

Saturday 23 May, 2026

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Shostakovich 5

Ethel Smyth Overture to *The Wreckers*

Richard Strauss *Burleske*

Dmitri Shostakovich *Symphony No 5*



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Cambridge Philharmonic presents

Ethel Smyth

Overture to *The Wreckers*

Richard Strauss

Burleske

Benjamin Grosvenor *piano*

Interval

Dmitri Shostakovich

Symphony No 5

Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra

Otis Enokido-Lineham *conductor*

Phillip Granell *guest leader*

Overture to *The Wreckers*

Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)



Opera in Britain had been virtually non-existent since Handel's day, with the exception of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. Instead, works for orchestra and voice in the nineteenth century were almost exclusively religious. So, when Ethel Smyth started to compose operas she had no British tradition upon which to draw. *The Wreckers* was her third opera and, as if to emphasise its unusual nature, its libretto, although written by an Englishman, was in French and its first performance was at Leipzig in German in 1906. This was a great success and Beecham arranged for its first English production. It was first performed in English, in full, at Covent Garden in 1910, conducted by no less a figure than Bruno Walter. It was hugely admired at the time, but Smyth was a controversial figure both as a suffragette and a lesbian, which gave plenty of ammunition for those who were not happy with the idea of a woman composer. It was not long before the opera disappeared into obscurity.

The production of the complete opera in the original French at Glyndebourne in 2022 was a hugely significant moment. It is set on the Cornish coast where local people use false shore lights to lure boats onto the rocks to murder the crew and plunder the cargo. There is an intense love affair and the community is split over the morality of the wreckers' actions. With no British operatic tradition behind her it is unsurprising that the score should draw on music from Europe: Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* provides inspiration for the love music and some of the choral writing for the villagers draws on his *Die fliegende Holländer*. However, the sound world is closer to French music, especially Debussy. The opera is often seen as a precursor of *Peter Grimes*, and indeed Britten had a copy of the opera on his shelves. It was Fauré who persuaded Smyth that the overture was such an atmospheric rendering of the stormy Cornish coast that she should work it up as a concert overture.

Otis Lineham, tonight's conductor, writes of the overture: 'It gives us a condensed summary of the opera and shows the emotional range of the work, from the solemn chorales of the townspeople to the crashing waves of the Cornish coastline. Orchestral pyrotechnics dominate the beginning of the piece and give way to a cor anglais solo that shows the eerie stillness of the flat horizon at night. Themes are smashed together and superimposed until we arrive at a glorious ending showcasing the power of the sea.'

Burleske for piano and orchestra

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

The *Burleske* was one of Strauss's early works, composed in his early twenties. In 1885 he spent a brief period as assistant conductor of the Meiningen Court Orchestra, during which time he performed Mozart's *Piano Concerto in C minor K 491*, even composing his own cadenzas. This sparked his interest and he started composing for piano and orchestra: a *Scherzo* and a *Rhapsody*.



There was little interest in these pieces and he abandoned them. However, four years later he returned to the *Scherzo* and completed it, now entitled *Burleske*, although he never gave it an opus number. It was first performed in 1890. Like many of his early works it disappeared into obscurity, as he was about to embark on the period of his great tone poems. He remained interested in concerto composition, though, and his two horn concertos and the *Oboe Concerto* are in the standard repertoire. Although he never wrote a piano concerto, works for piano and orchestra occur throughout his career, with obscure titles and sometimes for left-hand only, making them unattractive to programme. He never forgot the *Burleske*, though. On his final visit to London at 83 in 1947, just before he died, he included it in a concert he conducted at The Royal Albert Hall, along with *Don Juan*, the *Sinfonia Domestica* and waltzes from *Der Rosenkavalier*.

The *Burleske* shows clearly the influence of Brahms, who was actually in the audience when Strauss performed the Mozart *Piano Concerto* at Meiningen. It is in a single movement and lasts just under twenty minutes. It opens, strikingly, with a motto theme for four unaccompanied timpani and this recurs throughout the piece. Despite its debt to Brahms, it is full of passages of quick-witted fantasy and featherweight orchestration which look forward to the satirical impishness of *Till Eulenspiegel*, ten years later. The second subject is a graceful waltz and there is a central episode with a second, more languid, waltz. In the development section Strauss combines all his themes in an exciting orchestral climax. The central episode recurs in the coda, but the last word is left to the timpani and the mutterings of the motto theme.

INTERVAL

Symphony No 5

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

1. Moderato – Allegretto non troppo

2. Allegretto

3. Largo

4. Allegro non troppo

Shostakovich's fifteen symphonies span the whole period of his creative life. The fifth was composed in 1937 and first performed in November of that year by the Leningrad Philharmonic under Yevgeny Mravinsky. It was a huge critical success and soon entered the standard repertoire, and it remains one of his most performed works.

