

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

October 11 programme complementary content

Geoffrey Paterson

Hailed as a conductor with ‘natural and charismatic authority’ (*Opera World*), [Geoffrey Paterson](#) is renowned for his ‘impressive command’ (*The Telegraph*) and ‘impeccable grace’ (*The Guardian*) in repertoire extending from the Baroque to music of the present day.

In 2020 he made his televised *BBC Proms* debut with Steve Reich’s *City Life*, returning in 2022 to continue a longstanding collaboration with the London Sinfonietta and Norwegian saxophonist and composer Marius Neset.

Other memorable concert performances in recent years have included Strauss’ own film score reworking of *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in Vienna and London; Nielsen’s *Symphonia Expansiva* with the BBC Scottish Symphony; Strauss’ *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* with the Hamburg Symphony; and Bernstein’s *West Side Story* to an audience of 10,000 with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra. In the current season, Paterson will make concert debuts with the Warsaw Philharmonic and Arctic Philharmonic and conducts for the first time at the Royal Ballet, Covent Garden.

Among the numerous world premieres he has conducted are works by Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and James Dillon, and his performances of masterpieces by the greatest composers of the last 100 years (including Boulez, Berio, Stockhausen and Knussen) have been widely praised by press around the world.

With a background in composition – he was a pupil of Alexander Goehr, and studied with Boulez and Eotvos – he brings insight, technical command and an exacting ear to music whose secrets are only revealed through a rare combination of fastidiousness and inspiration.

Julian Bliss

[Julian Bliss](#) is one of the world's finest clarinetists, excelling as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, recitalist and jazz artist. He started playing the clarinet aged four, at five he appeared on television, and aged six he was invited to play at Buckingham Palace – returning in 2002 to perform in the Proms at the Palace as part of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Bliss studied at the Purcell School for Young Musicians and was 12 when he earned his postgraduate artist’s diploma at Indiana University. He went on to study in Germany under Sabine Meyer.

In recitals and chamber music he has played at the world’s leading festivals and halls including Gstaad, New York’s Lincoln Center, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Verbier and London’s Wigmore Hall. As a soloist he has appeared with a wide range of international orchestras including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Paris, Sao Paulo Symphony and the Queensland Symphony.

In 2010, inspired by Benny Goodman, he formed [the Julian Bliss Septet](#) which has become renowned for jazz-fuelled shows, captivating audiences across the globe. In 2020, he launched Bliss Music, making his arrangements of pieces for clarinet and piano available as digital sheet music.

Bliss previously performed Copland's *Clarinet Concerto* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra [in 2022](#).

Agustin Pennino

Uruguayan countertenor [Agustin Pennino](#) is known for his captivating vocal colours and engaging dramatic skills. He has performed on prestigious stages internationally, with notable roles including Oreste in Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* at Teatro Solis and Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo and Euridice* at the Sodre Auditorium. He has also appeared in festivals and concert series.

He was discovered in 2022 by David Gowland, Artistic Director of the JPAP Royal Opera House, who encouraged him to move to London to improve his technique. He has worked closely with world-renowned artists, participating in masterclasses with [Joyce DiDonato](#), Iestyn Davies, Yvonne Kenny, Jean Rigby, Nicky Spence and Kamal Khan among others. Pennino's training has also been shaped by the Opera Workshop organised by the UK's Jette Parker Young Artist Programme of the Royal Opera House, in collaboration with Uruguay's Sodre and InterArte.

His talent has been recognised with numerous awards including highly commended mentions in both the Blyth-Buesst Operatic Prize and the Elena Gerhardt Lieder Prize. He was also awarded first prize at the [2024 ANEMOS International Competition](#) in Rome and third place in the Stignani Competition. He was recently accepted into the Royal Academy Opera Company.

Listen to Agustin Pennino sing Mendelssohn's [Scheidend](#).

