

➔ From Bonn to Moscow

✍ Sarah Pitt 📷 © Philharmonie

Resounding applause at the Philharmonie

The Philharmonie's 09/10 Season commenced on Wednesday 16 September in the Grand Auditorium with a concert of Beethoven (1779-1827) and Shostakovich (1906-1975) by the prestigious London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Principal Conductor Valery Gergiev. The season began with a concert from the Great Soloists programme, and presented accomplished Russian pianist Alexei Volodin.

Resident at the Barbican since 1982, the London Symphony Orchestra is not only a well-known orchestra in Britain, but is set high among the leading orchestras of the world. The LSO was founded in 1904 and became the first British orchestra to play overseas when it went to Paris in 1906. The LSO draws on an enviable roster of soloists and conductors, and over a century after it was formed still attracts the best players. Russian conductor Valery Gergiev became the LSO's Principal Conductor on 1 January 2007, but is also the General Director and Artistic Director of the Mariinsky Theatre, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Metropolitan Opera.



Valery Gergiev



Alexei Volodin

Part I: Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto N° 2 op. 19

According to Beethoven's manuscript, this was one of the first concertos to be written and played by the composer while he was living in Bonn. Beethoven himself apparently did not rate this work particularly highly, remarking to the publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister that it was "not one of my best". Comparatively to the magnificent Concertos that are to follow this first attempt, as the composer, he may have reason to be so critical of his own work, but for an audience it is indisputably an excellent piece of music. Alexei Volodin played the intricate piano solo and accompaniment superbly, and thrilled the audience with an encore following the first part of the concert. Volodin, born in 1977 in St. Petersburg, began playing the piano at the age of 9. Volodin has performed recitals with great success all over the world, and has played with the finest orchestras and conductors. His future engagements continue this trend.

Part II: Dmitri Shostakovich: Symphony N° 11 op. 103 "The year 1905":

Shostakovich's Symphony No 11 is one of the last grand symphonies in the history of soviet music. This intense dramatic work belongs entirely to history as it celebrates Bloody Sunday as well as many other events of the Russian Revolution in 1905. Its character is overpoweringly militaristic, with ominous timpani (kettledrum) motifs, crashing cymbals and tremendous orchestra build-ups exploding into pounding marches. Nine revolutionary songs appear during the whole work, some of them dating back to the 19th century, others to the year 1905. Shostakovich does not merely quote these songs but he integrates them into the symphonic fabric within the bounds of his compositional style.

The London Symphony Orchestra performed again the following evening for the second concert of the season, but this time in the Great Orchestra programme and with a different repertoire. Valery Gergiev lead LSO through Tchaïkovski's Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture and Shostakovich's Symphony No 8.