



SUNDAY CLASSICS
INTERNATIONAL ORCHESTRA SEASON
2023-2024

Dresden Philharmonic

Sunday 21 April | 7.30pm

MUSSORGSKY – Khovanshchina Prelude (5')

MENDELSSOHN – Violin Concerto (26')

Interval

TCHAIKOVSKY – Symphony No. 6 (46')

Conductor:

Stanislav Kochanovsky

Soloist:

Maria Ioudenitch (violin)

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) *Khovanshchina: Prelude - Dawn on the Moscow River (1873)*

Mussorgsky's started work on *Khovanshchina* in 1872, guided by the critic and writer Vladimir Stasov who played such a crucial role in encouraging Russian composers to develop a national style in tune with local traditions and history. Mussorgsky continued to be plagued by self-doubt and also distracted by other compositions over the next nine years and consequently the work was left incomplete by the time of his death in 1881.

Naturally enough, Rimsky-Korsakov was first on hand to produce a performing edition, although understandably stamping his own style on the orchestration. Other composers have also been involved with this process: in 1913 Diaghilev asked Stravinsky and Ravel to re-orchestrate the work; in the 1950s Shostakovich produced yet another orchestration of *Khovanshchina* for a Soviet film

version of the opera. Shostakovich was keen to be as faithful as possible to the original and this version forms the basis for Claudio Abbado's classic 1989 recording of the 'completed' opera.

Mussorgsky spoke of the *Prelude* having been prepared in a letter from August 1873 and it beautifully depicts dawn over the Moscow river; the sound of the church bells later toll in the background, completing a scene of calm and quiet before the drama about to unfold. The subsequent complexities of the plot and the various combatants need not concern us here.

Timothy Dowling, October 2018

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) *Violin Concerto in E minor, Opus 64 (1844)*

1. *Allegro molto appassionato* –

2. *Andante* –

3. *Allegretto non troppo – Allegro molto vivace*

Like so many violin concertos after Beethoven, Mendelssohn's Concerto was the result of a close friendship with a great violinist, his friend from childhood, Ferdinand David (1810-1873). Both were born in Hamburg, both were child prodigies and their friendship blossomed in the 1820s. When Mendelssohn was appointed conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus in 1836 it was only natural that he would seek David as his concert-master, a position he held until his sudden death whilst on a Swiss mountain holiday with his children.

David had been a pupil of Louis Spohr (1784-1859) who had composed eighteen violin concertos, his first concerto in 1802 four years before Beethoven's towering masterpiece; Spohr managed to remain on good terms with Beethoven who was happy to encourage his younger protégé. Spohr tried to limit the virtuoso element in his violin concertos and he effectively bridged the gap between the classical and romantic eras – Spohr's Eighth Concerto is well worth exploring if you are interested in the transition from classicism to romanticism.

Soon after his appointment in Leipzig, David asked Mendelssohn for a violin concerto, the request being first documented in letters from 1838. Somewhat surprisingly it took six years for Mendelssohn to complete the commission, most of the composing being completed in 1844. Mendelssohn frequently asked for David's advice on violin technique and so David may have played a pivotal role in the composition process, most probably in the written-out solo cadenza in the middle of the first movement. Despite its long gestation, the work appears to be remarkably spontaneous and gives the impression of having been conceived in a single stroke.

Other than the addition of a second flute, the orchestration is identical to Beethoven's Concerto. Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto includes three notable innovations, the first right at the beginning, as the solo violin launches the main theme of the opening movement, singing continuously in its highest register for a considerable period of time. There is no hiding place here for the soloist whose technique is exposed in music pulsating with life and energy. The pace slows naturally for the introduction of the secondary material in the relative major key of G, with the soloist holding a low G for some eight bars, providing a blessed moment of time suspended before the exposition closes with dramatic orchestral trills.

The development section then leads to Mendelssohn's second innovation as the solo cadenza (not improvised) occurs here rather than at the end of the movement; indeed the cadenza continues into the orchestra-led recapitulation. The speed increases steadily as we rush headlong (truly *appassionata*) towards the apparent close – but here is Mendelssohn's third innovation, as the bassoon holds its final note, linking directly into the Andante.

The bassoon, together with flute, violas, violins and cellos, gently transform the tonality into an innocent C major for a glorious song without words. The song has a lilting 6/8 rhythm and Mendelssohn adopts a simple ABA structure, the short central 'B' section being in a more agitated key of A minor. Whilst the movement closes in its home key of C major, there is a clear instruction again that there

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 74, 'Pathétique' (1893)

First performed 28th October 1893 in St Petersburg, Russia

1. *Adagio – Allegro non troppo*

2. *Allegro con grazia*

3. *Allegro molto vivace*

4. *Finale: Adagio lamentoso*

should be no gap – Mendelssohn apparently disapproved of applause between movements.

