

Saturday  
**30.05.2026**  
7.00pm  
City Halls, Glasgow

**B B C**  
**Scottish  
Symphony  
Orchestra**

# **BBC Radio Scotland Young Classical Musician 2026**

## Grand Final

### **Ralph Vaughan Williams**

Oboe Concerto c.19 minutes

### **Antonín Dvořák**

Cello Concerto, Op.104 – Allegro (1st mvt) c.15 minutes

### **Sergey Rachmaninov**

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op.35 – variations 11–24 c.17 minutes

*Interval (adjudication)*

### **Antonín Dvořák**

Overture 'Carnival' c.10 minutes

**Alasdair Cottee** oboe

**Finn Mannion** cello

**Anastasia-Maria Barbu** piano

**Judith Ralston** presenter

**BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra**

**Jonathan Bloxham** conductor

This concert ends at approximately 8.45pm

This concert is being recorded by BBC Radio Scotland for broadcast on Sunday 31 May at 7pm, and will then be available to stream or download for 30 days via BBC Sounds, where you can also find podcasts and music mixes.

**[bbc.co.uk/bbcso](https://bbc.co.uk/bbcso)**

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switched off or set to 'Do Not Disturb'.**

During the performance, please don't  
film or take any photographs.

Latecomers will be admitted at  
a suitable break in the performance.

# **RADIO SCOTLAND**

# Ralph Vaughan Williams

(1872–1958)

## Oboe Concerto in A minor (1943–4)

- 1 Rondo Pastorale (Allegro moderato)
- 2 Minuet and Musette (Allegro moderato)
- 3 Finale: Scherzo (Presto – Doppio più lento – Lento – Presto)

**Alasdair Cottee** oboe

I chose to play Vaughan Williams's Oboe Concerto today because it was one of the first concertos I learnt on the oboe, and it's a real dream of mine to play it with a professional orchestra. It's not flashy in the way a lot of other concertos are, but takes a ton of stamina to play almost constantly for 20 minutes, so it's all about how you pace yourself and manage your air without losing the quality of the sound. I've always liked that it doesn't let you hide behind fast scales or technical gimmicks, it's just you and these really long, exposed lines that require a lot of physical control.

It's also got a great range of moods that feel fun to play. The first movement is quite heavy and grounded, but then it flips into something much more awkward and playful by the end. Getting to play this with the BBC SSO is the main draw for me, though, because the string writing is so lush, it's a massive sound to sit on top of. It feels like a proper challenge to end the competition with, mostly because it's as much an athletic test as it is a musical one.

Programme note © Alasdair Cottee

**Alasdair Cottee** studies oboe with Stephen West at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Junior Department. He is a member of the National Youth Orchestras of both Scotland and Great Britain and currently serves as Principal Oboe of the latter, having been a member for five years. He previously held the position of Principal Oboe with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. Alasdair has performed at the BBC Proms, Royal Festival Hall, Barbican, Bridgewater Hall, Usher Hall, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. He has worked with conductors such as Alexandre Bloch, Sir Mark Elder, Andrew Gourlay, Jaime Martín and Carlos Miguel Prieto. As a soloist Alasdair won the RCS Junior Concerto Competition in 2023 and performed Telemann's Oboe Concerto in E minor with the

Conservatoire Symphony Orchestra. He will return later this year to perform Donizetti's Concertino for cor anglais. In 2024 he was a quarter-finalist in the BBC Young Musician competition. He has taken part in masterclasses with leading oboists including Nicholas Daniel and François Leleux, and was invited to perform at the British Double Reed Society Convention. Alongside orchestral and solo work, he is an active chamber musician, recently performing with the wind quintet Clyde Winds across the UK.

# Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

## Cello Concerto in B minor, Op.104 (1894–5) – Allegro (1st mvt)

**Finn Mannion** cello

The monumental Cello Concerto by Dvořák has stayed with me since I first heard it as a child. I began playing the cello (and bagpipes) through exposure to folk traditions and session music in Scotland and Ireland, and I think that ties into why I love and relate to this piece. Dvořák, too, was shaped by the folk melodies of Bohemia, and they are woven throughout this work. He composed it in New York in the winter of 1894 to 1895, far from home and deeply homesick.

