



bournemouth  
symphony orchestra

Kirill Karabits Chief Conductor

Concert Programme  
Autumn 2021



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# Mighty Brahms

## Lighthouse, Poole

Wednesday 24 November

**Dedicated with thanks to our  
loyal Members**

## Brahms

Violin Concerto  
38'

Interval

## Carmen Ho

Unforged (world premiere)  
12'

## Schumann

Symphony No.4  
(Original Version)  
28'

## Kirill Karabits

Conductor

## Ning Feng

Violin

## Amy Merchant

Leader

## Martin Handley

Livestream Presenter

All information is correct at the time of going to print. All timings are guidelines only and may differ slightly from actual lengths.

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## Violin Concerto

### Johannes Brahms

Born: 7 May 1833 Hamburg

Died: 3 April 1897 Vienna

1. Allegro non troppo
2. Adagio
3. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace –  
Poco più presto

Brahms composed his Violin Concerto, his opus 77 in the key of D Major, in 1878 while staying at Pörtschach on Lake Wörth in southern Austria. This area provided great inspiration to him, causing him to remark that melodies were so abundant that “one had to be careful not to step on them”.

Brahms sought, but did not always accept, technical advice on the solo part from his friend Joseph Joachim, the greatest violinist of the day. It was Joachim to whom Brahms dedicated the concerto and who gave the premiere in Leipzig, with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the composer conducting, on New Year’s Day 1879.

Even after this performance there was further discussion, and publication was delayed until October 1879. The magnificent first-movement cadenza which Joachim himself composed is the one chosen by the vast majority of performers. However, there are also many fine alternatives by such composers as Reger, Enescu, Busoni and Ysaÿe, and by legendary performers such as Kreisler, Heifetz, and Milstein. In the extremely spacious orchestral introduction to the first movement Brahms presents a wealth of remarkably diverse melodic material, all with seamless continuity.

The material ranges from the relaxed, lyrical character of the opening melody to the assertive, rhythmically jagged theme introduced *forte* by the strings. The multiple repetition of a rapid four-note figure by the upper strings generates tension and heralds the dramatic entry of the violin, which begins with a fiery ascending flourish. As well as restating the themes already heard, now enhanced by wonderfully expressive figuration, the soloist also introduces new material, including a robust theme in chords and a lyrical melody suggestive of a leisurely waltz. Such strong contrasts of material are typical of the concerto as a whole, resulting in a fine balance between energy and lyricism. Although the technical demands upon the soloist are fierce, Brahms never for a moment indulges in virtuosity for its own sake. The first part of the development is relatively subdued but subsequently a tension-building passage initiated by angry trills from the solo violin leads to the triumphant beginning of the recapitulation. Following the cadenza, a serene, dream-like restatement of the opening theme, in the violin's upper register, leads to the emphatic conclusion, marked *animato*.

With great originality Brahms begins the serene *Adagio* with a long paragraph for woodwind only, in which the oboe plays one of his most beautiful melodies. Indeed, the strings are silent in more than a third of the movement, their absence effectively setting the solo violin in greater relief. A passionate minor-key middle section is followed by a varied return of the opening section, in which the soloist now assumes a more accompanying role.

The famous virtuoso Pablo Sarasate was not attracted by Brahms' concerto, objecting to the prospect of standing still for so long in this *Adagio* while the oboe played what he described as "the only proper tune in the work".

The vigorous, good-humoured finale is a splendid example of the Hungarian gypsy influence upon Brahms. This influence, evident in several of his major works, originates from Brahms' youth, when he toured with the Hungarian violinist Reményi in the early 1850s. However, Brahms' long association with the Hungarian-born Joachim was also important. This finale is as rich and varied in melodic material as the first movement, accommodating both the suavely lyrical and the sharply rhythmic. The solo violin immediately introduces the rondo theme, with very energetic accompaniment, and its gentler continuation. After a restatement by the orchestra the soloist then presents the second subject - a vigorous theme in octaves and based on an ascending scale. A delightful new melody - solo violin then oboe - brings contrasting tenderness but the irresistible rhythmic energy gradually returns. Eventually a short cadenza in the form of a descending flourish leads to a coda in which Brahms wittily transforms his main themes. The rondo theme now becomes a jovial march and the second subject assumes a delicate, playful character.

