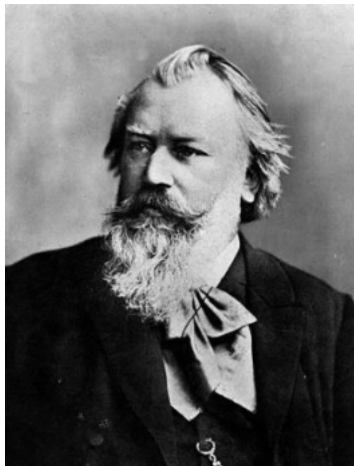




C A M D E N
S Y M P H O N Y
O R C H E S T R A

Spring Concert



Conductor Levon Parikian
Leader John Crawford

Saturday 16th March 2024 at 7.30pm

St Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street, London, NW1 6AX

Tickets: £15 / £12 concessions including programme.

Camden Symphony Orchestra is a registered charity, number 1081563.

Camden Symphony Orchestra

Welcome to our Spring Concert which includes three iconic works we've never performed before. After opening with the grandeur of Brahms' *Tragic Overture*, we have the exuberance of Khachaturian's *Masquerade Suite* including its famous *Waltz*, immediately familiar from numerous film and television soundtracks. After the interval, sit back to be indulged with the great sweeping orchestral melodies of Rachmaninov's *Symphony No. 2*. If you enjoy the concert, please do consider becoming a Friend of the Orchestra - and thank you to all our existing Friends for your continued support.

Camden Symphony Orchestra has been a mainstay of musical life in north London for more than forty years with around seventy regular players. Under our Musical Director Levon Parikian we seek to combine the familiar staples of the classical and romantic repertoire with less well-known and more challenging works. We rehearse weekly and perform three major orchestral concerts a year.

Recent highlights have included symphonies by Dvořák, Vaughan Williams and Florence Price, Holst's *The Planets*, Strauss' *Four Last Songs* and Sibelius' *Finlandia*. Our world premiere performance of *Dream Big for Tomorrow*, a work for improvising vocalist and orchestra, was broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Recent concerto performances include Brahms' *Violin Concerto*, Gershwin's *Piano Concerto* and Elgar's *Cello Concerto*. The orchestra has performed many choral works including Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Elgar's *The Spirit of England* and Handel's *Coronation Anthems*.

Whilst we pride ourselves on our friendly, inclusive environment, we take our music-making seriously. We are always pleased to hear from musicians interested in joining us. For more information about the orchestra, please visit www.camdenso.org.uk.



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C A M D E N
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Johannes Brahms
Tragic Overture

Aram Khachaturian
Masquerade Suite

~ Interval ~

Please join us for refreshments which will be served at the back of the church.

Sergei Rachmaninov
Symphony No. 2

Please ensure that mobile phones, pagers, digital watch alarms and other electronic devices are switched off during the performance.

We would like to thank the Clergy, Parish Administrator and PCC of St Cyprian's Church for permission to perform here tonight, and for their assistance in organising this concert.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) - *Tragic Overture*, Opus 81 (1880)

Despite eventually composing some of the greatest musical works ever written, Brahms' production of orchestral music was slow to start. Robert Schumann's declaration in 1853 that the 20-year-old Brahms was the long-awaited musical messiah, following Beethoven's death, proved a mixed blessing. Whilst such lavish praise was well deserved, it also raised the bar for the young composer and Brahms felt great pressure to show his talents.

His youthful piano and chamber music earned admiration from musicians, critics, and audiences alike, but everyone wondered when he would turn his attention to symphonies and operas. After the success of his first symphony, which Brahms finally completed in 1876, orchestral masterpieces flowed with greater ease and frequency. *Symphony No. 2* appeared the next year and following this Brahms composed two concert overtures, the *Academic Festival Overture*, and the *Tragic Overture* with which we open this evening's concert.

Brahms composed this twin set of overtures during the summer of 1880 when he was on holiday in the Austrian spa town Bad Ischl. Brahms was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Breslau in 1879 and wrote the *Academic Festival Overture* as a gesture of thanks. However, he felt the need to provide a companion to the work. 'The *Academic* has led me to a second overture that I can only entitle the "Dramatic", which does not please me,' he informed the Breslau Orchestra Society. 'You may include a "Dramatic" or "Tragic" or "Tragedy Overture" in your programme for 6th January; I cannot find a proper title for it'. The conductor Hans Richter led the Vienna Philharmonic in the overture's premiere in December 1880 and Brahms conducted both overtures in Breslau the following week.



