

# HARRIMAN JEWELL S E R I E S



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JACKIE AND JOHN MIDDELKAMP  
*presents*

## ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA VASILY PETRENKO MUSIC DIRECTOR ISATA KANNEH-MASON PIANO

This evening marks the Orchestra's fourth, Ms. Kanneh-Mason's second, and Maestro Petrenko's first appearance with the Series.

**The Muriel McBrien Kauffman Family Foundation  
is the sponsor of our 59th Season.**

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7:00 P.M., TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024  
HELZBERG HALL  
KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

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ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA  
VASILY PETRENKO MUSIC DIRECTOR  
ISATA KANNEH-MASON PIANO

*Danse*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY  
Orch. Maurice Ravel

Piano Concerto No.3 in C major, Op. 26

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

- I. Andante – Allegro
- II. Tema con variazioni
- III. Allegro, ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27

SERGEI RACHMANINOV

- I. Largo – Allegro moderato
- II. Scherzo (Allegro molto)
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro vivace



*Please join us after the concert for an informal conversation with the artists.  
We invite you to move to open seats closer to the stage at that time.*

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Isata Kanneh-Mason appears by arrangement with Enticott Music Management  
Isata Kanneh-Mason records exclusively for Decca Classics

Tour Direction:  
Sheldon Artists

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### *Danse*

Claude Debussy (1862–1918),  
Orch. Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Claude Debussy was fascinated by different dance forms and their musical characteristics. Looking at his vast output of piano music alone, we find many individual dances, as well as dance movements forming part of larger suites, including waltzes, sarabandes, mazurkas, cake-walks, habaneras and passepieds, and movements such as *Puck's Dance* and *The Snow is Dancing*.

From early in his career, there are also several short, individual dances written as student compositions that offer a valuable glimpse of the trainee composer at work. *Danse* (1890) is a lively, engaging work whose original title of *Tarantelle Styrienne* was replaced by the composer with a simpler single word. Any connection with the Austrian province of Styria is uncertain, but the dance has clear links to the rhythms and tarantula-bite frenzy of the Italian tarantella dance. Further excitement is generated by the repeated use of hemiola, a musical device where the grouping of beats alternates, in this case with the six quavers in each bar alternating as two groups of three and three groups of two. An effective solo piece for the keyboard, the *Danse* has found a new life in the concert hall in Ravel's deft but restrained orchestration. Although only a few minutes long, the piece is cast in three sections, each emerging in Ravel's treatment as a distinct sound-world, with the horn and harp prominent in the mix of colors.

*Program notes* © Brendan Beales,  
edited by Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Piano Concerto No.3 in C major, Op. 26  
Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

- I. Andante – Allegro
- II. Tema con variazioni
- III. Allegro, ma non troppo

Sergei Prokofiev completed his Third Piano Concerto in 1921 during a holiday at St Brevin-les-Pins on the Atlantic coast of Brittany. It was his custom to carry around themes in sketchbooks and wait for an opportunity to use and develop them, and some of the material in the Concerto dates back some ten years. The 'Russian' tune that opens the first movement, intoned by a single clarinet, was indeed written

back in Russia before Prokofiev decided to abandon his homeland, and the theme that opens the last movement was in fact composed in Japan as part of an ultimately abandoned string quartet. The composer's autobiography describes his encounter in Brittany with the symbolist poet Konstantin Balmont, who happened to be staying somewhere further up the Atlantic coast. 'While I played him fragments from the Third Concerto [Prokofiev writes] he dashed off a sonnet dedicated to it.' Prokofiev in turn dedicated the new concerto to Balmont but recalled that, soon afterwards, he and Balmont parted ways when the poet turned his pen against his 'suffering homeland'. In October of that year, Prokofiev went to Chicago for the production of his opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, and brought his new concerto with him. He played the new work in Chicago in December of that year, and in New York the following month, but was disappointed at the reception in both cities. His autobiography bitterly notes that 'in Chicago there was less understanding than support... in New York there was no understanding but neither was there any support.' The Concerto has fared much better since then, however, and remains the most popular of the composer's five keyboard concertos.

