



SUNDAY CLASSICS
INTERNATIONAL ORCHESTRA SEASON
2024-2025

Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Sunday 1 December | 3pm

KODALY Dances of Galanta
CHOPIN Piano Concerto No. 2
Interval
LISZT Mephisto Waltz No. 1
BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 7

Conductor:
Riccardo Frizza

Soloist:
Jeneba Kanneh-Mason (piano)



HUNGARIAN RADIO
ART GROUPS
since 1943

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

Dances of Galánta (1933)

When Kodály was commissioned in 1932 to produce a work to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic Society he looked back to the happiest seven years of his childhood spent in the region of Galánta (1885-92) and he recalled particularly the sound of a famous gypsy band that he heard, describing this as 'the first orchestral sonority that came to the ears of the child'.

Galánta is now part of Slovakia, lying about 30 miles east of the capital Bratislava. For several centuries it was part of the Hungarian Kingdom and Hungarian was the main language spoken in the area around the time that the young Kodály spent his idyllic childhood years there. Following the end of the Great War in 1918 the area became part of the new State of Czechoslovakia, and then part of Slovakia after the Velvet Divorce in January 1993.

A book of 'Hungarian Dances after several gypsies from Galánta' was published in Vienna in 1800 and Kodály used this collection for the five main dances featured in this work. They are woven together so that the composition takes on the form of a symphonic poem rather than separate dance movements that might be expected from the title of the work.

Kodály remained fond of the area and returned there in the opening decade of the century together with his friend Béla Bartók, recording the folk songs of local people on primitive phonograph cylinders.

Kodály uses surprisingly modest orchestral forces for this colourful 16-minute work, with just double woodwind, four horns and two trumpets and strings. The percussion is only moderately augmented with the addition of snare drum, glockenspiel and triangle to the standard timpani.

The distinctive Hungarian flavour is announced from the opening bars with the cello theme, repeated a few bars later by solo horn. This slow introduction leads to a cadenza passage for solo clarinet who then announces the first of five dance themes; this first dance acts as a rondo theme, recurring to separate the four subsequent dance themes.

The slightly faster second dance is introduced by flute and piccolo, the third by solo oboe which then leads to a more animated passage for full orchestra before giving way to the return of the first dance.

Strings introduce the fourth dance and this has a marked syncopated rhythm allowing for a further increase in orchestral excitement before yet another interruption: this time the unsteady bass and clarinet theme perhaps suggest the benign influence of alcohol on the merry-makers.

However, they return to full strength for the fifth and fastest of the five dances; this builds up to the final climax, accelerating relentlessly until a sudden bar of silence and a last, loving glance at the first dance; a solo clarinet cadenza takes us to the triumphant conclusion.

Timothy Dowling, March 2022

Liszt originally envisaged the Mephisto Waltz being published together with another scene from Lenau's Faust, 'Night procession'. However, it has since nearly always been performed as a separate item. Liszt prefaced his orchestral score with the following descriptive programme:

'There is a wedding feast in progress in the village inn, with music, dancing, carousing. Mephistopheles and Faust pass by, and Mephistopheles induces Faust to enter and take part in the festivities. Mephistopheles snatches the fiddle from the hands of a lethargic fiddler and draws from it indescribably seductive and intoxicating strains. The amorous Faust whirls about with a full-blooded village beauty in a wild dance; they waltz in mad abandon out of the room, into the open, away into the woods. The sounds of the fiddle grow softer and softer, and the nightingale warbles his love-laden song.'

The Mephisto Waltz was composed in three different versions at around the same time. Firstly, both for solo piano and also as an orchestral work. Thirdly, there is a version for piano duet, this being a transcription of the orchestral version. The solo piano version is forbiddingly virtuosic. The orchestral version, which we are hearing at this concert, is the most frequently performed version. Alan Walker, in his three-volume biography of the composer, points out that Liszt was the first composer to write a true harp glissando (in the concluding section Mephisto Waltz No. 1), inspired by the virtuoso harpist Jeanne Pohl, who played with the orchestra in Weimar. Liszt was equally at home in writing for solo piano, and also for the symphony orchestra. He was particularly well placed to develop his orchestral skills during his years at Weimar (1848-1861).

Timothy Dowling, July 2024

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Opus 21 (1830)

First performed 17th March 1830 in Warsaw, published in Paris by Maurice Schlésinger in 1833

1. *Maestoso*

2. *Larghetto*

3. *Allegro vivace*

Chopin's two piano concertos were both products of his twentieth year, the F minor being premiered on 17th March and the E minor on 11th October 1830 in Warsaw. However, their publication dates meant that they were numbered incorrectly: the E minor Concerto was the first to be published (in Paris in 1833) and so was numbered No. 1. His F minor Concerto was eventually published in Leipzig in 1836 and accordingly titled No. 2.