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir

When the Liverpool Philharmonic Society was founded in 1840, it saw the birth not only of an orchestra but of a chorus too. [The Choir](#) added 'royal' to its title in 1990. In recent years, the Choir has performed Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and *Mass in B minor*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Mahler's *Symphony No.2*, Rachmaninov's *Vespers*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Karl Jenkins' *Stabat Mater*, James MacMillan's *St John Passion*, Beethoven's *Mass in C*, and Britten's *War Requiem*.

It has also appeared in many of the UK's major concert venues, including the Royal Albert Hall, and has sung on a number of foreign tours.

The Choir is led by Director of Choirs and Singing Matthew Hamilton. During the 2025/26 season, members of the Choir will perform Brahms' *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah* and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, as well as appearing in December's Spirit of Christmas concerts and the Classic FM Hall of Fame performance. They will also lead A Choral Celebration which includes the world premiere of a new work by Rushworth Composition Prize winner, Andrew Barney.

Luciano Berio

When Luciano Berio died in 2003, tributes flowed in for the man who – in one [obituarist's words](#) – not only “wrote some of the most moving and beautiful scores” of the post-war world but who also “redrew the landscape” of composition. And Berio undoubtedly stands tall among the leading figures of the 20th Century's musical avant-garde.

Born on Italy's Ligurian coast in 1925, his father and grandfather were both organists and leading figures in the musical life of his hometown. After the Second World War (in which a teenage Luciano had quite the time – he was conscripted into the Italian army, wounded in one hand and later fled to hide with partisans) he studied at the Milan Conservatory and then Tanglewood in

Massachusetts. It was when he attended the International Festival of New Music in Darmstadt that he became influenced by the avant-garde and interested in electronic music, leading to him co-founding the Studio di fonologia musicale in Milan for experimental electronic contemporary classical music. From 1965 onwards he was a professor of composition at the prestigious Juilliard in New York.

Along with his pioneering of electronic music, Berio was a prolific composer who wrote for a wide range of instruments and voice. He was particularly known for his experimental work like the 1968 composition *Sinfonia* (commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for its 125th anniversary and featuring eight amplified voices) and his *Sequenza* solo series.

Berio also arranged or transcribed works by Kurt Weill, Purcell, Monteverdi, Mahler, Brahms, Bach and – in a 1975 commission from La Scala Theatre Orchestra – 18th Century composer and cellist Luigi Boccherini. Exacting in rehearsals – there are stories of him [reducing singers to tears](#) – he was much in demand as a conductor both of his own work and that of others.

Listen to Luciano Berio's adaptation of Boccherini's [Ritirata notturna di Madrid](#).

Leonard Bernstein

Composer, conductor and educator – along with beguiling and complicated human being – [Leonard Bernstein](#) bestrode 20th Century American music. As a conductor he enjoyed an impressively wide repertoire, while as a composer he was equally prominent in concert halls, theatre stages and the big screen.

Bernstein was born in Massachusetts in the closing months of the First World War and officially named Louis. His father Sam was initially resistant to paying for the young Lenny's piano lessons – Bernstein raised the money himself – but after seeing how talented his son was, he finally relented... and bought him a baby grand. He went on to study at Harvard and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and received his big break in the middle of the Second World War when he stood in at short notice to conduct a [New York Philharmonic](#) concert, quickly cementing a [musical partnership](#) which lasted nearly half-a-century.

As a composer, Bernstein's long list of works included his vivid, explosive scores for the stage and screen – musicals like *On the Town*, and, of course, *West Side Story* making him a global household name – chamber, piano and vocal music, opera, ballet, and orchestral music, and choral pieces such as the *Chichester Psalms*.

In 1961 he composed *Fanfare for the Inauguration of John F Kennedy*. Bernstein and [Kennedy were friends](#) who had first met in their native Massachusetts when the future president was a Senator for the state. Two days after Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Bernstein would conduct the New York Phil in a performance of Mahler's *Resurrection* symphony at a memorial 'night of the stars' at Madison Square Garden, [in his words](#) "not just for the resurrection of the soul, but also for the resurrection of hope in all of us who mourn him".

