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R O Y A L
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O F M U S I C
London

**RCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA:
SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE**

Friday 21 March 2025, 7.30pm
Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall
Rafael Payare conductor
Magdalene Ho piano
RCM Symphony Orchestra

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Friday 21 March 2025, 7.30pm | Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall

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| Carlos Simon (b 1986) | Fate Now Conquers | 5' |
| Beethoven (1770–1827) | Piano Concerto no 1 in C major op 15 <i>i Allegro con brio</i> <i>ii Largo</i> <i>ii Rondo: Allegro scherzando</i> | 36' |
| INTERVAL | | |
| Berlioz (1803–1869) | Symphonie fantastique op 14 <i>i Rêveries – Passions. Largo – Allegro agitato e appassionato assai – Religiosamente</i> <i>ii Un Bal: Valse – Allegro non troppo</i> <i>iii Scène aux champs: Adagio</i> <i>iv Marche au supplice: Allegretto non troppo</i> <i>v Songe d'une nuit de Sabbat: Larghetto – Allegro – Dies irae – Ronde du sabbat</i> | 49' |

Welcome to the Royal College of Music

Founded in 1882, the Royal College of Music moved to its present site on Prince Consort Road, opposite the Royal Albert Hall, in 1894, and has been recognised as the leading conservatoire in the world for Performing Arts in the QS rankings for the last three years. Illustrious alumni include Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Gustav Holst, Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Thomas Allen, Sir Colin Davis, John Wilson, Alina Ibragimova, Gerald Finley and Dame Sarah Connolly. In addition to the vocational training it provides to its 1000 full time students, the College engages dynamically with a wider and diverse community of children and adults through a dedicated range of creative activities delivered by RCM Sparks' education and participation projects, RCM Junior Department programme and the Creative Careers Centre. Graduates from the RCM are to be found performing at the highest levels as soloists, composers and in ensembles around the world.

You can follow the RCM on **X**, **bsky.social** and **Instagram @RCMLondon**, find us on **Facebook/royalcollegeofmusic** and subscribe to our **YouTube** channel **@RCMLondon**

The Royal College of Music Symphony Orchestra performs with conductors and musicians of the highest international stature and is frequently invited to perform in prestigious venues across London and beyond. Past and forthcoming conductors include Sakari Oramo, Sir Antonio Pappano, Thomas Zehetmair, Ryan Bancroft, Vasily Petrenko, Jessica Cottis and Rafael Payare. Performances are given after intensive rehearsals; and many concerts are broadcast live and on demand to an international audience online. The members of the RCM Symphony Orchestra are some of the world's very best young instrumentalists, who have chosen to study at the RCM for its unrivalled blend of superlative teaching, extensive performance opportunities, and close connections with the orchestral profession. In addition to the many professors who are active professional instrumentalists, the RCM participates in side-by-side and other experience schemes with, amongst others, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of English National Opera, the Philharmonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Opera House Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. This enables students to experience professional conditions and achieve professional standards before they graduate. The RCM's long tradition of high-quality orchestral training has launched the careers of many distinguished orchestral players throughout its history.

This evening Rafael Payare conducts the RCM Symphony Orchestra in a programme featuring Berlioz' dramatic *Symphonie fantastique* and Beethoven's First Piano Concerto performed by Magdalene Ho. But to begin, the orchestra performs Carlos Simon's *Fate Now Conquers* inspired by an entry in Beethoven's journal written in 1815:

Iliad. The Twenty-Second Book

But Fate now conquers; I am hers; and yet not she shall share

In my renown; that life is left to every noble spirit

And that some great deed shall beget that all lives shall inherit.

Using the fluid harmonic structure of the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, Carlos Simon composed musical gestures representative of the unpredictable ways of fate. He describes the work as:

Jolting stabs, coupled with an agitated groove with every persona.

Frenzied arpeggios in the strings that morph into an ambiguous cloud of free-flowing running passages depicts the uncertainty of life that hovers over us. We know that Beethoven strived to overcome many obstacles in his life and documented his aspirations to prevail, despite his ailments.

Whatever the specific reason for including this particularly profound passage from the *Iliad*, in the end, it seems that Beethoven relinquished to fate. Fate now conquers.