Philip Borg-Wheeler



## Unforged

### Carmen Ho

Born: 2 May 1990 Hong Kong

Carmen Ho is a composer of orchestral, instrumental and choral music who completed her doctorate at Bristol University under the supervision of John Pickard. She has won numerous awards including the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize in 2018 and last year fourth prize in the prestigious Toru Takemitsu Composition Award.

Her music has been performed by, for example, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Singers, the Bach Choir, Riot Ensemble, as well as the Hong Kong and Tokyo Philharmonic orchestras. She has twice participated in the BSO's Composers' Day when her *Maya* (2016) and *Dukkha* (2015/ rev 2018) was performed by Kokoro. Among her other works are *Susurrus* for string orchestra (2021), written for the strings of the BBC Symphony Orchestra which was broadcast on Radio 3 last April conducted by Martyn Brabbins; *Easter Wings* (2021), a commission from the Bach Choir, which was conducted by David Hill in July for a CD to be released next year; and *Unknown* (2020) for solo piano, commissioned by Riot Ensemble, and premiered at the Wigmore Hall in July. This work was shortlisted to represent the UK at this year's World Music Days of the International Society of Contemporary Music.

All in all, Carmen is establishing a formidable reputation among composers of her generation. Apart from her work as a composer, she is also the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Assistant Librarian.

Carmen Ho says of her new piece commissioned by the BSO, that, "*Unforged* for symphony orchestra was composed in autumn 2021 and is dedicated to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. The title of the piece means to me authenticity, originality and possibility. It explores and further develops my approach to creating a sense of endless continuous motion in the music through subtle timbral transformations and harmonic progressions. The piece starts with a bold and explosive opening, and this gradually evolves into a delicate, intimate passages in the percussion over sizzling, shimmery strings emerging at times. Time feels stretched or suspended, and yet building up energy towards a harmonically dense climax of the piece."

Andrew Burn

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## Symphony No.4 (Original version)

### Robert Schumann

Born: 8 June, 1810 Zwickau

Died: 29 July, 1856 Endenich, nr. Bonn

1. Andante con moto – Allegro di molto -
2. Romanza: Andante -
3. Scherzo: Presto -
4. Largo – Finale: Allegro vivace –  
Più vivace - Presto

In its original version this symphony, in the key of D minor, was composed between May and September 1841 and was Schumann's second in order of composition, completed a few months after his First Symphony. It received its first performance on 6 December that year in Leipzig with the Leipzig Gewandhaus conducted by Ferdinand David. The number 4 became attached to it only when Schumann revised the work in 1851, soon after completing his Third Symphony.

This ground-breaking work has a unique status in the repertoire, its highly unified character the result of Schumann's recycling of his melodic material. For instance, the very opening theme reappears in the second movement. Nevertheless, in spite of the numerous cross-references, the four movements are strongly contrasting in character. Many later composers have attempted – not often as convincingly – a comparable symphonic unity.

The version most commonly played today is the revision which Schumann made in 1851. Brahms preferred the first version, whereas Schumann's wife Clara rejected it in favour of the revision. The main reason why some conductors prefer the original is its greater clarity.

In revising the work Schumann decided to double many melodic lines, thereby thickening the texture. It is widely believed that it was the shortcomings of the Düsseldorf Orchestra with which Schumann worked which led him to double the melodic lines for security. Brahms wrote that in this revision the work had “undoubtedly lost much of its charm, lightness of touch and clarity of expression.” Nikolaus Harnoncourt wrote wisely of Schumann’s “spontaneous feelings at the time, the first version is that of the inventor at the moment of invention”. The revision has, in addition to the orchestral doublings, newly written bridge passages – from the introduction into the main body of the first movement, and between the third movement and the finale.

The spacious introduction of the original version culminates in a transitional passage of expectant character, before a short acceleration leads to the main body of the movement, marked *Allegro di molto*. In the short exposition the second main theme is closely related to the first – a device which Haydn often favoured. The long development section, beginning with a surprising *sforzando* E flat, includes two striking new themes, one march-like, the other intensely lyrical. Instead of moving into the traditional recapitulation, Schumann continues to develop and explore new aspects of his themes, before the lyrical melody returns - now more assertive - fully orchestrated in D Major. After an opening woodwind chord of A minor the brief Romanza begins with a simple but haunting melody for oboe and cello.