Bernstein himself died on October 14, 1990, at the Upper West Side's Dakota Building (also home to John and Yoko), just five days after announcing his retirement from conducting.

Listen to the [Chichester Psalms](#) conducted by Leonard Bernstein in 1975.

Aaron Copland

One of the most important American musical voices of the 20th Century, [Aaron Copland](#) was born in Brooklyn in 1900, the child of Russian Jewish immigrants who ran a neighbourhood department store. He started making up tunes on the piano as a child, and at 14 started taking lessons from his first professional piano teacher. As a young composer he was influenced by Stravinsky and studied with the hugely influential Nadia Boulanger in Paris. [Copland's](#) early works were written in a modernist style and included jazz elements (notably his 1926 *Piano Concerto*), although his music would develop in a more populist direction.

Perhaps his most productive time came in the 1940s, during which he produced a catalogue of enduring and popular works including *Fanfare for the Common Man*, ballets *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring*, his *Symphony No. 3*, *Clarinet Concerto*, and scores for the film version of Thornton Wilder's romance drama *Our Town* and *The Heiress*, which garnered him an Oscar.

Copland's music was championed by Leonard Bernstein, and the two enjoyed [a close 50-year friendship](#). From the 1950s onwards, Copland increasingly turned to conducting, both his own works and those of other American composers. He toured internationally, lectured about American music, and taught at institutions like Tanglewood and Harvard.

During his final years he suffered from dementia, finally retreating from public performance in his early 80s. The man *The New York Times* praised as "a gentle yet impassioned champion of American music" died in December 1990, at the age of 90.

Einojuhani Rautavaara

Often hailed as Finland's greatest composer after Sibelius, [Einojuhani Rautavaara](#) was born in Helsinki in 1928 to an opera singer father and doctor mother. Orphaned by the age of 16, he moved in with an aunt, and started taking piano lessons, later studying piano and musicology at Helsinki University and then composition at the Sibelius Academy. In fact, it was Jean Sibelius himself who saw the young Rautavaara's promise and recommended him for a scholarship at New York's prestigious Juilliard School.

A prolific composer in a range of styles, during a career spanning more than 60 years he produced eight symphonies, nine operas and 15 concertos along with a range of chamber and choral music, works for piano and organ, a ballet and, in the 1980s, two electronic tape works. His style combined modernism and mystical romanticism, and he was also greatly influenced by sounds of the natural world. Among his best-known works are his *Symphony No. 7* [Angel of Light](#), composed in 1994 and inspired by childhood dreams; his First Piano Concerto, dating from 1969 and reflecting his early serial technique; and the 1972 *Cantus Arcticus*.

In later years, Rautavaara suffered from major health problems, but he continued to compose well into his 80s, with works for piano, percussion and cello as well as chamber and choral compositions. He died in Helsinki in 2016 at the age of 87.

Listen to Rautavaara's [Cantus Arcticus](#).

Jean Sibelius

On December 2, 1905, Jean Sibelius stepped onto the stage at Liverpool's (original) Philharmonic Hall – the first time the Finnish composer had appeared on an English platform. Sibelius was [in the city](#) to conduct his First Symphony and his 1899 tone poem *Finlandia*. Sibelius had been due to appear in Liverpool a year earlier, but political events at home in Finland had delayed his

visit. But it was worth the wait, with the Philharmonic Hall audience reportedly giving him an “effusive” welcome – “a token of real admiration for the virility and originality of his genius”.

Johan Julius Christian Sibelius was born on December 8, 1865, one of three children of the Swedish-speaking Christian Gustav, municipal Doctor of Health in the southern city of Hämeenlinna, and his wife Maria Charlotta. Dr Sibelius died when his son was a toddler.

Showing early talent, the young ‘Jean’ had piano lessons and at the age of 10 was given a violin by his uncle. In fact, he would start his musical career as a violinist, although not wholly successfully – he was devastated when he was rejected by the Vienna Philharmonic.