Prokofiev's opening movement follows the progress of three distinct themes. The aforementioned 'Russian' theme is quickly shunted aside by a rapid orchestral passage that introduces a fast, spiky theme for the soloist. This in turn gives way to a kind of grotesque gavotte, which is colored here by an unusual castanet accompaniment. A tempestuous dialogue between soloist and orchestra leads to the return of the Russian theme and, eventually, an even more twisted version of the gavotte. It is the spirit of this same dance form that haunts the graceful theme that forms the basis of the second movement's variations, the tune itself having been composed back in 1913 and 'kept for a long time for subsequent use'. Each of the contrasting variations has its own distinct character, generally preserving the original theme's harmonic structure and melodic outlines. The tune is pushed to its furthest harmonic extreme in variation four, a chilling treatment that is rather suggestive of Rachmaninov, and in variation five becomes the basis for what promises to be a lively finale, until the sudden return of the original theme and tempo. A notable feature of these variations is the little cadence figure that appears at the very end of the tune, reappearing at the end of each variation with its own little transformation.

There is an element of barbarism in the theme that opens the finale, especially in the soloist's aggressive treatment of it. A secondary, faster theme is introduced and quickly re-presented in counterpoint to the main theme, the music's forward momentum gradually petering out and giving way to Prokofiev's glorious 'big tune'. The soloist, whose first response is to ignore this tune in favor of an obsessive little tune of its own, eventually takes up the great melody and joins with the orchestra in giving it the full Rachmaninov treatment. After the end of this theme (alas, never to return), the aggression returns with further development of the main theme and the movement heads inexorably towards its thrilling conclusion.

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### Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

- I. Largo – Allegro moderato
- II. Scherzo (Allegro molto)
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro vivace

*'I feel like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien. I cannot cast out the old way of writing, and I cannot acquire the new. I have made intense efforts to feel the musical manner of today, but it will not come to me.'*

Sergei Rachmaninov

The premiere of Sergei Rachmaninov's First Symphony in 1897 was a complete disaster. According to the composer's wife, the conductor on the occasion (Alexander Glazunov) was drunk, and most eyewitnesses agree that it was his complete indifference and apathy on the podium that led to the utterly shambolic performance. The composer César Cui damned the work in a colorful critique: 'If there were a conservatoire in hell, if one of its talented students were instructed to write a program symphony on *The Seven Plagues of Egypt*, and if he were to compose a symphony like Mr Rachmaninov's, then he would have fulfilled his task brilliantly and delighted the inmates of hell.'

Rachmaninov was understandably devastated by the performance and by the public's hostile reaction to the work and was plunged into a depression that effectively

prevented him from composing for the next three years. He attempted several short pieces and even began sketches for a new symphony that ultimately came to nothing. His eventual recovery was largely due to the help of a neurologist named Nikolai Dahl, who, in 1900, attacked the composer's creative block via a course of hypnosis and auto-suggestion. The treatment worked and the composer acknowledged his debt to Dahl by dedicating to him the very first post-depression work, the celebrated Second Piano Concerto.

The Second Symphony was originally planned for the 1902–03 season of Moscow Philharmonic Society concerts but was not actually completed until 1908, by which time the Rachmaninovs had taken up residence in Dresden. Their departure from Russia had been arranged partly to escape from the turmoil and political unrest that followed the unsuccessful revolution of 1905, but also because the composer was experiencing another, albeit milder, bout of the creative block that had previously crippled him. His correspondence with his friend Morozov reveals a man uncertain of his creative powers and increasingly suspicious of even his best work: 'I begin to think that everything I have written lately pleases no one. And I myself begin to wonder if perhaps it is not all complete nonsense.' Elsewhere, with regard to his attempts to compose symphonies, he wrote: 'To hell with them! I have no idea how to write symphonies, and besides I have no real desire to write them.' Work on the Second Symphony became 'terribly boring and repulsive' to him and he postponed work on it in favor of other projects. He eventually came back to the score, spending most of the latter half of 1907 reworking and orchestrating the music, and the Symphony was finally performed on 26 January 1908 in St Petersburg, the same city that had witnessed the shameful premiere of the First Symphony.

