



150 YEARS 1870 2020

DONATION
PROGRAMME

RACHMANINOFF SYMPHONY No. 2

ROSSINI
WILLIAM TELL
OVERTURE

BROWN
HARDENED BY
SUN AND AIR

Conductor **ROBERT BAXTER**

SAT 27 MAY 2023 7.30^{PM}
NEW AUDITORIUM
GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL

Welcome

Good evening! And welcome to our final concert of the season, the last of our delayed 150th anniversary celebrations. A full season of wonderful music in superb venues, after two years of very strange goings-on has been the best recipe for us returning to making music together. And we hope tonight's programme will be a fitting finale to a great season.

The concert starts with a well-known **Rossini** overture and our main work is **Rachmaninoff's** Symphony No 2. We are also re-visiting **Joshua Brown's** *Hardened by Sun and Air* – a work he wrote especially for us in 2022 as part of the **Adopt A Music Creator*** scheme and which we premiered in this venue last October. Joshua is very interested to hear it being played again alongside the Rachmaninoff as he was very influenced by that composer's work when he was writing for us.

And it's always a pleasure for us to have **Robert Baxter** conducting us, especially as he is increasingly sought after by professional groups, including Scottish Ballet and the RSNO. Our rehearsals with him are always hard work, but we hope you will agree that it has paid off!

Thank you all for coming along tonight and for your support throughout the season. We wish you all a very happy summer!

Ann Westwood, President



*The Adopt a Music Creator project is run by Making Music, in partnership with Sound and Music, and the 2022 scheme was funded by the PRS Foundation and the Philip and Dorothy Green Music Trust.

The premiere of *Hardened by Sun and Rain* was recorded live and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 In Concert on Tuesday 2 May 2023, available on BBC Sounds at 1h 46m

Conductor **ROBERT BAXTER**

Robert Baxter is a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and as a trumpeter works with every professional orchestra in Scotland. He has also performed with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, Tenerife Symphony, New London Consort, Manchester Camerata, Bruckner Orchestra Linz and Flanders Symphony. He studied conducting with Ilan Volkov and Kristian Kluttig and has conducted the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra. He recently made his full debut conducting the RSNO and will be conducting them again in June and next season.



Robert is a regular guest conductor for Scottish Ballet and has conducted Cinderella, Dextera, Snow Queen, Nutcracker and most recently The Scandal at Mayerling. He has been MD for the film composer Craig Armstrong in an evening of the composer's music. He has also been MD for the Scottish Concert Orchestra conducting in the SSE Hydro

and for Celtic Connections in a televised concert from the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall with the Chieftains and Kris Kristofferson.

Robert is currently MD of the Dunbartonshire Concert Band and as guest conductor he has conducted many leisure-time groups. He also enjoys teaching at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Junior Department and the Music School of Douglas Academy and is currently the chair of the Scottish Schools Orchestra Trust and the Artistic Director of a new rehearsal and performance arts venue in Bearsden, Kessington Hall. He was delighted to receive the Best Instrumental Musical Director award for 2021 from Making Music last year.

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Composer **JOSHUA BROWN**

Joshua completed his PhD in composition with Professor Philip Grange at the University of Manchester in 2018. From 2019-2020 he was Artist in Residence at the John Rylands Research Institute, and a London Philharmonic Orchestra Young Composer, and since 2021 he has held the post of Lecturer in Composition at the University of Manchester.

His music often explores a dichotomy of precision processes alongside elements of chance, and embraces the unique qualities individual musicians bring to a piece of music, so that each composition feels like a premiere every time it is played.

www.joshuabrowncomposer.com



PROGRAMME

GIOACHINO ROSSINI

(1792 – 1868)

OVERTURE TO *WILLIAM TELL*

Was ever an overture so much better known than the opera it prefaced? Composed in 1829, *Guillaume Tell* was the last of Rossini's 39 operas and also the last of several written or revised for performance in French, in Paris. With nearly four hours of music and demanding a large cast, chorus and *corps de ballet*, it was conceived for an opera house with significant technical resources. Inevitably, productions often made cuts; but there have been occasional almost complete revivals in recent decades. The overture is in four sections starting with the charming 'cello quintet, followed by a storm scene. Then an alpine pasture is evoked with beautiful cor anglais and flute solos before the famous concluding "cavalry charge" galop.

JOSHUA BROWN

(1989 –)

HARDENED BY SUN AND AIR

The musical material for *Hardened by Sun and Air* is derived from a melody that I composed for a Christina Rossetti poem.

When I was first working with the orchestra in Glasgow, I decided to use this melody to create a piece that would evoke qualities of the late Romantic repertoire that the members of the orchestra were so enthusiastic about, such as long flowing irregular phrases, richly ambiguous harmonies, and shifting orchestral colours. The musical structure overall has a tone poem-esque feeling of an unfolding landscape that presents the melody in a number of contrasting ways inspired by these qualities. This approach was coupled with a desire to dismantle, conceal, and obscure the nature of the original melody from the beginning, and to reveal parts of it bit by bit, section by section, until the seemingly simpler textures of its evolving revelation became a cacophony. JB

INTERVAL

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

(1873 – 1943)

SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN E

1. *Largo leading to Allegro moderato*
2. *Scherzo: Allegro molto*
3. *Adagio*
4. *Allegro vivace*

Rachmaninoff was born into a well-connected family whose financial fortunes however were in decline. Early musical talent was fostered, but in his early teens in St. Petersburg he proved a lazy student. A move to the Moscow Conservatory instilled a sense of focus and he developed rapidly thereafter. At 18 he completed his first Piano Concerto, later revised. He always regretted that it did not become better known and it was to be the last of his works that he recorded (1941). The disastrous première of his First Symphony (1897) triggered a depression which blighted him for three years. He emerged with the help of a sensitive physician and amateur musician Dr Nikolai Dahl who enabled the composer's triumphant return to creativity with his 2nd Piano Concerto of 1901, still his most popular. The second symphony came in 1906, mostly composed in Dresden: Rachmaninoff was already becoming a cosmopolitan figure touring internationally. His career developed with three strands, as concert pianist (one of the greatest of his, or indeed any, age), composer and conductor. After the 1917 revolution he was based in the USA and Switzerland.

Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony is one of the last of the Russian romantic tradition. Once seldom performed, and cut even then, it became a repertory work thanks to the advocacy of interpreters like Previn and Gibson. On paper, it shouldn't work: the four movements all have essentially the same four-crotchets-to-the-bar time signature and even without the first movement exposition repeat, performances take around 55

minutes. But the listener barely notices this, so skillfully does Rachmaninoff vary the pulse in each movement, and the subdivisions of the beat. A particular characteristic in the outer movements is his tendency to turn it into compound rhythm. A lengthy slow introduction to the first movement introduces various musical ideas later developed. The composer's melodic gift is amply on display as the movement grows. The Scherzo (A minor) has a vigorous *alla breve* variant of the basic rhythm. The sumptuous slow movement (A major) makes full use of Rachmaninoff's sense of orchestral colour and often superimposes duplet and triplet quavers.

The Finale, based in E major, is where Rachmaninoff most insistently all but transforms the rhythm into 12/8 rather than 4/4. This magnificently joyous movement makes a profoundly satisfying conclusion.

Note on 'Hardened by Sun and Air' by Joshua Brown;
all other notes by Alastair Whitelaw, May 2023.



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