Beethoven's first piano concerto was sketched in 1795–96, shortly after he settled in Vienna where he was recognised as one of the city's greatest pianists. The concerto was one of several works he wrote for himself. Interestingly, it is titled Piano Concerto no 1, but it was in fact composed after no 2; its numbering reflects that it was published first. The concerto is very characteristic of the Classical period, with a conventional form – the movements are structured in a fast-slow-fast sequence – and a small orchestration. However, Beethoven's innovative creativity was beginning to shine in this early work through the interaction between soloist and orchestra, and original touches of colour and drama, including off-beat *sforzandos* and unexpected changes of key.

Three years after Beethoven's death, a 26-year-old Hector Berlioz wrote one of his most popular pieces, the *Symphonie fantastique*, a programmatic work recounting the story of an artist's self-destructive passion for a beautiful woman. Some say the work reflects the composer's own obsession with the Irish Shakespearean actress Harriet Smithson, whom he eventually married and then divorced. Cast in five movements, Berlioz said of the work: 'I conceive an artist gifted with a lively imagination who ... sees for the first time a woman who realises the ideal of beauty that his heart has so long invoked and falls madly in love with her. By a strange quirk, the image of the loved one never appears before his mind's eye without its corresponding musical idea, in which he finds a quality of grace and nobility similar to that which he attributes to the beloved object.'

The object of the Artist's love is represented by a mysterious theme called the *idée fixe* – translated best as an 'obsession', introduced in the first movement. Following a frenetic waltz in the second movement, we are transported to a pastoral scene, where the *cor anglais* engages in a duet with a more distant oboe, mirroring a conversation between two shepherds. The narrative then shifts back to the era of the French revolution with *Marche au supplice* (March to the scaffold) as the ominous presence of the guillotine looms. The chilling sound of the orchestra playing a dark processional theme perhaps depicts the victims being marched to the scaffold. Here Berlioz employs an example of musical mimicry with a loud chord followed by three descending notes representing protagonist's head falling into the executioner's basket. In the fifth movement, witches celebrate with the higher pitched E flat clarinet introducing their theme. This monumental work concludes with the *Dies Irae*, a representation of the Christian Day of Judgment.

Rafael Payare

Rafael Payare's brilliance and charismatic energy on the podium has elevated him as one of the most sought-after conductors. The 2024–25 season marks his third as Music Director of Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and his fifth as Music Director of California's San Diego Symphony.

Rafael was previously Principal Conductor and Music Director of the Ulster Orchestra (2014–19) with whom he appeared twice at the BBC Proms (2016 and 2019). He now holds the title of Conductor Laureate.

Rafael works with some of the world's leading orchestras including the Wiener Philharmoniker, Chicago Symphony, Berlin Staatskapelle, London Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Simon Bolívar Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra. Soloists with whom he has enjoyed collaborations include Daniil Trifonov, Frank Peter Zimmerman, Hilary Hahn, Gil Shaham, Alisa Weilerstein, Sergey Khachatryan, Emmanuel Ax and Dorothea Röschmann. Highlights of the current season include a European tour with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and return visits to the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and Royal Opera House, Covent Garden to conduct *Turandot*.

As an opera conductor, Rafael has conducted at Glyndebourne Festival, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Staatsoper Berlin, Royal Stockholm Opera and Royal Danish Opera. In 2012, he was invited by the late Lorin Maazel to conduct at Castleton Festival and in 2015 he was appointed Principal Conductor and conducted performances of Gounod's *Romeo and Juliette* and Beethoven's Symphony no 9 in memory of Maazel.

An inspiration to young musicians, Rafael has forged a close relationship with the Royal College of Music in London where he visits regularly to lead its Symphony Orchestra. He has also led projects with the Chicago Civic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Americas, and the Filarmonica Joven de Colombia.

Born in 1980 and a graduate of the celebrated El Sistema in Venezuela, Rafael began his formal conducting studies in 2004 with José Antonio Abreu. In 2012, Rafael was awarded first prize at the Malko International Conducting Competition.

Magdalene Ho

Malaysian pianist Magdalene Ho was born in 2003 and started learning the piano at the age of four. In 2013, she began studying in the UK with Patsy Toh, at the Purcell School. In 2015, she received the ABRSM Sheila Mossman Prize and Silver Award. As part of a prize won at the Pianale Piano Festival in Fulda, Germany, she released an album of Bach and Messiaen works in 2019. She was a finalist at the Düsseldorf Schumann Competition 2023 and was awarded the Joan Chissell Schumann Prize for Piano at the RCM a few months later. In September 2023, she won the Clara Haskil International Piano Competition in Vevey along with receiving the Audience Prize, Young Critics' Prize and Children's Corner Prize. Magdalene is an undergraduate at the RCM and studies with Dmitri Alexeev. She is a Dasha Shenkman Scholar supported by the Gordon Calway Stone Scholarship and is also sponsored by the Weir Award via the Keyboard Charitable Trust.