It is hardly surprising, considering the self-doubts and depressions that were torturing the composer during this period, that the score of the Second Symphony contains some of his gloomiest music. (It is also true, however, that much of Rachmaninov's music is colored by a spirit of Russian gloom, and even in his sunniest, most lyrical music, the imprint of sadness is never far away.) In the opening bars of the slow introduction to the first movement, the lower strings introduce a seven-note motto theme that will generate much of the material for the movement and for the Symphony as a whole. This darkly scored fantasy pits massive brass and



Photo by Ben Wright

wind chords against the strings' development of the theme, the low tuba adding a tremendous resonance to the writing. It is the same seven-note theme that forms the first subject of the *Allegro* exposition, and even the brighter G major theme of the second subject (with its noticeable pre-echo of a theme from the third movement) cannot lighten the mood for very long. After a repeat of this expositional material, the development section explores the theme even further, giving it first to a solo violin and then passing it on to the clarinet. As the theme develops, the sound-world of the music is strongly colored by the sound of the strings, who play much of their music tremolo (rapid repeating notes). The development section also incorporates a return of the sinister brass chords from the slow introduction and highlights a three-note horn figure which is carried over into the recapitulation.

The horn theme of the *Scherzo* second movement is a variant of the Gregorian *Dies irae* chant whose association with death so obsessed the composer that he included it, explicitly or implicitly, in several of his compositions. A secondary string theme relieves the tension with its passionate lyricism, followed by a return of the opening material and its highly syncopated development. An unusual stroke is the introduction of a trio section in the form of a fugato, although the rapid theme that is tossed around between sections of the orchestra turns out to be a fast variant of the *Scherzo* theme itself. Against this hectic scampering, the brass reintroduce the sinister horn chords from the first movement, as well as an obsessively repeating

note that was first suggested in that movement's development section. The gorgeous theme that opens the *Adagio* is a misleading one, since after six bars it gives way to the movement's first theme proper, a long, expressive solo for the clarinet set against an intricate, gentle accompaniment from the strings. When the opening theme does return, it is as the closing refrain of this section and gives way immediately to a series of overt references in the strings to the Symphony's motto theme. The orchestra is once again dominated by the strings, who are largely instrumental in creating the great climax at the center of the movement, and who take up the last, long statement of the clarinet theme.

The last movement, in a bright E major tonality, opens with an exuberant theme that displays a kinship with the Symphony's motto theme and with the *Dies irae*. A brash modulation takes the movement into D major for the resplendent big tune that serves as a second subject, but which again bears a striking resemblance to the *Dies irae* theme. A brief *Adagio* section introduces a flashback of the slow movement's opening melody and the ensuing development section is built principally on descending scales and references to the motto theme and brass chords of the first movement. The recapitulation builds inevitably to a full-blooded return of the movement's big tune, with the ever-present motto theme emerging triumphant as a brass chorale, and the Symphony ends with a characteristic flourish.

*Program notes* © Brendan Beales,  
edited by Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

## BIOGRAPHIES

■ The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's (RPO) mission to enrich lives through orchestral experiences that are uncompromising in their excellence and inclusive in their appeal, places it at the forefront of music-making in the UK and internationally. Typically performing approximately 200 concerts a year and with a worldwide live and online audience of more than 60 million people, the Orchestra is proud to embrace a broad repertoire and reach a diverse audience. Whilst artistic integrity remains paramount, the RPO is unafraid to push boundaries and is equally at home recording video game, film and television soundtracks and working with pop stars, as it is touring the world performing the great symphonic repertoire.

Throughout its history, the RPO has attracted and collaborated with the most inspiring artists and in August 2021, the Orchestra was thrilled to welcome Vasily Petrenko as its new Music Director. A landmark appointment in the RPO's history, Vasily's opening two seasons with the RPO have been lauded by audiences and critics alike. Highlights included a star-studded gala concert to mark the RPO's 75th Anniversary (with soloists Sheku Kanneh-Mason MBE and Sir Bryn Terfel), all three of Mahler's epic Choral Symphonies at the Royal Albert Hall, performances at the BBC Proms and Edinburgh International Festival, and major tours to the USA, Japan, Germany, Spain and a host of prestigious European festivals.

The RPO is recognised as the UK's most in-demand orchestra, an accolade that would have pleased Sir Thomas Beecham, who founded the Orchestra in 1946. As well as a busy schedule of national and international performances, the Orchestra enjoys an annual season of concerts in London's Royal Albert Hall (where the RPO is Associate Orchestra), the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall and Cadogan Hall, where it is celebrating its 20th Season as Resident Orchestra. In the 2023–24 Season, Vasily Petrenko and the Orchestra take a fresh look at the works of five major composers in *Icons Rediscovered*. The series explores the burning inspiration, the living emotion and the human personality behind some of the most iconic masterpieces, including Rachmaninov's *The Bells*, Elgar's *Falstaff*, Verdi's *Requiem*, music from Wagner's greatest operas and a semi-staged production of

Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*. The Season will also feature an autumn residency in Florida, followed by tours to the UAE and Germany, a twelve-concert tour of the USA, a series of relaxed performances across the UK, and collaborations with guest artists including Principal Associate Conductor Alexander Shelley, Yunchan Lim, Sheku-Kanneh-Mason MBE, Miah Persson, Nikolai Lugansky, John Rutter, Jennifer Johnston, and Artist-in-Residence Zlatomir Fung, amongst others.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's mission is to place orchestral music at the heart of contemporary society and, through collaboration with creative partners, foster deeper engagement with communities to ensure that live orchestral music is accessible to as inclusive and diverse an audience as possible. To help achieve this goal, in 1993 the Orchestra launched RPO Resound, which has grown to become the most innovative and respected orchestral community and education programme in the UK and internationally. Early in 2025, the Orchestra will move its headquarters to Wembley Park in the London Borough of Brent; this will be the realisation of its long-held ambition to embed the Orchestra in a community, in line with its mission to be a truly inclusive and contemporary international orchestra for the modern age.

The Orchestra has always been entrepreneurial; in 1986 it was the first UK orchestra to launch its own record label and it has gone on to embrace advances in digital technology, achieving well over 50 million streams of its recorded music each year. The RPO's global online audience engages with it through the website and social media channels, where the Orchestra shares streamed performances, artist interviews, 'behind-the-scenes' insights and more.

Passion, versatility and uncompromising artistic standards are the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's hallmarks; as it looks forward to an exciting future with the patronage of HRH The former Prince of Wales and Vasily Petrenko as Music Director, the RPO will continue to be recognised as one of the world's most open-minded, forward-thinking and accessible symphony orchestras.

Discover more online at [rpo.co.uk](http://rpo.co.uk)



■ **VASILY PETRENKO** is Music Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO), a position he commenced in 2021. He is Conductor Laureate of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, following his hugely acclaimed fifteen-year tenure as their Chief Conductor from 2006–2021. He is Chief Conductor of the European Union Youth Orchestra (since 2015), Associate Conductor of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, and has also served as Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (2013–2020) and Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (2009–2013). He stood down as Artistic Director of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia 'Evgeny Svetlanov' in 2021 having been their Principal Guest Conductor from 2016 and Artistic Director from 2020.

Vasily was born in 1976 and started his music education at the St Petersburg Capella Boys Music School – Russia's oldest music school. He then studied at the St Petersburg Conservatoire where he participated in masterclasses with such luminary figures as Ilya Musin, Mariss Jansons and Yuri Temirkanov.

He has worked with many of the world's most prestigious orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (Rome), St Petersburg Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Sydney Symphony orchestras, and in North America has led the Philadelphia

Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, and the San Francisco, Boston, Chicago and Montreal Symphony orchestras. He has appeared at the Edinburgh Festival, Grafenegg Festival and made frequent appearances at the BBC Proms. Equally at home in the opera house, and with over thirty operas in his repertoire, Vasily has conducted widely on the operatic stage, including at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Opernhaus Zürich, the Bayerische Staatsoper, Bavarian State Opera and Metropolitan Opera, New York.

Recent highlights with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra have included wide-ranging touring, across major European capitals, Japan and the USA, including an acclaimed performance at New York's Carnegie Hall. In London, he led an impressive survey of Mahler's choral symphonies at the Royal Albert Hall. In the 2023–24 Season, Vasily and the RPO will tour the USA and Europe, whilst in London their *Icons Rediscovered* series will explore the music of Elgar and Rachmaninov at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall and embrace grand works by Tchaikovsky, Wagner and Verdi in the Royal Albert Hall.

Vasily has established a strongly defined profile as a recording artist. Amongst a wide discography, his Shostakovich, Rachmaninov and Elgar symphony cycles with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra have garnered worldwide acclaim. With the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, he has released cycles of Scriabin's symphonies and Strauss' tone poems, and works by Prokofiev and Myaskovsky.

In September 2017, Vasily was honoured with the Artist of the Year Award at the prestigious annual Gramophone Awards, one decade on from receiving their Young Artist of the Year Award in October 2007. In 2010, he won the Male Artist of the Year at the Classical BRIT Awards and is only the second person to have been awarded Honorary Doctorates by both the University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University (in 2009), and an Honorary Fellowship of the Liverpool John Moores University (in 2012), awards which recognise the immense impact he has had on the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the city's cultural scene.

