



**NORTH  
WILTSHIRE**  
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# Spring Concert

**21<sup>st</sup> March 2026**

St Andrew's Church, Chippenham



*we get on with*



Registered Charity No. 267492



# About

# NORTH WILTSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The North Wiltshire Symphony Orchestra is a thriving community-based symphony orchestra. We perform three concerts a year in St Andrew's Church, Chippenham, and rehearse on Wednesdays at Monkton Park Primary School, Chippenham. The orchestra was founded in the summer of 1966 and was designed to serve the market towns in the north of the county, hence the name. In the early days, there were strong links with Marlborough College as the conductor Graham Smallbone was Director of Music there.

Initially there were only two concerts per year; the winter weather was reckoned to be too severe for rehearsal attendance! The autumn concert was for symphony orchestra; the summer one for a 'classical' ensemble. Under the direction of Christopher Finzi the orchestra developed into a full symphony orchestra and widened the scope of recruitment so that players came, and continue to come, from a wide catchment living up to its name. Around the millennium, a decision was made to give three concerts a year and this was followed by a move to St Andrew's Church, Chippenham as our permanent concert base.

When Alex Arkwright took over from Chris Thompson in 2012, the links with Marlborough College, where Alex is Head of Instrumental Studies, were revived. Under his direction, the membership has expanded and he has constantly challenged us to greater heights both in playing standard and repertoire. Recent highlights have included Beethoven's Triple, Dvorák's New World Symphony, the Saint Saëns Organ Concerto and the Grieg Piano Concerto.

Vice President	<i>Graham Smallbone</i>
Artistic Advisor	<i>Philip Dukes</i>
Past Conductors	<i>Graham Smallbone (1966 - 1971)</i> <i>Christopher Finzi (1971 - 1997)</i> <i>Alan Harwood (1997 - 2002)</i> <i>Chris Thompson (2002 - 2012)</i>

## ***Interested in joining?***

*Visit our website at [www.nwso.org.uk](http://www.nwso.org.uk) or email us at [nwso2016@gmail.com](mailto:nwso2016@gmail.com)*



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# Programme

## **Mascagni**

Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana*

## **Verdi**

*The Force of Destiny Overture*

## **Nino Rota**

Trombone Concerto in C

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## **Interval**

*Refreshments served by WellBoring*

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## **Rachmaninoff**

*Isle of the Dead Op. 29*

## **Elgar**

*In the South (Alassio) Op. 50*



# Friends and Honorary Members of the NWSO



We would like to express our thanks to the Friends and Honorary Members of the NWSO for their support and promotion of the orchestra.

<i>Margaret Barrett</i>	<i>Kathy Hayward</i>
<i>Emma Cave</i>	<i>Simon Locke</i>
<i>Alison Giles</i>	<i>Margaret Lodge</i>
<i>Mary Gladman</i>	<i>Ian Mckay</i>
<i>Dick &amp; Lis Glass</i>	<i>Richard Newman</i>
<i>Nigella Hall</i>	<i>Keith Stephens</i>
	<i>Keith &amp; Rosemary Taylor</i>

## Become a Friend of the Orchestra

As an amateur orchestra, we are dependent on the support of friends. Friends of the NWSO is intended to be a group of people who provide support to the NWSO and act as its ambassadors.

**For only £36 a year**, you will enjoy the following benefits:

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nwsso2016@gmail.com or visit our website **nwsso.org.uk**

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## Alex Arkwright - Principal Conductor



Alex became the conductor of the NWSO in April 2013. Enjoying a portfolio career in the music industry, Alex is currently Head of Instrumental Studies at Marlborough College. His trumpet playing career ranged from orchestral work and extensive appearances on theme and incidental music for the BBC & ITV to performances of the Neruda and Arutunian concertos, as well as Quiet City by Copland.

Alex was principal trumpet in the North Wiltshire Symphony Orchestra for over ten years and still performs in various guises today.