Sibelius instead turned to composition, encouraged by his tutor at Helsinki’s Institute of Music and inspired by the folklore of his homeland. Early success with his choral work *Kullervo* in 1892 brought him to public attention, while *Finlandia* – which remains his best-known work – would become the unofficial anthem of Finnish resistance to Russian rule. Yet it was the natural world around him, particularly the tranquillity of the landscape at his home **Ainola** on the banks of the crystalline Lake Tuusula, north of Helsinki, which would inspire much of his later work. It was at Ainola in September 1957 that Sibelius died, with his wife of 65 years, Aino, at his side.

Listen to the finale of Sibelius’ *Symphony No.5*.

About the Music

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805)/Luciano Berio (1925-2003): *Ritirata notturna di Madrid*

Composed: 1780/1975

First Performed: 17 June 1975, Milan, La Scala Opera House, La Scala Philharmonic, cond. Piero Bellugi

Though famous across Europe, Luigi Boccherini was happy to remain mostly in Spain, still somewhat cut off then from the rest of the continent. Boccherini’s evocation of night in Madrid, *Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid* (‘Night Music for the City of Madrid’) was one of his biggest successes, especially the movement ‘Ritirata notturna di Madrid’, which depicts the mood in the city after the military retreat to barracks, which became so popular that Boccherini made four different arrangements of it. When the Italian composer Luciano Berio was asked for a short piece to open the 1975 La Scala season he took the different versions of *Ritirata* and superimposed them, creating a fascinating stratified sound picture, at the same time atmospherically ancient and vibrantly modern.

Leonard Bernstein (1918-90): *Chichester Psalms*

1. Psalm 108, vs 2 – Psalm 100

2. Psalm 23 – Psalm 2, vs 1 -4

3. Psalm 131 – Psalm 133 vs 1

Composed: 1965

First Performed: 15 July 1965, New York, Philharmonic Hall, cond. Bernstein

Leonard Bernstein was no orthodox believer. He was a passionate humanist, a supporter of the American Human Rights movement, but like his great hero Gustav Mahler he had a strong sense of the transcendent, and he recognised the value of religion in bringing people together, giving them a sense of continuity with past and future, and in focusing hope. When a commission came through from Walter Hussey, the arts-loving Dean of Chichester Cathedral, he responded with a

kind of mini choral symphony, for boy treble (or countertenor), choir and reduced orchestra. After its New York premiere, *Chichester Psalms* was performed in Chichester Cathedral for the first time on 31 July.

As in Bernstein's previous major work, the Third Symphony (*Kaddish*, 1963), he drew on Hebrew texts, in this case the Book of Psalms. But where *Kaddish* is filled with doubt, even anguish (Bernstein had been profoundly shocked by the assassination of President Kennedy), hope and joy return in *Chichester Psalms*, and especially in the celebratory, dancing first movement, 'Awake psalter and harp'. Serene faith and conflict face each other in Part 2, ('The Lord is my shepherd'), then the finale restores hope in its flowing second section, 'Behold how good and pleasant it is for the brothers to dwell together in unity'.

Aaron Copland (1900-90): Clarinet Concerto

1. Slowly and expressively –

Cadenza (freely) –

2. Rather fast

Composed: 1947-9

First Performed: NBC Radio Broadcast (New York), 6 November 1950, cond. Fritz Reiner

The American jazz clarinettist Benny Goodman was keen not to treat jazz as a musical 'ghetto'. Noting how many modern classical composers were impressed and influenced by jazz, he commissioned several of them to write concert works for him. The most immediately successful of these was the Clarinet Concerto by Aaron Copland. Goodman paid handsomely ('two thousand dollars and that's real money'), and he gave Copland virtually free rein. Nevertheless the sound and style of Goodman's playing left a strong imprint on the Concerto, especially in the long, mostly unaccompanied solo cadenza between the two main movements, and in the wild, dance-like finale.