A photograph of the University of Breslau in the 19th century. During Brahms' time, Breslau was a German city, but it is now in Poland and known as Wrocław.

As is the case with much of Brahms' orchestral music, there is no story attached to the *Tragic Overture*, simply the idea of it preceding a tragedy. The composer Hugo Wolf, unwilling to listen to the work on Brahms' terms, provided a 'plotline' to help orientate the listener. In one of his reviews of Brahms, Wolf writes, 'Brahms' *Tragic Overture* reminds us vividly of the ghostly apparitions in Shakespeare's dramas who horrify the murderer by their presence while remaining invisible to everyone else. We know not what hero Brahms murdered in this overture but let us assume that Brahms is Macbeth, and the overture is the embodiment of the murder of the spirit of Banquo, whom, with the first down-bows falling like the blows of an axe, he is just murdering. In the course of the composition, the ghost of his victim appears

again and again, the blows of the axe reintroduce the motif of the murder as at the opening of the overture, reminding him pointedly of these events’.

This description captures the most striking musical moments in the work, from the two opening thundering chords to its stark conclusion. A dark and mysterious mood is noticeable throughout the entire composition, even when the thematic material is treated with warmth and tenderness. This overture is often thought to be underrated and somewhat neglected. However, it is characteristically Brahmsian and whilst it does not weep, it has an emotional resonance that is powerfully affecting.



Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978) - *Masquerade Suite* (1944)

I Waltz - II Nocturne – III Mazurka – IV Romance – V Galop

Armenian-Soviet composer and conductor Aram Khachaturian was born in Tbilisi, Georgia and later moved to Moscow, where he studied at the Moscow Conservatory. Khachaturian’s compositions include three symphonies, ballet music to *Spartacus* and *Gayane* (which includes the popular, rhythmically stirring *Sabre Dance*), film scores, numerous concertos and the Armenian national anthem. The composer is well-known for his use of folk music and sensuous melodies, the inspiration for which he drew from his childhood and Armenian and Georgian songs and dances. In the early 1950s, he taught at the Moscow Conservatory and later, in 1957, became the Secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party accused Khachaturian, along with Dimitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev, of writing formalist music with bourgeois tendencies in 1948. Khachaturian responded to the charges by stating, ‘I want to warn those comrades who, like myself, hoped that their music, which is not understood by the people today, will be understood by future generations tomorrow... What can be higher and nobler than writing music understandable to our people and to give joy by creative art to millions?’ The charges were formally rescinded in 1958. He was named People’s Artist of the Soviet Union in 1954 and was awarded the Lenin Prize in 1959.

In 1941 Khachaturian composed incidental music for a production of Mikhail Lermontov’s play *Masquerade*. The play premiered on 21st June 1941 in the Vakhtangov Theater, Moscow. However, its production run was cut short as on the following day Germany invaded the

Soviet Union. A month later German air-bombing destroyed the Vakhtangov Theatre, killing many actors and theatre staff members.

A few years later, in 1944, the composer created a standalone symphonic suite containing five movements from the music he'd written for that production. The movements are based on romances and dances and include a hauntingly dark *Waltz* in a minor key, a nostalgic and mournful *Nocturne* featuring a solo violin, a stately and upbeat *Mazurka*, a film noir-like *Romance* with a legato and sustained melody heard in a solo trumpet, and a final fast and quirky *Galop*.



The Armenian painter Robert Nikoghosyan completed this mural of Khachaturian near the Yerevan Vernissage in 2015.

The *Waltz* was performed at Khachaturian's funeral service in May 1978 by the USSR State Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Yevgeni Svetlanov, at the Moscow Conservatory's Grand Hall. It was also one of the pieces of classical music featured during the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia in February 2014, along with the *Sabre Dance*. In recent decades, the *Waltz* has become highly popular with figure skaters around the world and been used in numerous skating competitions. It has also been extensively used for film and television soundtracks.



Khachaturian is considered one of the three greatest composers of the Soviet Union and celebrated as a national treasure in Armenia. His status is reflected by his depiction on Soviet (left, 1983), Russian (middle, 2003) and Armenian (2003, right) postage stamps.