The soloist and orchestral strings muse briefly, in a gentle question and answer passage, before two fanfares wake us from our reveries. And so begins the irrepressible dance that will carry us to the end, with music that resurrects the elves that featured so delightfully in the 17-year-old Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture.

Many have commented on the ever-fresh innocence of this Concerto. There is an account by Oliver Sacks in his book *Musicophilia – Tales of Music and the Brain* how Mendelssohn's Concerto helped him to walk again after a climbing accident in 1974: 'I had been given a cassette of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor – this was the only music I had, and I had been playing it for two weeks almost nonstop. Now suddenly, as I was standing, the concerto started to play itself with intense vividness in my mind. In this moment, the natural rhythm and melody of walking came back to me, and along with this, the feeling of my leg as alive, as part of me once again. I suddenly "remembered" how to walk.'

After the Second World War, Yehudi Menuhin played the Mendelssohn on tours of war-ravaged Germany. He recounted how moved he was when people spoke to him after the concerts, thanking him for bringing Mendelssohn back home following the dark days of the Nazi regime when Mendelssohn's music had been banned. Most significantly, it was one of the first works that he played (and recorded) with the Berlin Philharmonic under Wilhelm Furtwängler following Furtwängler being cleared of charges at the de-Nazification trials in 1947:

Mendelssohn's Concerto was most appropriately chosen as a symbol of reconciliation.

Mendelssohn's Concerto was enthusiastically received at its premiere on 13th March 1845 and was rescheduled for the following season in October 1845. Interestingly, a few weeks later, Clara Schumann was unwell and so unable to premiere her husband's Piano Concerto on 10th November; Schumann turned to Mendelssohn to ask that his Violin Concerto be substituted instead. Ferdinand David was not available on that particular date and so he suggested that the 14-year-old Joseph Joachim play instead, thus launching his illustrious career.

The pure joy of Mendelssohn's ever-fresh Concerto was not lost on later generations and, in particular, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius clearly appreciated the structural ideas that Mendelssohn introduced so spontaneously.

Timothy Dowling, December 2016

The circumstances of Tchaikovsky's death just weeks after the premiere of his final Symphony has inevitably led to various theories regarding the composition itself, the cause of his death and also whether the two are linked. Much of this is speculation that would not be considered admissible at a coroner's court and does little (if anything) to affect our appreciation of his final masterpiece. And so it is best to concentrate on the work itself and Tchaikovsky's own words about its genesis and possible programme.

Tchaikovsky remained very ambivalent about programme music and often avowed how he despised the form, preferring to let the music speak for itself on its own terms. However, he continued to produce programme music throughout his career and his *Romeo and Juliet Overture* must rank as one of the greatest masterpieces of the form. In 1877 he wrote a very detailed description of the programme of his Fourth Symphony in a letter to its dedicatee Nadezhda von Meck. This was clearly a description written after the event and Tchaikovsky immediately had misgivings about committing himself to paper in these terms. And yet despite these misgivings a rough programme outline was found amongst the sketches for the first movement of the Fifth Symphony in 1888. Similarly, five years later in 1893 he wrote to his brother Modest about his new plans for a programme symphony: 'At the time of my journey I had an idea for another symphony, this time with a programme, but a programme of a kind that will remain an enigma to all – let them guess, but the symphony will just be called *Programme Symphony* (No.6); This programme is permeated with subjective feeling, and quite often on my journey, composing it in my mind, I

wept copiously. When I reached home, I settled down to the sketches, and the work went with such ardour and at such speed that in less than four days I had completely finished the first movement and clearly outlined the remaining movements in my head. Half the third movement is already done. Formally there will be much that is new in this symphony, and incidentally the Finale will not be a loud *Allegro* but, on the contrary, a very slow-moving *Adagio*. You cannot imagine what bliss I feel in the conviction that my time is not yet over and that work is still possible. Of course I may be wrong, but I don't think so.

I can tell you in all sincerity that I consider this symphony the best thing I have ever done. In any case, it is the most deeply felt. And I love it as I have never loved any of my compositions.'

One striking feature in this letter is Tchaikovsky's positive frame of mind, despite the proposed content of the suggested programme on which he was working at the time. There is no suggestion here that he was writing a musical suicide letter as appears to be the case in some of the conspiracy theories regarding the *Pathétique*.

