

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

October 23 programme complementary content

Kristiina Poska

Award-winning Estonian conductor [Kristiina Poska](#) is in high demand on the international music scene. She has held the post of Chief Conductor of the Flanders Symphony Orchestra since 2019 and is also Principal Guest Conductor of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra. In addition, she started her tenure as [Musical Director](#) of the Orchestre Français des Jeunes (National Youth Orchestra of France) in 2025. She also previously served as Kapellmeister at the Komische Oper Berlin for four years, and was General Music Director at Theater Basel.

Poska regularly works with leading orchestras all over the world including the BBC Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw, hr-Sinfonieorchester, Vienna Radio Symphony, Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, Norwegian Radio Symphony, Toronto Symphony and Oregon Symphony Orchestra.

She studied conducting at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn and orchestral conducting with Christian Ehwald at Berlin's Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler. She was a finalist at the renowned Donatella Flick LSO Competition in 2010 and at the Malko Competition in May 2012, where she also won the audience prize. She then went on to win the prestigious German Conductors' Prize in April 2013.

Inmo Yang

South Korean violinist [Inmo Yang](#) has played on some of the most prestigious stages in the world, where he has showcased a beguiling sound imbued with poetry and underpinned by unwavering technical prowess. He has an extensive concerto repertoire, and over previous seasons he has appeared with many leading conductors and with renowned orchestras including the Seoul Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Polish National Radio Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic. In August 2025, he performed Sarasate's *Fantasia on Carmen* at the BBC Proms.

Yang studied with Namyoon Kim at Korea National University of Arts, Miriam Fried at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and Antje Weithaas both at Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin and Kronberg Academy. He was the first prize winner of both the 2015 International Violin Competition 'Premio Paganini' in Genoa and the [2022 Jean Sibelius Violin Competition](#).

He plays [a violin](#) made by Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù in Cremona in 1743, known as the 'Carrodus' and worth \$20 million, on generous loan from a member of the Stretton Society.

Ida Moberg

Search the Internet for 'Finnish composers' and you'll see dozens of perhaps unfamiliar names alongside internationally known stars like Sibelius and Einojuhani Rautavaara. And yet among the comprehensive cohort there's one name that, in the main, is still frustratingly absent. And that is Ida Moberg.

A singer-turned-composer and conductor, [Moberg](#), like Jean Sibelius, came from a family of Swedish-speaking Finns. She was born in 1859 in Helsinki, where her father was an instrument maker, and where women had a major influence on her early studies, both through the girls' school she attended and the music lessons she took with pianist Alie Lindberg (who had been a pupil, in turn, of Liszt). Later she also had female vocal tutors at St Petersburg Conservatory.

Abandoning singing for composition, her mentors included Sibelius who taught her at the Helsinki Philharmonic Society's Orchestra School. In her early 40s she also studied at Dresden's music academy, and later still, when she was in her 50s, she studied pedagogy (the method and practice of teaching) in Berlin.

[Moberg's music](#) started to be publicly performed in the first decade of the 20th Century, and she sometimes conducted her own work – which was chiefly choral pieces or orchestral works, greatly influenced by spiritualism and spiritual philosophy (anthroposophy). For more than 30 years she worked on an opera, *Light of Asia*, based on the life of Buddha, but it remained unfinished at her death in 1947.

Sadly, over the past century, many of her pieces have become lost, notably her early symphony, but those which do survive include her *Sunrise Orchestral Suite* and a violin concerto *Tondikt* (it translates as tone poem) which was composed around 1940 and [finally premiered in Helsinki](#) in November 2020.

Enjoy [Sunrise](#) from Ida Moberg's *Sunrise Orchestral Suite*.

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](#).

Johannes Brahms

He's been described as the 'Janus' of musical history – a figure looking both back to the classical tradition of Mozart and Beethoven but also forwards, incorporating features of 19th Century Romanticism in work that was innovative, new and entirely his own.

