

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra June 29 programme complementary content

Take Sibelius at his most sublime, Strauss at his most swashbuckling and Tchaikovsky at his most romantic and you have quite an evening in store.

Pianist Inon Barnatan was a hit when he performed at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall last season, and now he's back to play Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto. Meanwhile, it's a warm welcome to conductor Roderick Cox who is making his Liverpool debut.

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.

Roderick Cox

Berlin-based American conductor [Roderick Cox](#) pays his first visit to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall for this June concert.

Cox has been described as a “trailblazer” and hailed for his “riveting intensity and focus”.

Born in Macon, Georgia, into a home filled with gospel music, he studied at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University. He earned a master's in conducting at Northwestern University, going on to further his studies at the [American Academy of Conducting in Aspen](#).

He was the winner of the 2013 Robert J Harth conducting prize and, in 2018, the [Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award](#).

With a passion for diversity and inclusion in the arts, in 2019 he started the Roderick Cox Music Initiative, which provides scholarships for young musicians from historically marginalised communities.

Cox is also the subject of a recent film documentary, [Conducting Life](#), which was shot over the course of seven years. Watch the trailer for [Conducting Life](#).

Inon Barnatan

A warm welcome back to [Inon Barnatan](#) who made his debut playing Mozart with the Orchestra in December 2021.

One of the most admired pianists of his generation, Barnatan was born in Tel Aviv in 1979 and started learning piano at three when his parents discovered he had perfect pitch.

He made his orchestral debut aged 11 and later studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where his teachers included Christopher Elton and the late Maria Curcio.

His career has encompassed playing with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic where he was the inaugural [artist-in-association](#) for three seasons. He promotes, commissions and plays the work of contemporary composers including Thomas Adès, Sebastian Currier, Avner Dorman and Andrew Norman.

In 2021 he sat [on the judging panel](#) of the Leeds International Piano Competition.

Watch Inon Barnatan talk about [why classical music matters](#).

Richard Strauss

[Richard Strauss](#) was born in Munich in 1864, the son of Franz Strauss (one of Germany's leading horn players) and Josephine, whose family were brewers.

As a child he played the piano and violin, and he began composing aged six. He would also often sit in on rehearsals of the court orchestra in which his father played.

His first orchestral work, completed at the age of 13, was a *Serenade in G major*, and he composed his first symphony at 17.

In 1886 a visit to Italy inspired his symphonic fantasy, *Aus Italien*. But it was Spanish literature's legendary libertine Don Juan, brought colourfully to life, which really [made the young conductor and composer's name](#).

In 1889, Strauss conducted the premiere of his famous [tone poem](#) in Weimar, where he was the kapellmeister. He would return to it throughout his long six-decade career, both live on stage and in the [recording studio](#).

Listen to an excerpt of [Don Juan](#) played by the Berlin Philharmoniker under Gustavo Dudamel.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

[Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky](#) was a music theory and harmony professor at the Moscow Conservatory when he sat down to compose what would become his [Piano Concerto No 1 in B-flat minor](#) in the autumn of 1874.

It's thought the 34-year-old hoped the Conservatory's founder [Nikolai Rubinstein](#) might agree to play the completed work. But when he showcased it to his mentor and great supporter, along with some friends, Rubenstein pulled it apart, calling it worthless and impossible to play.

After his initial shock at the reaction, Tchaikovsky decided he would 'not change a note' and offered it instead to [Hans von Bulow](#) who praised its "unsurpassed originality" and premiered the piece in Boston the following year.

Tchaikovsky, it would seem, was right to stick to his guns, with the concerto going on to become one of his most popular and widely played pieces. But he obviously didn't bear a grudge, as he dedicated his Second Piano Concerto to Rubinstein.

Enjoy Simon Trpčeski and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra playing the [allegro con fuoco](#) from Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No 1*.

Jean Sibelius

[Swans in flight over the Finnish countryside](#) are said to have inspired the famous horn motif in the final movement of Jean Sibelius' Fifth Symphony.

In his diary for April 1915, the [Finnish composer](#) recorded an encounter with the birds near Ainola, his beloved retreat at Järvenpää, writing: "Today at ten to eleven I saw 16 swans. One of my greatest experiences! Lord God, what beauty! They circled over me for a long time. Disappeared into the solar haze like a gleaming silver ribbon."

The [epic symphony](#), written on his return to Finland after a successful concert tour of America, was commissioned by the Finnish government to mark Sibelius' 50th birthday in December 1915.

And it was the man himself who stood up to conduct the Helsinki Symphony Orchestra in the premiere of the work on his birthday.

Did you know? *Symphony No 5* was premiered as a four-movement work, and it wasn't until 1919 that Sibelius condensed it into the three-movement piece known today.

Listen to the finale of Sibelius' [Symphony No 5](#) and watch rare footage of the composer and his family.