

Registered Charity No. 1144327

Orpheus in the Underworld Overture

Jacques Offenbach

Capriccio Espagnol

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Symphony No 6 “Pathétique”

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Saturday 6 December 2025, 7.30pm

Yolande Paterson Hall, St Helen and St Katharine School

Conductor: Caroline Hobbs-Smith | Leader: Misha Yakovlev

Introduction

We warmly welcome you to the Yolande Paterson Hall for this December concert of the TVYO, featuring the wonderful music of Offenbach, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky – and we give a particular welcome to parents and family of 24 new members of the orchestra. Since the last concert in April, there have been some exciting developments at TVYO, including establishing, in September, the 'TVIO' - the Thames Vale Intermediate Orchestra, whose membership has already grown to 40 players with conductor Helen Eccleston. The TVYO also had its first appearance at the Music for Youth National Festival at Birmingham Symphony Hall in July, joining with musicians from Music Flood to create the Mighty Orchestra conducted by Helen and Caroline. This followed the 300-strong Mighty Orchestra's concert at the Oxford Town Hall in April.

Tonight, we will be announcing, and fundraising for, a new bursary fund. We expect to use this fund for several purposes including: to give financial help where it is needed with members' subscriptions; to provide supplementary instrumental tuition to help promising players move up to the next level of playing; and to support players travel costs for attendance at future TVYO or TVIO concerts outside the Thames Vale area. As our plans and ambitions for TVYO become bolder, it will be important to embed fundraising as part of our regular business.

We thank our conductors Caroline and Helen and all the instrumental coaches for everything they give to the TVYO and TVIO – in general they are willing to give far more time and energy than we ask them to, and they are the lynchpin and inspiration of the TVYO's music making. We also wish to thank all the volunteers and committee members who regularly give their time to help out at rehearsals and concerts – this orchestra would not function without you! Finally, thanks to parents and family members for your time and commitment in supporting and encouraging the members of the orchestra, without which this concert would not have been possible. We hope you enjoy the concert, and will share in a sense of pride in what the orchestra have achieved this term, in preparing for this exciting and challenging programme.

Tim Softley, Chair TVYO Trust (December 2025).



The players, coaches, musical director
and the committee wish you a
Merry Christmas

Overture: Orpheus in the Underworld (1858)

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880)

Jacques Offenbach is widely regarded as the pioneer of French operetta, his witty satire and irresistible melodic writing inspiring generations of composers and shaping the course of modern musical theatre. When *Orpheus in the Underworld* burst onto the scene in 1858, its mischievous send-up of classical mythology scandalised polite society, gleefully overturning the lofty seriousness of French grand opera. Offenbach's gods argue with each other, his mortals misbehave, and high-and-mighty ideals collapse in a flurry of laughter and dance.

The overture, compiled after the opera's success, captures this irreverence in a dazzling curtain-raiser. It begins in mock-tragic tones, hinting at operatic grandeur before slipping effortlessly into Offenbach's trademark sparkle. Themes tumble over one another in a

whirl of orchestral brilliance, culminating in the now-iconic *Galop infernal* - the can-can that has come to epitomise sheer musical exuberance.

Yet beneath the comedy and captivating melodies lies meticulous craftsmanship. Offenbach's orchestration glitters with colourful precision and an exact sense of theatrical pacing. The result is a miniature masterclass in musical wit: clever, irresistibly charming, and still as fresh as ever.



THÉÂTRE DE LA GAITÉ
Tous les Soirs

ORPHEEZ aux ENFEERS

OPÉRA-FÉERIE
en 4 Actes, 12 Tableaux
Paroles de
M. CREMIEUX



The Orchestra

Violin

Misha Ardkov
Harry Bolton
Karsten Cheung
Evie Fan-Chiang
Brian Chu
Jayalakshmi Hill
Tom Hollindale
Thérèse Kelly
Sam Lee
Rex Li
Damon Lo
Crystal Luo
Rebecca Mason
Ryan Ng
Elizabeth Nga
Rose Nichols
Oliver Oross
Samrakshini Ramesh
Sumadhyuti Ramesh
Emilia Scaber
Tamara Smythe
Emily Wilson
Branden Wong
Xinyi Xu
Andrey Yakovlev
Misha Yakovlev