Both concertos reflect the 20-year-old's infatuation with the 20-year-old singer Konstancja Gładkowska, a passion that seemingly remained undeclared, possibly until his farewell concert prior to his departure from Warsaw in November 1830.

He wrote to his closest friend Tytus Wojciechowki on 3rd October 1829:

'... I, perhaps unfortunately, already have my own ideal, which I have served faithfully, though silently, for half a year; of which I dream, to thoughts of which the *Adagio* of my Concerto belongs... but how dismal it is to have no one to go to in the morning to share one's griefs and joys; how hateful when something weighs on you and there's nowhere to lay it down... You know to what I refer. I often tell to my pianoforte what I want to tell to you.' (extracts from *Frédéric Chopin's Letters*, translated by E.L. Voynich, 1931, Dover publication, 1988)

Although he was writing here about the F minor Concerto it is clear that she was also the inspiration for the E minor Concerto, and particularly the central *Romanze*. He wrote to Tytus later on 15th May 1830: 'The *Adagio* of the new concerto is in E major. It is not meant to be loud, it's more of a romance, quiet, melancholy; it should give the impression of gazing tenderly at a place which brings to the mind a thousand dear memories. It is a sort of meditation in beautiful spring weather, but by moonlight. That is why I have *muted* the accompaniment.'

In 1828 the composer Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) visited Warsaw and heard the 18-year-old Chopin perform and he was greatly impressed by the 18-year-old's pianistic skills. Hummel's concertos provided a model for Chopin; he also learnt much from the concertos of Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) whose *Adagio* from his Piano Concerto No. 3 (1821) appears to anticipate the *Larghetto* in Chopin's F minor Concerto. And so, the early Romantic concertos were the major influence for Chopin rather than the classical Viennese school of Mozart and Beethoven.

It is not surprising that Berlioz, whose *Symphonie fantastique* dates from the same year as Chopin's piano concertos, was critical of Chopin's orchestration. This is particularly an issue in the long first movement where Chopin employs the structure of sonata-form, orchestral passages staking out the four bare marking points of the edifice: firstly, the long orchestral exposition at the start (which has been severely cut in some performances without arguably affecting the essential qualities of the movement), then two passages to mark the end of the soloist's exposition and the start of the recapitulation (allowing time for the soloist to take breath), and finally a short coda passage to close the movement. Otherwise, the orchestra simply provides a subdued background texture to support the soloist's virtuoso and poetic performance: all the musical material is pianistically inspired. The musicologist Donald Tovey has criticised Chopin's limitations in handling larger structures, pointing out that we only have the bare bones of Sonata-form without the dynamic energy displayed by his contemporaries Mendelssohn and Schumann. But – and this is a 'But' with a capital 'B' – the pianist as protagonist is the sole purpose and lifeblood of Chopin's concertos. His works therefore need to be heard as the prime examples of the romantic concerto, the heirs of Hummel and Moscheles and also first cousins to the lyrical outpourings of Italian opera's *bel canto* style, as exemplified by Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835).

The central *Larghetto* remains the heart and soul of the Concerto. We can best appreciate here the possible influence of Bellini's lyrical gifts – his long-breathed melodies – on his younger contemporary. Bellini's opera based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (*The Capulets and the Montagues*) also premiered in 1830.

Like the finale of the E minor Concerto, the F minor Concerto's lively Rondo finale celebrates outdoor life in Poland and the music is more folk-based than the earlier movements. Chopin's orchestral writing shows more confidence in the finale and comes much closer to partnership with the soloist, rather than what Berlioz described as 'a cold, almost superfluous accompaniment' in the earlier parts of the Concerto.

A solo horn call signals the start of the coda, with a transformation of the mood as Chopin allows light to flood the scene. We are happily taken into the brighter world of F major for the concluding bars. It is little wonder that this effervescent and joyous music ensures a positive reception.

Just three weeks after the premiere of the E minor Concerto in Warsaw in October 1830 Chopin left Poland, travelling via Breslau, Dresden and Prague to Vienna. He travelled with his friend Tytus Wojciechowski who returned to Warsaw when they heard news of the uprising in Warsaw on their arrival in Vienna on 29th November. Chopin was stranded in Vienna for the next six months but finally obtained a visa to travel to Paris. He left Vienna on 20th July and travelled via Munich and Stuttgart, arriving in Paris in September 1831. The E minor Concerto triumphed in the French capital and Chopin later performed the work to help raise funds for the burgeoning number of Polish refugees in the French capital following the Warsaw uprising; Berlioz and Liszt were amongst enthusiastic supporters in the early audiences. It was also positively appreciated by the foremost pianist of the day in Paris, Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785-1849). Kalkbrenner offered Chopin the opportunity of becoming his student,

but on the condition that he sign a contract for three years; Chopin wisely declined his offer but tactfully dedicated the E minor Concerto to him. Chopin was well aware of his own abilities as a pianist and realised that he did not need to be bound to a musician who was later to become merely a footnote in musical history.

