

RLPO January 20 and 23 programmes complementary content

Bienvenue tout le monde!

The Liverpool Philharmonic is celebrating all things Gallic this month in a pair of concerts packed to the brim with fantastic French music – and a fantastic French soloist too of course.

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

Watch Stephen Johnson talking about the concert programme here ((LINK)).

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.

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

Described as having “insatiable enthusiasm and artistic curiosity”, multi award-winning pianist **Jean-Efflam Bavouzet** ((<https://www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/jean-efflam-bavouzet>)) is widely recognised as one of the world’s outstanding exponents of the French repertoire.

Bavouzet was born in Brittany but grew up in Metz before studying under Pierre Sancan at the Conservatoire de Paris and being given private lessons by Sir Georg Solti.

His repertoire includes not only Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart, Prokofiev and Debussy but also contemporary works by composers like **Bruno Mantovani** ((<https://www.brunomantovani.com/en/biographie.html>)) and **Jörg Widmann**. ((<https://www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/jorg-widmann>))

He records exclusively for Chandos, and his numerous recordings have won Gramophone and BBC Music Magazine Awards as well as a Diapason d’Or and Choc de l’année.

The 59-year-old is International Chair in Piano at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he is a Fellow of the college, and artistic director of the Lofoten Piano Festival in Norway.

Watch Bavouzet perform Ravel’s *Piano Concerto in G*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9cxIJikenw>

Domingo Hindoyan

Studying in Geneva, Liverpool's new chief conductor admits he was greatly influenced by French repertoire.

So it's perhaps no wonder that when he sat down to discuss the programme for his first season with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, **Domingo Hindoyan** (<https://www.askonasholt.com/artists/domingo-hindoyan/>) wanted to make sure it was represented.

He's already conducted Ravel – *La Valse* in the opening concerts in September – and now adds Debussy, Messiaen and Roussel in this all-French evening.

And there's more to come between now and the summer with **Paul Dukas** (<https://www.liverpoolphil.com/whats-on/classical-music/the-romance-of-rachmaninov/4064>) on the programme next month.

Watch a Q&A with Domingo Hindoyan.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Jy9Pmn-fKs>

Maurice Ravel

"The only love affair I have ever had was with music," said composer **Maurice Ravel**. (<https://www.biography.com/musician/maurice-ravel>)

And it's a love affair that has left the world with a rich legacy of pieces, from operas and choral works to orchestral pieces and piano music.

Three of those works are on the programme for these Thursday and Sunday concerts.

Pavane pour une infante défunte

(<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/ravel/music/maurice-ravel-pavane-pour-une-infante-defunte/>) – or Pavane for a Dead Princess - was first composed in 1899 while Ravel was still at the Paris Conservatoire, where he studied composition under Fauré, and this orchestral version of the Spanish-flavoured miniature was published in 1910.

There are also Spanish fragrances in Ravel's entertaining *Piano Concerto in G* (<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/ravel/music/piano-concerto-g/>), composed between 1929 and 1931.

Despite his extensive writing for the piano, Ravel was nowhere near a virtuoso on the instrument himself as soloist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet explains in this illuminating interview at the keyboard.

<https://vimeo.com/140182755>

And the sounds and smells of Spain also infuse *Boléro* (<https://www.francemusique.fr/en/10-little-things-you-might-not-know-about-ravel-s-bolero-15565>), perhaps one of the most recognisable pieces of classical music in the world.

Boléro (<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/ravel/guides/story-maurice-ravels-bolero/>) was originally commissioned as a ballet by **Ida Rubenstein** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3vgt1IOEOA>) in 1928, and its insistent repeated melody came to Ravel as he holidayed on the French Basque coast.

Did you know? Boléro may have become Ravel's most famous work, but the composer himself was often disparaging about it, saying: "Sadly there is nothing musical in it."

Watch Torvill and Dean's gold medal-winning performance at the Winter Olympics in 1984.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8obUdxnTlc>

Debussy Jeux

Claude Debussy (<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/debussy/pictures/debussy-20-facts-about-great-composer/>) was born near Paris in 1862 and started having piano lessons at the age of seven.

Aged 10 he entered the Paris Conservatoire where his tutors included Émile Durand and César Franck and where he realised he would never become the piano virtuoso he had hoped, instead turning to concentrate on composition.

In his early 20s he won the prestigious Prix de Rome.

Jeux has an impressive pedigree. Debussy composed the piece, described as a poème dansé, in 1912 for Diaghilev's Ballet Russes and it was choreographed by none other than Nijinsky, **seen here in this rare clip.** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJeOsAm3CGU>)

Debussy reportedly wasn't very happy with the initial storyline but softened after his fee was raised.

Sadly, *Jeux* wasn't quite the success it had been hoped when it was premiered in Paris in 1913 – not helped that a bare two weeks later the Ballet Russes premiered another new work...Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Watch this excerpt of the 1980 biographical film Nijinsky, featuring *Jeux*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INBKDH1I2ms>

Messiaen Les Offrandes Oubliées

Olivier Messiaen (<https://www.oliviermessiaen.org/biography>) was fresh out of the Paris Conservatoire when he composed *Les Offrandes Oubliées* – or The Forgotten Offerings - in 1930, and its premiere was his first work played by an orchestra.

You can read more about the background of *Les Offrandes Oubliées* and Messiaen's interests in these **illuminating programme notes.**

(<https://www.laphil.com/musicdb/pieces/460/les-offrandes-oubliees>)

Messiaen, whose mother Cecile was a poet, had started composing aged seven and entered the Conservatoire as a child prodigy aged 11 where he studied piano, organ and composition, the latter with Paul Dukas.

His faith was an important part of his artistic life – he called it his “grand drama” – and he was also influenced by the tones and rhythms of music from India, Greece and the orient, and by the ‘colours’ he envisaged in music.

Messiaen’s career was interrupted by the Second World War where he served as a medical auxiliary in the French army, and after the fall of France he spent a year in a Silesian POW camp.

It was there he wrote one of his most important works, the chamber piece *Quatuor pour la fin de temps* (https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W15787_120126), which was premiered by fellow prisoners.

Did you know? Messiaen spent many years studying birdsong which he incorporated in his music, travelling across France and sometimes sleeping rough to hear as many different species as possible.

Watch a performance of *Les Offrandes Oubliées*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lgnwKoWiv0>

Roussel Suite, Bacchus and Ariadne

Born in 1869 in Tourcoing on the French/Belgian border, **Albert Roussel** (https://www.chandos.net/composers/Albert_Roussel/426) spent seven formative years as a midshipman in the French Navy. But the sea’s loss turned out to be music’s gain with him becoming one of the most important French composers of the interwar period.

The adult Roussel studied in Paris at the Schola Cantorum, and while studying he also acted as a teacher himself. One student was Erik Satie.

He composed the ballet *Bacchus and Ariadne* in 1930 – it was premiered by the Paris Opera with choreography by Serge Lifar, and later he created **two orchestral suites** (<https://www.musicprogramnotes.com/roussel-bacchus-et-ariane-suite-no-2-op-43/>) from the score, which were first performed in 1933.

It contains complex, contrapuntal writing and a glorious Technicolor soundscape.

Listen to a performance of *Bacchus and Ariadne* by the Brussels Philharmonic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghdaXfa55kY>