

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra September 28 programme complementary content

Cellist Pablo Ferrández returns to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall to play Dvořák's lyrical *Cello Concerto* in this concert full of tremendous – and tender – tunes. Enjoy the lively overture to Smetana's much-loved operatic hit *The Bartered Bride*, and then settle back for the monumental musical experience that is Brahms' Fourth Symphony.

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 the Orchestra's new Chief Conductor in 2020, taking up this position in September 2021. In July he announced he had extended his contract until 2028.

Pablo Ferrández

Spanish cellist [Pablo Ferrández](#) has been hailed as a “new cello genius”, winning acclaim for his “pop-idol magnetism, superb technique and exhilarating musicality”.

Born into a family of musicians in Madrid in 1991, he was 13 when he joined the prestigious Escuela Superior de Musica Reina Sofia where he studied with Natalia Shakhovskaya. He went on to train at the Kronberg Academy and at the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation.

A prize winner at the XV International Tchaikovsky Competition, he records exclusively for SONY Classical. His 2021 debut album *Reflections* won him Young Artist of the Year at the Opus Klassik Awards, while his second album, released last year, includes Brahms' *Double Concerto* performed with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Czech Philharmonic under conductor Manfred Honeck.

In demand as both a soloist and recitalist, he is also frequently invited to international festivals including Salzburg, Dresden, Verbier and the Dvořák Prague Festival. Future engagements this season include performances with the Czech Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In 2018 he [performed the Haydn and Korngold cello concertos](#) with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Alpesh Chauhan.

Ferrández plays the 1689 Archinto Stradivarius on generous lifelong loan from a member of the Stretton Society.

Listen to Pablo Ferrández play Gabriel Fauré's [Après un rêve](#) with pianist Julien Quentin.

Bedřich Smetana

Next March marks the bicentenary of the birth of the pioneering [Bedřich Smetana](#), founding father of the Czech national music revival of the 19th Century.

The son of a Bohemian brewer, the young Friedrich – as he was officially christened – showed an early aptitude for the piano and after studying in Prague, he spent his early years as a teacher and player.

In 1848, the year of the Prague Uprising (in which he had a brief stint on the barricades), he opened a music school but failed to make it a going concern.

Smetana and his family moved to [Sweden in 1856](#), where he enjoyed more success as a conductor and performer.

But after the Prague Provisional Theatre was opened in the early 1860s as a home for Czech opera, he returned to his homeland and his work *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* proved a huge hit, winning him first prize in a competition for new operas for the theatre.

His follow-up, [The Bartered Bride](#), was premiered in July 1866 but the performance, staged on a sultry evening and with a threatened Prussian invasion, was a bit of a disaster.

Revised and restaged four years later as a three-act opera, it became a smash hit success and would be pivotal to the development of Czech opera over the next few decades.

Listen to the Czech Philharmonic play the Overture from [The Bartered Bride](#).

Antonin Dvořák

[Dvořák](#) spent a total of two-and-a-half years in the United States – but despite (or perhaps because he was) yearning for his homeland, it was a productive time for the Czech composer.

His American sojourn as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York coincided with the creation of his *Symphony from the New World*, *String Quartet in F major* (known as his American Quartet) and his piano cycles *Humoresques*.

It was in 1894, during his third, and last, term as director of the National Conservatory that he sat down to write a work for cello.

Dvořák had attempted to write a [cello concerto](#) as a young man, composed while he was courting not his future wife Anna but her sister Josefina.

Nearly 30 years on, as he prepared to tackle his new concerto, Dvořák learned Josefina was seriously ill. Struck by the news, he wove her favourite song *Leave Me Alone* into the work's wistful third movement.

The concerto was completed in February 1895. Two months later, the composer and his family had quit America for good and returned to Prague.

Meanwhile, the concerto received its premiere in London on March 19 1896 with Dvořák conducting and British cellist [Leo Stern](#) – playing the General Kyd Stradivarius - taking the soloist's role.

Along with Elgar's 1919 work, Dvořák's *Cello Concerto* remains one of the most popular and most performed in the world.

Watch Pablo Ferrández play the Dvořák [Cello Concerto](#) with the Israel Philharmonic conducted by Vasily Petrenko.

Johannes Brahms

It took [Johannes Brahms](#) the best part of two decades to complete his First Symphony – but by the time he started work on his last, inspiration came fast enough for him to have it concert ready within 12 months.

Coming off the back of a burst of creativity which included his well-received violin and piano concertos and his Third Symphony, the 51-year-old embarked on what would be his final symphonic work.

It was written in the quiet alpine town of [Mürzzuschlag](#), south west of Vienna, where he spent the summers of 1884 and 1885, completing two movements on each visit.

Conductor [Hans von Bulow](#) was the first to link Brahms with Bach and Beethoven – the [Three Bs](#) as they have become known. And if the monumental [Fourth Symphony](#) nods in the direction of Beethoven, it also makes a sweeping bow in the direction of Bach, referencing his *Cantata No 150* in the theme of its final movement.

