

Norwich Philharmonic Society

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Ravishing Rachmaninov with Norwich Phil

www.norwichphil.org.uk

Saturday 8th February at 7.30pm

Norwich Philharmonic Orchestra

Matthew Andrews, conductor

Alexander Ullman piano

Shostakovich Festive Overture

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 3

Prokofiev Symphony No. 5

Alexander Ullman

For the Norwich Philharmonic Orchestra's next concert at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, on Saturday 8th February, we are very excited to be welcoming back Liszt Piano Competition prize winner, **Alexander Ullman**, to perform the epic **3rd Piano Concerto by Rachmaninov**. It forms part of a colourful all-Russian programme, conducted by **Matthew Andrews**, with **Prokofiev's 5th Symphony** the other main work and the fizzing **Festive Overture by Shostakovich** to kick things off.

Rachmaninov's Piano Concert No. 3 is notoriously one of the most demanding concertos in the repertoire, calling on remarkable technical virtuosity as well as physical and emotional stamina from the soloist. (Its challenges famously triggered the nervous breakdown of young Australian pianist, David Helfgott, whose story was told in the 1996 movie, *Shine*.) Rachmaninov wrote the concerto in 1909 and first performed it in New York with Mahler conducting the second performance the following year. He later declared it was his favourite of his 4 concertos. Our soloist, **Alexander Ullman**, returns to the Norwich Phil after stunning us with his performance of the composer's 2nd concerto 2 years ago just after he won the Liszt Piano Competition.

Written in one month in the summer of 1944 while World War II was still raging around him, **Prokofiev's 5th Symphony** was premiered in 1945 and instantly earned him international recognition. Today the symphony is widely regarded as his finest. He saw the work as "glorifying the grandeur of the human spirit, praising the free and happy man – his strength, his generosity and the purity of his soul." It is music written by a composer who had earlier fled the Soviet Union but then, having returned and been restored to the artistic establishment, remained deeply disturbed by the Stalinist regime. That disquiet clearly manifests itself in Prokofiev's extraordinary score.

The night of Russian music begins in a blaze of brass and dazzling woodwind in the rousing **Festive Overture by Shostakovich**. Written in 1947 to mark the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution, it didn't get its first performance until 1954 but has now become one of the classical repertoire's most popular orchestral showpieces.

Concert tickets (priced £11-£18, under 26s £7), are available from St. George's Music Shop, 17-19 St. George's Street, Norwich

www.stgeorgesmusic.co.uk 01603 626414 or via the Norwich Phil website: www.norwichphil.org.uk

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Notes to Editors:

Alexander Ullman (piano)

Born in London, in 1991, Alexander first came to international attention in 2017 after winning the Franz Liszt International Piano Competition in Budapest. Before that he had studied at the Purcell School, the Curtis Institute and the Royal College of Music, completing his Artist Diploma as the Benjamin Britten Piano Fellow in 2017.

Praised for his subtle interpretations and refined technical mastery, British pianist Alexander Ullman has impressed audiences and critics worldwide with his deep understanding of the scores he interprets, his elegant touch and crystalline phrasing.

Alexander has appeared with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, Budapest Radio Orchestra and Korean Symphony Orchestra, as well as the New Jersey, Fort Worth and Montreal symphonies, working with conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Giancarlo Guerrero, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Valentin Uryupin and Markus Stenz.

He has performed at Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall (London), the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Gewandhaus (Leipzig), Kimmel Center (Philadelphia), Kennedy Center (Washington DC), Seoul Arts Center, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center and the NCPA in Beijing, and has been featured in the Nottingham and Oxford international piano series, on BBC Radio 3, France Musique and MDR Klassik. Chamber music highlights include

He has performed recitals in Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy, Georgia, Mexico, Korea and his native UK. In April 2020 he gave recital tours to China, Japan and North America. Chamber music projects have included a tour with violinist Barnabas Kelemen and his debut at the Montreal Chamber Music Festival as well as performances at the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove (UK), Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany), the Pablo Casals Festival in Prades (France) and La Jolla Summerfest (US) with performers such as the Dover Quartet, violinist Aleksey Semenenko and cellist Michael Petrov.

In Spring 2019, Rubicon released his first album, featuring Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite, Prokofiev's Six Pieces from Cinderella, as well as Stravinsky's Petrushka and Firebird suites.

Matthew Andrews (Orchestra Conductor, Norwich Philharmonic Orchestra)

Matthew Andrews is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where he studied composition (Dr Robert Saxton), piano, and conducting technique (Alan Hazeldine). He has received further tuition with Simon Bainbridge, Hans Werner Henze and conductors Christopher Adey and Peter Stark.

Matt has a rapidly growing reputation as an orchestral conductor and trainer. Since 2012 he has been a visiting conductor to the Guildhall School of Music & Drama Junior Dept., Essex Young People's Orchestra, and in 2014 will work with Wells Cathedral School Symphony Orchestra.

His début with Norwich Philharmonic Orchestra in 2010 conducting Mahler's Resurrection Symphony led to his immediate appointment as Principal Conductor, a post he also holds with both the Sudbury and Southend Symphony Orchestras. Matt is Guest Conductor with the Academy of St Thomas, and de facto Artistic Director of the McKinsey Music Festival at the Alpine University in Kitzbühel, since its inception 12 years ago.

Matt is sought after for his realisations of modern music and complex musical projects. These have included the premiere of Neil Yates's Surroundings, a site-specific work for antiphonal Big Band (Manchester Jazz Festival 2010). He has also conducted the Northern Sinfonia, Amadeus Orchestra, Essex Youth Orchestra, North London Chorus (Artistic Director 2000-02), Opera Lab, and taught orchestral conducting technique at the Guildhall School of Music.

He was assistant to composer Geoffrey Burgon, recording Merciless Beauty with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields and the BAFTA award-winning soundtrack of Longitude with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Matt is also an award-winning consultant in the creative industries. He has managed more than sixty projects in education, broadcasting and the performing arts, and in 2003 received an award from the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts. He has worked with the BBC, Danish Business Council, University of Liverpool, Creative Partnerships and Performing Arts Labs. Matt's company Creative Imperative also manages international music festivals for its client McKinsey & Company.

The Norwich Philharmonic Society

The Norwich Philharmonic Society – www.norwichphil.org.uk - was established in 1841 and has remained at the heart of the city's musical life ever since. With a full-size symphony orchestra and a mixed chorus of some 120 voices, the Society performs a wide repertoire of large-scale works, joined by guest soloists of the highest calibre. 'The Phil' gives four concerts of choral and/or orchestral music each season at St Andrew's Hall, plus a very popular Family Christmas Concert.

In the absence of regular professional symphony concerts in Norwich, the Phil has a vital role to play in the musical life of the city and its wider area, giving performances of a consistently high standard and attracting strong support from local music lovers.

The Norwich Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the UK's leading amateur orchestras and certainly one of the longest established. Made up of talented non-professional, semi-professional and former professional musicians, the orchestra is acclaimed for its performances of major works from the symphonic repertoire and its work with gifted guest soloists, many of whom are the rising stars of the concert world. The Society's Orchestral Conductor is Matthew Andrews.

The Norwich Philharmonic Chorus, which has around 120 members, is directed by Choral Conductor David Dunnett, the principal organist for Norwich Cathedral and an acclaimed trainer of singers and chorus master.

The Phil celebrated its 175th anniversary in March 2016 and in May that year a memorable performance of Mahler's epic 'Symphony of a Thousand' as part of the Norfolk & Norwich Festival brought almost 2,000 people to their feet at the Showground Arena. The Phil was Music Award Winner in the 2015 Norfolk Arts Awards.