Dvořák crafts a concerto of vast, symphonic scale, with a long orchestral exposition beginning in a fateful B minor. The movement's lyrical second theme becomes the heart of the movement, introduced by the horn in this opening *tutti*. The music settles into B major and the cello enters with grandeur, a main protagonist voice arising from what has come before. For me, this movement alone has everything: heartache, dance, beauty and hard-won triumph. Brahms famously remarked: 'Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a cello concerto like this? If I had only known, I would have written one long ago.'

Having studied abroad in Basel myself, I understand something of that particular ache of homesickness so present in this music, that pull towards home even when far away. Tonight, returning to perform this concerto with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Jonathan Bloxham is a true privilege, and I am so happy to share it with you.

Programme note © Finn Mannion

Scottish-Irish cellist **Finn Mannion** began playing at a young age through regular exposure to the folk tradition of his homelands. He now enjoys a colourful career as a soloist, recitalist and chamber musician, performing across Europe at major venues including Wigmore Hall, TivoliVredenburg, Palau de la Música, Stadtcasino Basel and Perth Concert Hall.

Finn is a Britten-Pears Young Artist 2025/26, a Countess of Munster Trust Scholar and Associate Artist of the Aboyne Cello Festival in Aberdeenshire. A founding member of Trio Archai, he won First Prize at the 2025 Schoenfeld International String Competition in China and First Prize at the 2024 Royal Over-Seas League Competition in London. In recent years Finn has also been a Cross Trust Young Artist, a Tunnell Trust Award winner and a recipient of the Beatrice Huntington and Vontobel Bank LYRA Awards.

Named a Royal Philharmonic Society Isserlis Scholar in 2019, Finn moved to Switzerland to study with Danjulo Ishizaka at the Musik-Akademie Basel. He remains deeply grateful to Céline Flamen and his former teachers at St Mary's Music School and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland: Ruth Beauchamp, Alison Wells and the late David Watkin. He plays a 1788 Giulio Cesare Gigli cello on private loan. Aside from music, Finn is an avid hillwalker, lover of dogs and passionate street photographer.

## **Sergey Rachmaninov** (1873–1943)

### **Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 35** (1934) – variations 11–24

**Anastasia-Maria Barbu** piano

The *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* was written by Rachmaninov in 1934. In 1939, Russian ballet dancer Michel Fokine used the music to create the ballet *Paganini*, a story about the violinist's inner struggle and his legendary battle with the devil. The main theme of the *Rhapsody* is the famous 24th Caprice for solo violin by Niccolò Paganini. Throughout the work Rachmaninov constantly intertwined Paganini's theme with the *Dies irae* plainchant theme, symbolising the battle between good and evil, between Paganini and the devil. Even though Rachmaninov did not write the work with this story

in mind, I think it perfectly describes the journey of the music: it is full of tension, struggle, tragedy (and a bit of romance in variation 18), but it is also always cheeky, charming, mischievous and fun.

Like most people, when I first heard this piece, I immediately fell in love with the 18th variation. The beautiful, swooning melody of that two-minute-long variation convinced me to learn the other 23. I have since grown to love all of them equally, discovering in each of them a different treasure, a different piece of Rachmaninov's soul. It has been my dream for a while to perform this concerto with an orchestra (especially for those two minutes). I never imagined the first time I did it would be with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, so it is such a joy and a huge honour to perform alongside them tonight.

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## **Anastasia-Maria Barbu**

Romanian pianist Anastasia-Maria Barbu started studying the piano at the age of 8 in her hometown of Braşov. She is currently studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with Lithuanian pianist and pedagogue Petras Geniušas. From September she will continue her studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where she will pursue a Master's degree.

