

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra January 26 programme complementary content

Bruckner's Ninth Symphony is a piece that you simply must hear live. It's sometimes compared to a "cathedral in sound", and no question, it's got majesty to spare. But Bruckner was on a lifelong spiritual quest, and Domingo Hindoyan feels a deep kinship with this very personal masterpiece. First, though, we welcome the winner of the 2024 Leeds International Piano Competition, Jaeden Izik-Dzurko, for Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.4*.

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.

Jaeden Izik-Dzurko

Canadian pianist [Jaeden Izik-Dzurko](#) makes his Liverpool Philharmonic Hall debut as the winner of the [2024 Leeds International Piano Competition](#). Celebrated by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 2021 as one of '30 hot Canadian classical musicians under 30', British Columbia-born Izik-Dzurko is earning a reputation as a promising young artist.

Recognised by audiences, conductors, composers and critics alike for the communicative power and thoughtfulness of his interpretations "he projects a distinctive musical personality which imbues even the most routine passagework with character and individuality" (*Calgary Herald*).

He has performed alongside the Calgary Philharmonic, Edmonton Symphony, Kamloops Symphony, Hilton Head Symphony, Okanagan Symphony, Lions Gate Sinfonia, Bilbao Symphonic, Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Jove Orquesta Nacional de Catalunya, Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra, Orquesta Ciudad de Granada and the [Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra](#). An experienced recitalist, Izik-Dzurko has appeared in such venues as the Wigmore Hall, Salle Cortot and Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, Auditorio Nacional de Musica in Madrid and the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

Along with the Leeds International Piano Competition, he won the Concours Musical International de Montreal in May 2024, and was a first prize winner at the 2022 Hilton Head International Piano Competition and the 2022 Maria Canals International Music Competition. He was also awarded the first prize, Canon Audience Prize and chamber music award at the 20th Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition. He is a grand prize winner at the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals' National Competition, and a winner of Juilliard's Gina Bachauer Scholarship Competition. He was also the recipient of a 2024 [Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship](#).

Izik-Dzurko earned his Bachelor of Music degree at the Juilliard School with Yoheved Kaplinsky, and his Master of Music degree at the [University of British Columbia](#) with Corey Hamm. He is also a former student of Ian Parker. He currently studies with Jacob Leuschner at the Hochschule für Musik Detmold and Benedetto Lupo at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

Watch an excerpt of Jaeden Izik-Dzurko performing Brahms' [Second Piano Concerto](#) at the Leeds International Piano Competition.

Beethoven – Piano Concerto No.4 in G major

The public premiere of Beethoven's [Fourth Piano Concerto](#) came in December 1808 in the same infamous four-hour, bone-chilling, posterior-numbing concert in Vienna which also included the first performance of both his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. The composer was at the keyboard himself for its inaugural outing – the last time, with his increasing deafness, that he would act as a soloist in such circumstances.

But, lost in the sprawling pre-Christmas concert's programme, it would be the best part of another three decades before the work was properly popularised by another German pianist-composer, Felix Mendelssohn, kickstarting a concert hall love affair with the concerto which continues to this day.

[Beethoven](#) sat down to compose the G major work during a particularly [rich patch of creativity](#) – albeit one set against a backdrop of political upheaval. Written over 1805 (the year Napoleon's troops occupied Vienna for the first time) and finished in 1806, while its three-movement structure may have been classical, the music itself marked a departure from what was considered the conventional concerto form of the age.

Listen to the [second movement](#) of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.4 in G major*.

Anton Bruckner - Symphony No.9 in D minor

Theatricals are a superstitious lot with their rules on whistling backstage, no peacock feathers on stage and definitely no mention of... shhh, 'the Scottish play'. But there are plenty of superstitions in classical music too, particularly ones that surround numbers.

Arnold Schoenberg suffered from triskaidekaphobia – a fear of the number 13, and avoided it in his music, while in the Middle Ages musicians dubbed the tritone the 'devil's interval' and were convinced it would summon Beelzebub himself. The most well-known, however, remains the ['Curse of the Ninth'](#), the idea that a composer is fated to die while or after composing their ninth symphony, with the superstitious citing the examples of Beethoven, Schubert, Dvořák, Vaughan Williams and Gustav Mahler.

Another composer to fall foul of the 'curse' was [Anton Bruckner](#), who had many strange obsessions including a mania for numbers and counting. Bruckner started composing his Ninth Symphony in the summer of 1887, directly after completing his *Symphony No.8 in C minor* – but put work on its first movement on hold to carry out revisions on the Eighth. He then became embroiled in carrying out revisions on his Third Symphony and on preparing the Second Symphony for publication, and the new work was relegated to the back burner for more than three years.

Bruckner finally returned to it briefly in the spring of 1891 before being sidetracked again, and it was December 1893 before the completion of its 'feierlich' (meaning solemn) misterioso opening movement. By the autumn of 1894 the first three movements were finally finished. But the work still needed a finale – and time finally ran out for Anton Bruckner on October 11, 1896. The symphony became known as the 'Unfinished'. In fact, its composer had created the outline of its

final movement; it was the full orchestration which remained outstanding. But copies of the manuscript he was working on in his final days were said to have been taken from his room as mementoes by friends following his death.