Harp

Alexa Lee

Viola

Malaika Adlung
Kwame Abayateye
Richard Cookson *
Rowan Davis-James
Saidee Ip *

Cello

Rebecca Bales
Robbie Blundel
Martha Bolton
Adrian Chiu
Chi Hoi Chow
Mia Fan-Chiang
Jonny Foster
Vincent Law
Alastair Mucklow
Daniel Phillips
Ursula Smith
Shaun Wang
Kayden Wong
Tilly Wyn-Jones

Bass

Shenara De Silva
Leo Gonzalez-Merckx
Samuel Price
Charlotte Wilson
Ian Zhang

Flute

Leo Chek
Horace Fong
Sahana Vaidyanathan
Mia Xie
Simone Yu

Clarinet

Maximilian Lakhal-Littleton
Bethan Platt
Toby Price
Daria Simpson
Jerry Wong

Oboe

Ting-Kai Pai
Alexander Regardsoe
Irfan Sampurno
Clara Schwabe
Alice Wilson

Bassoon

Aiden Aldis-Evans
Amelia Bruce
Anna Zlodre *

Horn

James Anderson
Simon Body
Akira Johnston
Laurence Maggs
Theo Woolley

Trumpet

Gabriel Bosse Chitty
Joshua Crisp
Jonathan Jacques
Clement Kelly
Reuben Russell

Trombone

Oliver Claydon
James Rayment
Alex Somerville

Tuba

Andrew Claxton *

Percussion

Edmund Kimber *
Leo Lumer-Raybould
Katharina Pongratz

* *Guest player*

Capriccio Espagnol, Op. 34 (1887)

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)

Few composers understood the orchestra as intimately as Rimsky-Korsakov. A former naval officer turned composer, he possessed an extraordinary ear for colour and his orchestrations became models for generations to come. In *Capriccio Espagnol*, he conjures a picture of Spain - not as it truly is, perhaps, but as the Romantic imagination wished it to be: sunlit, rhythmic, and alive with dance.

Originally conceived as a violin fantasy, the work grew into a five-movement orchestral showcase. The opening *Alborada* bursts with the bright energy of morning; a seductive set of variations follows, leading to the lyrical *Scena e canto gitano*, rich with solo cadenzas. The *Fandango asturiano* finale crowns the work in a blaze of rhythmic vitality, recalling earlier themes in a joyful orchestral flourish.

Rimsky-Korsakov called *Capriccio Espagnol* “a virtuoso piece for orchestra,” and indeed, it offers nearly every player a moment to shine. Beneath its exotic brilliance lies something distinctly Russian: a fascination with vibrant colour, bold rhythm, and the transformative magic of orchestral sound.



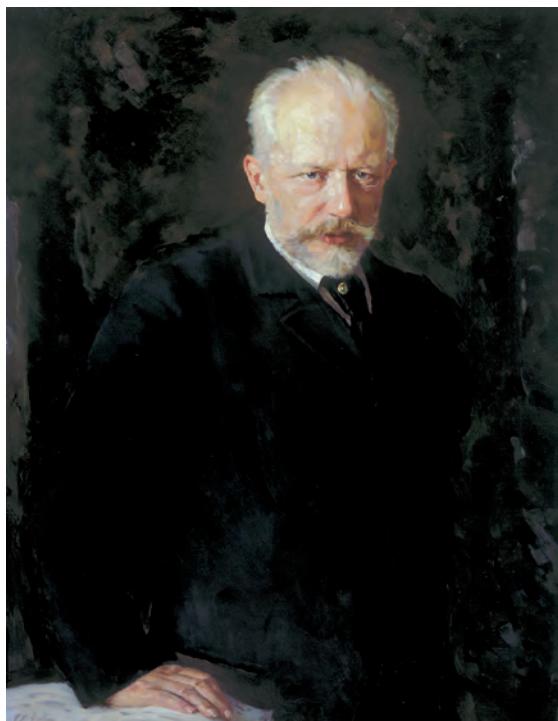
Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, “Pathétique” (1893)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony stands as one of the most personal and profound utterances in all symphonic music. He called it “the best thing I ever composed - or shall compose,” and it was to be his final completed work. He conducted the première in St. Petersburg on 28 October 1893; nine days later, he was dead. The closeness of these events has inspired endless speculation, but the *Pathétique* remains above all a masterpiece of musical expression rather than mere autobiography.

