



ROYAL
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA

LIVE IN CONCERT

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EIN HELDENLEBEN (A HERO'S LIFE)

Richard Strauss' electrifying symphonic masterpiece

Wednesday 8 April 2020 from 4pm BST – YouTube Premieres

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in association with
Southbank Centre, Google Arts & Culture and YouTube

Conductor: **VASILY PETRENKO**
Music Director Designate, August 2020

Leader (Solo violin): **DUNCAN RIDDELL**

A Black Swan Film and Video Production

**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**



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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 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 concerts 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) 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
Joana Valentinaviciute
Kay Chappell
Esther Kim
Anthony Protheroe
Marciana Buta
Erik Chapman
Patrycja Mynarska
Sophie Mather
Rosemary Wainwright
Geoffrey Silver
Imogen East
Robin Wilson

SECOND VIOLINS

Andrew Storey

David O'Leary
Jennifer Christie
Charlotte Ansbergs
Jennifer Dear
Peter Graham
Stephen Payne
Manuel Porta
Sali-Wyn Ryan
Siân McInally
Victoria Lyon
Nicola Hutchings
Colin Callow
Joanna Watts

VIOLAS

Abigail Fenna

Liz Varlow
Ugne Tiškutė
Chian Lim
Esther Harling
Jonathan Hallett
Triona Milne
Andrew Sippings
Clive Howard
Helen Picknett
Pamela Ferriman
Laura Galletta

CELLOS

Richard Harwood

Jonathan Ayling
Chantal Webster
Roberto Sorrentino
Jean-Baptiste Toselli
William Heggart
Rachel van der Tang
Naomi Watts
Anna Stuart
Tom Roff

DOUBLE BASSES

Sebastian Pennar

David Gordon
Benjamin Cunningham
Ben Wolstenholme
Mark O'Leary
Josie Ellis
Cathy Colwell
Martin Lüdenbach

FLUTES

Emer McDonough

Joanna Marsh
Holly Melia

PICCOLO

Emilia Zakrzewska

OBOES

John Roberts

Timothy Watts
Patrick Flanagan
Katie Bennington

COR ANGLAIS

Patrick Flanagan

CLARINETS

Katherine Lacy

Massimo di Trollio

E-FLAT CLARINET

Thomas Verity

BASS CLARINET

Katy Ayling

BASSOONS

Daniel Jemison

Helen Storey
Graham Hobbs

CONTRABASSOON

Fraser Gordon

FRENCH HORNS

John Ryan

Kathryn Saunders
Philip Woods
Max Garrard
Andrew Budden
Finlay Bain
Hugh Seenan
Michael Kidd
Richard Ashton

TRUMPETS

James Fountain

Adam Wright
Mike Allen
Toby Street
Katie Smith

TROMBONES

Matthew Gee

Rupert Whitehead

BASS TROMBONE

Joshua Cirtina

EUPHONIUM

Matthew Knight

TUBA

Kevin Morgan

TIMPANI

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VASILY PETRENKO

Conductor, *RPO Music Director Designate, August 2020*

In 2021, Vasily Petrenko will take up the position of Music Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Currently, he holds the position of Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (appointed in 2013–2014), Chief Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (since 2009 as a continuation of his period as Principal Conductor which commenced in 2006), Chief Conductor of the European Union Youth Orchestra (since 2015) and Principal Guest Conductor of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia (since 2016). He served as Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (2009–2013), and Principal Guest Conductor of the Mikhailovsky Theatre, where he began his career as Resident Conductor (1994–1997).

Vasily Petrenko was born in 1976 and started his music education at the St Petersburg Capella Boys Music School – Russia's oldest music school. He then studied at the St Petersburg Conservatoire where he participated in masterclasses with such luminary figures as Ilya Musin, Mariss Jansons and Yuri Temirkanov.

He has worked with many of the world's most prestigious orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (Rome), St Petersburg Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, NHK Symphony and Sydney Symphony orchestras. He has appeared at the Edinburgh Festival, Grafenegg Festival and made frequent appearances at the BBC Proms. Recent years have seen a series of highly successful North American debuts, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, and the San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, Montréal and St Louis Symphony orchestras.

Equally at home in the opera house, and with over thirty operas in his repertoire, Vasily Petrenko made his debuts in 2010 at Glyndebourne Festival Opera (*Macbeth*) and the Opéra de Paris (*Eugene Onegin*), and in recent seasons has also conducted at the Mikhailovsky Theatre, Zürich Opera and Bayerische Staatsoper. In Autumn 2019 he made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, in a production of *The Queen of Spades*.

Vasily Petrenko has established a strongly defined profile as a recording artist. Amongst a wide discography, his Shostakovich symphony cycle for Naxos Records with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra has garnered worldwide acclaim. With the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, he has recently released cycles of Scriabin's symphonies and Strauss' tone poems.

