

RLPO November 27 programme complementary content

It may not be quite bells and whistles, but there will definitely be bells in this unmissable Saturday night concert at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall.

Wagner, Shostakovich and Berlioz combine in one thrilling evening.

You can learn more about it in our programme notes which this year are being presented in a new and accessible way.

And in addition, this companion page draws together a range of complementary content which we hope will help shine additional light on the pieces, the people who composed them and the performers bringing them to life here in Hope Street.

Domingo Hindoyan

“It’s a crazy symphony with plenty of emotions every two bars, and changes of moods,” says the Liverpool Philharmonic’s new chief conductor of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*.

So expect fireworks when **Domingo Hindoyan** walks out in front of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in this latest performance in the city.

Hindoyan started his tenure at Hope Street in September and is already attracting headlines for his performances, including a ‘spine-tingling’ Beethoven’s Ninth last month.

Watch Domingo Hindoyan talk about five of his favourite symphonies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRh7I6k5168>

Wagner – Lohengrin

When *Lohengrin* was premiered in Weimar in August 1850, it was Franz Liszt who took up the baton to conduct.

The opera’s 37-year-old composer was hundreds of miles away in Switzerland where he had fled after facing arrest for his part in the 1849 **Dresden uprising** and where he would live after being banned from his native Germany for more than a decade.

It was in exile in Switzerland that **Wagner** would start to work on his *Ring Cycle*.

Lohengrin, the son of Parzival, is a character in epic German Arthurian legend - a knight of the Holy Grail sent in a boat pulled by swans to rescue a maiden who is never allowed to know his identity.

The most famous musical theme from the three-act opera is the “**Bridal Chorus**”.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C5FOW2ekHo>

Did you know? Aged 15, Wagner wrote a sprawling five-act play called *Leubald* which referenced Hamlet, Lear and Goethe. It was this which inspired the teenager to start composing.

Listen to the Prelude to Act III of *Lohengrin*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOQlG8YRxEQ>

Anastasia Kobekina

Growing up in Yekaterinburg, in the shadow of the Ural mountains, **Anastasia Kobekina** was surrounded by music – not surprising with her mother a pianist and her father a composer.

The young Kobekina started playing a baby cello aged three-and-a-half and would put on performances at home, dressing up in her finery with a paper crown on her head to be formally announced and take a bow.

Kobekina went on to study in Moscow and at the Kronberg Academy in Germany and the University of Arts in Berlin.

The award-winning young cellist, now 27, plays a **1698 Stradivarius, De Kermadec-Bläss**, which is loaned to her by the Stradivari Stiftung Habisreutinger.

Catch a glimpse into the world of Anastasia Kobekina.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzVWh-L4oE4>

Shostakovich Cello Concerto No.1

Dmitri Shostakovich was the first of Russia's composers to come to attention after the 1917 Revolution – and unlike Prokofiev, Rachmaninov and Stravinsky who made new lives abroad, he remained a resident of the USSR.

It might be an understatement to say he didn't always have an easy relationship with Mother Russia however, where it was deemed that art should serve the revolution and his **music came under attack** with the rise of Stalin when Shostakovich was denounced not once but twice for the crime of 'Formalism'.

In later years, the Soviet state grudgingly softened its position – and Shostakovich finally joined the Communist Party in 1960, but reportedly under duress.

His **Cello Concerto No 1** was composed in 1959 – the same year Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra performed Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony in Moscow.

Listen to Anastasia Kobekina play the Cello Concerto No.1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNxsoiIq-7s>

Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique

In September 1827, a 24-year-old **Louis-Hector Berlioz** found himself in the audience of a performance of *Hamlet* by a company led by the great Charles Kemble (whose elder brother John Philip was incidentally born in Prescot) and visiting from England.

The evening started both a life-long love of Shakespeare for Berlioz and a grand, overwhelming passion for the woman playing the Bard's doomed Ophelia – Anglo-Irish actress **Harriet Smithson**.

It was a grand – at that point unrequited – passion which in 1830 was channelled into the Early Romantic composer's ***Symphonie Fantastique***, charting the progress of a torrid love affair through five turbulent movements.

The couple would eventually marry, but it wasn't a happy union and within a decade they had separated.

Listen to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra perform *Symphonie Fantastique* in France.

<https://www.liverpoolphil.com/the-orchestra/live-from-liverpool-philharmonic-hall/works-by-dukas-and-berlioz/>

Did you know? While Berlioz was a composer and conductor, he principally earned his living as a music critic and was a particular champion of Beethoven.

The bells

The bells! The bells!

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is in the unique position of owning the largest collection of church bells of any UK orchestra.

The set of 14 bells has been brought together as part of our **Forever Bells** project and with the generous support of Liverpool Philharmonic donors.

They were made in the Netherlands at the **Royal Eijsbouts Bell Foundry** at Asten, founded in 1872, and each bell features the Liver Birds and the official flower of Liverpool – Sea Holly – cast in bronze relief.

Watch percussion section leader Graham Johns talk about the bells.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qnwh8gWaY-w>