His conducting studies have continued over time with Tim Reynish and Mark Heron at the RNCM and highlights include working with City of London Sinfonia at St John's Smith Square in London, as well as the musical direction of various shows and the world premiere of Burgon's Saxophone Concerto. Alex has conducted various local community groups in the South West, including Aldbourne Band, Swindon Symphony Orchestra and the Swindon and Corsham Concert Bands.

He also served as musical director of the IAPS National Concert Band and is the trumpet coach for the National Schools' Symphony Orchestra. He is frequently in demand as a coach and adjudicator in all manner of contexts. He fronts his own function band and once appeared in a feature film alongside Dawn French, though pipped at the post for an Oscar nomination. He is passionate about travel of all kinds and hopes to continue to indulge himself for many years to come; especially in trips to the Lake District where he is attempting to climb, over time, all 214 fells known as 'Wainwrights' – 143 so far.....



## Sara Stagg - Leader

Sara was born and grew up in Kenya, where she first started the violin. Having been heavily involved with music at Christ's Hospital School, Sara graduated from Manchester University with Honours in Music alongside studying with the Lindsay Quartet. She has subsequently been awarded a LRSM Diploma while studying with Dennis Simons, former leader of BBC Philharmonic and Vesselin Gellev, co-principal of London Philharmonic.

She makes frequent solo appearances, most recently performing the Bruch Double Concerto with the much-acclaimed Philip Dukes, The Lark Ascending in both St George's, Bristol and Malmesbury Abbey and the Beethoven Triple Concerto in Bath, along with many other performances locally and in London. Sara hugely enjoys the role as leader of the North Wiltshire Symphony Orchestra and has also been the guest leader of the Bristol Classical Players, Bath Concertino and leader of the Bath Spa Quartet and many other ensembles.



She also works with the International Film Orchestra and gives regular masterclasses with local orchestras. Sara is currently working as the Head of Strings at Marlborough College, where she directs numerous ensembles and orchestras alongside her teaching practice. Previously, Sara has also been involved in creating a book '*Stringbabies*', designed to easily introduce very young pupils to the violin.

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## Robb Tooley - Soloist (Trombone)

Robb Tooley grew up in Essex and started playing the trombone aged 11, and soon joined his local brass band in Colchester. At 16 he successfully auditioned for the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain, and at 17 he gained a place in the National Youth Orchestra. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and whilst there spent three years as a member of the European Union Youth Orchestra, performing with conductors such as Sir Colin Davis and Bernard Haitink.

Professionally he has performed with many UK orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia. He has also worked with the orchestra of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, English National Opera and Birmingham Royal Ballet. In chamber music he has performed with London Brass, Britten Sinfonia and the English Brass Ensemble. Since 2009 he has been a member of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.



## Pietro Mascagni (1863 – 1945)

### ***Intermezzo from Cavalleria rusticana (1890)***

Mascagni had already had an operetta produced in Cremona and had been conducting opera for several seasons when he decided to enter a competition in 1888 for new one-act operas. He had seen Giovanni Verga's hit play *Cavalleria rusticana* (Country Chivalry) shortly after it had opened in 1884, and Mascagni now commissioned a libretto based on the play.



This was completed in December 1888 and six months later Mascagni had his opera finished. One of 73 entries, it won the competition, and was first staged in Rome in May 1890.

This was perhaps the first opera to draw on the *verismo* literary movement, of which Verga was a major figure. Verismo opera placed an emphasis on true-to-life, regional characteristics and a quick narrative pace.

*Cavalleria rusticana* takes place on Easter Sunday in a Sicilian village. Turiddu, a young peasant, has seduced and then abandoned Santuzza in favor of Lola, who is married to Alfio. Santuzza pleads with Turiddu to return to her; when he spurns her, she tells Alfio about Turiddu and Lola.

At this point the village square is empty, and the drama moves to the orchestra with this Intermezzo, played with the curtain up.

