Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
February 5 programme complementary content

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.

Guy Johnston

Guy Johnston is one of the most exciting British cellists of his generation. His early successes included winning the BBC Young Musician of the Year, the Shell London Symphony Orchestra Gerald MacDonald Award, Suggia Gift Award and a Young British Classical Performer Brit Award. He has performed with many leading orchestras including the London Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony, St Petersburg Symphony and Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo.

Recent seasons have included a BBC Prom with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and concertos with the Hallé, Philharmonia Orchestra and Aurora Orchestra. In 2024 he received critical acclaim as the featured soloist of Taverner's *The Protecting Veil* for Britten's Sinfonia UK and Ireland tour. He has performed and recorded with conductors including Alexander Dmitriev, Sir Andrew Davis, Daniele Gatti, Ilan Volkov, Leonard Slatkin, Sir Roger Norrington, Sakari Oramo, Vassily Sinaisky, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Yuri Simonov.

Johnston is a passionate advocate for chamber music and recitals, performing regularly at prestigious venues and festivals across Europe, and as a recording artist he often champions contemporary British composers. Recent releases include Dobrinka Tabakova's *Cello Concerto* and Rebecca Dale's *Night Seasons*. His latest recording is Xiaogang Ye's *My Faraway Nanjing* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Johnston was Associate Professor of Cello at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York (2018-2024) and a guest Professor of Cello at the **Royal Academy of Music**. He has recently been appointed President of the European String Teachers Association and is patron of several charities promoting music education for young people.

A Larsen Strings Artist, he plays the 1692 Antonio Stradivari cello, known as the 'Segelman, ex Hart', kindly loaned to him through the Beare's International Violin Society by a generous patron.

Franz Schubert

Nicknamed 'schwammerl' (translated as little mushroom) by his friends due to his diminutive and somewhat plump stature, **Franz Schubert** was born in 1797 in the suburbs of Vienna. The twelfth of 14 children, he showed early musical promise. At the age of 11, he won a scholarship which admitted him to the imperial court chapel choir and Stadtkonvikt boarding school, where his tutors included Antonio Salieri.

Straddling the late Classical and early Romantic era, the young Schubert composed his *Symphony No.1* when he was just 16. Within three years, he had completed four more, among a prodigious output including hundreds of songs, cantatas, choruses, masses, string quartets and sonatas. Despite all this, pressured by his schoolmaster father Franz Theodore (himself an amateur cellist) to find a secure and stable career, at the age of 19 Schubert started studying for a law degree – albeit at the same time composing his Fifth Symphony. While his legal career proved to be short-lived, his passion for music endured and by the early 1820s he had begun to enjoy some professional success.

Sadly, Schubert himself was also short-lived. On November 19 1828, the composer died in his home city **aged just 31**. The official cause was recorded as typhoid fever, but rumours have persisted that he had been suffering from syphilis and either that – or the treatment (ingestion of mercury) – hastened his demise. Yet, he left a huge opus of work including some 600 songs, which led him to be widely considered the 'father of lieder'.

Watch a performance of the ***Rosamunde Overture***.

Camille Saint-Saëns

Parisian pianist, organist and composer **Camille Saint-Saëns** was born in the French capital in 1835. A child prodigy, he first performed in public aged 10 and entered the city's Conservatoire at 13. Raised mostly in a female household after the early death of his father, he started piano lessons aged two, taught by his great-aunt Charlotte, herself a talented musician.

He was a church organist, before he joined the teaching staff at the École de Musique Classique et Religieuse in the 1860s, where one of his pupils was a teenage **Gabriel Fauré**. It was the start of a lifelong friendship. In 1871, he founded the National Society for French Music, and he was a pioneering figure in its development through the Romantic period. Saint-Saëns was the first French composer to write piano concertos, while his chamber music influenced those that followed him, including his pupil and friend Fauré and Maurice Ravel.

Among his prolific output were three symphonies – his first written when he was 17 – and 13 operas, including *Samson and Delilah*. His best-known piece of chamber music remains ***The Carnival of the Animals***.

A performer to the last (his final public appearance came a month before his death), Saint-Saëns also wrote poetry, plays and criticism, was a passionate astronomer and an adventurous traveller – he drew his final breath in Algiers in December 1921.

Did you know? In 1881, Saint-Saëns visited Liverpool to perform at Philharmonic Hall. During his stay he also played two recitals on the organ at St George's Hall, which went down very well – he "created a most favourable impression by his vigorous yet refined manipulation of the instrument".

Listen to **an excerpt** of Guy Johnston playing Saint-Saëns' *Cello Concerto* at the Proms.

Anton Bruckner

His symphonies have been described as a 'cathedral of sound', and that's apt because 19th Century Austrian composer **Anton Bruckner** spent his life on a spiritual quest. Born in Ansfelden in 1824, Bruckner first studied organ and violin with his father. Bruckner senior died when Anton was just 13 however, and the teenager was sent off to nearby Saint Florian to become a chorister at the monastery school, later teaching there himself and then, in 1848, becoming its official organist. In 1849, he composed what he considered his first significant work, the *Requiem in D minor*. But he would have to wait another 15 years for his compositional career to really take off.

He then migrated to Linz, where he became the cathedral's organist and studied harmony and counterpoint. There, Bruckner discovered, and was inspired by, the music of Wagner. In 1871, Bruckner (at that time Court organist in Vienna) arrived in London to play the organ in the newly-opened Royal Albert Hall – although the instrument, at that time the largest in the world, had already been officially put through its paces by Liverpool corporation organist WT Best.