His *Symphony No 1*, although a juvenile work, is very approachable and is often played, but the second and third are experimental, revolutionary works which are rarely heard.

His first great symphony was the fourth, the music heavily influenced by Mahler, composed in 1936, at the same time as his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtzenk*. However, the free experimental world of the twenties in the USSR had been replaced in 1934 by the demands of Socialist Realism and the start of the Great Terror. Compositions now had to be positive and easily understood by the masses. Neither of these two works conformed to these new rigid requirements; the opera was banned and the *Symphony No 4* never performed. Neither would see the light of day until after Stalin's death.

How should Shostakovich proceed? The answer was the fifth symphony. Leading cultural figures in Russia were being liquidated and clearly Shostakovich was on the list of potential additions. The advantage he had over the poets, writers and painters was that music can mean whatever the listener wants it to mean. He subtitled it 'A Soviet Artist's Reply to Just Criticism'. Was this genuine, or an ironic comment, and was the music glorifying Stalin's Russia or satirising it? It was up to the listeners to judge. In the event it was a huge critical success. At the time it appeared that the composer had submitted to the demands of Socialist Realism, but knowing what we know now of the rest of Shostakovich's life and music, few think that way any more.



The symphony is composed in the traditional four-movement structure, with the *scherzo* placed second. The first movement opens with an austere vaulting theme in canon on the strings, descending via a motto theme to three repeated As on the violins. This is developed with the help of woodwind and brass to a noble climax which introduces the second subject, a melody for violins. This eventually winds down to a pause and the first entry of the piano announces the beginning of the development. The music gains in energy with brass and percussion; at its climax the recapitulation occurs with the first theme in rhythmic unison across the orchestra. This subsides into an idyllic version of the second theme before the coda enters with a haunting recollection of the first theme, ending with chords on the celesta.

The short second movement shows the continuing influence of Mahler; its trio section has solo violin and flute prominent. After the repeat of the *scherzo* the flute tries to reintroduce the trio, only to be brushed aside.

The slow third movement, in which the strings predominate (there is no brass), is a moonlit nocturne with a central climax. The feeling of immense space is a hall-mark of Shostakovich's mature orchestral slow movements. The movement ends with a long death-trill, with ethereal echoes of the first theme now on celesta and harp.

The finale opens with a strident theme on brass and timpani and inexorably builds to a great climax. At its height a solo trumpet slices through the texture with a new theme, and the music builds again to a crescendo. The fanfares wind down into a transformation of the second theme on horns over shimmering strings and reveals a plateau of gentle radiance. From here, the music builds steadily to the final overwhelming climax.

Programme notes: John Harding

Benjamin Grosvenor *piano*

Photo: Marco Borggreve



British pianist Benjamin Grosvenor has an acclaimed international career as a soloist and chamber musician, which is reflected in his extensive discography on Decca Classics. During his 2025/26 season, Benjamin debuts with the Swedish Radio (Beethoven 1), performs Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G major* with Filharmonica della Scala, San Diego Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony and Orchestre Svizzera Italiana and closes the Philharmonia Orchestra's 80th anniversary season with a UK tour of Strauss's *Burleske*. He also returns to the Concertgebouw

Amsterdam for his debut performance with John Wilson's Sinfonia of London. Previous concerto engagements have included Cleveland, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, NHK Symphony, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre National de France and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

In the UK, Benjamin has performed with all the major London orchestras and very regularly at the BBC Proms, including at the First and Last Nights. As well as a solo recital in the Royal Albert Hall, his concerto performances at the Proms have included works by Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Busoni, Shostakovich and Britten.

Benjamin's solo recitals have included Tokyo, Berlin, Warsaw, Barbican Centre, Southbank Centre, Wigmore Hall and at Klavierfest Ruhr and La Roque d'Anthéron. Last season he was a featured artist at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris and in 2024 he premiered *Hommage à Liszt* by Brett Dean. In 2011 Benjamin signed to Decca Classics, the youngest British musician ever to do so, and also their first British pianist in almost 60 years. His impressive discography encompasses solo, chamber works as well as concertos, attracting numerous accolades. His most recent release is of solo repertoire by Chopin.

Benjamin is an Ambassador of Music Masters, a charity dedicated to making music education accessible to all children regardless of their background; championing diversity and inclusion.

Otis Enokido-Lineham *conductor*



Otis Enokido-Lineham is a British/Japanese conductor currently based in London. Last season's highlights included winning 1st prize at the Giancarlo Facchinetti Conducting Competition in Brescia and reaching the finals of the 2025 International Khachaturian Competition in Armenia, both of which have led to upcoming debuts and concerts throughout Europe.