The posthumous publication title for the Symphony was suggested by Tchaikovsky's brother Modest. 'Патетическая' (*Pateticheskaya Simfoniya*) or *Pathétique Symphony* does not translate easily into contemporary English; the Greek origin of the word would be closer with its suggestion of 'passion' or 'suffering' and perhaps The Passionate would thus be a more apt translation, although its subtitle is now ingrained in our consciousness and so is unlikely to change.

Tchaikovsky's programme for the *Pathétique* remained unspoken in words although it is likely that he may have transferred some of his ideas from a proposed E flat major symphony that he wrote about in 1892: 'the ultimate essence of the symphony is Life: First part – all impulsive passion, confidence, thirst for activity. Must be short (the *Finale* death – result of collapse). Second part love: third disappointments; fourth ends dying away (also short).'

This is clearly not the programme for the *Pathétique*, but the struggle between Life and Death is the common feature and the most daring part of the plan was the suggested ending as the proposed symphony dies away quietly: this then proved to be the *Pathétique's* most radical dramatic stroke. The battle with Fate had dominated Tchaikovsky's previous two Symphonies; he managed to achieve a positive victory in the *Finales* of these two works, but with mixed results as shown in his ambivalence about their success. The radical departure from the triumphant *Finale* remains the *Pathétique's* defining character.

The *Pathétique* is thus a work about life and death and it marks death's ultimate victory with its *Adagio lamentoso*, although this does not necessarily mean the *composer's* imminent death. If so, Mahler would have had at least nine lives: each of his symphonies contains a funeral march and yet he survived all his symphonies until the Tenth....

As was customary with Tchaikovsky the first movement is the most substantial part of the Symphony and contains its essential drama. In a sense, we start with its ending as pianissimo cellos and basses steal in quietly. This provides the background for the four-note repeated theme introduced by solo bassoon, a brief fragmented

theme that will then form the essential germ for the ensuing *Allegro non troppo*. The brief motivic quality of this theme represents a new development for Tchaikovsky who had previously relied on his lyrical gift for symphonic composition. However, this nervous, darting music does provide a strong contrast for the lamenting long-limbed theme soon introduced by muted strings playing *teneramente, molto cantabile, con espansione*. This is one of Tchaikovsky's most memorable themes and he repeats it unchanged apart from instrumentation and accompaniment, firstly on full orchestra and then on solo clarinet, dying away to an extreme *pppppp*.

We are shocked out of our reverie by the *fortissimo* start of the development section, mainly featuring the four-note theme that set the work in motion. Death stalks the first movement as chant from the Russian Orthodox Requiem makes a quiet appearance on brass in the development section (bars 201ff), the unsung words being 'With thy saints, O Christ, give peace to the soul of thy servant.'

This whole middle section is Tchaikovsky's greatest symphonic development and builds up to a tremendous climax over a long, sustained dominant pedal. This heralds the return of the tender second subject theme now in the home key of B in major mode. Quiet chant on brass brings this dramatic movement to a peaceful conclusion. We are reminded of the story that the musicologist Stephen Johnson told regarding the Russian's love affair with the minor mode:

Q: Why are so many Russian symphonies and concertos in the minor mode?

A: Because they reserved the major mode for their saddest moments.

In his Fifth Symphony Tchaikovsky introduced a graceful waltz in order to lower the emotional

tension created by the first two movements. After all the life/death drama that we have traversed Tchaikovsky here also turns to a waltz-like theme. But it is now a broken waltz, in a halting 5/4 rhythm that is maintained throughout, even in the central 'trio' section with its falling, mournful (*flebile*) theme over its endless pulse on timpani.

Likewise Tchaikovsky was a skilled creator of the triumphant march and uses this as the basis for his third movement, but this 'march' has a strange hollowness to it. Mendelssohnian grace and lightness set us on our way as strings and woodwind skip around the broken fragments of the gathering march. The march theme is only stated in full after several minutes but the movement then builds up to an undeniably exciting climax although we are aware of an emptiness at the core of all this hyperactivity. Its emphatic G major close may initially sound like the exciting ending of the work and plunging straight into the B minor *Adagio lamentoso* creates an unnerving shock. Applause between these disjointed worlds deprives us of the full effect of this experience.

The fragmentary march does have an echo in the broken theme that starts this lament as first and second violins play alternate notes of the opening falling phrase, thus producing an aural illusion. As the first two horns provide a gentle heartbeat, the final apotheosis of the falling phrase comes with the central *Andante* section in D major. We can imagine that this is where Tchaikovsky may have 'wept copiously' as there appears to be no end to the grief. However, a quiet, single stroke of the gong (tamtam) marks the end of the grieving as life ebbs slowly away and we drift into silence.