Apart from the *Andante spianato et grande polonaise brillante*, Opus 22, that he had started composing in 1830 and completed in 1834, Chopin concentrated on music for solo piano for his remaining years and so avoided further orchestral forays.

Timothy Dowling, July 2024

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) Mephisto Waltz

Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke: Erster Mephisto-Walzer
(The Dance in the Village Inn: First Mephisto Waltz)

Based on a version of the Faust legend by Nicolaus Lenau (1836).

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Timothy Dowling, July 2024

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Symphony No. 7 in A major, Opus 92 (1812)

1. *Poco sostenuto – Vivace*

2. *Allegretto*

3. *Presto – Assai meno presto – Presto – Assai meno presto – Presto*

4. *Allegro con brio*

'*The apotheosis of the dance*' (Richard Wagner)
It is rare to read a programme note on Beethoven's Seventh Symphony that does not include Wagner's surprisingly brief, but apt description. The reason for the ubiquitous presence of this quote is obvious once the first movement's *Vivace* is established: rhythm is the key to this celebration of energy and life.

After completing his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies in 1808, Beethoven concentrated on other music forms for the next couple of years, although the theme of the second movement *Allegretto* does feature in an 1806 sketchbook for possible inclusion in the third of his *Razumovsky* String Quartets. Beethoven, however, opted for another *Andante con moto, quasi Allegretto* (also in A minor) for the Opus 59 no.3 Quartet and saved the famous theme for the next six years for inclusion in the Seventh Symphony.

Beethoven started work on the Seventh Symphony in September 1811 and continued through the winter months 1811-1812, completing the main work by April 1812; he then immediately embarked on the Eighth Symphony, apparently with the plan of producing a trio of symphonies, but he only completed two symphonies in the end. Beethoven sent a copy of the Seventh to his friend Archduke Rudolf in July 2012. Problems in producing the orchestral parts meant that the first private performance was delayed until 21st April 1813 at Archduke Rudolf's palace; it was not until 8th December 1813 that it received its first public performance in Vienna, nearly five years after the premiere of his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies.

The Seventh shared the stage with the premiere of *Wellingtons Sieg*, the famous 'Battle Symphony', Opus 91, celebrating the allies' triumph over Napoleon at the Battle of Vitoria; indeed, the Seventh was in danger of being overshadowed by this popular crowd-pleaser. But in the event, the Seventh was also well received – the composer and violinist Louis Spohr was amongst other eminent musicians who participated in the performance. Spohr reported that the *Allegretto* had to be encored both at the premiere and the follow-up performance on Sunday 12th December. However, Friedrich Wieck (father of Clara Schumann), who was present during rehearsals for the premiere, expressed another viewpoint: he said that the consensus amongst players and other listeners was that Beethoven must have composed the Symphony whilst under the influence of alcohol.

Beethoven had introduced trombones into his symphonic orchestra for the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, premiered in 1808, but he returned to Haydn's standard classical orchestra for the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies: strings, plus pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets and timpani.

For the private performance at Archduke Rudolf's palace, Beethoven stated that there should be a minimum of four first and four second violins, four violas, two cellos and two double-basses, but these numbers would have been substantially enlarged for the public performances.

The *Poco sostenuto* opening is the only slow(ish) music in the entire Symphony and serves as an ideal introduction to the first movement proper,

culminating in 62 (if my counting is correct!) high dominant Es as the flute finally states the joyous theme that then dominates the proceedings. Its infectious 6/8 rhythm carries us right through to the exultant ending.

Neither the Seventh nor Eighth Symphony contains a slow movement, this being replaced by *Allegretto* movements in both works. The Eighth features the famous tick-tock joke, all over in less than four minutes; the Seventh's *Allegretto* is one of the best known movements of all Beethoven's works; its relentless rhythm was memorably described by Hector Berlioz as 'a dactyl followed by a spondee, tirelessly sounded, now in three parts, now in just one, then in all the parts together' (*Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 11 February 1838).