While he had already produced much organ, piano and choral work by then, along with three early symphonies – including his *Symphony No.1 in C minor* – 1871 can also be seen as something of a watershed year for Bruckner in terms of his **symphonic output**. From 1872 onwards he composed eight symphonic works including the monumental fifth and eighth. And in 1881 came his most joyful hymn of praise, his *Te Deum*.

Bruckner died on October 11, 1896, in Vienna and was buried in the crypt of the **Monastery Church of St Florian**, in a tomb directly below the church's organ.

Watch Sir Simon Rattle conduct the **final movement** of Bruckner's Sixth Symphony.

About the Music

Franz Schubert (1797-1828): Overture *Die Zauberharfe (Rosamunde),* D644
Composed: 1820
First Performed: 19 August 1820, Vienna, Theater an der Wien.

'Two parts sorcery, one good, one evil, a moonstruck lady in a ruined castle, an enraged father and a banished son, some foolish knights, a bucketful of tears, a handful of sighs and a stiff dose of the most nonsensical magic' – that was how Schubert's critic friend Franz von Schlechta summed up the melodrama *Die Zauberharfe* ('The Magic Harp') by Georg von Hoffmann. We don't know what Schubert thought of it, but a commission from Vienna's premiere theatre was far too important for a still largely ignored young composer to pass up, and the score he provided for Hoffmann's play has some wonderful music, most of all in this striking, atmospheric Overture. The stern, minor key opening figure standing for the evil sorceress is followed by a lovely plaintive oboe tune, then an ebullient, bright Allegro vivace carries us through to a brilliant curtain-raising ending. It all makes one wonder what Schubert might have achieved in the theatre if he had ever found a libretto worthy of his extraordinary talents.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921): Cello Concerto No 1 in A minor, op 33
1. Allegro non troppo –
2. Allegretto con moto
3. Tempo primo – Un peu moins vite (A little less lively)

Composed: 1872
First Performed: 19 January 1873, Paris Conservatoire, Auguste Tolbecque

Saint-Saëns' First Cello Concerto is a gem, which is all the more remarkable when one considers that the 37-year-old composer had no great models to work from. At that time cello concertos tended to be regarded as freakish novelties. Haydn's were long forgotten, and although there are similarities in structure to Schumann's concerto (1850), that was unknown even in the composer's homelands. Part of the problem was balancing the cello against the orchestra – it's a much less powerful instrument on a big stage than you might think. And that's where Saint-Saëns scored a clinching goal: 'Here, for once, is a violoncello concerto in which the solo instrument displays every register without the slightest difficulty in penetrating the orchestra', wrote the influential critic Donald Tovey. It set a gold standard for such later masters of the medium as Dvořák, Elgar and Shostakovich.

The concerto's structure is as original as its melodic ideas are beautiful and exciting. Is it in three linked movements or one continuous movement? The best answer is probably both and neither. The concerto begins with a compelling allegro in which themes seem to fall over each other in the race to be heard. But in time it begins to run out of energy, and we find ourselves in a new world: an elegant, ethereal minuet for muted strings, like music in a ghostly ballroom. The dream fades, and the first movement begins its chase again (has it ever really gone away?), only to be edged out by a slightly more restrained finale – until the ending that is, where the cello really shows its acrobatic capabilities to the full.

Anton Bruckner (1824-96): Symphony No 6 in A major

1. Majestoso
2. Adagio: Sehr feierlich (Very solemn)
3. Scherzo: Nicht schnell (Not fast) – Trio: Langsam (Slow) – Scherzo
4. Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell (Lively, but not too fast)

Composed: 1879-81
First Performed: 26 February 1899, Graz (Austria), cond. Gustav Mahler

When Bruckner wrote his Sixth Symphony he was at a low ebb. He'd moved to Vienna from his Upper Austrian homeland full of hopes – where better than the home city of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert to make a stunning success as a composer? But Vienna was either indifferent or actively scornful, and the disastrous first performance of his Third Symphony in 1877, followed by a mauling in the musical press, brought him close to despair.

Bruckner is often said to have lacked confidence as man and artist, but the fact that he carried on composing after this – and carried on writing symphonies – suggests that at a deeper level his sense of 'vocation' (as this intensely religious man described it) remained strong. Though he didn't realise it then, vindication was just around the corner – the premiere of the Fourth Symphony, not long after the Sixth was finished, was to be a breakthrough. But given the circumstances it's not surprising that the Sixth Symphony sounds more inward-looking, enigmatic, and less affirmative in its ending than any of its great neighbours. Perhaps for that reason, the Sixth has tended to be neglected in the concert hall. But it offers rich rewards. Despite its often sombre tone, the slow movement is a beautiful meditation, culminating in a gorgeous long coda mostly for the strings, and the magical, mysterious nocturnal Scherzo clearly left a deep impression on Bruckner's younger friend Gustav Mahler, who conducted the first performance.

It's the outer movements that puzzle some people. The first seems more dynamic and rhythmically driven than is typical in mature Bruckner, but shifts in tone and perspective can be puzzling for the first-time listener. Trust Bruckner – he knows where he's going – and the magnificent coda will draw everything together. The Finale is darker, more nervous, and often it seems to question itself just when it's getting going. There is a massive reaffirmation of the first

movement theme at the end, but this time (in contrast to the other mature symphonies) the questions – doubts? – can still linger. But that only makes this remarkable symphony all the more fascinating. Faith can be strengthened by opening itself to doubt, and perhaps that's what we hear in Symphony No 6. As we've seen, that faith would soon be vindicated.