In September 2017, Vasily Petrenko was honoured with the Artist of the Year award at the prestigious annual Gramophone Awards, one decade on from receiving their Young Artist of the Year award in October 2007. In 2010, he won the Male Artist of the Year at the Classical BRIT Awards and is only the second person to have been awarded Honorary Doctorates by both the University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University (in 2009), and an Honorary Fellowship of the Liverpool John Moores University (in 2012), awards which recognise the immense impact he has had on the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the city's cultural scene.



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PROGRAMME NOTES

EIN HELDENLEBEN (A HERO'S LIFE), OP.40

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

- I. **Der Held (The Hero)**
- II. **Des Helden Widersacher (The Hero's Adversaries)**
- III. **Des Helden Gefährtin (The Hero's Courtship)**
- IV. **Des Helden Walstatt (The Hero's Battlefield)**
- V. **Des Helden Friedenswerke (The Hero's Works of Peace)**
- VI. **Des Helden Weltflucht und Vollendung
(The Hero's Retreat from the World and Fulfillment)**

Despite being one of the most phenomenally gifted composers of the last hundred years, Richard Strauss' position in music's hall of fame nevertheless continues to be hotly debated. The scorching virtuosity of his early tone poems can hardly be held in doubt, yet for all their monumental skill and imagination, there are some who continue to find their occasionally bombastic sense of overkill simply too much of a good thing.

Sir Thomas Beecham once mischievously recollected: 'I spent a couple of days on the train with a German friend of mine. We amused ourselves by discovering how many notes we could take out of *Ein Heldenleben* and leave the music essentially intact. By the time we had finished we had taken out 15,000!' But perhaps the most levelheaded assessment of Strauss' art was made by the great man himself just a year before he passed away. The English conductor, Norman del Mar, overheard him call out during a rehearsal in the Royal Albert Hall: 'No! I know what I want, and I know what I meant when I wrote this! After all, I may not be a first-rate composer, but I am a first-class second-rate composer!'

Rather less controversial was Strauss' legendary prowess on the podium. He made the minimum of gestures when conducting – a mere flick of the wrist was enough to inspire the most hair-raising of fortissimos. As for the left hand, he considered its rightful place was in 'the waistcoat pocket from which it should only emerge to restrain or to make some minor gesture for which in any case a scarcely perceptible glance should suffice.' Strauss' ten 'golden rules' for budding young conductors contain such gems as: 'You should not perspire when conducting; only the audience should get warm; never look at the brass – it only encourages them... if you can hear them at all, they are too loud,' and 'When you think you have reached the limits of prestissimo, double the pace!'

Strauss' irrepressible ego – no prizes for guessing who the 'hero' of tonight's work really is – was the principle motivation behind *Ein Heldenleben*, a semi-autobiographical edifice, which recalls some of his previous works as well as painting an affectionate portrait of his wife and taking waspish swipes at his critics along the way. Claude Debussy (as 'Monsieur Croche, dilettante-hater') was present at a Paris performance of *Ein Heldenleben* under the composer's baton: 'One must admit that the man who composed such a work at so continuously high a pressure is very nearly a genius,' was his famous put-down. Getting his own back, Strauss once remarked dejectedly after attending a performance of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*: 'I am a musician – and I hear nothing.'



Ein Heldenleben is structured in six continuous sections, opening with **The Hero**, a swaggering, indomitable musical self-portrait, brimming with uncontrollable self-confidence and bravado, which climaxes in a shattering fortissimo chord. Next, Strauss portrays his enemies – carping critics, charlatans, and so on – in the **The Hero's Adversaries**, during which the noble main theme asserts itself with increasing strength against a background of sniping catcalls from the sidelines. This leads directly into **The Hero's Courtship**, led by the principal violin soloist. At first the object of his affections seems light-hearted and flirtatious, but she finally succumbs to our hero's advances in a luxuriously extended orchestral swoon.

Distant trumpet fanfares announce **The Hero's Battlefield**, during which the various members of the orchestra metaphorically don combat gear, as the doubters attempt unsuccessfully to throttle the Hero and his Beloved into submission. The Hero overcomes his enemies with a breathtaking display of instrumental machismo, and then reflects upon his achievement in **The Hero's Works of Peace**, as excerpts from Strauss' past triumphs – *Don Juan*, *Tod und Verklärung*, *Don Quixote*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, et al – float in and out of the textures. The work concludes with **The Hero's Retreat from the World and Fulfillment**, in which the dying strains of the enemies' baying deep down the tubas is soothed by the magical strains of the solo violin, leading to a valedictory ending tellingly reminiscent in mood of Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*.

Programme notes @ Julian Haylock

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoyed this performance from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

As a Registered Charity the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) is largely reliant on the income it generates via the sale of tickets for its concerts and the donations it receives from benefactors. The cancellation of so many RPO concerts in the coming weeks and months due to Covid-19 is financially devastating for the Orchestra and it is inevitable that we will become more reliant on philanthropic support and charitable donations.

We are enormously grateful for all or any donation that you are able to give, which can be made via the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's website www.rpo.co.uk where a **Donate** button is located on the top of the page. Alternatively, you can contact Huw (daviesh@rpo.co.uk) who will be happy to help.

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



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