It is important to stress that this is an *Allegretto* and accordingly needs a good walking pace. Schubert, another great walker (and wanderer), was clearly inspired by this movement, although he took his time to assimilate its spirit into his instrumental compositions. Listen also for the characteristic opening wind chord that identically closes the circle as the final sound to be heard in this brief interlude.

It is interesting that William Kinderman in *Beethoven* refers to the *Trio* section of the third movement as the 'still centre of the Symphony. Its majestic, yet almost static character...' But this is surely not what Beethoven intended, even if it sounds so apt a description of a performance such as Otto Klemperer's account of the Symphony. The score actually marks this passage 'Assai meno presto', thus suggesting only a relatively small

change of pace from the opening *Presto*. Having been brought up on the Otto Klemperer and Herbert von Karajan recordings of the Seventh, it was a real shock to hear Arturo Toscanini's earlier version with the *Trio* taken at twice their speed. However, Toscanini's approach is closer to Beethoven's intention; it is notable that Klemperer omits the repeats in the *Trio* section, as otherwise the movement would have ended up being the longest of the Symphony! The Klemperer account is still a marvel to hear – the Symphony hewn from granite, as solid as a rock, a truly monumental experience. However, this is a case where the metronome reveals a different story, where the dance continues and the energy never relaxes.

Ideally, we should move without a break into the *Finale* in order to maximize the shock of the sudden downward shift from the third movement's F major to the opening of the fourth movement in E major before Beethoven works his way back to the home key of A major. Beethoven has beguiled us with a variety of rhythms for the first three movements but nothing can prepare us for the energy of the *Finale*, Beethoven as Dionysus reincarnated. The *Allegro con brio* drives ever forward, with barely a pause for breath, towards its intoxicating climax. The coda is underpinned by a powerful ostinato, with cellos and basses providing the swaying but sure foundation for the final triple *fortissimo* peroration. Sir Henry Wood memorably described the cellos and basses 'sawing away regardless' during this triumphant passage.

Timothy Dowling, July 2019

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason

Piano

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason is already captivating audiences with her “maturity in performance and interpretation” (Fraser). She made her debut on the international scene at the BBC Proms, performing the Florence Price Concerto and was heralded by the press as “demonstrating musical insight, technical acuity, and an engaging performing persona” (Music OMH). The piece was then recorded with Chineke! and Leslie SUGANANDARAJAH, released on Decca Classics in Summer 2023. The Guardian hailed her performance, stating that ‘Price could have no more persuasive an advocate’.

Now an exclusive Sony Classical Artist, Jeneba’s debut solo album will be released in Spring 2025, and showcases her wide-ranging curiosity for repertoire, with works by Chopin, Debussy and Scriabin alongside Margaret Bonds, William Grand Still and Florence Price.