The tune is based on a hymn heard earlier from within the village church, and its setting here suggests the both the peace of country living and the intense individual feelings of the principals. It closes the Easter ceremony and foreshadows the coming events. Turiddu and Lola come out of the church and enter his mother's inn, where Alfio challenges him. After asking his mother to take care of Santuzza, Turiddu goes off-stage to meet Alfio, who kills him. This is typically referred to as a "tragedy," but the present writer has his doubts.

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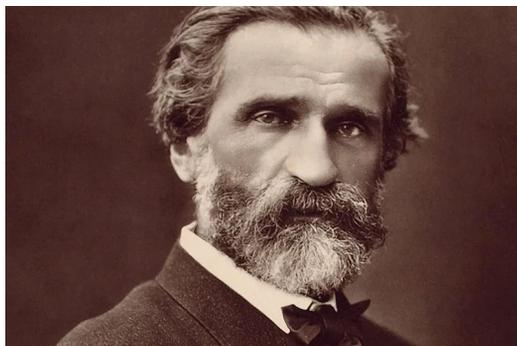
## Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901)

### Overture to *La Forza del Destino* (1861; first performed in 1862, but substantially revised and reintroduced at *La Scala*, Milan, 1869)

In 1861, at the height of his powers and already a great celebrity, Giuseppe Verdi was beginning to contemplate retirement, but could not resist taking up the commission by the Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg to write a grand opera of his choice. Eventually, he settled on a decades-old, intensely romantic play by the Spanish poet and playwright Ángel de Saavedra, Duke of Rivas, from which his long-time librettist Francesco Maria Piave crafted the text for his grand opera, *La Forza del Destino* ("The Force of Destiny," or "The Power of Fate").

Set in the mid-18th century, the story centres on the consequences of the ill-fated love between Leonora, daughter of an influential and wealthy family in Seville, and the mixed-race Don Alvaro. Their relationship is opposed by Leonora's father, whose accidental death occurs when he tries to prevent their elopement. The lovers become separated, and Leonora's brother Carlo vows to avenge his father's death. Carlos relentlessly pursues Alvaro across a panoramic landscape of brutal warfare, eventually leading to a monastery retreat. Identities are confused along the way, and the unwavering obsession of Carlos produces tragic outcomes for the whole seemingly cursed family. Apparently the first audience, in St. Petersburg, were expecting something rather light-hearted, but instead got a duel, stabbings, a suicide from a mountain top, and a pervasive dearth of good cheer.

The opera underwent complicated revisions as Verdi reintroduced his grand opera to Western Europe and the New World over the following years. For its 1869 production in Milan, which included new libretto material, he replaced a brief prelude with the substantial overture that we are playing this evening.



# Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901)

## Overture to *La Forza del Destino* (cont.)

It's not surprising that the overture to the final, revised version of the opera has become so well-known in concert halls beyond the opera house. In addition to containing a potpourri of memorable tunes, the overture distills the opera's tense drama. The six opening brass exclamations create a heavy atmosphere of foreboding, where the heavy repetition seems to hammer home the sense that there's no way out of the tangle to ensue; and the agitated theme that follows more fully enunciates the doom and gloom the opening bars portend. This "agitated theme," associated with the tragic destiny of the principals, dominates the Overture either as the main material or as a grim undercurrent to melodies related to the opera's characters.



This latter treatment, when the "destiny" motif casts its dark shadow on both the soaring and the gentle lyric themes is, if not subtle, still unfailingly effective and stimulating, so theatrical is Verdi even in his orchestral operatics.

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## Nino Rota (1911 - 1979)

### Trombone Concerto in C (1966, first performed 1969)

- I. Allegro giusto
- II. Lento, ben ritmato
- III. Allegro moderato



The present piece was first performed at the Great Hall of the Conservatory of Milan by the soloist Bruno Ferrari, to whom the piece is dedicated, and the *Orchestra Pomeriggi Musicali* of Milan directed by Franco Caracciolo.

