

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra October 20 and 23 programme complementary content

The musical genius of Ludwig van Beethoven takes centre stage in this pair of concerts which also mark a welcome return to Liverpool for stellar Japanese pianist, Nobuyuki Tsujii. This is the first time he'll be appearing alongside Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Chief Conductor Domingo Hindoyan in the city.

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 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 Ecole de Musique in Geneva, 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 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.

Nobuyuki Tsujii

Nobuyuki Tsujii has become a real audience favourite during his visits to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall over the last decade.

The Japanese superstar pianist also toured his home country with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in 2015 to great acclaim.

Tsujii was born in Tokyo in 1988. He has been blind since birth, but at the age of two he played 'Do-Re-Mi' on a toy piano after hearing his mother sing the tune. He began piano lessons at the age of four and gave his first recital in Tokyo's famous Suntory Hall at 12.

He learns new works by ear and performs with orchestras by 'listening to the conductor's breath and sensing what is going on around [him]'.

In 2014, *Touching the Sound* was released. This was a film about Tsujii's life, following his journey from birth to performing at Carnegie Hall for the first time in 2011.

Along with being in great demand as a performer on stages across the world, Tsujii – who is known to audiences as 'Nobu' – is also a composer.

In addition to his appearances in this pair of concerts, he will also be performing a recital at the Hall on November 2, a concert which was originally scheduled for St George's Hall earlier this year.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven was just 21 when he first moved to Vienna. The city would remain his home for his entire adult life though, becoming the grand backdrop for his greatest musical creations.

The Creatures of Prometheus dates from 1801 and was the only full-length ballet the composer wrote. Months later, Beethoven completed what would become known as the 'Moonlight' sonata – and it was also the year he first mentioned his hearing problems, admitting to his friend Dr Franz Wegeler: “for the last three years my hearing has become worse....”.

The 'Emperor' Concerto and Sixth Symphony, meanwhile, were both composed in 1808-9 in Vienna, although Beethoven had worked on sketches for the symphony as early as 1802.

While he spent his life in the middle of a bustling city, Beethoven was a nature lover who had enjoyed childhood walks along the Rhine with his father and as an adult, regularly took afternoon strolls to inspire and invigorate him. The man himself said, “How happy I am to be able to walk among the shrubs, the trees, the woods, the grass and the rocks... for the woods, the trees and the rocks give man the resonance he needs.” And it was he who also gave his new symphony the moniker, 'Pastoral'.

Did you know? *The Creatures of Prometheus* was staged in New York in June 1808 – making it one of the first of Beethoven's works to be performed in its entirety in the United States.

About the Music

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Overture to the ballet *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* op. 43

Composed: 1801

First Performed: 28 March 1801, Burgtheater, Vienna

Beethoven wrote only one full-length ballet, *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*. 'The Creations of Prometheus' was a considerable success at its first performance, and as his first major stage work, it marked a significant step towards the opera stage. The subject is the mythological half-man-half god Prometheus (a great favourite of the Romantics) who defied the gods to help humankind, in the process giving them science and art. The ballet's Overture has survived well in the concert hall. It's not hard to see why: direct, appealingly melodic (the allegro's second theme, introduced on woodwind, is a real 'ear-worm'), it builds to its exciting close with irresistible mastery. Light music it may be, but if so, it is of the very highest quality.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827): Piano Concerto No 5 in E flat major, Op. 73 ('Emperor')

1. Allegro
2. Adagio un poco mosso –
3. Rondo: Allegro

Composed: 1809

First Performed: Gewandhaus, Leipzig, 28 November 1811, soloist Friedrich Schneider, cond. Johann Schulz

In English-speaking countries, Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto is known as the 'Emperor', which has led to the misconception that it was written in praise of Revolutionary France's military hero Napoleon Bonaparte. In fact, Beethoven's feelings about Napoleon had darkened by the time he came to write this concerto, and they grew darker still when Napoleon's forces invaded Beethoven's home city of Vienna while he was composing it. Now there was 'nothing but drums, canon, soldiers, misery of all sorts', Beethoven wrote, and in a desperate effort to save what was left of his hearing, he fled to his brother's cellar and covered his ears with pillows. Granted, there is something magnificently 'imperious' about the opening, in which the piano storms in with cascades and runs, claiming the stage at once. This was in defiance of classical convention, which normally brings in the soloist later, after the orchestra has prepared the scene. But as the long first movement unfolds, the orchestra seems to question the pianist's grand self-assertion, and a much more complex, nuanced dialogue begins to develop.

The wonderful slow movement is worlds away from military conflict. The piano writing has an almost fabulous delicacy (remember that the man who created these crystalline sounds was now

barely able to hear a piano), then comes a moment of expectant stillness. The piano seems to try out a new idea dreamily – then a titanic waltz-like finale bursts onto the scene. The waltz was beginning to emerge as ‘the’ Viennese dance form at this time. Could this be an act of solidarity with Beethoven’s besieged home city? A way of saying ‘You shall dance again’? Whatever, it makes a rousing ending. Once again though, the soloist’s ‘imperial’ role can be subtly challenged: in what ought to be the piano’s big solo moment near the end, the timpani won’t stop playing – even in this mighty work Beethoven’s sense of humour won’t be repressed.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Symphony No 6 in F major, op 68, ‘Pastoral’

1. Allegro ma non troppo (‘Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the country’)
2. Andante molto mosso (‘Scene by a brook’)
3. Allegro (‘Peasants’ merrymaking’)
4. Allegro (‘Thunderstorm’)
5. Allegretto (‘Shepherds’ Hymn - happy, thankful feelings after the storm’)

Composed: 1807-8

First Performed: 22 December 1808, Theater an der Wien, Vienna, cond. Beethoven

‘More the expression of feeling than tone-painting’, was how Beethoven summed up his ‘Pastoral’ Symphony (1807-8). There are moments of wonderful tone-painting: the thunder in the fourth movement for instance, or the birdcalls in the closing pages of the second. But Beethoven believed that truth lay more in feeling than in fact, and that is what counts in the end. The first movement has a relaxed, open, song-like quality quite unlike the taut, muscular thematic springboards that set the *Eroica* and the Fifth symphonies in motion - not an explosion of emotion, but a gradual ‘awakening of cheerful feelings’. ‘Scene by a brook’ begins with flowing harmonies for lower strings, while first violins sing heart-easing melodies. Near the end, we hear the calls of nightingale, quail and cuckoo before the movement ebbs gently to its close.

A lightly dancing scherzo, with a stomping trio section in two-time suggestive of earthy country dances, is suddenly and dramatically cut off. Hushed bass tremolos and pattering violin figures evoke distant thunder and the first raindrops. Before long the storm is fully upon us, with terrific thunderclaps on brass, timpani and growling cellos and basses. A quiet hymn-like figure is heard on woodwind and upper strings (this is famously compared to a rainbow), then a rising solo flute heralds the beginning of the finale. A solo clarinet imitates a shepherd’s pipe, echoed by a solo horn. Violins transform these fragments of themes into a long, fully-fledged melody. At length the finale builds to an ecstatic climax, again very hymn-like, then muted horn – the shepherd now distant perhaps – pronounces a benediction. As an ‘Ode to Joy’, it’s every bit as convincing as the Ninth Symphony’s famous finale. Again, it’s worth remembering that the man who created these vivid sound-pictures had been deaf for the best part of a decade: the memories were clearly still fresh as ever though.