Johannes Brahms was born in 1833 in Hamburg, and showed early promise on the piano, giving his first recital aged 14. Alongside the piano, he also started to compose. While on concert tours with young Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi, he met and played some of his works to violinist Joseph Joachim who became a (mostly) lifelong friend. It was a letter of introduction from the future superstar fiddler that first threw Brahms into the orbit of **Robert and Clara Schumann**. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Over the course of the next four decades, despite his often painfully meticulous approach and the powerful self-criticism that saw him destroy both early drafts and completed works – including, it's said, a score of string quartets – Brahms would produce a prodigious number of compositions. Among the work that survived its composer's own cull are four symphonies, choral works including his *German Requiem*, serenades, chamber works, overtures and variations such as the 1879 *Academic Festival Overture*, motets, organ music, piano music and songs.

It also wasn't just music he destroyed – Brahms also burned letters and other papers, even asking for his own letters to be returned so he could consign them to the flames.

In later life, many honours were bestowed on the composer. He received the freedom of Hamburg in 1889, and six years later was acclaimed as the third 'B' alongside Bach and Beethoven at a **music festival in Meiningen**. Brahms succumbed to cancer in April 1897, a year after Clara Schumann's death, to whom he had remained devoted for more than 40 years.

Enjoy the **final movement** of Brahms' *Symphony No.4*.

About the Music

Ida Moberg (1859-1947): 'Sunrise', from *Sunrise Orchestral Suite*

Composed: 1909

Ida Moberg is a real find. Known for most of her long life as an influential teacher, she also composed from an early age. Encouraged by her musician father, she studied in St Petersburg, then in Dresden, where her Overture in A minor was performed and well received. But when she returned to her native Finland, reaction to her music was much more mixed, and some major works remained unperformed. Listening to 'Sunrise', the opening movement of the *Sunrise Suite*, it's hard to see why. This is a lovely, stirring piece of orchestral tone painting and, like her countryman Sibelius' recent *Nightride and Sunrise*, it magically evokes the shifting colours and slow-moving luminous drama of a far-northern dawn, especially in its opening. It does so, however, very much on its own terms.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957): Violin Concerto in D minor, Op 7

1. Allegro moderato
2. Adagio di molto
3. Allegro, ma non tanto

Composed: 1903-4; revised: 1905

First Performed: 8 February 1904, Helsinki Philharmonic Society, Victor Nováček (violin)

‘Dreamt I was twelve years old and a virtuoso’, Sibelius noted sadly in his diary in 1915. Today, it may be hard to understand how a man with five magnificent symphonies, a growingly popular violin concerto and a sequence of superbly imaginative tone poems to his credit should feel in any way an artistic failure. But there was a time when a career as a violin virtuoso had been a real possibility. What destroyed Sibelius’ prospects in this direction was his dreadful nervousness on the stage. And so he bowed to what he believed to be the ruling of Fate - he was to be a composer, not a violinist - but not without lasting regret.

Then, around the turn of the century, an insightful friend urged him to use his experience as a violinist to create a violin concerto. Composing it was torment. Sibelius’ alcoholism was bad at the best of times, but while he was writing it got even worse: the wonderful slow second movement was apparently sketched out during a three-day hangover. His heroically patient wife Aino needed all her strength to help him through this ordeal. But the result was one of the most treasured and ferociously challenging concertos in the violin repertory. It’s also one of the most poignant – is this Sibelius’ requiem for his career as a violinist? Yet for all its dark emotional intensity, there’s also tremendous strength in this music. The long floating, soaring violin melody at the beginning is beautifully shaped, and even in the heart-wrenching slow movement one can sense the hand of Sibelius the master symphonist. The turbulent but unambiguously major-key ending suggests inner darkness confronted and defied. For Sibelius himself there may have been an element of wish-fulfilment here, but as art it’s resoundingly convincing.

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!’

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 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.