces us to the *Pilgrims' Chorus* alone. It approaches, swells to a mighty outpouring, and finally passes into the distance. As night falls, magic visions show themselves. A rosy mist swirls upward, and the blurred motions of a fearsomely voluptuous dance are revealed.... This is the seductive magic of the Venusberg. Lured by the tempting vision, Tannhäuser draws near. It is Venus herself who appears to him.... His heart and senses glow, the blood in his veins takes fire, an irresistible attraction draws him nearer, and he steps before the goddess. In drunken joy the Bacchantes rush upon him and draw him into their wild dance.... The storm subsides. Only a soft, sensuous moan lingers in the air over the spot where the unholy ecstasy held sway. Yet already the morning dawns: from the far distance the pilgrim's chorus is heard again. As it draws ever nearer and day repulses night, those lingering moans are transfigured into a murmur of joy so that at last, when the sun rises in splendor and the pilgrims' chorus proclaims salvation to all the world, the joyous murmur swells to the mightiest, noblest rejoicing. Redeemed from the curse of ungodly shame, the Venusberg itself joins its exultant voice to the godly chant."



Elias Grandy
conductor

German-Japanese conductor Elias Grandy is increasingly recognized as a distinctive voice among today's conductors. He is admired for his passionate temperament, precise musicianship, and an effortless podium presence that brings even the most complex musical ideas to life with clarity, depth, and emotional intensity.

Grandy was most recently appointed Chief Conductor and Artistic Director Designate of the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra. His tenure in Prague will begin in 2026/27 season. Grandy was appointed Chief Conductor of the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra in 2025, following on from eight successful seasons as Music Director of the Theater and Orchester Heidelberg in Germany, a position he held until 2023. He is equally at home in both symphonic and operatic repertoire.

In the 2025/26 season Grandy returns to the Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo and the Prague Radio Symphony, as well as to Oper Frankfurt with Puccini's *Tosca*, Opera Niki Kai Tokyo with Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, and the Semperoper Dresden with Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. With the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra, he will perform Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and Mahler's *Symphony No. 3* with Gerhild Romberger, amongst other works. Debut performances this season take him to the RTV Slovenian Symphony Orchestra and the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra.

Highlights of recent seasons include highly successful guest conducting appearances with orchestras such as the Vienna Symphony, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern, Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse, Brussels Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Belgique, Antwerp Symphony, Orquesta Filarmónica de Buenos Aires at Teatro Colón, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, Kyoto Philharmonic, Utah Symphony, and Minnesota Orchestra.

A passionate advocate of musical storytelling, Grandy has led critically 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 Niki Kai Tokyo, and *Rusalka* at Portland Opera.

Born in Munich, Grandy studied cello, music theory, and chamber music in Basel and Munich before turning to conducting at the Hanns Eisler School of Music Berlin. He launched his professional career as Resident Conductor at the Staatstheater Darmstadt and was a prize winner at the Sir Georg Solti International Conducting Competition in 2015.

Upcoming Concerts

Classic Hits: Sibelius & Tchaikovsky

Katara Cultural Village, Opera House
Saturday, 13 June 2026
7:30 pm

Elias Grandy, conductor
Luka Faulisi, violin

Conductor Elias Grandy leads a powerhouse programme that pairs a showpiece for violin with one of the most thrilling symphonies ever written.

Sibelius's *Violin Concerto* is music of ice and fire with haunting lyricism and a solo part that feels both fearless and intensely personal. Taking the spotlight is Luka Faulisi, a rising star on today's concert scene, bringing virtuosity and intensity to one of the repertoire's most iconic concertos.

After the interval comes Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4*, a powerful and deeply emotional work. From its dramatic opening fanfare to its triumphant final movement, the symphony charts a journey through struggle, fate, and ultimate resilience, culminating in a thrilling and unforgettable conclusion.

Program

Jean Sibelius: *Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47*

Intermission

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: *Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 36*

QPO Presents: Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition

Katara Cultural Village, Opera House
Friday, 19 June 2026
7:30 pm

Hossein Pishkar, conductor
Rony Moser, clarinet

Conductor Hossein Pishkar leads the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra in a programme pairing Weber's romantic orchestral writing with one of the most vivid works in the symphonic repertoire. QPO's clarinetist Rony Moser takes centre stage for Weber's virtuosic *Clarinet Concerto No. 2*, preceded by the dramatic Overture to *Der Freischütz*. The second half features Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in Ravel's celebrated orchestration; a kaleidoscopic journey through colour, texture, and the power of the orchestra.

Program

Carl Maria von Weber: *Der Freischütz Overture*
Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E-Flat Major, Op. 74, J. 118

Intermission

Modest Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition (arr. Maurice Ravel)*

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 FURLANÙ



ROLANDA GINKUTE



MAIAS ALYAMANI



REEM KHOURY



GEORGES YAMINE



ISLAM EL HEFNAWY



SHAZA OWEDA



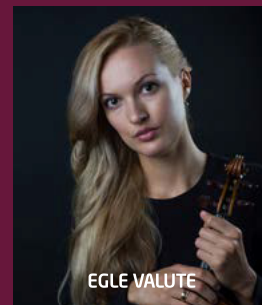
JULIA KORODI



ANNE-CATHRIN EHRLICH



MOHAMED OWEDA



EGLÉ VALUTE



GIOVANNI PASINI

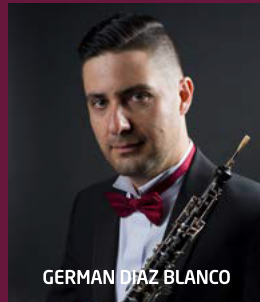
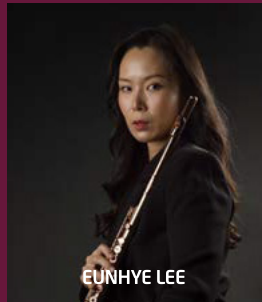
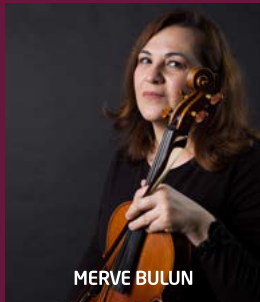


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ANDREA MEREUTA

Musicians



Musicians



MIROSLAV STOYANOV



PETER DAVIDA



GIDEON SEIDENBERG



ATILLA SZÜCS



ZSOLT PÉTER



LASZLO FROSCHL



JORIS LAENEN



DANIEL EDELHOFF



PHILIPP REBMANN



TOMOKI KIRITA



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