Orchestral coaches

The RCM would like to thank the following orchestral coaches:

Gabrielle Lester (violin and tutti strings)

Linda Kidwell (viola)

Amanda Truelove (cello)

Tom Goodman (double bass)

Sue Thomas (woodwind)

Amos Miller (brass)

Grahame King (percussion)

Stephen Fitzpatrick (harp)

Frank Zielhorst (tutti strings, tutti woodwind, brass & percussion, and tutti orchestra)

Violin I

Viviane Plekhotkine
Zea Hunt
Isabella Azima
Enya Barber
Betania Johnny
Jane Park
Theo Elwes
Clarissa Cheuk
Jelena Horvat
Ruihan Sun
Aries Chow
Maria Noskova
Waiying Law
Zoe Hirst
Mira Steenbrugge

Violin II

Nicholas Cerny
Masa Stopar
Sharon Zhou
Elizabeth Hur
Piotr Burda-Zwolinski
Ayana Jaycox
Katarzyna Ratajczak
Qintong Zhou
Homan Woo
Leyth Elmani
Gabriella Bavetta
Emily Ames
Layla Wang
Xixuan Zhang
Kana Aihara

Viola

Zephyr Wills
Katharine Wing
Declan Wicks
Karis Lee
Manuel Camara
Shay Dyer
Haotian Yuan
Anthony Ip
Juliet Park
Xiaohan Gao
Danya Rushton
Vera Edgington

Cello

Ozgur Kaya
Lily Dai
Clare Juan
Ezra Starr Escobar
Carlos Villa Contreras
Aline Christ
Theodore Baujard
Lucas Robson
Floora Valila
Shikun Wang

Double Bass

Sam Lee
Mafalda Ribeiro
Nathan Ng
Linxuan Zeng
Susannah Rance
Tess Miles
Alex Verster
Joseph Straker

Flute

Cecilia Tena Garcia
Lucy Rowan (pic)

Oboe

Alexander Franklin
Lizzy Russell (cor)

Clarinet

Emily Crook
Hannah Shimwell (E flat)

Bassoon

Jonathon Churchett
Janice Chui
Clara Graham
Joe Lyndley

Horn

Molly Bielecki
Tom Hutchison
Lucas Boardman
Hannah Spry
Seb Barley

Trumpet

Immy Timmins
Ucheena Cohen-Shah
Callum Robb (cornet)
Alex Gray (cornet)

Trombone

Edward Simons
Max Pritchard
Jose Teixeira (bass)

Tuba

Matt Lait
Nathan Garvey

Timpani

Ewan Millar
Juho Hwang
Tim Dobinson

Percussion

Kian Hsu
Hoi Yin Ng
Matthew Kosciecha
Lewis Isaacs
Alex Freeman

Harp

Annest Davies
Rosie Scott

Personnel correct at the time of going to print.

Italics denote section principals.

CHAMBER SPOTLIGHT: MENDELSSOHN OCTET

Wednesday 26 March 2025, 6pm | Performance Hall

Anna Meredith Octet

Finn Mattingly Thistles (world premiere)

Mendelssohn Octet in E flat major op 20

Join us for a chamber concert of contrasting octets: while Mendelssohn's early work for strings is bright and virtuosic, Anna Meredith's octet for wind and brass is effervescent and enigmatic.

These epic works frame a brand-new piece by RCM composer Finn Mattingly.

Tickets: £5

RCM Box Office 020 7591 4314 | www.rcm.ac.uk/events

GREAT EXHIBITIONISTS

Monday 31 March–Friday 4 April 2025

Inspired by the 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, the RCM's cutting-edge Great Exhibitionists series is curated entirely by students. Multidisciplinary in outlook, these innovative performances often feature collaborations with artists from other creative fields including art, dance, drama and film.

Visit www.rcm.ac.uk/greatexhibitionists for further details.

Tickets: Pay What You Can

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Latecomers will not be allowed into the auditorium until a suitable break. In the interests of safety, sitting or standing on the steps or floors is strictly prohibited. Thank you for your cooperation.

Programme details correct at time of going to print.