Meanwhile Bruckner is said to have stated back in 1894 that if he should die with the Ninth Symphony uncompleted, his *Te Deum* should be used as its fourth movement.

Listen to the [first movement](#) of Anton Bruckner's *Symphony No.9 in D minor*.

Did you know? Bruckner was buried in the crypt of the Monastery Church of Sankt Florian in Linz, in a tomb directly below his favourite organ.

About the Music

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Piano Concerto No 4 in G major, op.58

1. Allegro moderato
2. Andante con moto –
3. Rondo. Vivace

Composed: 1805-6

First Performed: 22 December 1808, Vienna, Theater an der Wien, Beethoven as soloist & director

The Fourth Piano Concerto is one of the gentlest and most intimate of Beethoven's large-scale works, but it's as audacious and original as any of his more loudly heroic masterpieces. Here, as in the Fifth Concerto (the so-called 'Emperor'), Beethoven breaks with classical convention by having the piano come in right at the start. But where in No 5 the pianist seizes the audience's attention with brilliant cascades of broken chords and runs, here in the Fourth Concerto the pianist steals in quietly, unaccompanied, musing on the first theme before coming to a half close. This, and the orchestra's response, on a completely unexpected, hushed harmony, form one of the most magical beginnings in the concerto repertoire. The leading da-da-da-DA rhythmic pattern of the first theme is exactly the same as that of the famous 'Fate' motif that opens the Fifth Symphony, which Beethoven was working on at the same time. And yet it is hard to imagine two movements less like each other than the driven, tragic Allegro con brio of the symphony and the serene Allegro moderato of this concerto.

One contemporary described the poignant slow second movement as 'a masterpiece of beautiful, sustained melody', in which Beethoven 'truly sang on his instrument with deep melancholy feeling'. It unfolds as a dialogue between unison strings (initially aggressive, then gradually calmer) and lyrical piano. Franz Liszt memorably compared this movement to the legend of Orpheus taming wild beasts with his music. This links into a wonderful high-spirited Rondo (a circular form, with the main theme recurring more-or-less regularly). The soloist keeps up the fireworks right through the very end, and so a concerto that began with unprecedented modesty ends with a brazen appeal for thunderous applause.

Anton Bruckner (1824-96): Symphony No 9 in D minor

1. Feierlich [Solemn], Misterioso
2. Scherzo: Bewegt, lebhaft [With movement, lively] - Trio: Schnell [Fast] – Scherzo
3. Adagio: Langsam, feierlich [Slow, solemn]

Composed: 1887-96 (Unfinished)

First Performed: (as reworked by Ferdinand Lowe) 11 February 1903, Vienna, Musikverein, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, cond. Ferdinand Lowe
(Bruckner's original version) 2 April 1932, Munich, Musikfestsaal, Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Siegmund von Hausegger

It was meant to be the summing up of his life's achievement. 'I'll write my Ninth Symphony in D minor, like Beethoven', Bruckner told his students. 'Beethoven won't object!' There would be quotations from his most successful works, including his beloved Te Deum, and in place of Beethoven's concluding choral 'Ode to Joy', there would be a heaven-storming orchestral finale with, at the end, a grand orchestral 'Hymn of Praise' to the symphony's dedicatee – none other than the 'dear God' who had sustained Bruckner through severe mental and professional crises.

But when Bruckner died in 1896, nine years after he'd started work on the symphony, the finale was still incomplete, and there was no sign of that all-important concluding Hymn of Praise. So, the decision was taken to perform the three apparently completed movements as they stood. It turned out that the Ninth Symphony worked remarkably well in this incomplete state. The Adagio third movement made a remarkably poignant ending - and hadn't Bruckner referred to this wonderful slow movement as his 'Farewell to Life'?

The opening movement has the grand, spacious quality that has led to Bruckner's symphonies being described as 'cathedrals in sound'. But if it is a cathedral, it's a strange, and at times a scary one. There's rich profusion of themes, and as the movement progresses the changes in direction can become disorienting. It's as though we were walking up the aisle of a dark, mysterious cathedral one minute, then peering down vertiginously from a high gallery the next. Yet Bruckner draws all these threads together magnificently in the final crescendo, ending in dark but electrifying splendour.

By contrast, the Scherzo is pure formal clarity: a big A-B-A structure framing a weirdly animated central Trio section. As for the content though, the pounding repetitive rhythms and ambiguous or downright abrasive harmonies have invited comparison with Bartók, Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Then the Adagio begins its long process of restless searching, alternating with sombre lamentation and wintry lyricism. There are moments of fleeting radiance, but the final long crescendo culminates in the most agonizing music in the whole symphony, the devastating final dissonance left hanging in the air. Somehow the coda manages to bring a sense of peace and long-sought stability. It may not be the ending Bruckner intended, but it's still a deeply moving 'Farewell to Life'.