



ROYAL  
PHILHARMONIC  
ORCHESTRA

LIVE IN CONCERT

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# BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA

Benjamin Britten's lively fugue and variations introducing the instruments of the orchestra, based on a memorable theme by Henry Purcell.

*Thursday 13 August 2020, 3pm BST – Facebook Live*  
*Friday 14 August 2020, 4pm BST – YouTube Premieres*

**ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**

Conductor and Narrator: **ALEXANDER SHELLEY**

Leader: **DUNCAN RIDDELL**

The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra appears courtesy of **Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited**

Produced and edited by **Matthew Knight**  
Creative coordinators: **Patrick Flanagan** and **Sali-Wyn Ryan**



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# ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

President: Mrs Aline Foriel-Destezet

Music Director Designate, August 2020: Vasily Petrenko

Principal Guest Conductor: Pinchas Zukerman

Principal Associate Conductor: Alexander Shelley

Permanent Associate Conductor: Grzegorz Nowak

As the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) approaches its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2021, its mission to enrich lives through orchestral experiences that are uncompromising in their excellence and inclusive in their appeal, places the RPO at the forefront of music-making in the UK. Performing approximately 200 concerts each season and with a worldwide audience of more than half-a-million people, the Orchestra embraces a broad repertoire that enables it to reach the most diverse audience of any British symphony orchestra. Whilst artistic integrity remains paramount, the RPO is unafraid to push boundaries and is equally at home recording video game, film and television soundtracks and working with pop stars, as it is performing the great symphonic repertoire.

The RPO collaborates with the most inspiring artists and looks forward to welcoming its new Music Director, Vasily Petrenko, in September 2021. Vasily Petrenko will join a roster of titled conductors that includes Pinchas Zukerman (Principal Guest Conductor), Alexander Shelley (Principal Associate Conductor) and Grzegorz Nowak (Permanent Associate Conductor).

Cadogan Hall in London has been the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's home since 2004. Here it performs an annual season of concerts, many of which are subsequently toured to its seven principal residency venues. In addition, the Orchestra promotes more than forty-five concerts each season at partnership venues across the country, several of which are in areas where access to live orchestral music is very limited. In London, the Orchestra also promotes a season of symphonic concerts at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall and a popular series at the iconic Royal Albert Hall, where it has recently been appointed as the Hall's Associate Orchestra.

As a respected cultural ambassador, the RPO enjoys a busy schedule of international touring, performing in the world's great concert halls and at prestigious international festivals. This season's touring highlights include visits to Belarus, Slovakia and a three-week tour of the USA.

The RPO is recognised as being the UK's most in-demand orchestra, an accolade that would have pleased Sir Thomas Beecham, who founded the RPO in 1946. His mission was to lead a vital revival of UK orchestras after World War II and form an ensemble that comprised the finest musicians in the country. The Orchestra

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has since attracted a glittering list of principal conductors, including Rudolf Kempe, Antal Doráti, Walter Weller, André Previn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yuri Temirkanov, Daniele Gatti and Charles Dutoit.

The RPO aims to place orchestral music at the heart of contemporary society, collaborating with creative partners to foster a deeper engagement with communities to ensure that live orchestral music is accessible to as inclusive and diverse an audience as possible. To achieve this, in 1993 the Orchestra launched RPO Resound, which has grown to become the most innovative and respected orchestral community and education programme in the UK and internationally. The programme delivers bespoke, pioneering education, community and talent development projects to a wide range of participant groups, including homeless people, children, young people and stroke survivors, always with the overarching objective to leave a lasting legacy.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has always been entrepreneurial and in 1986 it was the first UK orchestra to launch its own record label. The RPO has gone on to embrace advances in digital technology and now achieves nearly thirty million downloads of its recorded music each year. The Orchestra is increasingly active online ([www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk)) and on social media (@rpoonline) providing audiences with the opportunity to engage with the RPO and enjoy 'behind-the-scenes' film clips and photographs.

Passion, versatility and uncompromising artistic standards are the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's hallmarks, and as it looks forward to an exciting future with its new Music Director, Vasily Petrenko, it will continue to be recognised as one of the world's most open-minded, forward-thinking and accessible symphony orchestras.

