

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra December 5 programme complementary content

With some concerts it's hard to say which bit we're looking forward to the most! There's never a dull moment when pianist Simon Trpčeski is in town: we love him, you love him, and we can't wait to hear him bring all his charisma and flair to Tchaikovsky's barnstorming First Piano Concerto. And then Domingo Hindoyan whirls us off to the Kingdom of Sweets, with a lavishly stuffed selection box of tuneful goodies from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*. Talk about a treat...

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 musical 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 his position in September 2021. He has now extended his contract with the Orchestra to 2028.

Simon Trpčeski

[Simon Trpčeski](#) needs little introduction to Liverpool audiences. The Macedonian piano virtuoso has become a favourite at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall over the past two decades, not least for his partnership – dubbed the Dream Team – with conductor [Vasily Petrenko](#).

[Trpčeski](#), praised for his powerful virtuosity and charismatic stage presence, was born in Macedonia in 1979 and studied at the School of Music at the University of St Cyril and St Methodius in Skopje. He was a BBC New Generation Artist from 2001-3 and in 2003 was honoured with the Young Artist Award by the Royal Philharmonic Society.

As a much-demanded soloist, during his career he has collaborated with more than 100 orchestras on four continents as well as a long list of prominent conductors. An acclaimed recitalist, he has also appeared in major concert halls across the globe, and has a busy schedule as a chamber musician, regularly partnering cellist Daniel Muller-Schott. He is also committed to strengthening the cultural image of his [native Macedonia](#).

Listen to Trpčeski play an excerpt from Rachmaninov's [Piano Concerto No.1 in B-flat minor](#) with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky – *Piano Concerto No.1 in B-flat minor*

When, on Christmas Eve 1874, [Tchaikovsky](#) played Nikolai Rubinstein a [piano concerto he had been working on all autumn](#), he had hoped for encouragement and enthusiasm from his

much-respected mentor. But Rubinstein, his boss at the Moscow Conservatory, was destined to disappoint the composer.

As Tchaikovsky later related in a letter to his patroness Nadezhda von Melk, Rubinstein – evidently not one to soft-soap his criticism – described the work as worthless and unplayable, adding for good measure that only a couple of pages ‘were worth anything at all’. It might have been enough to devastate some, but Tchaikovsky had faith in his concerto and declined to alter a single bar. He instead completed the orchestration for the work and then approached the pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow, who – in stark contrast to Rubinstein – was immediately enthusiastic about it. Von Bülow went on to [premiere the concerto](#) in Boston in October 1875.

The concerto became, and remains, hugely popular and even Rubinstein eventually changed his tune to become a vocal supporter of the piece. Meanwhile Simon Trpčeski returns to the work after [recording it](#) with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra ten years ago.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky – Excerpts from *The Nutcracker*

While the *Piano Concerto No.1* arrived towards the start of Tchaikovsky’s career, [The Nutcracker](#) – the last of his triumvirate of great ballet scores – was completed barely a year before the composer’s death.

The commission came from the director of the Imperial Theatres following the success of *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1890. Tchaikovsky was, by all accounts, not overly enthusiastic about the plot for the two-act ballet which was based on a fairy tale by ETA Hoffman and adapted by Alexander Dumas. But he launched himself into its composition, with choreographer Marius Petipa offering detailed guidance on his vision for each scene, reportedly right down to the number of bars.

[The ballet](#) received its first performance in a lavishly staged production at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg in December 1892. Tchaikovsky feared it hadn’t been well received – critics were...critical, and the composer told an interviewer early in 1893 that it seemed to him the audience ‘were bored’. Sadly, he didn’t live to see his enchanting, enchanted creation overcome this tepid beginning to become one of the best-loved of all classical ballets.

Watch the [‘Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy’](#) from Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker*.

Did you know? Tchaikovsky was in Paris when he first heard the celeste, which was invented in the city in 1886. He was enchanted and was one of the first to write for the instrument – initially in *The Voyevoda* and then in *The Nutcracker*’s ‘Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy’ which helped popularise the instrument.

About the Music

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-93): Piano Concerto No I in B-flat minor, op 23

1. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito
2. Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Tempo 1
3. Allegro con fuoco

Composed: 1874-5

First Performed: 25 October 1875, Boston, Hans von Bülow (soloist), cond. Benjamin Johnson Lang.

Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto is one of this ever-popular composer’s most beloved works, by pianists and audiences alike. Brimming over with passion, drama, brilliance and glorious melodies, it has been adopted as an unofficial anthem by Russians, while Ukrainians point with

pride to the fact that several of its themes derive from Ukrainian, rather than Russian folk music. But like many much-admired pieces, it didn't get off to a great start. Tchaikovsky hoped that his influential friend, pianist and composer Nikolai Rubinstein, would introduce it to the world in Moscow, but Rubinstein's reaction to the score was crushing, not just criticising it but even mocking it savagely. Fortunately the hyper-sensitive Tchaikovsky kept faith and showed it to another famous pianist, the German Hans von Bülow, who was thrilled by it – 'so original and noble', he wrote – and arranged a premiere in America, where it was such a success that the finale was encored.

The Concerto's most famous theme, a superb, long-breathed tune, is heard at the beginning, where it goes through a short sequence of variations – and then never returns. A few critics have grumbled about this, but there's plenty more colour, thrilling theatre and above all fabulous lyricism to come. The first movement is a long, gripping darkness-to-light drama, after which comes a lovely wistful pastoral interlude (but with a few virtuoso fireworks at its climax). Then comes the stunning finale, its main theme based on a Ukrainian tune, in which soloist and orchestra battle it out to a thrilling conclusion, crowned by yet another splendid tune. No wonder this Concerto remains one of the enduring hits in the repertoire.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky: *The Nutcracker* (Excerpts)

Composed: 1892

First Performed: 17 December 1892, Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg

Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* is such a glorious evocation of a child's ideal Christmas, so generously tuneful and so exquisitely magical in its array of colouristic effects, that one imagines it must have been pure joy to compose. Far from it: Tchaikovsky did a lot of grumbling during the two years (1891-2) he was working on it. Things started badly: when the idea of creating a ballet on E.T.A. Hoffmann's fairy-tale Christmas story was proposed to him by the Imperial Theatre in Petersburg, Tchaikovsky's reply was tart. Whatever he thought of Hoffmann's story, he didn't like the drastically pared down version of it prepared for him by the ballet director, Marius Petipa. Even when he'd squared himself to tackling the project seriously, Tchaikovsky was still grouching about it to his brother: '*I am working extremely hard and am beginning to reconcile myself to the subject of the ballet.*'

Yet, as so often with Tchaikovsky, irritation was the grit in the oyster that produced the pearl. And what a pearl it is! Although the first production wasn't a success, most agreed that the problems were on the stage, not in the music. When the much-loved *Nutcracker Suite* (based on excerpts from the ballet score) was heard, also in 1892, it was a triumph, and it has remained so ever since, not least because of the prominent part it plays in the famous Walt Disney animation *Fantasia*. The story of the ballet is fairly simple. On Christmas Eve, little Clara creeps downstairs to play with her favourite toy, a nutcracker which magically comes to life and whisks her off to the Land of Sweets. Later, Clara is able to rescue the Nutcracker Prince from the evil Mouse King and is rewarded with a fabulous array of edible goodies. Quite a few of you will probably recognise some of the musical treats on offer, but in Tchaikovsky's original sequence they combine to form a constantly evolving set of musical tableaux, up to the point where Clara is finally taken home in a reindeer sleigh – with her head full of memories, and apparently no damage whatsoever to her digestive system. If only all Christmasses were like that!