The symphony received its premiere in October 1885 with Brahms conducting.

Did you know? Brahms became a mentor to Dvořák after being impressed by the young Czech's entry into a composing competition he was judging. The two later became close friends, travelling Europe together and providing each other with support and feedback.

Listen to the final movement of Brahms' [Symphony No 4 in E minor](#).

About the Music

Bedřich Smetana (1824-84): Overture, *The Bartered Bride*

Composed: 1863-6 (rev. 1867-70)

First Performed: 30 May 1866, Provisional Theatre, Prague

Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, the first Czech opera to enter the general repertoire, is now considered a landmark in the development of modern Czech music and culture. The premiere wasn't a great success, but the first performance of the revised and extended version in 1870 catapulted it onto the world stage. The plot, set in a Bohemian village, tells how true love wins out over the scheming of the heroine's parents and their marriage broker. But there's no hint of potential broken hearts in the brilliant, lively Overture, which seems to radiate joy from first to last. There's flourish from the full orchestra, then an imitative build up (string sections entering one at a time) leads to a strongly Czech-flavoured dancing tune on full orchestra. Somehow we can guess that this opera will have a happy ending.

Antonin Dvořák: (1841-1904): Cello Concerto in B minor, op 104

1. Allegro
2. Adagio ma non troppo
3. Allegro moderato

Composed: 1894

First Performed: 19 March 1896, London, Leo Stern (cello), cond. Dvořák

When Dvořák's friend and champion Johannes Brahms first saw the score of this Concerto, he exclaimed, 'Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a cello concerto like this?... I would have written one long ago!' Concertos for cello were still rare in the 1890s, and it was only the badgering of his friend, the cellist Hanus Wihan (to whom Dvořák dedicated the Concerto), that finally persuaded him to give it a try. But the end result was not only one of his greatest achievements, but the work that did more than any other to change the musical world's perceptions of the cello as soloist.

Dvořák begins the first movement with a long introductory passage for orchestra alone. There is a darkly memorable theme for low woodwind at the start then, after the first big climax, a glorious long tune for solo horn – Dvořák himself confessed that he could not hear this without strong emotion. When the cello enters, it has to claim these themes as its own. In the end, it is clearly the cello that wins – to which the orchestra, magnanimous in defeat, finally roars its approval.

The Adagio's first theme carries strong suggestions of Czech folksong. Then comes dramatic contrast in a darker minor-key central section. While Dvořák was working on the Concerto, he heard that his sister-in-law, Josefina Kaunitzová, was seriously ill – in his youth Dvořák had been in love with her, marrying her sister 'on the rebound'. Just after the first stern entry of the trombones and tuba, Dvořák has the cello quote his own song 'Leave Me Alone' – a favourite of Josefina. Calm is restored in the final section, but with a note of unresolved yearning.

The finale begins in a mood of martial resolution, but near the end a solo violin recalls 'Leave Me Alone', with an exquisitely tender response from the cello (apparently Dvořák had just learned of Josefina's death). The march music returns to end the concerto, but that poignant reminiscence of lost love still hangs in the air when the music is over.

Johannes Brahms (1833-97): Symphony No 4 in E minor, Op.98

1. Allegro non troppo
2. Andante moderato
3. Allegro giocoso
4. Allegro energico e passionato

Composed: 1885

First Performed: 25 October 1885, Meinigen, cond. Brahms

Brahms liked teasing his friends. Writing from the Austrian Alps in 1885, Brahms wondered if the weather hadn't had a negative effect on the music: 'I'm afraid it takes after the climate in these parts – the cherries don't get ripe here; you wouldn't eat them!' To another friend he wrote, '...the cherries don't grow ripe and sweet to the taste here – if you don't like the thing, don't hesitate to say so.'

That might help explain why some of Brahms' allies initially found the Fourth Symphony hard to like. After hearing Brahms and a friend play it on two pianos, the critic Eduard Hanslick said that he 'had the feeling that [he] was being beaten up by two very intelligent people'. It's certainly darker than any of the previous symphonies, and the last movement is unlike anything Brahms had created before: a rigorously constructed set of variations on a stark chordal theme on winds, moving with grim inevitability towards a dark minor-key conclusion. Despite its many beautiful

moments, this was a symphony which seemed to offer – in the Biblical phrase – ‘naught for your comfort’.

But sour cherries can be delicious in the right context, tragically exhilarating, even uplifting. Some have found hints of a ‘dark saying’ in the Fourth Symphony, and Brahms provided some delicate clues. The first movement is haunted by eerie pre-echoes of the third of his *Four Serious Songs*: ‘Oh death, oh death, how bitter you are’. The middle two movements appear to offer consolation, even the possibility of joy (the vigorous march-like third movement is marked ‘*giocoso*’, ‘joyous’), but the theme of the finale is taken from one of J.S. Bach’s most sombre church cantatas, *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich* (‘My soul longs for thee, O God’). Yet there is something uplifting about this music: not resigned but defiant and full of life, right to its magnificent ending.