[vasilypetrenkomusic.com](http://vasilypetrenkomusic.com)

■ Pianist **ISATA KANNEH-MASON** is in great demand internationally as a soloist and chamber musician. She offers eclectic and interesting repertoire with recital programmes encompassing music from Haydn and Mozart via Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann, Chopin and Brahms to Gershwin and beyond. In concerto, she is equally at home in Felix Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann (whose piano concerto featured on Isata's chart-topping debut recording) as in Prokofiev and Dohnányi.

Highlights of the 23/24 season include performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra Ottawa, London Mozart Players, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on tour in the USA and Germany, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Cleveland Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, and Stockholm Philharmonic. With her cellist brother, Sheku, she appears in recital in Japan, Singapore, and South Korea in addition to an extensive European recital tour. Isata also gives a series of solo recitals on tour in the USA and Canada as well as at London's Wigmore Hall, the Lucerne Festival, and across Germany.

In 2022/23 Isata made successful debuts at the Barbican, Queen Elizabeth and Wigmore halls in London, the Philharmonie Berlin, National Concert Hall Dublin, Perth Concert Hall and Prinzregententheater Munich. As concerto soloist, she appeared with orchestras such as the New World Symphony Miami, City of Birmingham Symphony, Barcelona Symphony, Geneva Chamber Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic and was the Artist in Residence with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Isata is a Decca Classics recording artist. Her 2019 album, *Romance – the Piano Music of Clara Schumann*, entered the UK classical charts at No. 1, Gramophone magazine extolling the recording as "one of the most charming and engaging debuts". This was followed by 2021's *Summertime*, featuring 20th-century American repertoire including a world premiere recording of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Impromptu in B minor and 2023's endearingly titled album *Childhood Tales* is a tour-de-force showcase of music inspired by a nostalgia for youth.

2021 also saw the release of Isata's first duo album, *Muse*, with her brother Sheku Kanneh-Mason, demonstrating the siblings' musical empathy and rapport borne from years of playing and performing

together. Isata and Sheku were selected to perform in recital during the 2020 BBC Proms, which was a vastly reduced festival due to the Covid-19 pandemic and they performed for cameras to an empty auditorium. 2023 sees her BBC Proms solo debut, this time to a fully open Royal Albert Hall, alongside Ryan Bancroft and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Isata was an ECHO Rising Star in 21/22 performing in many of Europe's finest halls and she is also the recipient of the coveted Leonard Bernstein Award, an Opus Klassik award for best young artist and is one of the Konzerthaus Dortmund's Junge Wilde artists.

[www.isatakannehmason.com](http://www.isatakannehmason.com)



Photo by David Venni



# ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

## VASILY PETRENKO MUSIC DIRECTOR

### FIRST VIOLINS

Duncan Riddell  
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 Janice Graham  
 Shana Douglas  
 Esther Kim  
 Andrew Klee  
 Kay Chappell  
 Anthony Protheroe  
 Erik Chapman  
 Adriana Iacovache-Pana  
 Imogen East  
 Judith Choi-Castro  
 Emma Lisney  
 Caroline Frenkel  
 Maya Bickel  
 Aysen Ulucan

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 Charlotte Ansbergs  
 Peter Graham  
 Stephen Payne  
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 Sali-Wyn Ryan  
 Charles Nolan  
 Clare Wheeler  
 Sophie Phillips  
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 Jean-Baptiste Toselli  
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 Naomi Watts  
 Anna Stuart  
 George Hoult  
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 Joanna Marsh  
 Diomedes Demetriades

### PICCOLO

Diomedes Demetriades

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 Timothy Watts  
 Patrick Flanagan

### COR ANGLAIS

Patrick Flanagan

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Sonia Sielaff  
 Massimo Di Trolio

### BASS CLARINET

Katy Ayling

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 Fraser Gordon

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 Ben Hulme  
 Finlay Bain  
 Jake Parker  
 Flora Bain

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 Adam Wright  
 Mike Allen

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Matthew Gee  
 Rupert Whitehead

### BASS TROMBONE

Josh Cirtina

### TUBA

Kevin Morgan

### TIMPANI

Christopher Ridley

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 Richard Horne

### HARP

Bryan Lewis

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