During her time in Romania, Anastasia participated in numerous national and international competitions, such as the 'Frederic Chopin' International Piano Competition in Bacau in 2019, where she was awarded the Second Prize. She is also a laureate of the Roma Piano Competition in 2019 and 2023, when she was awarded First Prize. She has taken part in masterclasses with figures such as Dmitri Alexeev, Boris Berman, Yulia Chaplina, Andrzej Jasiński, Elisabeth Leonskaja, Noriko Ogawa, Steven Osborne, Tamás Ungár and Arie Vardi.

Recent performances include the Cambridge Piano Festival Competition, where she was a finalist, and a recital at the Perth Concert Hall, alongside piano students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Anastasia is passionate about exploring works by Romanian composers, especially those of George Enescu, and showcasing them alongside more standard piano repertoire to help shine a brighter light on these lesser-known compositions.

## Jonathan Bloxham

British conductor Jonathan Bloxham was appointed Music Director of the Lucerne Theatre in 2023 and this season will be his second year as Chief Conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie. This season marked his first as Principal Conductor of the London Mozart Players, building on his long-standing relationship with the ensemble, which he has served as Resident Conductor and Artistic Advisor since 2022.

Guest highlights of the past two seasons have included performances with the BBC and Tokyo Symphony orchestras, BBC and London Philharmonic orchestras, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Salzburg Mozarteumorchester, Hallé, Belgian National Orchestra, Residentie Orkest (The Hague), Tonkünstler Orchestra (Vienna), Beethovenorchester Bonn and Philharmonic Brass (musicians from Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic orchestras).

This season he conducts the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Bremen Philharmonic and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Prior to conducting he enjoyed a successful career as a cellist, performing across Europe and making his concerto debut at the Berlin Philharmonie in 2012. For the past 16 years he has been Artistic Director of the annual Northern Chords Festival in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

## BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

### Chief Conductor

Ryan Wigglesworth

### Principal Guest Conductor

Delyana Lazarova

### Creative Partner

Ilan Volkov

### Composer-in-Association

Hans Abrahamsen

### Conductor Emeritus

Sir Donald Runnicles

### First Violins

Shlomy Dobrinsky

*guest leader*

David Routledge\*

Iona McDonald †

Jane Mackenzie

Elita Poulter

Alastair Savage

Gent Koço

Emily Ward

Mireia Ferrer Yabar

Amy Cardigan

Alan Manson

Wen Wang

### Second Violins

Lise Aferiat\*

Cheryl Crockett

Liza Johnson ‡

Brigid Leman

Julia Norton

Alex Gascoine

Julia Carpenter

Barbara Downie

Alice Rickards

Ana do Vale

### Violas

Andrew Berridge †

Kimi Makino

Rik Evans

Rhoslyn Lawton

Alma Orr-Ewing

Yvette Berridge

David McCreadie

Shelagh McKail

### Cellos

Rudi De Groot\*

Siân Bell †

Nick Byrne ‡

Gill De Groot

Sarah Digger

Gen Li

### Double Basses

Gyunam Kim\*

Iain Crawford †

Genna Spinks ‡

Tom Berry

### Flutes

Eilidh Gillespie ‡

Brontë Hudnott †

Luke Russell †

### Oboes

Rainer Gibbons ‡

Kirstie Logan

Christopher Vetraino

### Clarinets

Yann Ghiró\*

Maria Gomes

### Bassoons

Cerys Ambrose-Evans ‡

Peter Wesley †

### Horns

Lauren Reeve-Rawlings †

Hector Salgueiro

Martin Murphy

Stephanie Jones

### Trumpets

Hedley Benson †

Mark Calder

### Trombones

Merin Rhyd †

Ryan Hume

Bass Trombone

Alexander Kelly †

### Tuba

Andrew Duncan\*

### Timpani

Gordon Rigby\*

### Percussion

David Lyons †

David Kerr

Christopher Edwards

Paula O'Malley

### Harp

Helen Thomson

\* *section principal*

† *principal*

‡ *string sub-principal*

‡ *guest principal*

*orchestra list correct at  
time of going to print*