And so the *Pathétique* ends like no previous symphony, but soon found followers in the next

generations, in particular with Mahler's Sixth and Ninth Symphonies and Sibelius's Fourth Symphony. The shape of Mahler's Ninth is remarkably similar to the *Pathétique* and in particular the two central movements: Mahler's second movement *Ländler* echoing Tchaikovsky's broken waltz and Mahler's *Rondo burlesque* matching Tchaikovsky's bombastic march. Both *Finales* then take the consoling road to silence.

Tchaikovsky's bombastic march could also be heard as an ancestor of Shostakovich's nihilistic second movement of his Tenth Symphony composed some sixty years later in the wake of Stalin's death.

Thus this is Tchaikovsky's greatest symphony and an overwhelming emotional experience as he tackles head-on the issues of life and death. In so doing he joins together with other nineteenth century composers for whom death remained a figure of endless fascination, including Berlioz and Liszt, and then Mahler and Rachmaninoff in the generation that followed.

Tchaikovsky's brother Modest attested to Tchaikovsky's positive attitude both during and after the completion of the *Pathétique*; we may well appreciate the cathartic effect that this work may have had on the composer as he finally came to terms with Fate without equivocation and so poured out his heart in music of searing honesty and directness. With music of this power and intensity, why do we need to turn to conspiracy theories? The music provides all the answers we need.

Timothy Dowling, August 2016

STANISLAV KOCHANOVSKY

conductor

Appointed Chief Conductor of the NDR Radiophilharmonie in Hannover starting with the 2024/25 season, Stanislav Kochanovsky has a refined artistic personality that has led him to be considered one of the most brilliant conductors of our time.

In recent years, he has made successful debuts with, among others, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Wiener Symphoniker, the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington and the Cleveland Orchestra, collaborating with soloists such as L. Kavakos, M. Pletnev, N. Lugansky, M. Vengerov, D. Matsuev, A. Volodin, K. Gerstein, S. Khachatryan, V. Frang, T. Mork, P. Ferrandez, M. Goerne.

In the 2023/24 season, he will continue his regular collaboration with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the DR Danish National Symphony Orchestra, the Netherlands Philharmonic, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, the Belgian National Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, among others, and will meet for the first time the WDR Sinfonieorchester in Köln, the Teatro La Fenice Orchestra in Venice, the KBS Symphony Orchestra and will tour with the Dresdner Philharmonie in the UK, performing in the major cities of England, Scotland and Wales.

With his profound knowledge and experience of a wide range of symphonic and operatic repertoire, he is regularly invited by renowned orchestras and opera houses around the world, such as the Orchestre de Paris, the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Danish National Symphony, the NDR Elbphilharmonie, among others.

During his career, he has also collaborated with leading Russian orchestras such as the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, the Russian National Orchestra, the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Russia and the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra.

With more than thirty operas in his repertoire, recent opera engagements have included *The Pique Dame* and *Evgenij Onegin* at the Opernhaus Zürich, *Iolanta* at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and *Prince Igor* at the Dutch National Opera Amsterdam, working with distinguished directors and singers such as D. Tcherniakov, B. Kosky, E. Nikitin, A. Netrebko, I. Abdrazakov, O. Borodina, L. Davidsen, P. Mattei. As a guest conductor, he performed regularly for years at the Mariinsky Theatre.

Since 2017, Kochanovsky is a regular guest at the Verbier Festival where he conducted opera in concerts (*Eugene Onegin*, *Rigoletto*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Hansel and Gretel*) and symphonic programme with soloists Lucas Debargue and Mikhail Pletnev.

In addition to the classical repertoire, Kochanovsky has a strong interest in rarely performed works and new compositions. Over the last few seasons, he has conducted rare gems as Ligeti's Requiem, Scriabin-Nemtin's Prefatory Action "Mysterium", Kodály's Psalmus Hungaricus, Shostakovich's unfinished opera "The Gamblers"; Myaskovsky's "Silence", Weinberg's Symphony No. 21 "Kaddish"; and works by living composers such as Dean, Fedele, Broström, Tawfiq, Visman, Campogrande, Martinsson, Golijov, Thorvaldsdottir, Tarnopolski, Rääts, Vasks.

Stanislav Kochanovsky attended the Glinka Choir School in his hometown of St. Petersburg before going on to graduate with honours at the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatoire, where he studied choral conducting, organ and opera-symphonic conducting.

He was Chief Conductor of the State Safonov Philharmonic Orchestra and in 2007 began his collaboration with the Mikhailovsky Theatre where, from the age of 25, he had the great opportunity to conduct more than sixty opera and ballet performances.