## THE ORCHESTRA

### FIRST VIOLINS

**Duncan Riddell**

Tamás András

Sulki Yu

Shana Douglas

Esther Kim

Joana Valentinavičiute

Kay Chappell

Anthony Protheroe

Sophie Mather

Rosemary Wainwright

Judith Templeman

### SECOND VIOLINS

**Andrew Storey**

Elen Hâf Rideal

David O'Leary

Jennifer Christie

Charlotte Ansbergs

Jennifer Dear

Peter Graham

Stephen Payne

Charles Nolan

Sali-Wyn Ryan

### VIOLAS

**Abigail Fenna**

Liz Varlow

Ugne Tiškutė

Esther Harling

Jonathan Hallett

Triona Milne

### CELLOS

**Richard Harwood**

Jonathan Ayling

Chantal Webster

William Heggart

Rachel van der Tang

Naomi Watts

Anna Stuart

### DOUBLE BASSES

**Benjamin Cunningham**

Ben Wolstenholme

Mark O'Leary

### FLUTES

**Emer McDonough**

Joanna Marsh

### PICCOLO

**Helen Keen**

### OBOES

**John Roberts**

Tim Watts

Patrick Flanagan

### CLARINETS

**Sonia SIELAFF**

Katy Ayling

### BASSOONS

**Helen Storey**

Fraser Gordon

### FRENCH HORNS

**Nico Fleury**

Kathryn Saunders

James Pillai

Finlay Bain

### TRUMPETS

**Mike Allen**

Adam Wright

### TROMBONES

**Matthew Gee**

Matthew Knight

Rupert Whitehead

### BASS TROMBONE

**Josh Cirtina**

### TUBA

**Kevin Morgan**

### TIMPANI

**Matt Perry**

### PERCUSSION

**Stephen Quigley**

Gerald Kirby

### HARP

**Suzy Willison-Kawalec**

### *Managing Director*

*James Williams*

### *Deputy Managing Director*

*Huw Davies*

### *Finance Director*

*Ann Firth*

### *Concerts Director*

*Louise Badger*

### *Director of Press and*

*Marketing*

*Chris Evans*

### *Director of Community*

*and Education*

*Ruth Currie*

### *Orchestra Managers*

*Jane Aebi*

*Kathy Balmain*

### *Librarian*

*Patrick Williams*

### *Stage and Transport Manager*

*Steve Brown*

# ALEXANDER SHELLEY

## Conductor and Narrator

Alexander Shelley succeeded Pinchas Zukerman as Music Director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra (NACO) in September 2015. The ensemble has since been praised as 'an orchestra transformed ... hungry, bold, and unleashed' (*Ottawa Citizen*) and Alexander Shelley's programming credited for turning the orchestra 'almost overnight ... into one of the more audacious orchestras in North America' (*Maclean's Magazine*).

Born in London in October 1979, Alexander Shelley, the son of celebrated concert pianists, studied cello and conducting in Germany and first gained widespread attention when he was unanimously awarded First Prize at the 2005 Leeds Conductors' Competition, with the press describing him as 'the most exciting and gifted young conductor to have taken this highly prestigious award. His conducting technique is immaculate, everything crystal clear and a tool to his inborn musicality.' In August 2017, he concluded his tenure as Chief Conductor of the Nürnberger Symphoniker, a position he held since September 2009. The partnership was hailed by press and audiences alike as a golden era for the orchestra, where he transformed the ensemble's playing, education work and international touring activities.

In January 2015, he assumed the role of Principal Associate Conductor of London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, with whom he curates an annual series of concerts at Cadogan Hall and tours both nationally and internationally.

Described as 'a natural communicator both on and off the podium' (*Daily Telegraph*), Alexander Shelley works regularly with the leading orchestras of Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australasia, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal.

Alexander Shelley's operatic engagements have included *The Merry Widow* and Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* (Den Kongelige Opera); *La bohème* (Opera Lyra /National Arts Centre), *Iolanta* (Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen), *Così fan tutte* (Opéra National de Montpellier), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera North) in 2015 and he led a co-production of Harry Somers' *Louis Riel* in 2017 with the NACO and Canadian Opera Company.

He was awarded the ECHO Prize in 2016 for his second Deutsche Grammophon recording, *Peter and the Wolf*, and both the ECHO and Deutsche Grunderpreis in his capacity as Artistic Director of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen's *Zukunftslabor*, a visionary project of grass-roots engagement, which uses music as a source for social cohesion and integration. Through his work as Founder and Artistic Director of the Schumann Camerata and their ground-breaking *440Hz* series in Dusseldorf, and through his leadership roles in Nuremberg, Bremen and Ottawa, inspiring future generations of classical musicians and listeners has always been central to Alexander Shelley's work. He has led the German National Youth Orchestra on several tours of Germany and works with many thousands of young people a year in outreach projects. He regularly gives informed and passionate talks on his programmes, as well as numerous interviews and podcasts on the role of classical music in society.



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# PROGRAMME NOTES

## THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA, OP.34

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

Creative genius, opera supremo, virtuoso pianist, gifted conductor, inspired recording artist and visionary festival organiser – Benjamin Britten was a musical polymath without equal in the history of British music. While still in his mid-teens, he won a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music, after which one of the examiners enquired indignantly, 'What is an English public schoolboy doing writing music of this kind?' Aged just twenty-four, he composed his *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, a blistering masterpiece for string orchestra that once and for all announced the arrival of a major new talent.

Britten spent the early part of the Second World War in North America, where his life-long friendship with the great English tenor Peter Pears blossomed. It was after returning to England that in 1945 he completed the work that would prove a turning point in British music: the opera *Peter Grimes*. Riding on a wave of popular success, he produced a set of orchestral variations on a theme by his favourite English composer Henry Purcell (1659–1695) that would win instant popularity as *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. Yet whatever personal success he may have enjoyed, Britten above all wanted to feel useful – to be a vital part of everyday society, as witnessed by a 1964 newspaper article in which he wished for his music to be 'accepted as an essential part of human activity and human expression' and that he longed to be 'of value to the community'.