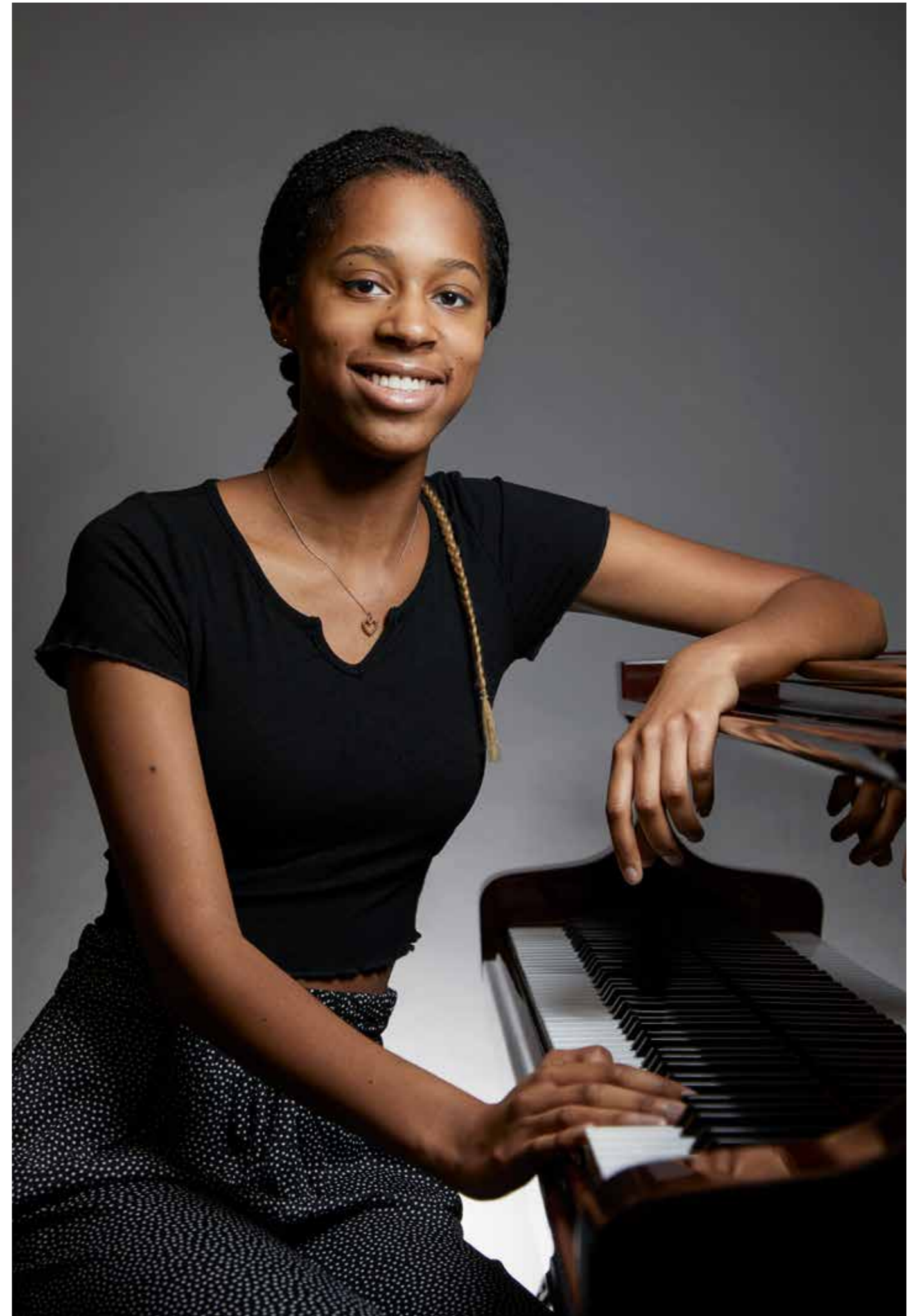
Jeneba starts her 24/25 season with a recital at London’s Wigmore Hall, where she is now a regular guest. An avid recital performer, she has performed in venues such as the Zurich Tonhalle, Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, amongst others, as well as the Lenzburgiade, Rheingau, Cheltenham, Bradfield and Lamberhurst festivals.

Throughout the season, Jeneba will make her debuts with the Oslo Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and Orchestre National de Lyon, working with conductors such as Vasily Petrenko, Marta Gardolinska or Dinis Sousa. Other recent and forthcoming highlights include an extensive UK tour with the Hungarian Radio Symphony

and Riccardo Frizza, a European tour with Chineke!, debuts with the Detroit Symphony, Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Belgrade Philharmonic, and BBC Philharmonic. She also recorded Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 6 with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra and Howard Griffiths, which was released on Alpha.

Jeneba was a Keyboard Category Finalist in BBC Young Musician 2018, winner of the Murs du Son Prize at the Lagny-Sur-Marne International Piano Competition in France, 2014, and The Nottingham Young Musician 2013. She was also winner of the Iris Dyer Piano Prize at The Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy, where she studied with Patsy Toh.

Jeneba was named one of Classic FM’s ‘Rising Stars’ and appeared on Julian Lloyd Webber’s radio series in 2021. She has also been featured on several television and radio programmes, including Radio 3, In Tune, The BAFTAs, The Royal Variety Performance, the documentary for BBC4, Young, Gifted and Classical, and the Imagine documentary for BBC1, This House is Full of Music. She has recorded for the album, Carnival, with Decca Classics.



Riccardo Frizza

Conductor

Riccardo Frizza is one of the Italian leading conductors of his generation, particularly devoted to the nineteenth century Italian operatic repertoire and Belcanto, as well as to the late romantic symphonic repertoire. He is Chief Conductor of the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Budapest and Music Director of the Donizetti Festival in Bergamo.

Frizza is a regular guest to the major international opera houses such as Opéra National de Paris, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, New York Metropolitan Opera, the Liceu in Barcelona, Teatro Real in Madrid and at the Bayerische Staatsoper. In Italy, he regularly conducts at Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Teatro Regio in Turin, La Fenice in Venice, Opera di Roma, Teatro San Carlo, the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, the Verdi Festival in Parma and the Macerata Opera Festival.

Orchestral engagements have seen him step onto the podium at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Gewandhaus in Leipzig and the Dresden Sächsische Staatskapelle and conduct the Orchestra Sinfonica "Giuseppe Verdi" di Milano, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra.