Although Nino Rota is primarily known for his scores for films, such as *The Godfather*, and the films of Federico Fellini, he also wrote many classical works including operas, ballets, and instrumental works. The Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra, composed in 1966, is a typical example of his classical production, embodying the charm, wit, and refined orchestration typical of the composer, with both clear structures and emotional depth. It is scored for a smallish orchestra of strings, winds, horns and timpani, but no other brass instruments. This leaves the orchestral texture clear for the solo trombone. The piece is noted for its lightness or delicacy in the outer movements, which contrasts with the intimate, personal nature of the middle movement. It is heavily influenced by 20th-century neoclassicism, with crisp rhythms and elegant, often melancholic melodies.

I. **Allegro giusto**: Opens with a vigorous, declamatory theme from the soloist, featuring, conversational, recitative-like passages.

II. **Lento, ben ritmato**: Characterized as "quasi una leggenda" (almost a legend), this movement showcases the trombone's warm, vocal, and lyrical capabilities, exploiting the high registers of the instrument.

III. **Allegro moderato**: A rondo-form finale that begins with a thematic callback to the first movement before turning into a, dance-like, energetic, and playful conclusion. One writer has described it as a "Fellini-esque romp, worthy of an Italian comedy."

# Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873 - 1943)

## *Isle of the Dead* Opus 29 (Composed and first performed, 1909)

In May 1907, Rachmaninoff participated in a festival of Russian music organised in Paris by the famous ballet impresario and founder of the *Ballets Russe*. In this “Saison Russe” Rachmaninoff played his own Piano Concerto No. 2. While in Paris he saw a monochrome reproduction of the Swiss Symbolist Arnold Böcklin’s painting *Die Toteninsel* (“Isle of the Dead”).



It depicted a boat rowed by a solitary oarsman over dark waters, carrying a coffin and a solitary mourner draped in white. The boat is approaching a gloomy island with huge rocky outcrops and cliffs, cypress trees and the impression of crypts hollowed into the cliffs. Böcklin painted five different versions of the piece between 1880 and 1886 and reproductions of it abounded in Europe. The painting, which the artist called a “dream image,” had a profound effect on Rachmaninoff, as indeed it did on many others at the time. Vladimir Nabokov noted (surely with exaggeration) that prints of it were “found in every Berlin home”; and it could also be found in the offices of Sigmund Freud, Vladimir Lenin, and Georges Clemenceau.



Adolf Hitler bought the third version of the painting in 1933. Two years after seeing the painting, Rachmaninoff composed the present work, a sort of “tone poem,” and conducted the premiere in Moscow shortly thereafter.

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The “symphonic poem,” or “tone poem” is an important genre that more or less originated with Liszt. It became the quintessential orchestral means of “telling a story” with a symphony orchestra. Unlike a typical classical symphony, if there is such a thing, the symphonic “poem” takes as its subject matter something in the real world that it aims through music to depict in something like narrative form, whether it be a painting, or a battle, a well-known story from a play, or the like. Or it may be that the symphonic poem aims mainly to convey an impression of a mood, as in Rachmaninoff’s *Isle of the Dead*, or (let’s say) in Debussy’s *La Mer*, which aims to give a wide-ranging impression of the sea.

*Isle of the Dead* begins softly and ambiguously in the harp and low strings, in five-eight time, seeming to depict the irregular movement of the boat’s oars in the lapping water.

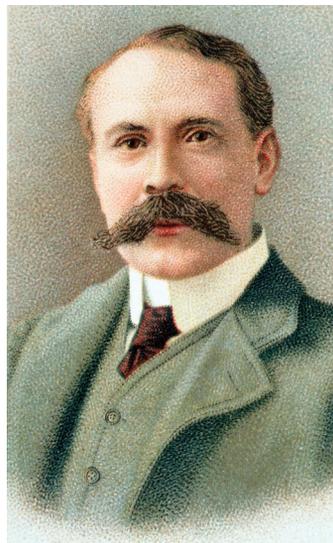


Throughout, one hears intimations of one of the composer’s favourite musical motifs, beloved by so many composers—the *Dies Irae*, the “day of wrath” from the medieval mass for the dead. The piece moves through different moods and climaxes, both optimistic and grim, at last concluding with a soft resignation to life’s finality.

## Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

### ***In The South (Alassio), Opus 50* (Composed and first performed, 1904)**

The year 1904 did not start very well for Edward Elgar. In the preceding years he had been able to notch up his first overwhelming triumphs, starting with the *Enigma Variations* and the *Sea Pictures* (1899), followed by *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900) whose first performances in Düsseldorf (1901/02) marked the beginning of Elgar's international reputation. Nevertheless, Elgar, a man in his mid-forties, was under huge pressure: he finally wanted to compose a full-scale symphony, an aim which he had attempted for years by preparing sketches. However, he had postponed this venture again and again, continuously eluding every arising possibility of a premiere.



To get in the mood and to escape the English winter, the sensitive, somewhat hypochondriacal composer wanted to spend some months on the supposedly sunny and warm Italian Riviera. In November 1903, Elgar and his wife Alice travelled to Italy and eventually settled in Alassio, where unfortunately the weather was every bit as lousy as in England, at least to start. Dispirited, Elgar failed to get on with writing a symphony. On 3 January 1904, he complained to his editor and friend Alfred Jaeger: 'This visit has been, is, artistically a complete failure & I can do nothing: we have been perishing with cold, rain & gales ... The Symphony will not be written in this sunny (?) land. I am trying to finish a Concert Overture for Covent Garden instead of the Symphony.'

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The very next day Elgar got to work. As if miraculously, dramatically, the weather improved, and Elgar, with Alice and their daughter, who had joined them at Christmas-time, ventured on various excursions from Alassio that brought joy and inspiration.

Many pages have been written about various incidents and impressions that have been alluded to in the present work, but the present compiler of your programme notes has some reason to believe that recounting all of these, or asking you to listen for “the relentless domineering onward force” of Empire here or there, would bore you even more than programme notes usually do, and refrigerate the mind with interruption. Suffice it to say, perhaps, that the imaginative among you will meet with musical, three-note puns on the three-syllable name of a village called “Moglio”; grazing sheep; flute-playing shepherds contrasting with monumental Roman Roads that evoke vanished empire; streams, flowers, hills, and you name it.



This piece, like Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead*, is often referred to as a “symphonic poem,” or a “tone poem,” but Elgar himself was disinclined to call it that, preferring rather to call it a “Concert-Overture,” not least because it lacks any particular narrative. On its first performance, the piece was a tremendous hit with the general public, as we hope it will be with you as well. And by the end of the summer, Elgar was knighted; so it was not such a bad year after all.

# The Orchestra

## Violin I

*Sara Stagg\**  
Tom Budden  
Wendy Clark  
Dick Glass  
Bernie Lanham  
B McAhron  
Mags Matthews  
Meg Moss  
Claire Sparrow  
Tessa Welford

## Violin II

*Lucy Marshall\**  
Helen Angelinetta  
Jenny Durina  
Menna Frost  
Cathy Reed  
Nancy Short  
Millie Thomas  
Alex Winchcombe

## Violas

*Clare Beresford\**  
Sue Birley  
Lucy Doggett  
Gareth Jenkins  
Fiona Lockwood  
Liz Parker  
Jenny Scrutton  
Rosemary Stanbury

## Cellos

*Catherine Oliver\**  
Rachael Byrne  
Simon Chadwick  
Mark Ellerby  
Emma Greeley  
Angela Greene  
Emer Hopkins  
Ruth Jordan  
Heather Locke

## Double Basses

*William Hollands\**  
Margaret Andrews  
Nigel Shires  
Luke Stuart-Lewis

## Flutes

*Malcolm Webb\**  
Tim Fosker  
Tony Jones

## Piccolo

Tim Fosker

## Oboes

*Simon Harris\**  
Rosamund Pendry

## Cor Anglais

Christopher Joseph

## Clarinets

*Helen Pysanczyn\**  
Alison Kent

## Bass Clarinet

Anna Wilkins

## Bassoons

*Cathy Springate\**  
Alan Braunton

## Contra Bassoon

Mel Buckley

## Horns

*Mervyn Stephens\**  
*Phil Springate\**  
Tony Brewer  
Richard Cowdy  
Nicki Kinton  
James Seddon

