

Semyon Bychkov

Semyon Bychkov's tenure as Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Czech Philharmonic was initiated in 2018 with concerts in Prague, London, New York and Washington marking the 100th anniversary of Czechoslovak independence. With the culmination of *The Tchaikovsky Project* the following year, Bychkov and the Czech Philharmonic turned their focus to Mahler, and the first release in a new cycle of the symphonies - Mahler's Fourth Symphony – on PENTATONE.

With a repertoire that spans four centuries, Bychkov's highly anticipated performances are a unique combination of innate musicality and rigorous Russian pedagogy. He holds honorary titles with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Academy of Music and is a frequent guest with all the major international orchestras. International Opera Awards named him 'Conductor of the Year' in 2015 and, this year he will receive an Honorary Doctorate from the Royal Academy of Music.

Bychkov began his recording career with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio, Royal Concertgebouw, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic and Orchestre de Paris. A series of benchmark recordings with WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne followed including the four Brahms Symphonies, as well as works by Strauss, Mahler, Shostakovich, Rachmaninov, Verdi, Glanert and Höller. Bychkov's 1992 recording of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* was recommended by BBC Radio 3's Building a Library in 2020, and his 2009 recording of Wagner's *Lohengrin* awarded BBC Music Magazine's Record of the Year (2010).

In common with the Czech Philharmonic, Bychkov has one foot in the culture of the East and the other in the West. Born in Leningrad in 1952, he emigrated first to the United States and is now based in Europe. In 1989, he was named Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris and also returned to Russia as Principal Guest Conductor of the St Petersburg Philharmonic. In 1997, he was appointed Chief Conductor of the WDR Symphony Orchestra and, the following year, Chief Conductor of Dresden Semperoper.

Czech Philharmonic

The 126 year-old Czech Philharmonic gave its first concert – an all Dvořák programme conducted by the composer himself - in the famed Rudolfinum Hall on 4 January 1896. Acknowledged for its definitive interpretations of Czech composers, the Orchestra is recognised for its special relationship to the music of Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Mahler, who conducted the world première of his Symphony No. 7 with the Orchestra in 1908.



Czech Philharmonic

Throughout the Czech Philharmonic's history, two features have remained at its core: its championing of Czech composers and its belief in music's power to change lives. As early as the 1920's. Václav Talich (Chief Conductor 1919-1941) pioneered concerts for workers, young people and voluntary organisations.

The philosophy continues today and is equally vibrant. A comprehensive education strategy engages with more than 400 schools bringing all ages to the Rudolfinum. An inspirational music and song programme led by singer Ida Kedarová for the extensive Romany communities within the Czech Republic and Slovakia has helped many socially excluded families to find a voice. In addition to an international education exchange with the Royal Academy of Music in London, over lockdown the Orchestra gave seven benefit concerts which were live streamed internationally in 4K by Czech Philharmonic's producing house Czech Phil Media, raising funds for hospitals, charities, and healthcare professionals.

An early champion of the music of Martinů and Janáček, the works of Czech composers - both established and new - remain the lifeblood of the Orchestra. Initiated by Semyon Bychkov, nine Czech composers have been commissioned to write works for the Orchestra alongside five international composers - Detlev Glanert, Julian Anderson, Thomas Larcher, Bryce Dessner and Thierry Escaich; the Orchestra additionally holds an annual young composers' competition launched in 2014 by Jiří Bělohlávek (Chief Conductor 2012-2017).