More recent and forthcoming highlights include a new production of *Ballo in Maschera* at the Liceu, *Le Villi* at the Teatro Regio di Torino, *Maria Stuarda* at Teatro San Carlo and "The three Queens" Gala at the Teatro Real featuring Sondra Radvanovsky. Frizza will also be performing a concert version of Bellini's *I Puritani*, featuring Lisette Oropesa, and leading the Dresdner Philharmonie Orchestra; and Verdi's *Aida* with the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra.

On the symphonic stage, Frizza will make his debut leading the Vienna Tonkünstler Orchestra at the Musikverein as well as a Spain tour with Euskadiko Orkestra.

During the current season, Riccardo Frizza will also celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Hungarian Radio Orchestra.

Engagements in recent years have included *Norma* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Rigoletto* at the Liceu in Barcelona, *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Teatro la Fenice and in Bilbao, *I Puritani* in Budapest, *Falstaff* at the Parma Verdi Festival and in Dallas, *Il pirata* at Teatro alla Scala and *Anna Bolena* in Rome.

Since 2017, Riccardo Frizza has been music director at the Donizetti Opera Festival in Bergamo, where in 2018 he conducted *Il castello di Kenilworth*, and in 2019 *Lucrezia Borgia* for the first performance of the new critical edition of the score published by Ricordi and Fondazione Teatro Donizetti, *Marin Faliero* and *Belisario* in 2020 and *L'elisir d'amore* in 2021, *La Favorite* in 2022. In 2023 he will again inaugurate the Donizetti Opera conducting *Il diluvio universale*. His Donizetti repertoire includes *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Linda di Chamounix*, *Maria Stuarda* (at the Metropolitan Opera with Sondra Radvanovsky), *La fille du régiment*, *Lucrezia Borgia* (at the San Francisco Opera with Renée Fleming), *Roberto Devereux* (again in San Francisco), and *Anna Bolena* (at the Opera di Roma).

In June 2021 he won the Ópera XXI award for best music director. The accolade was awarded by Ópera XXI, the association of theatres, festivals and opera companies of Spain, for the outstanding *Lucia di Lammermoor* which was staged for ABAO Bilbao Ópera in October 2019.

In March 2022, his appointment as Chief Conductor of the Hungarian Radio Symphony



Maestro Frizza rehearsing

Orchestra and Choir was announced during their concert in which he conducted Mahler's Second Symphony. He returned to the podium in Hungary in 2023 to conduct an extremely wide-ranging repertoire, showcasing the qualities of the Hungarian orchestra and choirs entrusted to his baton. The symphonic year in Budapest will come to a close on 19th December with the jubilee concert to celebrate the orchestra's 80th anniversary.

Noteworthy productions from recent and upcoming seasons include *L'amico Fritz* and *Rigoletto* at the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, *The Three Queens* concert with Sondra Radvanovski at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, as well as *Il Trovatore* and *Un ballo in maschera*. *La Sonnambula* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the concert entitled "Ritorno a Napoli" at the Toscanini Festival in Parma, the Belcanto Gala and *Anna Bolena* at the Teatro San Carlo, *La Cenerentola* at the Teatro Real in Madrid, the inauguration of the Donizetti Opera in Bergamo with *L'elisir d'amore*, "Omaggio a Caruso" at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, concerts with the Haydn Orchestra and *La clemenza di Tito* at ABAO Bilbao Opera. *The Three Queens* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Maria Stuarda* at the Teatro San Carlo, *Lucia di*

Lammermoor at the New York Metropolitan Opera, *Simon Boccanegra* during the Festival Verdi at the Teatro Regio di Parma and *La Favorite* at the Donizetti Opera. *La Traviata* at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, *Ernani* at La Fenice, the *Verdi Requiem* at the Duomo in Milan for the "Manzoni 150" celebrations, *I Vespri siciliani* at the Teatro Regio in Turin, *Madama Butterfly* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia and *Rigoletto* at the Rome Opera Caracalla Festival. *I puritani* at the Dresdner Philharmonie, *Le villi* at the Teatro Regio in Turin.

He has an impressive discography, especially in the field of opera. In 2022 three CDs by artists of the caliber of Sondra Radvanovsky (*The Three Queens*, Pentatone), Nadine Sierra (*Made for opera*, Deutsche Grammophon) and Javier Camarena (*Signor Gaetano*, Pentatone) were released and all well-received by the international press. The DVD of Mascagni's opera *L'amico Fritz* (Dynamic, 2023) with the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino was also well-received.