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**Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) - *Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Opus 27 (1907)*
*I Largo - Allegro moderato – II Allegro molto – III Adagio – IV Allegro vivace***

Following the disastrous 1897 world premiere of his first symphony in St Petersburg, Russian composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninov was plunged into a period of profound depression which threatened to destroy his musical career. A breakthrough finally occurred in 1900 as, following the advice of relatives, Rachmaninov consulted Dr Nikolai Dahl, a psychiatrist who used hypnosis as part of his patient's treatment. These consultations proved to be an extraordinary success and Rachmaninov's confidence started to return. He immediately began work on his *Piano Concerto No. 2* which premiered in 1901, with a dedication to Dr Dahl.

In the autumn of 1906, the composer and his family moved from their native Russia to Dresden. This relocation offered the solitude Rachmaninov needed to devote himself entirely to composition and to escape the political tumult that would put Russia on the path to revolution. The family remained in Dresden for three years, returning to Russia each summer to spend time in Ivanovka where the Satins, Rachmaninov's aristocratic relatives and in-laws (Rachmaninov had married Natalia Satina, his first cousin, in 1902), had their family home.



The house in Ivanovka where Rachmaninov spent each summer before his emigration to the United States. All the buildings in the town were later destroyed during the October Revolution and Russian Civil War.

Summoning the courage to attempt another symphony in October, Rachmaninov finished the first draft on New Year's Day, 1907. He later refined the score and conducted the work's premiere at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg on 8th February 1908. It received a favourable reception from both the audience and the critics. The success of the premiere finally restored Rachmaninov's self-worth as a symphonist and the enthusiastic reception won the composer a second Glinka Award which came with a considerable cash prize. The second symphony proved to be immensely popular throughout the composer's life and it remains one of his most beloved orchestral works. Its rich orchestration and passionate melodies assure its status amongst the finest Russian symphonies of the late Romantic era.

The symphony is in four movements. The first begins with an extended slow-tempo introduction (*Largo*), opening with a motif that will appear in various guises throughout the work. The principal quick-tempo section (*Allegro moderato*) follows. The second movement

is a vibrant scherzo (*Allegro molto*), culminating in the brass' chorale transformation of the symphony's opening bars. The beautiful third movement (*Adagio*) is based upon two melodies, presented at the outset. The finale (*Allegro vivace*), recalling music from previous movements, propels the piece to an exuberant close.

The work has had an interesting life throughout its one hundred plus years of existence. It is expansive but in the eyes of some, too long. Rachmaninov's conductor colleagues suggested extensive performance cuts (some totalling almost 20 minutes) and the composer surprisingly conceded most of them. According to one source, Rachmaninov stated that he had 'no objections' to cuts to his second symphony if others thought them necessary. Until the 1970s the symphony was usually performed in a revised, shorter form, but since then it has become more usual to perform the full version. Tonight, we are playing the complete symphony (although, like many performances, omitting the repeat of the exposition of the first movement). When Rachmaninov conducted the work himself, it was always complete and in its original form.

Rachmaninov's music was also used by the American singer and songwriter Eric Carmen who died this week. The melody for his 1975 single *All by Myself*, later covered by Celine Dion, was based on the second movement from Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 2*, and his 1976 song *Never Gonna Fall in Love Again* borrowed the introduction and main melody of the third movement of *Symphony No. 2*. As Rachmaninov's music was still in copyright at the time, Carmen was contacted by the Rachmaninov estate following the release of his debut solo album (which included both songs), and Carmen agreed to pay the estate 12% of the royalties from the songs.



Rachmaninov in 1901, a few years before he wrote his second symphony.

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Would you consider supporting the orchestra by joining our Friends Scheme?

We enjoy performing an extremely varied range of repertoire for you, but it costs around £5,000 to put on a concert, and ticket sales only cover around a third of the costs. In the present climate, funding for any arts endeavour is increasingly difficult and like any other organisation, we face rising costs every year.

Our aim is to continue to provide players and audiences with the opportunity to perform and hear adventurous repertoire, to keep membership of the orchestra open to accomplished players regardless of their means, and to provide a platform for emerging soloists. We would like to thank our Friends who are helping us to achieve this.

