

Media Information
April 5, 2017

BMW LSO Open Air Classics 2017 with Valery Gergiev and Rachmaninov programme

Rising star pianist Behzod Abduraimov makes his London Symphony Orchestra debut

London. As part of the BMW LSO Open Air Classics, one of today's rising stars of the piano, Behzod Abduraimov, will make his London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) debut performing to a crowd of thousands at the free, outdoor concert in London's Trafalgar Square, on Sunday, May 21. He will perform Rachmaninov's virtuosic "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini", part of an all-Rachmaninov programme conducted by Valery Gergiev, which also features the composer's Second Symphony.

This concert is the result of a partnership between the LSO and BMW, who share the belief that great music is for everyone, whatever their background or situation. Now highly-anticipated in London's musical calendar, BMW LSO Open Air Classics each year offers, Londoners and visitors to the city alike, the opportunity to experience the LSO free and in the open air in Trafalgar Square. Large screens and state-of-the-art sound technology allow the whole crowd to witness the concert close-up, making the experience equally special at the back of the square as at the front. In 2016, 69% of the audience in the Square were under the age of 35 and 86% had never seen the LSO perform before.

Dr Ian Robertson, Member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, said, "In the sixth year of our partnership with the London Symphony Orchestra we are looking forward to welcoming around 10,000 listeners from all over the world, whether they are new to classical music or seasoned enthusiasts. For almost 50 years now, the BMW Group's cultural engagement programme has focused on making the arts more accessible to everyone. We are honoured to be a patron of collaborations with some of the world's leading cultural institutions and we're extremely proud of this concert series with the London Symphony Orchestra."

The concert will also feature 40 young musicians aged between 11 and 18 years, from schools in east London, who will join the LSO on stage for a special performance of Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances. Playing as part of the Orchestra, the young people will sit amongst the members of the LSO and musicians from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, all performing together.

This thrilling experience for the young musicians, who are from a broad range of backgrounds in the diverse East London community, is part of LSO On Track, a pioneering programme which, in partnership with local Music Education Hubs, builds on existing musical provision by giving special access to LSO musicians. Through school visits, ensemble learning, mentoring and opportunities to perform with the LSO on stage, young people are challenged and inspired, giving them valuable insight into the life of a professional musician and nurturing their talent. LSO On Track also provides mentoring for primary school teachers, who may have had little or no musical training, in order to build the knowledge and confidence they need to use music creatively in classrooms. LSO On Track was launched in 2008 and has seen young people perform side-by-side with the LSO in Trafalgar Square, at the Barbican and notably as part of the Opening Ceremony for the London Olympics in 2012.

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Kathryn McDowell, the LSO's Managing Director, said, "I'm delighted that this wonderful, free event, for all Londoners, presented in partnership with BMW, will again bring the LSO's music into the heart of London. We have a piano soloist for the first time in the Square, the dazzling young Behzod Abduraimov who will perform Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, making his LSO debut in this dramatic setting. A real highlight will be the performance by the young LSO On Track musicians, demonstrating the remarkable work our players do in music education throughout the year, and providing a hugely rewarding and exciting musical experience for the young people. All of this is enabled by the continued support of BMW who have been our partner in this project since it began, and sincere thanks to Ian Robertson and the BMW teams in the UK and Germany who work closely with us to bring this event about. I'd also like to thank the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, for his continued support."

Sadiq Kahn, the Mayor of London, said, "There are few places on earth that can rival our city for its arts, culture and music, and tourists flock here in their millions every year to get a taste of our cultural riches. I'm delighted to see the LSO bringing another incredible concert to Trafalgar Square. As well as giving rising young stars from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to play alongside world-class musicians, this top showcase of talent will entertain thousands of Londoners who may have never had the chance to experience this calibre of classical music before. It is these types of events that show London at its outward-looking, open and creative best."

Pianist Behzod Abduraimov, said, "To make my debut with the London Symphony Orchestra in the iconic Trafalgar Square will be a wonderful experience and I am very much looking forward to performing with the LSO and again with Maestro Gergiev. I hope the audience will be drawn into the romanticism of Rachmaninov's 'Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini' and taken on a musical journey through the array of colours and emotions depicted by the '24 Variations'."

The performance begins at 6.30pm on Sunday 21 May 2017. The concert is free, does not require a ticket and is open to everybody. However, for the safety and comfort of the audience, only a certain number of people can access the square during the performance and, once capacity is reached, entry will be suspended. Early arrival is therefore strongly advised to secure a place.

About BMW Group's Cultural Commitment

For almost 50 years now, the BMW Group has initiated and engaged in over 100 cultural cooperations worldwide. The company places the main focus of its long-term commitment on contemporary and modern art, classical music and jazz as well as architecture and design. In 1972, three large-scale paintings were created by the artist Gerhard Richter specifically for the foyer of the BMW Group's Munich headquarters. Since then, artists such as Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, Daniel Barenboim, Jonas Kaufmann and architect Zaha Hadid have co-operated with BMW. Currently, female artist Cao Fei from China and American John Baldessari are creating the next two vehicles for the BMW Art Car Collection. Besides co-initiatives, such as BMW Tate Live, the BMW Art Journey and the "Opera for All" concerts in Berlin, Munich and London, the company also partners with leading museums and art fairs as well as orchestras and opera houses around the world. The BMW Group takes absolute creative freedom in all its cultural activities – as this initiative is as essential for producing groundbreaking artistic work as it is for major innovations in a successful business. Further information: www.bmwgroup.com/culture and www.bmwgroup.com/culture/overview

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The BMW Group

With its three brands BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. As a global company, the BMW Group operates 31 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries and has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2016, the BMW Group sold approximately 2.367 million cars and 145,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax was approximately € 9.67 billion on revenues amounting to € 94.16 billion. As of 31 December 2016, the BMW Group had a workforce of 124,729 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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