Riccardo Frizza (born 1971 in Brescia) studied at the Milan Conservatory and the Accademia Chigiana di Siena



Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

The Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra has a strong, 80-year long historical base in Hungary and is well known in other countries globally. Please have a close look below at the overview of the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Over the 80 years since the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra was founded, with countless concerts in Hungary and abroad, and its radio, TV and CD recordings of almost the entire symphony and oratorio repertoire, it has won its place in the vanguard of symphony orchestras. The world's leading critics are unanimous in praising its evenness of sound, its flexibility, and its patronage in promoting and recording contemporary Hungarian music. The Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra has since the beginning been the central figure in the annual Budapest Wagner Days.

History

Composer-pianist *Ernő Dohnányi* was appointed principal music director of Hungarian Radio in 1931. It was he who initiated the founding in 1936 of a chamber orchestra that can be considered the core of the later symphony orchestra. Dohnányi invited the most talented musicians to join the group. The Radio Orchestra gradually grew into a symphony orchestra, and it seemed natural that they should want to play to the audience not only over the radio waves, but in concerts too. The group debuted as a symphony orchestra on 7 October 1943, conducted by Ernő Dohnányi.

After the war composer *László Lajtha* was entrusted with reorganizing the orchestra. He invited János Ferencsik and Tibor Polgár to assist him as colleagues. The first radio broadcast following the war (1 May 1945) began with music: the Radio Orchestra was born again. From 1949 *János Ferencsik* was at the helm of the orchestra as principal conductor, but two years later, due to his burgeoning duties at the opera house, he passed the baton to *László Somogyi*.

In 1954 *Sviatoslav Richter* gave his first orchestral concert in Hungary, and the Radio Orchestra was conducted by Vilmos Komor. In parallel with this the orchestra played a decisive role in enriching operatic life in Hungary. They made the first entirely Hungarian-language recording of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, and this was followed by Bizet's *Carmen*. Opera recordings continued to be a priority task later too.

After the 1956 revolution, almost everything had to be started over. Many musicians, including the principal conductor *László Somogyi*, had emigrated. In the final month of the year, with *János Ferencsik*, *Vilmos Komor*, and *Miklós Lukács* conducting, the orchestra recorded works by its original founder, Ernő Dohnányi, whose works had been banned in Hungary for over ten years. In the 1957-58 season Tamás Bródy took over the orchestra as permanent conductor, but in the first tour in Western Europe (Paris and Brussels) György Lehel and Miklós Lukács conducted. To play with the Radio Orchestra, or to conduct it, became



an attractive artistic challenge. A few names from the late 1950s: *David Oistrakh*, *Ruggiero Ricci*, *Lazar Berman*, *Emil Gilels*, *George Georgescu*, *Pierre Dervaux*, and most especially: *Lamberto Gardelli*, with whom the orchestra began what was to be a long and extremely fruitful working relationship.

At the end of 1964 *György Lehel* became the orchestra's principal conductor, and he remained director - conductor until his death in 1989. He did a great deal for new Hungarian music: between 1950 and 1988 he conducted the orchestra in premieres of 219 works by 58 Hungarian composers. In concerts given with the Hungarian Radio Choir (founded in 1950) the orchestra played more and more of the most important oratorios and choral works of the repertoire, often shining in the most exacting, demanding music. In 1971 the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra was the first Hungarian orchestra to tour in North America. It was conducted by *György Lehel*, and *Zoltán Kocsis*, *Dezső Ránki*, and *Ferenc Tarjáni* performed as soloists. One of the 26 concerts was given in Carnegie Hall in New York. 'The Budapest Orchestra altogether a first-class orchestra, up to the best standards anywhere. It is a supple and homogeneous group, with proficient firstdesk players', wrote Harold C. Schonberg.

In 1974 the Hungarian Television held the first international conducting competition, and the conductors who won first and second prizes, *Ken-Ichiro Kobayashi* and *Ádám Medveczky* later became frequent guests of the orchestra. During the "Lehel era" as the group rose to become one of the leading orchestras, it hosted the world's most sought - after conductors. Aswell as those mentioned earlier, in Hungary and abroad it worked with conductors like *Claudio Abbado*, *John Barbirolli*, *Paul Capolongo*, *Antal Doráti*, *Péter Eötvös*, *Wolfgang Gönnenwein*, *István Kertész*, *Igor Markevitch*, *Charles Münch*, *Giuseppe Patané*, *Karl Richter*, *Helmuth Rilling*, *Gennady Rozhdestvensky*, *Paul Sacher*, *Peter Schreier*, *Sir George Solti*, *Leopold Stokowski* and *Carlo Zecchi*.

After the death of György Lehel, work continued under the musical direction of *András Ligeti*, then in 1993 the world-famous pianist and conductor Tamás Vásáry took the helm of the orchestra.