Then Schumann returns to the symphony’s slow introduction, brighter here as it is a fifth higher in pitch. In the D Major central section a solo violin adds graceful embellishments. This section includes an unobtrusive phrase for trombones – a fine example of Schumann’s orchestral imagination. A varied reprise of the oboe/cello melody concludes the movement.

The scherzo, full of driving energy, has a contrastingly serene Trio section, marked *dolce*, in which the solo violin embellishments from the *Romanze* are recalled at a slightly faster tempo. The Trio returns for a second time, before finally dissolving into a series of chords. The mood darkens for the mysterious *Largo* introduction to the *Finale*, as the first violins recall a phrase from the first theme of the *Allegro di molto* in the opening movement. Then fanfare-like figures increase the tension, which builds towards a new, faster tempo – *Allegro vivace*. A lyrical melody is subsequently introduced as a dialogue between first violins and oboe/horn, then a further *dolce* melody is played by the clarinet. Following dramatic unisons, with upward-rushing scales in the strings, the energetic development section begins with a fugato pervaded by the kind of rhythmic obsessiveness characteristic of Schumann. The unorthodox recapitulation, entirely omitting the first subject, leads eventually to a joyful new clarinet melody – *dolce, molto espressivo*. Two increases of tempo contribute to the jubilant conclusion of this landmark in the history of the symphony.

Philip Borg-Wheeler



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## Kirill Karabits

Chief Conductor

Kirill Karabits has been Chief Conductor of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for thirteen years and their relationship has been celebrated worldwide. Together they have made many critically acclaimed recordings, performed regularly at the BBC Proms and appeared together at London's Barbican Centre as part of the Beethoven celebrations in the 2019/20 season.

Karabits has worked with many of the leading ensembles of Europe, Asia and North America and enjoys a special relationship with the Russian National Orchestra with whom he returned to the Edinburgh Festival in the 2018/2019 season, and more recently embarked on extensive European and North American tours with Mikhail Pletnev which included his New York debut at the Lincoln Center.

Recent highlights include Kirill's debut with the Dallas Symphony, and the Russian

National Youth Symphony Orchestra, as well as return visits to the Minnesota Orchestra, Bamberger Symphoniker, Orchestre National Capitole de Toulouse, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, as well as the BBC Proms with the BSO.

Highlights of the 2021 season included Kirill's debut with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, as well as a number of US debuts. This season sees Kirill return to the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, and the Opéra Montpellier for a production of *Pelléas*. Kirill will also return to the Russian National Orchestra for their tour of the US.

A prolific opera conductor, Karabits has worked with the Deutsche Oper, Opernhaus Zürich (*Boris Godunov*) and Oper Stuttgart (*Death in Venice*), Glyndebourne Festival Opera (*La bohème* and *Eugene Onegin*), Staatsoper Hamburg (*Madama Butterfly*), English National Opera (*Don Giovanni*), Bolshoi Theatre and he conducted a performance

of *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Wagner Geneva Festival. Music Director of the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar from 2016-19, Karabits conducted acclaimed productions of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Tannhäuser* as well as Mozart's *Da Ponte Cycle*.

Working with the next generation of bright musicians is of great importance to Kirill and as Artistic Director of I, CULTURE Orchestra he conducted them on their European tour in August 2015 with Lisa Batiashvili as soloist and a summer festivals tour in 2018, including concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Montpellier Festival.

In 2012 and 2014 he conducted the televised finals of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Award and in 2019 made his debut with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain on a UK tour.

Kirill was named Conductor of the Year at the 2013 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards.



## Ning Feng

Violin

Ning Feng has toured Europe, Asia and Australia with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, he has toured China with many orchestras including the Budapest Festival Orchestra and has also performed several times in Budapest, with the Berlin Konzerthaus Orchester, and with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Other career highlights to date include performances with the Royal Philharmonic, BSO, City of Birmingham Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, LA Philharmonic, National Symphony (Washington), Helsinki Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Russian National Symphony orchestras amongst others. In China, Ning Feng is held in the highest regard, appearing with all the major Chinese orchestras, visiting international orchestras and in recital. In 20/21 he was Artist-in-Residence with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and in the same season he performed the Beethoven

Violin Concerto with Shanghai Symphony, Guangzhou Symphony and China Philharmonic orchestras.

In chamber music Ning Feng has performed many times with Igor Levit at the Schubertiade Festival, and across Germany and London, including both Wigmore Hall and Barbican Centre. He has performed many times at Kissinger Sommer Festival.