## Trumpets

*Duncan Evans\**  
Lydia Hills  
Emma Hazlewood

## Trombones

*Martin Holstead\**  
Mike Lomas

## Bass Trombone

Paul Holland

## Tuba

Archie McVicar

## Timpani

Charles Giddings

## Percussion

*Martin Oliver\**  
Alastair Marshallsay

## Harp

Manon Browning

\*Section Leader

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# The Orchestra Would Like to Thank...

**Media Design** Andrew Byrne

**Programme notes** Cully Wilcoxon

**Programme editors** Rachael Byrne and Heather Locke

**Sheet music** Christopher Fletcher-Campbell

**Refreshments** WellBoring

**For permission to perform, providing  
the stewards and the wider church  
team's help behind the scenes**

St Andrew's Church

**Front of House** Many thanks!

And finally, the audience for your continued support!





WellBoring is proud to supply water (and other refreshments!) at the Orchestra concerts in Chippenham, and 100% of all funds raised go out to sub-Saharan Africa to provide clean water where there was none before. 10 million people in Kenya alone have to walk distances to collect dirty water from ponds and rivers, and then burn wood to boil the water to make it less unsafe. Often it is the children who are sent, meaning that absenteeism from school is high.

WellBoring is a water charity that is based in St Mary Street, just behind St Andrews Church. We bore new wells and refurbish wells that have fallen into disrepair, mostly in primary schools and mostly in Kenya (although we are also active in Malawi, The Gambia and soon in Uganda, Tanzania and Sierra Leone). We have two drilling rigs and crews based in Kenya which enables us to bore wells in different geology, and we usually find water between 40-60 metres below ground. A simple hand-pump is installed, and with regular maintenance the supply should last for 20+ years.

Wells cost around £7,000 each, with £2,000 sufficient to refurbish a broken well – each serving an average of 500 kids and another 500 parents, teachers and the local community. To find out more please visit [wellboring.org](http://wellboring.org) – and please donate or volunteer to help provide the most basic of human rights – safe water!

When the NWSO started supporting WellBoring, the target was 100 wells, providing safe water to 100,000 people each year. To date we have now achieved over 500 wells. The NWSO has raised funds sufficient to provide one well – and is on the way to pay for a second well - so thank you to everyone who buys a drink or donates at the end of each performance!

***WellBoring, the NWSO's chosen charity for this concert, will be holding a retiring collection after the concert. Please give generously to support their amazing work.***



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## What's on in the area & Next Concert

### Wessex Concert Orchestra

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2026, 7.30pm, St Paul's Church, Chippenham

- Britten *Soirees Musicales*
- Butterworth *A Shropshire Lad*
- Walton *Four Dances from Facade*
- Ethel Smyth *Overture to the Wreckers*
- Bennett *Farnham Festival Overture*
- Vaughan Williams *English Folk Song Suite*
- Holst *Suite from the Perfect Fool*

### Marlborough Concert Orchestra

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2026, 7.30pm, St Mary's Church, Marlborough

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Concert

### Royal Wootton Bassett Orchestra

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2026, 7.30pm, Malmesbury Abbey

'London Calling'

Mendelssohn *Piano Concerto No. 1* (Soloist: Dominic Irving)

Walton *Crown Imperial*

Beethoven *Symphony No. 7: Allegretto*

Tate *London Fields Suite* (extracts)

Smyth *March of the Women*

German *Three Dances from Henry VIII*

### Next NWSO Concert:

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2026, 7.30pm, St Andrew's Church, Chippenham

Elgar Cello Concerto in E Minor Op. 85 with Soloist: Susan Norton

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 in E Minor Op.64

Beethoven Egmont Overture Op.84



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