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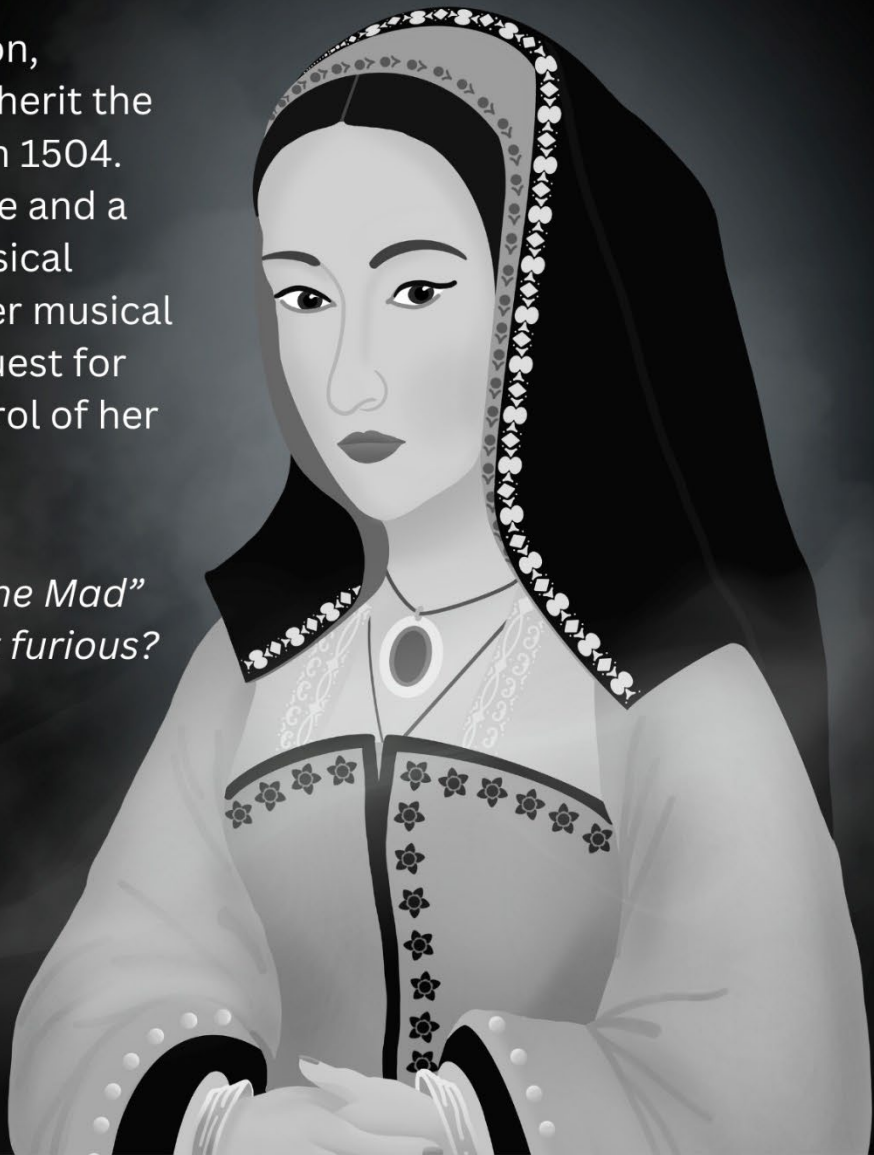
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Levon Parikian – Conductor

Levon Parikian has been one of our regular conductors since 2000, and our Musical Director since 2004.

After studying conducting with Michael Rose, David Parry and George Hurst, Lev went to St Petersburg to study with the great Russian teacher Ilya Musin. Since completing his studies, he has pursued a freelance career and is much in demand as Guest Conductor with orchestras in Britain. He currently holds Principal Conductor posts with several London-based orchestras, is Principal Conductor of the City of Oxford Orchestra, and Artistic Director of The Rehearsal Orchestra. He has worked extensively with students and youth orchestras, including the Hertfordshire County Youth Orchestra, National Youth Strings Academy, Royal College of Music Junior Sinfonia, and at Royal Holloway, University of London, where he also taught conducting for fifteen years. In 2012, Lev conducted the UK première of Armen Tigranian's opera *Anoush* with London Armenian Opera. In 2014 he conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra in a re-recording of the theme tune for *Hancock's Half Hour* for lost episodes recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 4. Lev conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra again, along with violinist Jack Liebeck, for *Raptures*, the debut orchestral album of composer Stuart Hancock which was released in November 2019.