MARIA IOUDENITCH

violin

American-Russian violinist Maria Ioudenitch captured the attention of music lovers worldwide when she received first prizes in three international violin competitions – the Ysaÿe, Tibor Varga and Joseph Joachim – in 2021, as well as numerous special prizes at these competitions, including Joachim’s Chamber Music Award, the prize for Best Interpretation of the Commissioned Work and the Henle Urtext Prize. In 2023, she won the Opus Klassik award in the category “Chamber Music Recording of the Year” for her debut album, *Songbird*, on Warner Classics.

Highlights of Maria’s 23/24 season include concerts with Camerata Bern, where she will open the season with a play-direct program, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Stuttgart Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Symphony and Dresden Philharmonic, the latter to include a six-city tour of the UK. Furthermore, she will make her debut at the Vienna Musikverein in October 2023, where she will perform with Elena Bashkurova, among others. She will also feature on the Marlboro Music Festival’s US-tour, having attended the festival under the artistic direction of Mitsuko

Uchida and Jonathan Biss for the third time this summer. In September, she will participate in the Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival directed by Elena Bashkurova, and in February, she returns to Carnegie Hall for a chamber music concert presented by the Kronberg Academy. This season, for the first time she will also perform recitals with her father, Stanislav Ioudenitch.

Maria grew up in Kansas City and began playing violin with Gregory Sandomirsky at the age of three. She continued her studies with Ben Sayevich at the International Center for Music in Kansas City and Pamela Frank and Shmuel Ashkenasi at the Curtis Institute of Music and completed her master’s degree and Artist Diploma at the New England Conservatory, where she studied with Miriam Fried. Last year, she was mentored by Sonia Simmenauer as part of her new initiative, *zukunfts.music*. Currently, she is in the Professional Studies program at the Kronberg Academy, working with Christian Tetzlaff. She is also a member of the emerging US-based chamber music collective, *ensemble132*.



THE DRESDEN PHILHARMONIC



Music for everyone - the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra stands for concerts of the highest artistic quality, musical education for all ages and a view beyond the musical horizon. Guest performances on almost every continent and collaborations with guests from all over the world have established the orchestra's reputation in the international classical music world. Marek Janowski was most recently Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Dresden Philharmonic (2019-2023). Sir Donald Runnicles will take over from the 2024/25 season. Kahchun Wong is the orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor from 2023/24.

Since 2017, the Dresden Philharmonic has been at home in the first-class concert hall of Dresden's Kulturpalast. Here, the orchestra has the ideal acoustic conditions to further develop its sound ideal and to distinguish its programmes. The orchestra has retained its own warm, rounded sound in the Romantic repertoire. In addition, it is characterised by a tonal and stylistic flexibility for Baroque and Viennese Classical music as well as for modern works.

The orchestra was founded over 150 years ago by the self-confident citizens of Dresden. Philharmonic concerts were held regularly from 1885 until the

orchestra adopted its current name in 1923. In its early decades, composers such as Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák and Strauss conducted their own works. Paul van Kempen formed the orchestra into a first-class ensemble from 1934. After him, Kurt Masur (who has also been its Honorary Conductor since 1994), Marek Janowski, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and Michael Sanderling, among others, shaped the orchestra.

The orchestra promotes young musicians at the Kurt Masur Academy.

The orchestra began recording in 1937. Today, the Dresden Philharmonic's discography includes nearly 330 works. Recent recordings include a cycle of the complete symphonies of Shostakovich and Beethoven under the baton of Michael Sanderling (Sony Classical). With Marek Janowski, the Dresden Philharmonic has recorded Mascagni's "Cavalleria rusticana", Puccini's "Il Tabarro", Beethoven's "Fidelio", all of Schumann's symphonies, Haydn's "The Creation" and Schubert's "Unfinished" and "Great" C major symphonies (PentaTone). Most recently, Verdi's "La traviata" has been released in a concert recording conducted by Daniel Oren and featuring bel canto arias with Lisette Oropesa (also on PentaTone).

ORCHESTRA LIST

VIOLIN 1

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Johannes Groth
Juliane Ketttschau
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Xianbo Wen
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Adela-Maria Bratu
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Constanze Sandmann
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Annalena Kott
Minchang Jo
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Aleksandra Varaksina
Ipek Atila**

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Tobias Glöckler
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Gengpei Li
Dante Valencia Ruz**

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Karin Hofmann
Friederike Herfurth-Bätz

OBOE

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Jens Prasse
Volker Hanemann*

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Björn Kadenbach

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TUBA

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* Substitute

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Dvořák Symphony No. 7

Steven Mercurio Conductor

Mark Bebbington (piano)

26 MAY | 3pm

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