



Semyon Bychkov

Chief Conductor & Music Director, Czech Philharmonic

Celebrating both his fifth season as Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Czech Philharmonic and his 70th birthday, Semyon Bychkov will celebrate his birthday with three concerts in November pairing Beethoven's Fifth with Shostakovich's Fifth. It is a season which opens in Prague with the official concert to mark the Czech Republic's Presidency of the EU and continues with concert performances of Dvořák's *Rusalka* as part of the Dvořákova Prague International Music Festival. Later in the season, Bychkov will conduct *Rusalka* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Bychkov's tenure at 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* in 2019, Bychkov and the Orchestra turned their focus to Mahler. PENTATONE released the first disc in the ongoing complete symphonic cycle – Mahler's Fourth Symphony – in April 2022.

Bychkov's repertoire spans four centuries. The unique combination of innate musicality and rigorous Russian pedagogy ensure that his performances are highly anticipated. In addition to being a guest with the major orchestras and opera houses across Europe and the US, Bychkov holds honorary titles with the BBC Symphony Orchestra – with whom he appears annually at the BBC Proms – and the Royal Academy of Music from whom he recently received an Honorary Doctorate. In 2015, he was named 'Conductor of the Year' by the International Opera Awards.

Bychkov began recording for Philips in 1989 and released discs with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio, Royal Concertgebouw, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic and Orchestre de Paris. Subsequently a series of benchmark recordings with WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne included a complete cycle of Brahms Symphonies, together with works by Strauss, Mahler, Shostakovich, Rachmaninov, Verdi, Glanert and Höller. His 1992 recording of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* was BBC's Radio 3's Building a Library recommended recording (2020); Wagner's *Lohengrin* was BBC Music Magazine's Record of the Year (2010); and Schmidt's Symphony No. 2 with the Vienna Philharmonic was BBC Music Magazine's Record of the Month (2018).

In common with the Czech Philharmonic, Bychkov has one foot firmly in the culture of the East and the other in the West. Born in St Petersburg in 1952, he emigrated to the United States in 1975 and has lived in Europe since the mid-1980's. Singled out for an extraordinarily privileged musical education from the age of 5, Bychkov studied piano before winning his place at the Glinka Choir School where, aged 13, he received his first lesson in conducting. He was 17 when he was accepted at the Leningrad Conservatory to study with the legendary Ilya Musin and, within three years had won the influential Rachmaninov Conducting Competition. Denied the prize of conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic, Bychkov left the former Soviet Union in 1975. He returned in 1989 as Principal Guest Conductor of the St Petersburg Philharmonic and, the same year, was named Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris. In 1997, Bychkov was appointed Chief Conductor of the WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne, and in 1998, Chief Conductor of the Dresden Semperoper.

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