The first movement, in which the clarinet is accompanied by just strings and harp, conveys something of the spirit of the blues, but there is little that sounds jazz-like here. At times it recalls the 'wide-open spaces' nature poetry of Copland's ballet *Appalachian Spring*. But in the cadenza, and still more in the finale (where the piano enters for the first time), elements of Tin-Pan-Alley and Dixieland jazz fuse with Copland's love of Latin American dance music to produce something gloriously abandoned and un-'classical'. The Concerto was a hit at its first performance, and it's been a favourite ever since.

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928-2016): Cantus arcticus, Op 61 (Concerto for Birds and Orchestra)

1. The Bog

2. Melancholy

3. Swans migrating

Composed: 1972

First Performed: 18 October 1972, Oulo (Finland), Oulu Symphony Orchestra, cond. Stephen Portman

'Think of autumn and of Tchaikovsky', says a note in the score. At the time *Cantus arcticus* was written, Tchaikovsky was a hate-figure for many leading modernists. But Rautavaara had turned his back on all that – or, rather, on most of that. *Cantus arcticus* does use one modernist device – pre-recorded sound – but Rautavaara's purpose was to take the romantic nature mysticism of his great countryman Sibelius to new levels. Armed with a tape-recorder he explored the wild,

remote marshlands of northern Finland, recording the sounds of the birds he heard there. These then became the 'concerto' soloists of *Cantus arcticus*. Often the orchestra seems to stand for the human spectator-listener, one moment echoing the birds' cries, the next pouring out its own feelings in hymns to the ecstatic, melancholic beauty of it all. 'Lord God, that beauty', wrote Sibelius after witnessing the flight and song of a flock of swans – 'Nature mysticism and life's *Angst!*' Rautavaara's music seems to speak from the same place, geographically and spiritually. We may sense something of the weird twilight beauty of the far north, 'on the boundary between the real and the imaginary' as Rautavaara himself put it. It can be glorious, especially in the great melodic apotheosis of the final movement, 'Swans migrating'. But an underlying elegiac note may be heard too. After all, as Rautavaara was well aware, we live in times when that beauty is increasingly under threat.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957): Symphony No 5 in E flat major, op 82

1. Tempo molto moderato - Allegro moderato (ma poco a poco stretto) - Presto - Piu Presto

2. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto

3. Allegro molto

Composed: 1914-19

First Performed: 24 November 1919, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Sibelius

'Today at ten to eleven I saw 16 swans. One of my greatest experiences! Lord God, that beauty! They circled over me for a long time. Disappeared into the solar haze like a gleaming, silver ribbon.'

For Sibelius, it was in this visionary moment that the Fifth Symphony was truly conceived. In his diaries from the time, he compares a symphony to a river: 'It is born from various rivulets that seek each other and in this way the river proceeds wide and powerful toward the sea.' But composing the symphony didn't quite work out like that. In fact, it took Sibelius another four years of gruelling work, including two extensive revisions, before he arrived at the version of the score we know today, with the wonderful horn theme Sibelius called his 'Swan Hymn' finally emerging in triumph.

Originally there were four separate movements: the opening Molto moderato is followed, after a surprise break, by a steadily accelerating scherzo. But then Sibelius was struck by an audacious idea: why not have the scherzo emerge seamlessly from the first movement, as though a grandly flowing river has picked up momentum, until it finally plunges into white-water rapids? The result is one of the most gripping transitions in symphonic music. Now everything seems to grow from the horn motif in the opening bars, a musical 'seed' if ever there was one.

The Andante mosso is a set of free variations on a folk-like theme heard at the beginning, but things are going on under that seemingly calm surface, creating tensions which emerge in troubled string tremolos or in the menacing brass crescendos towards the close. The finale then begins as a rapid airborne dance, sweeping into the first appearance of the 'Swan Hymn' on horns, with aspiring woodwind countermelody. The mood becomes tense and expectant, until the Swan Hymn returns quietly but radiantly on trumpets. The ending is remarkable: six sledgemoor chords separated by long silences: the music holds its breath - then, almost brusquely, Sibelius brings the symphony to a close.