**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**
**March 12 programme complementary content**

## Adam Hickox

British conductor **Adam Hickox** brings to the podium an impressive and elegant fluidity of technique and mature interpretations of a wide range of repertoire which is seeing him in increasing demand across the world both on concert stages and in opera houses. In recent seasons he has conducted the Orchestre de Paris, BBC Scottish Symphony, BBC Symphony, the Ulster Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, Philharmonia Orchestra, Deutsche Symphony Orchestra Berlin, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Iceland Symphony Orchestra and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. Meanwhile in November 2024, just a few months after making his debut with the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra, he was announced as its new **chief conductor,** taking up the position in autumn 2025.

In the opera house he has conducted *Tosca* at Opera North and a new production of *Hansel and Gretel* at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire. And in December 2023, following a successful debut at Glyndebourne conducting Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*, he was appointed **principal conductor of the Glyndebourne Sinfonia**. In 2024 he conducted *La Traviata* at Glyndebourne as well as a concert staging of Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*.

Born in 1996, Hickox studied music and composition with Robin Holloway at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and conducting with Sian Edwards at the **Royal Academy of Music** from where he graduated in 2019. He was assistant conductor at the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2019-22, and in 2021 he was invited to Tanglewood as one of the festival's two conducting fellows, later also taking part in the fellowship's corresponding residency with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig.

## Paul Lewis

Huyton-born superstar pianist **Paul Lewis** is internationally regarded as one of the leading musicians of his generation. His cycles of core piano works by **Beethoven and Schubert** have received unanimous critical and public acclaim worldwide and consolidated his reputation as one of the foremost interpreters of the central European classical repertoire.

His numerous awards have included the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year, two Edison awards, three Gramophone awards, the Diapason D'or de l'Annee, the Preis Der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik, the Premio Internazionale Accademia Musicale Chigiana, and the South Bank Show Classical Music award. He holds honorary degrees from Liverpool, Edge Hill, and Southampton Universities, is an honorary fellow of **Liverpool John Moores** and was appointed a CBE in the 2016 Queen's Birthday Honours for services to music.

Lewis works regularly as soloist with the world's great orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, London Philharmonic, London Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony, NHK Symphony, New York Philharmonic, LA Philharmonic, and the Royal Concertgebouw, Cleveland, Tonhalle Zurich, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Philharmonia, and Mahler Chamber Orchestras. His recital career takes him to venues such as London's Royal Festival Hall, Alice Tully and Carnegie Hall in New York, the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, Theatre des Champs Elysees in Paris, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Berlin Philharmonie and Konzerthaus.

He is also a frequent guest at the some of the world's most prestigious festivals including Tanglewood, Ravinia, Schubertiade, Edinburgh, Salzburg, Lucerne, and the BBC Proms where in 2010 he became the first person to play a complete Beethoven piano concerto cycle in a single season. His multi-award winning and extensive discography for Harmonia Mundi includes the complete Beethoven piano sonatas, concertos, and the Diabelli Variations, all of Schubert's major

piano works from the last six years of his life including the three song cycles with tenor Mark Padmore.

**Lewis**, whose father was a Liverpool dock worker and his mother a local council worker, studied at Chetham's School of Music and with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London before going on to study privately with Alfred Brendel. He is co-Artistic Director of Midsummer Music; an annual chamber music festival held in Buckinghamshire.

**Robert Schumann**

There's a fine line, so they say, between genius and madness and it was one **Robert Schumann** certainly knew and understood. But before mental health issues overwhelmed him and led to him admitting himself to an asylum, the German composer created an important body of piano music, orchestral works and lieder.

Schumann was born in Zwickau in June 1810, the last of six children. His father was a successful novelist, bookseller and publisher. Young Robert wasn't a musical prodigy – he didn't start learning the piano until he was 10 and although he became enthusiastic about composing, he bowed to familial pressure to study law, enrolling at Leipzig University. But music was Schumann's real passion, and he approached Leipzig piano teacher Friedrich Wieck for lessons, subsequently meeting Wieck's then 10-year-old daughter **Clara**. It was when an injury to his right hand put paid to his plans for a performing career that composing came to the fore. In 1840 came one of the defining moments in Schmann's life when he married Clara, a prodigiously talented pianist and composer in her own right, despite her father's opposition to the union.