Tamás Vásáry led the orchestra until 2004. Later *László Kovács* was first conductor, and *Ádám Fischer* was the principal musical director. Fischer initiated and leads the Budapesti Wagner Days, which has garnered international attention, and started in 2006 with an acclaimed performance of *Parsifal*. By 2013, Wagner's centenary year,



all of his large operas had featured in the programme. In 2008 *Stephen d'Agostino*, an American with close links to the Hungarian music scene, submitted a successful bid for the directorship of the Radio Orchestra, and he occupied the post from 2009 to 2011. Then a dynamic, innovative leader was sought for the orchestra, and the choice fell on composer-conductor Gergory Vajda. His artistic programme placed an emphasis on modern music.

Currently the President-Conductor is *Tamás Vásáry*, Chief Conductor is *Riccardo Frizza*, Permanent Conductor is *János Kovács*.

Maestro Riccardo Frizza was appointed as Chief Conductor of the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra starting from the 2022/2023 concert season. Maestro Frizza being the music director of the Donizetti Opera Festival in Bergamo, is one of the most highly acclaimed conductors of his generation and a regular guest at Italian and international theatres and festivals such as l'Opéra de Paris, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York Metropolitan, Bayerische Staatsoper, Teatro alla Scala, Teatro Real, Rossini Opera Festival, Gran Teatre del Liceu, the Parma Verdi Festival, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester and the Dresden Sächsische Staatskapelle.

In March 2022, his appointment as Chief Conductor of the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Choir was announced during their concert in which he conducted Mahler's Second Symphony. He returned to the Hungarian podium in 2023 to conduct works by Puccini, Fauré, Rossini, Debussy, Rodrigo and Prokofiev, Mahler, R. Strauss and Berlioz.

We celebrated the 80th anniversary of the establishment of our Orchestra on 19 December, 2023. Remembering the Orchestra's first concert 80 years ago, Tamás Vásáry has chosen to conduct the very same Liszt work, while János Kovács has selected an exceptional Mendelssohn masterpiece, Psalm 42. Finally, there was a chance to wonder at the infinite possibilities of the grand orchestral sound in the Richard Strauss programme symphony 'A Hero's Life' conducted by Riccardo Frizza.

From the season 24/25 Gábor Káli conductor became the music director and artistic director of the Hungarian Radio Art Groups. Coming from the same Hungarian musical tradition as Dohnányi, he focuses on helping the Hungarian Radio Art Groups to keep their special sound and the tradition way of musical thinking.

ORCHESTRA LIST

VIOLIN 1

Vilmos OLÁH
Livia Ilona LŐRINCZY
Ilona BÚZA
NOVÁK Jánosné
Ibolya Lilla BODÓ
Andrea IGAZ
Noémi RADVÁNYI
Péter Pál KOVÁCS
Balázs CSONKA
Lili SOMOGYI
Ádám DANKÓ
Edina PINKERT

VIOLIN 2

László NYÁRI
Ildikó FODOR
Nóra TÓTH
Miklós BALOG
Ádám RADICS
Gabriella TÓTH
Katalin UJLAKI
Noémi HUSZÁR
Anna GÁL-TAMÁSI
Anna WINDBERG

VIOLA

János Gergely FEJÉRVÁRI
Levente János FÜLÖP
György FAZEKAS
Viktória KISS
Krisztina SZABÓ
Lilla BIRÓ-ÉRSEK
Katalin Emese MADÁK
Gergő FAJD

VIOLONCELLO

Árpád AMIRÁS
Márton BRAUN
Zoltán Attila CSEH
Selja SIMON
Flóra MATUSKA
Zsolt PUSKÁS

DOUBLE BASSES

Csaba FERVÁGNER
Dávid CSUTI
Gábor NAHAJ
Dániel LAJCSIK

FLUTE

Rebeka DRAHOS
Izabella NAGY
Imre KOVÁCS

OBOE

András CSIZMADIA
Melinda KOZÁR

CLARINET

János SZEPESI
Mátyás KATRIN

BASSOON

Zsanett PFUJD
Péter Dániel VEDRES

HORN

Dávid FRETÝÁN
János József KEVEHÁZI
János SZOKOLA
Bence MÉSZÁROS

TRUMPET

Szabolcs KOCZUR
Balázs István PECZE
János KIRSCH

TROMBONE

Róbert Tibor KAIP
András SÜTŐ
Miklós Gusztáv CSÁTHY

TUBA

Róbert VIDA

PERCUSSION

Bertalan UR
Dániel SOMODI
György HALMSCHLAGER

HARP

Kornélia Matild ORBÁN

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Tünde MEGYERI
orch. personnel manager
György IGRIC
artistic director
Nikolett Szabina NYIRO
manager of communications

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