For the 22/23 season Otis was an Assistant Conductor with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO). He also held the position of associate conductor with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group NEXT Programme and worked with both ensembles in a variety of concerts and projects. Upcoming engagements include work with the Orchestra Sinfonica della

Città Metropolitana di Bari, returning to the St Endellion Festival and National Youth Orchestra and debuts at Opera Holland Park and Glyndebourne.

Since 2021 Otis has taught at the Yehudi Menuhin School as Head of Orchestras and features in their CD release *Around The World In 80 Minutes*, alongside artists such as Maxim Rysanov on Orchid Classics. He has also worked with the National Youth Orchestra GB (National Tour), Purcell School Symphony Orchestra (Southbank), London Schools Symphony Orchestra (Barbican), National Children's Orchestra (London Weekend Project) and on a side-by-side project with the London Mozart Players and students from the GDST.

In the field of contemporary music, he has worked with several of the major ensembles in the UK including London Sinfonietta, BCMG and at the Aldeburgh Festival. Abroad he has performed with the Divertimento Ensemble, Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto and Danubia Orchestra and continues a number of these collaborations in the next season. In 2023 he premiered a new opera *Hey Maudie* commissioned by the Roberts Institute of Art and co-written by artist Rachel Jones, composer Joseph Howard and poet Victoria Adukwei Bulley.

Phillip Granell *guest leader*



Phillip Granell is a violinist, violist and string arranger based in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

He is Artistic Director and violinist of Phaedra Ensemble, a London-based contemporary chamber music group with whom he has led and performed extensively across the UK and internationally for over a decade.

As a performer and recording session musician, he has worked internationally and recorded on major Hollywood film scores and for television with the likes of Netflix, Amazon and Apple.

His wide-ranging musical interests span Eastern European gypsy music, contemporary classical repertoire, and collaborations with bands and artists

including Arctic Monkeys, Pulp and Richard Ashcroft of The Verve.

Phaedra Ensemble release their debut album on Cantaloupe Records in September, and will be performing extensively in London and across the UK in 2027.

Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra

Violin 1

Phillip Granell (leader)
Kate Clow (co leader)
Joyce Yu
John Richards
Abigail Tan
Stuart Holder
Roz Chalmers
Anne Hewitt
Margaret Scourse
Nichola Roe
Anna Bailey
Jo Cumberbatch

Violin 2

Andrew Tusa
Emma Lawrence
Hilary Crooks
Tabitha Smith
Fiona Cunningham
Sarah Ridley
John Bryne
Amelie Roper
Ariane Stoop
Imogen Poole
Natalie Hogg
Anne McAleer

Viola

Wendy Savage
Edna Murphy
Peter Conlon
Dominic de Cogan
Xavier Salazar
Robyn Sorensen
Agata Richards
Emma McCaughan
Hermione Blakiston
Jeremy Harmer
David Yadin
Sarah Legg

Cello

Angela Bennett
Anna Edwards
Daniel Coldridge
Jess Llewellyn
David Brown
Catherine Wilson
Helen Davies
Isabel Groves Dixon
Helen Hills
Clare Gilmour

Double Bass

Sarah Sharrock
Tony Scholl
Susan Sparrow
Alan Blackwell
Elaine Shield

Flute

Sarah Blazeby
Alison Townend
Louise Wells

Piccolo

Louise Wells

Oboe

Rachael Dunlop
Tom Gillam

Cor Anglais

Tom Gillam

Clarinet

Tom McFarlane
Graham Dolby
Simon Kelly

E♭ Clarinet

Graham Dolby

Bass Clarinet

Simon Kelly

Bassoon

Sarah Kwan
Jenny Warburton

Contra bassoon

Neil Greenham

Horn

Peter Roberts
Tim Summers
Tony Hawkins
Gareth Edwards
Chris Wykes

Trumpets

Paddy Wakelam
Laureen Hodge
Alex McLean

Trombone

Ryan Higgin
Denise Hayles

Bass Trombone

Alan Dimond

Tuba

Robin Norman

Timpani

Dave Ellis

Percussion

Derek Scurll
Eva Laverty
Lottie Dalmijn
Nick Cowling

Harp

Catrin Meek
Elspeth Wilson

Piano/Celeste

John Cuthbert

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by Jennifer Day



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Jennifer's book is available to purchase at today's concert for £5, or email: info@cam-phil.org.uk for more details.

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Photo: Bill Hiskett

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West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

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Ian Cobb, conductor

soloists:

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Sunday 5 July 2026, 4pm

Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony*
Debussy *Prélude a l'Après-midi*
Ireland *These things shall be*
Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden



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