Subtitled 'Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Henry Purcell', *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* was originally composed as the soundtrack to a 1946 Crown Film Unit feature intended to introduce children to the various instruments of the orchestra. Composed in just two weeks, Britten based this bracingly dynamic score on a *Rondeau* from Purcell's incidental music to *Abdelazer* (or *The Moor's Revenge*) by Aphra Behn, whose keen involvement in the frequently racy Restoration theatre scene led to her being accused of 'lewdness'. On hearing that the Ministry of Education had given the work its blessing, Britten retorted: 'I never really worried it would be too sophisticated for the kids – it is difficult to be that for the little blighters!'

Britten follows the full orchestral statement of the main theme with a playful series of variations that presents the instruments of the orchestra in their proper families, working down from the highest-pitched instruments. Thus he opens with the woodwind (piccolo and flute, oboes, clarinets, bassoons) and continues with the strings (violins, violas, cellos, double basses, harp), French horns, brass (trumpets, trombones and bass tuba) and percussion, and then brings everyone back in order again for a majestic fugal finale.

Programme note © Julian Haylock

### ALEXANDER SHELLEY WRITES:

'This brand new virtual performance is all about reaching out from the isolation of our homes. We want to reinforce to our existing audiences and also introduce new audiences to the excitement, passion, skill and

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craftsmanship involved in a symphony orchestra. Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* is the perfect vehicle for this and with an orchestra like the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in full force, each musician a master of their trade, giving their all and playing to the maximum of their abilities, I think we have created something really amazing that we hope you enjoy.

'I've written a new narration for the *Young Person's Guide*, one that hopefully speaks a little bit more to the times we're in right now. I begin by introducing what is about to happen, and then you hear the Orchestra start to play Henry Purcell's famous theme before Britten's variations unfold. For those listeners who don't know Britten or Purcell, I suggest you imagine Ed Sheeran writing a cover of a John Lennon song! It's that sort of level of a meeting of minds. Britten was most definitely one of the greatest composers in the world in the Twentieth Century, an extraordinary British icon, and the same is true of Henry Purcell for his time. As we go through the piece, I present each section of the orchestra and try to give a sense of their idiosyncrasies.

'It is incredibly accessible music for all and I think that's exactly why Britten picked this Purcell theme, as well. It has a lovely shape to it – when you listen to it, it sticks in the ear and you'll hum it all day long! The melody makes a clear, succinct statement, and what Britten does is he brilliantly puts that melody into the different sections (the strings, woodwind, brass and percussion) and he gives an example of what each of those groups together sounds like before he breaks it down to individual instruments. After having done this, he builds his fugue, which is a stroke of genius. Starting in order with every instrument that he has introduced, the music builds to a glorious finale. As we approach the end, he does something very clever with metre, where he has half of the orchestra playing in one time signature and the other in a very different feel above it. It sounds like some magnificent edifice rising from under water; it is this moment that makes your hair stand on end. It is astonishing music.

'Even though it is extraordinary that through the wonders of modern technology we can put together a virtual Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, with everybody performing from their homes, and an orchestral that sounds really great, we are all acutely aware that there is no substitute for the live experience. We can't wait to bring this exceptional piece to a concert hall and celebrate it in front of a live audience soon.'

# MEET THE ORCHESTRA

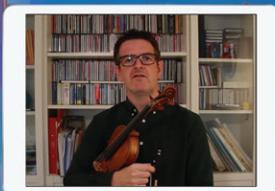
Get a behind-the-scenes insight and hear from the talented musicians who have created this very special performance of Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, as they introduce their instruments and explain how their section comes together to produce this magnificent work.



FLUTES & PICCOLO



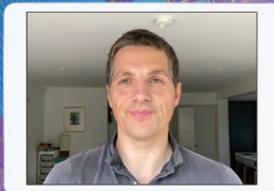
CLARINETS



VIOLINS



CELLOS



TRUMPETS



TROMBONES & TUBA



PERCUSSION

Watch all seven videos now at [WWW.RPO.CO.UK/YPG](http://WWW.RPO.CO.UK/YPG) or follow online with [#RPOYPG](https://twitter.com/RPOYPG).



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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoyed this performance from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

These are difficult times for all of us, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is no exception. With 90% of our income generated from the sale of concert tickets and with no performances since the middle of March, the COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact, both on the Orchestra's finances and the income of its freelance musicians. And with the continued restrictions, it's unlikely the RPO will be able to perform to live audiences in the foreseeable future.

But resilience is one of the RPO's values and we remain optimistic and resolute in our determination to emerge from this crisis, continuing to serve our communities, bringing the thrill and excitement of live orchestral music to the widest possible audience.

**Your support at this critical time would be hugely appreciated. Together, we can ensure that the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra continues making music that kindles the fires of the imagination and inspires all of us towards a positive and more hopeful future.**

With grateful thanks for your continued friendship and support,  
from everyone at the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**

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