The first movement unfolds as a deeply felt drama, its sighing main theme of haunting beauty contrasted with passages of radiant lyricism, emotional turbulence and uplifting warmth. The second movement, a graceful waltz in the unusual rhythm of 5/4, dances elegantly but with a subtle unease, as if the floor itself were unsteady. The third movement - a brilliant march full of energy and triumph - is so exhilarating that audiences at the première applauded before realising the tragedy still to come.

For the finale, Tchaikovsky does the unthinkable: instead of a jubilant conclusion, he ends with a slow movement of profound desolation. The music seems to fade from life itself, its heartbeat faltering into silence. It is an ending that refuses consolation - one that still feels, even now, painfully human.



About TVYO

Thames Vale Youth Orchestra welcomes talented and committed young musicians in full-time school attendance, and offers them the opportunity to work together regularly, studying and performing large-scale orchestral works at the highest possible standard and in an enjoyable atmosphere.

The Orchestra's origins lie in the Abingdon Holiday Orchestra Christmas courses started by Frances Kitching in the late 1950s. By 1969 these had led to the foundation of the North Berks Youth Orchestra, and the orchestra took its present name in 1974. Today it is an independent youth orchestra with players coming from schools in both the state and independent sector. Several recent members have played in the National Children's Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra. Amongst former orchestra members, who have moved on to distinguished careers, are the conductors Daniel Harding and Sian Edwards.

Rehearsals take place on term-time Monday evenings at Larkmead School, Abingdon, from September to May. A major feature of the orchestra's work is the period of sectional tuition with specialist instrumental tutors at the start of most rehearsals. The players are usually aged 12 – 18 in full time education, and entrance is by audition. Performances are given twice a year and the concerts feature the Orchestra's wide repertoire.

TVYO is managed by the Thames Vale Youth Orchestra Trust, a Registered Charity, No.1144327. For further information about the Trust please visit our website: www.tvyo.org.uk



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Directors & Tutors

Since its foundation, the Thames Vale Youth Orchestra has benefitted from the services of distinguished local musicians as its Musical Directors and Instrumental Tutors. Their enthusiasm and support is gratefully acknowledged here.

Musical Directors

Antony le Fleming: 1969 – 1973
Bryan Kelly: 1973 – 1975
Robert Secret: 1975 – 1976
John Melvin: 1976 – 1992
Michael Stinton: 1992-2023
Caroline Hobbs-Smith: 2023-

Instrumental Tutors

Violin: PJ
Violin: Caroline Churchill
Viola: Rachel Byrt
Cello: Valerie Findlay
Double Bass: Stuart Murray
Woodwind: Victoria Medcalf
Horn: Sue Cooke
Brass: Nigel Somerville
Percussion: Chris Hadland
Harp: Jenny Hill
Oboe: Jo Rhind-Tutt
Trumpet: Sasha Canter

How to join us

To become part of this great orchestra you need to play to at least Grade 5 standard, and we ask you to undertake a short audition. The audition process is very straightforward: we would like you to perform two short contrasting pieces that you have prepared in advance, and we ask you to do a short piece of sight-reading. String players may also be asked to play some scales. An accompanist will be available to support you – just remember to bring the piano music with you. Auditions to join the orchestra are held in June although we are keen to hear from potential member at any time of the year and auditions can be provided by video. Interested players should contact the Admissions Secretary, Carolyn King, at carolyn2king@btinternet.com or on 01235 522774. Information is also on the website: **www.tvyo.org.uk**

Next Concert

Saturday 21 March 2026

Silk Hall, Radley College

Academic Festival Overture
Johannes Brahms

L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2
Georges Bizet

Firebird Suite (1919)
Igor Stravinsky