

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra April 7 programme complementary content

As part of his tenure at Liverpool Philharmonic, Chief Conductor Domingo Hindoyan has promised to present an opera every season.

And what more dramatic way to begin than with a performance of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* right here on stage at the Hall?

You can learn more about what to expect 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 (<https://youtu.be/VOqLMzAnbto>).

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

Domingo Hindoyan

Domingo Hindoyan (<https://www.askonasholt.com/artists/domingo-hindoyan/>) was born in Caracas in 1980 to a violinist father and a lawyer mother. He started his musical career as a violinist in the ground-breaking Venezuelan music education programme, El Sistema.

He studied conducting at **Haute école de musique in Geneva** (<https://www.hesge.ch/hem/en/school>), where he gained his masters, and in 2012 was invited to join the Allianz International Conductor's Academy, through which he worked with the London Philharmonic and the Philharmonia Orchestra, and with conductors like Esa-Pekka Salonen and Sir Andrew Davis.

He was appointed first assistant conductor to **Daniel Barenboim** (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Barenboim>) at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin in 2013 and in 2019, he took up a position as principal guest conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra.

In the same year, he made his debut with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and was appointed as successor to Vasily Petrenko in 2020, taking up this position last September.

Jennifer Johnston

Mezzo **Jennifer Johnston** (<https://www.jenniferjohnstonmezzo.com/>) started singing as a schoolgirl at Merchant Taylors in Crosby. She made her earliest

appearances at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall when she was a teenager, as a member of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir.

Speaking about her time with the Choir, she says: “I learned such a lot in those three years which really formed me later as a performer.”

Johnston went on to be a Cambridge choral scholar, then worked as a barrister in London before being encouraged to train professionally, winning a scholarship to the Royal College of Music.

A former **BBC New Generation Artist**

((<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2J8nGhHFq1hX3KPB6S8bQHH/new-generation-artists-a-to-z>)), she has appeared at the First Night of the Proms, with other career highlights including Jocasta in Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* in Berlin and London, and Mrs Grose in Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* at La Scala.

Dubbed the ‘Scouse Diva’, Johnston’s first album, *A Love Letter to Liverpool*, included a special version of the Liverpool FC anthem **You’ll Never Walk Alone** ((<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvRvCBIE5yU>)), which she recorded with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir.

She won the **Royal Philharmonic Society Singer’s Award 2021**

((https://royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk/rps_today/news/2021-rps-awards-winners-announced)) and is also a member of the **Liverpool City Region Music Board**. ((<https://lcrmusicboard.co.uk/>))

Károly Szemerédy

Hungarian **Károly Szemerédy** ((<https://www.intermusica.co.uk/artist/Karoly-Szemeredy>)) makes his British debut in this performance of fellow countryman Béla Bartók’s opera, sung in Hungarian with English surtitles.

The bass-baritone began his studies at the **Hungarian State Opera as a student of Margit László** ((<https://www.opera.hu/en/company/szemely/szemeredy-karoly/1231/>)) and continued at the Escuela Superior de Canto de Madrid.

He made his debut at the Teatro Real in Madrid in 2007, playing Levitsky in *Boris Gudanov*.

In 2008, he won the Maestro Guerrero International Singing Competition in Madrid, later reaching the finals of the Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition in Vienna. In 2013, he won the Opera-Città di Mondovi award for breakthrough young talent of the year.

His roles include William Tell, Count Almavira, Escamillo in *Carmen* and Leonardo in Szokolay’s *Blood Wedding*.

He has previously performed *Bluebeard’s Castle* at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, with the Orchestra of the Municipal Theatre of Bologna and with Opera Lyon.

Gustav Mahler

The **Curse of the Ninth** (<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/curse-of-the-ninth/>) – the idea that a composer is fated to die while or after composing their ninth symphony – remains one of the best-known superstitions in classical music.

Of course, many have proved it's just that, a superstition. Shostakovich produced 15 symphonies, Mozart left almost 50 and Haydn? Haydn completed a record-breaking 106.

But still the superstition persists, fuelled by the examples of Beethoven, Bruckner, Schubert, Dvořák, Vaughan Williams... and Mahler.

It was **Gustav Mahler**

(<https://www.deutschegrammophon.com/en/composers/gustav-mahler/biography>) who might actually have given the superstition oxygen. He reportedly became obsessed with the idea, which then, in turn, ironically became a self-fulfilling prophecy when the Austrian died while in the middle of composing his *10th Symphony*.

Did you know? Mahler liked to compose in the morning and then spend the rest of his day swimming, running or cycling.

Listen to the Adagio from Mahler's *10th Symphony*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHyV8noUXCo>

Béla Bartók

Composer and pianist **Béla**

Bartók (<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/bartok/guides/discovering-great-composers-bela-bartok/>) was born in Nagyszentmiklós – now Sânnicolau Mare in northwest Romania – in 1881.

A sickly child, he showed musical promise at an early age. At five years old, he could already play 40 pieces on the piano, and he gave his first public recital at 11.

While he was studying at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest, the young Bartók met fellow composer **Zoltán Kodály** (<https://kodalyhub.com/about-zoltan-kodaly/the-life-of-zoltan-kodaly>), who became a lifelong friend.

Liszt, Richard Strauss and Brahms, and later Debussy, Stravinsky and Schoenberg all influenced his style – as of course did the folk music he encountered and recorded (on an Edison phonograph) as he travelled through his native Hungary.

Bartók was 30 when he embarked on composing what would turn out to be his only opera, ***Bluebeard's Castle***. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Duke-Bluebeards-Castle>)

It had a libretto by Hungarian writer, poet and film critic **Béla Balázs** (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bela-Balazs>), who had originally conceived it for Kodály.

Did you know? In March 1922, Bartók gave a recital at the Rushworth Hall in Liverpool where, as one critic recalled, “his shy and modest personality charmed everyone, just as his strong and wilful music surprised us all.”

Listen to a performance of *Bluebeard’s Castle*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoImjQOEp-Q>