Ning Feng records for Channel Classics and his most recent disc 'Virtuosismo' featuring Paganini Violin Concerto No.1 and Vieuxtemps Violin Concerto No.4 was released in September 2019. His earlier recording was of Bach's complete solo works for violin and his discography also includes concerti by Elgar, Finzi, Tchaikovsky, Bruch (Scottish Fantasy), works for violin and orchestra by Sarasate, Lalo, Ravel and Bizet/Waxman, and with the Dragon Quartet works by Schubert, Dvořák, Borodin, Shostakovich and Weinberg.

Born in Chengdu, China, Ning Feng studied at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music with Weimin Hu, the Hanns Eisler School of Music (Berlin) with Antje Weithaas and the Royal Academy of Music (London) with Hu Kun, where he was the first student ever to be awarded 100% for his final recital. The recipient of prizes at the Hanover International, Queen Elisabeth and Yehudi Menuhin International violin competitions, Ning Feng was First Prize winner of the 2005 Michael Hill International Violin Competition (New Zealand), and in 2006 won first prize in the International Paganini Competition.

Ning Feng plays the 1710 Stradivari violin known as the 'Vieuxtemps Hauser', by kind arrangement with Premiere Performances of Hong Kong, and plays on strings by Thomastik-Infeld, Vienna.



# Christmas & New Year with the BSO



## A Baroque Christmas

Laurence Cummings Conductor  
Carolyn Sampson Soprano

Wed 15 Dec Lighthouse, Poole

## Christmas Crackers

Pete Harrison Conductor  
with Iain Mackenzie

Fri 17 Dec Great Hall, Exeter University  
Sat 18 Dec Lighthouse, Poole  
Wed 22 Dec Guildhall, Portsmouth

## Celebration of Christmas Carols

Gavin Carr Conductor  
Bournemouth Symphony Chorus  
Bournemouth Symphony Youth  
Chorus and Children's Chorus

Thur 23 Dec Lighthouse, Poole

## New Year Johann Strauss Gala

Michael Seal Conductor

Sat 1 Jan Lighthouse, Poole  
Fri 7 Jan Town Hall, Cheltenham  
Sat 8 Jan Pavilion, Weymouth

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## Martin Handley

Presenter

Martin Handley is an experienced broadcaster best known for presenting BBC Radio 3's *Breakfast* and *In Concert* programmes. His broadcasting career began at the BBC World Service, where he shared live classical music, including BBC Proms concerts, with listeners around the globe.

Alongside his busy broadcasting career he has coached young singers for the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the National Opera Studio, and the Royal Academy of Music.

A musician and actor, Martin has combined performing musically and vocally for as long as he can remember! He's worked as a répétiteur and conductor in Germany, as head of music and conductor for the Royal Danish Opera, and as chorusmaster and conductor for both English National Opera and Australian Opera.

Martin introduced the BSO's first livestreamed concert in 2020, following the longest break from the stage in the Orchestra's 127-year history.

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The BSO, under its Chief Conductor Kirill Karabits, is known for pushing artistic boundaries, and its ongoing series of music from former Soviet states, *Voices from the East*, continues to gain praise. Boasting an enviable list of principal conductors, since its founder, Sir Dan Godfrey, including Constantin Silvestri, Sir Charles Groves and Marin Alsop, the BSO has given memorable performances worldwide and is broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM.

The Orchestra's inaugural livestreamed series, which featured Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Benjamin Grosvenor and Alina Ibragimova, was widely praised by audiences and critics alike, with the BSO making history as one of the first British orchestras to return to the stage in 2020. Horn player Felix Klieser makes his UK concerto debut as the BSO's Artist-in-Residence, as the Orchestra resumes symphonic touring in 2021.

Committed to new music, the BSO celebrates a triptych of contemporary works written by women in 2021/22, with premiere performances of works by Carmen Ho, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh and Elizabeth Ogonek. During the pandemic, the BSO also gave premieres by composers Shirley J. Thompson and Magnus Lindberg.

The BSO was recognised with the Royal Philharmonic Society's Impact Award in 2019 for its work in improving opportunities for disabled musicians, and BSO Resound – the world's first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major orchestra – continues to receive international attention for igniting change. Challenging access to high-quality music for all, the BSO leads hundreds of events each year, from award-winning work in health and care settings to partnerships with schools and music education hubs.

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