Although he wrote extensively for the keyboard, Schumann only completed one piano concerto during his life. It was premiered in Dresden in December 1845 with Clara as the soloist. Schumann's other output included 140 songs including the *Dichterliebe* and *Frauenliebe Und-Leben* (A Woman's Love and Life) song cycles, four symphonies, a cello concerto, *Carnaval* – a set of 20 piano miniatures, and the four-act opera *Genoveva*.

Along with being one of the most important composers of the 19th Century, Schumann was also a music critic and co-founder of the influential Neue Zeitschrift für Musik. It was in the publication that he would praise a young Johannes Brahms after the budding pianist and composer greatly impressed the Schumanns when he visited them at home in Dusseldorf. Schumann's work began to increasingly suffer after 1850 as his **always fragile mental health deteriorated** . He began to suffer from increasingly debilitating depression, severe psychotic episodes, auditory hallucinations and delusions and progressive paralysis. In 1854 he attempted suicide, after which he admitted himself to a mental institution where he died two years later, aged 46.

**Did you know? Clara Wieck's controlling father Friedrich was so set against her marrying Schumann that he reportedly threatened to shoot him. He also publicly badmouthed Schumann calling him 'lazy' and 'a mediocre composer'. None of it worked – Clara and Robert married a day before her 21st birthday and Schumann sued his father-in-law for defamation and won.**

Enjoy the Overture from Robert Schumann's *Genoveva.*

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

A musical Janus – and genius - who bestrode both the Classical period of Mozart and Haydn and the dawn of the 19th Century Romantic era, **Ludwig van Beethoven** remains a titan of classical music. He was born in Bonn in December 1770. Beethoven's father Johann was a singer who taught keyboard and violin - but he was also a heavy drinker who tried to turn the young Ludwig into another Mozart-style child prodigy through a draconian regime that involved plenty of stick and no carrot.

The youngster was forced to leave school at 11 to earn money to support the family. Composition lessons led to his earliest works when he was still only 13 (*Nine Variations on a March by Dresler*), and as a teenager he was appointed court organist. He also started playing viola in the court orchestra.
In 1792, he finally escaped Bonn, and his father, and moved permanently to **Vienna** to study with Joseph Haydn, quickly gaining a reputation as the finest piano virtuoso in the city.
A month after he left for his new life, Johann Beethoven died.

Along with his prowess at the keyboard, Beethoven began to make a name for himself as a composer. His earliest works included piano, cello and violin sonatas and trios. The early years in Vienna also saw the first signs of hearing trouble which would become increasingly debilitating to the point that by around 1815 the composer was **completely deaf**. Then in 1800 came his First Symphony, and from there to the 'Emperor' Piano Concerto in 1809, and despite ever shifting employment and the disruption of the Napoleonic Wars, **the decade** saw the composer change the face of classical music.

Beethoven's purple patch included six symphonies – among them the mighty Fifth and the *'Pastoral' Symphony No.6*, numerous sonatas – including the *Moonlight Sonata*, his *Violin Concerto* and his only opera, *Fidelio*, produced in 1805. In 1814 his deafness forced him to give up performing, but he continued to compose and conduct, despite not being able to hear what was being played for him.

Ill health also dogged the revolutionary composer, but as he entered the final decade of his life, and after a few years of little meaningful output, he also rallied creatively, returning to the keyboard to compose his first piano sonatas in many years. He also wrote two mighty works for massed voices – his *Missa Solemnis* and *Ninth Symphony*. Beethoven died of cirrhosis of the liver in Vienna on March 26, 1827, at the age of 56. Thousands of people lined the route of his **funeral cortege**, and his pallbearers included fellow composers Hummel, Carl Czerny and a young Franz Schubert.