Lev has a parallel career as a writer, and his latest book, *Taking Flight: The Evolutionary Story of Life on the Wing*, published in May 2023, was shortlisted for the 2023 Royal Society Trivedi Science Book Prize. He also writes regularly for The Guardian's *Country Diary*. Lev's previous books include: *Waving, Not Drowning*, an entertaining insight into the conductor's world; *Why Do Birds Suddenly Disappear?*, a sorry tale of atrocious birdwatching; *Into the Tangled Bank*, an exploration of our relationship with nature longlisted for the Wainwright Prize; *Music to Eat Cake By*, a collection of essays commissioned by readers; and *Light Rain Sometimes Falls: A British Year Through Japan's 72 Seasons* which was published in September 2021. For further information, visit levparikian.com.

John Crawford - Leader

John Crawford has been our leader since September 2006.

John received his early musical training in Sheffield, but later was able to study with Molly Mack at the Royal Academy of Music through the help of the National Youth Orchestra. He won a Foundation Scholarship to the Royal College of Music where he studied with Leonard Hirsch. After further study in Vienna and Siena, John joined the BBC Symphony Orchestra where he played for a decade. A growing interest in teaching led to his appointment as principal violin teacher at the Keski-Pohjanmaan Conservatory in Finland. John now combines a busy performing life with teaching at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, the Purcell School and the Royal College of Music Junior Department.

John is also a qualified teacher of the Alexander Technique and has had a lifelong interest in freedom of movement for musicians. He works regularly as an adjudicator and leads the Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra as well as CSO.

Camden Symphony Orchestra

Violin I

John Crawford (Leader)
Ashleigh Watkins
Hannah Min
Marianne Tweedie
Martin Fraenkel
Susie Bokor
Nick Sexton
Sarah Benson
Jasmine Cullingford
Lyndsey Silver
Jonathan Silver
Sarah Too

Violin II

Sheila Hayman
Josh Hillman
Marion Fleming
Jo Wilson
Josie Pearson
Lea Herrscher
Kathy He
Robbie Nichols
Martin Young
Diana Muggleston

Viola

James Taylor
Ingolf Becker
Roz Norkett
Lottie Copley
Isobel Jones
Sarah Dewis

Cello

Susan Delgado
Jane Brett-Jones
Denis Ribeiro
Phoebe Scott
Antje Saunders
Rebecca Cowper
Richard Campkin
Sophie Linton
Andra East

Double Bass

James Mott
Seth Edmunds
Anton Pastushok
Aarón Aguayo

Flute

Amanda Lockhart Knight
Jarad Slater

Piccolo

Adam Stoodley

Oboe

Sonia Stevenson
Rachel Sutton

Cor Anglais

Nina Swann

Clarinet

Sheena Balmain
Debbie Shipton

Bass Clarinet

Jess Sullivan

Bassoon

David Robson
Sebastian Till

Horn

Ed Dorman
John Isaacs
Michael Slater
Gwen McDougal
Jay Sewell

Trumpet

Sarah Hall
Daniel Haigh
Tim Milford

Trombone

Ben Haslam
Peter Rowe
Peter Biddlecombe

Tuba

Sean Byrne

Timpani

Owain Williams

Percussion

Ryan Hepburn
Francisco Negreiros
Kevin Ng
Gregor Thomson

Our Next Concert

Saturday 6th July 2024 at 7.30pm

St Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street, London, NW1 6AX

Karol Szymanowski - *Violin Concerto No. 2*

(Soloist: Fenella Humphreys)

Hector Berlioz - *Symphonie Fantastique*

Our Summer Concert includes some important unfinished business. We planned to perform Szymanowski's *Violin Concerto No. 2* in June 2020, and we're delighted to welcome back Fenella Humphreys to perform it at last! The highly evocative movements of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* include a ball, a rural scene in the fields, a march to the scaffold and dreams of a witches' sabbath. We hope that you will be able to join us for the thrilling climax to our 2023-2024 season.

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www.camdenso.org.uk

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