**Did you know? When Beethoven started to wear spectacles like one of his friends, the talented amateur cellist Baron Nikolaus Zmeskall, he wrote '*Obbligato for Two Pairs of Spectacles*' in E flat for them to play together – the Baron on cello and Beethoven on viola.**

Listen to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic playing the second movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No.6 in F major.*

**Hector Berlioz**

Hirsute composer, conductor and critic **Louis-Hector Berlioz** was one of the most radical and rebellious Romantics of 19th Century French music and left a legacy of original and inventive work. Berlioz was born in 1803 in La Côte-Saint-André, a commune in southeastern France situated between Lyon and Grenoble, where his physician father gave him his first lessons in music and Latin.

Despite no formal music tuition, the young Hector started composing short tunes at the age of 12 and was also taught by local musicians how to play the guitar and flute. His father wanted him to follow in his footsteps, so an 18-year-old Berlioz dutifully went to study medicine in Paris but was soon distracted by music and wangled himself a place at the Conservatoire, much to his parents' anger, where in 1830 he won the prestigious Prix de Rome.

Despite being a great honour, in many ways the award came at just the wrong time. Three years earlier, the composer had attended a performance of Hamlet by a company led by the great Charles Kemble (whose elder brother John Philip was, incidentally, born in Prescot) and visiting from England. The evening started both a life-long love of Shakespeare for Berlioz and an all-consuming infatuation with actress **Harriet Smithson** who was playing Ophelia. It was a

grand and, for a long time unrequited, passion which in 1830 would be channelled into his *Symphonie Fantastique*. And although the couple eventually tied the knot, it wasn't a successful marriage and they later separated.

Meanwhile Berlioz could not capitalise on the success of the *Symphonie Fantastique* because the terms of the Prix de Rome involved him uprooting himself from Paris and studying in Italy for two years. The composer was an energetic figure of the Romantic period who shared his vision of what modern French music should be on many international stages – including Germany, Belgium, Russia, Austria-Hungary and, notably, Britain, where he paid **five visits** between 1848 and 1855.

His **other works** included *Harold in Italy* (1834 - a commission from Paganini), *Grande Messe des Morts* (1837), *Roméo et Juliette* (1839), *La Damnation De Faust* (1845), the epic five-act opera *Les Troyens* (composed between 1856-8 and considered his other great masterpiece) and the comic opera *Béatrice Et Bénédict* (1860-2). Berlioz died in Paris in March 1869. The following year a book of his memoirs was released.

Listen to the Dream of a Witches Sabbath from Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique.*

**About the Music**

**Robert Schumann (1810-56): Overture *Genoveva***

Composed: 1847-9
First Performed: 25 June 1850, Leipzig Stadttheater, cond. Schumann

Like many German romantics, Schumann yearned to create a great national opera. The pioneering model was Weber's *Der Freischütz* ('The Free-Shooter', 1817-21), which combined old German legend, magic and a triumphant redemptive love story with music steeped in 'folkish' elements: the hunting and dance songs of the people, and the mysterious, elemental qualities of the great German forests.

The story of Genoveva, wife of the warrior Siegfried, was first written down in the Middle Ages. While Siegfried is away from home, his rival Golo attempts to seduce Genoveva and, when she rejects him, he denounces her as unfaithful. Genoveva is condemned to death, only to be saved at the last moment when Golo's deception is uncovered. Schuman's Overture begins with a stirring slow introduction, depicting both the anguish and the beauty of wronged Genoveva. The following *Allegro* provides plenty of romantic storm and stress, but also picturesque touches – notably some virile horn-calls (Siegfried himself?). Eventually the dark minor key turns to bright, increasingly hopeful major as Genoveva's vindication grows ever more certain.

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770—1827): Piano Concerto No 3 in C minor, Op. 37**

1. Allegro con brio
2. Largo
3. Rondo. Allegro

Composed: 1800
First Performed: 5 April 1803, Vienna, Theater an der Wien, soloist/director Beethoven

Only one of Beethoven's seven completed concertos is in the dark minor mode, but it's a key with a special significance for him - C minor. (Listeners who know the Fifth Symphony or the *Pathétique* Piano Sonata, also in C minor, should get the picture easily enough.) A similar feeling of a stormy, perilous journey can be felt in the first movement of this concerto. But here there is an extra dimension to the drama: the relationship between the soloist and orchestra becomes a kind of heroic contest between Titanic equals, unlike anything in the concerto literature before. For many 19th century musicians, the Romantic piano concerto was born here.

Typically for a classical era concerto, the opening *Allegro con brio* begins with a substantial introduction for the orchestra alone. This is alternately tense and explosive, though with a well-contrasted lyrical second theme. Eventually the piano enters with a series of powerful upward runs, followed by a restatement of the opening theme in massive octaves: it is as though the piano were trying to establish itself as an equal contender. But the masterstroke comes at the end of the piano's long solo cadenza: soft timpani strokes are answered by rippling figures on piano. Soloist and orchestra are momentarily not in conflict, but discover a strange, hushed intimacy.

The *Largo* is a magnificent slow aria, in which the piano sometimes sings, at other times adds a glorious filigree of decorations to the orchestra's melody lines. Near the end there's a wonderful lyrical outpouring for piano right hand alone, like an improvisation, marked *sempre con gran espressione* ('always with great expression') – a supremely romantic moment, which left its mark on later pianistic masters like Chopin and Schumann. After this the Rondo finale brings a return to C minor – but are we fully back in tragic mode? An impish spirit keeps breaking through in this music, especially after the brief but dazzling final cadenza, where Beethoven deftly transforms the opening theme into a sprightly, almost cheeky dancing tune in the bright major key. So much for the idea that Beethoven had no sense of humour!

### Hector Berlioz (1803-69): *Symphonie fantastique*

1. Rêveries - Passions (Reveries – Passions)
2. Un Bal (A Ball)
3. Scène aux Champs (Scene in the Country)
4. Marche au Supplice (March to the Scaffold)
5. Songe d'une Nuit du Sabbat (Dream of a Witches Sabbath)

Composed: 1830
First Performed: 5 December 1830, Paris Conservatoire, cond. François Habeneck

If there's one classical composer who deserves to be called 'larger than life', it's Hector Berlioz. Prone to tempestuous mood-swings, a bold (some would say reckless) innovator, his life and work mirror each other so closely that it's often hard to tell where one ends and the other begins. Many composers have fallen passionately, hopelessly in love; some have attempted to work through their feelings in music. But how many would invite the object of their desire to a public performance of a huge, ambitious symphony in which the agonies and ecstasies of that love are publicly, even graphically displayed?

But that's exactly what the twenty-six-year-old Berlioz did in his wild and brilliant Symphonie fantastique. Three years before he wrote it, he'd seen the Irish actress Harriet Smithson playing Shakespeare and fallen cataclysmically in love, both with the playwright and with Harriet, the Bard's beautiful advocate. Understandably, she backed off when he started making wild declarations of love, so instead Berlioz threw his passion into one of the most vivid pieces of musical storytelling ever composed. Berlioz's programme note describes it as the evocation of an 'opium dream', in which we hear the rejected lover's longings and despair, his subsequent feelings of loneliness and rejection, and how everything finally turns nasty. He dreams that he has killed his beloved and is led to the scaffold for her murder, after which she returns, horrifically, in a grotesque 'Witches Sabbath', where she gloats over the apparently still conscious body of her former lover. Hardly a guaranteed way to a girl's heart, you might think, but it worked. Ten months after the Symphonie's second performance, in 1832, at which Smithson was guest, Berlioz and his ideal love were married. It would be lovely to say that they lived happily ever after, but (not too surprisingly perhaps) the marriage was a disaster. Fortunately, the Symphony wasn't. Rapturously received at its premiere, it has been thrilling audiences ever since.