

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
March 15 programme complementary content

This concert is in memory of friends and in thanks to those who have given and pledged a legacy.

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 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.

Claude Debussy

The late 19th and early 20th Century was a time of brilliant creativity in French classical music, driven by the rise of a generation of superstar composers. Among those born between 1835 and 1875 were Fauré, Saint-Saëns, Delibes, Bizet, Massenet, Dukas, Satie, Roussel, Ravel and – in August 1862, just outside Paris – Achille Claude Debussy.

Debussy enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 10. And it was later, while still a student, that he was taken under the wing of none other than Tchaikovsky's patroness [Nadezhda von Meck](#); over the course of three summer holidays he travelled to the von Meck's summer residences across Europe to play piano duets with her children.

Debussy won the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1884 with his cantata *The Prodigal Son*, although he spent most of his year in the Italian capital socialising with artists and writers rather than composing. Over the next decade he developed and matured his own distinctive style, and it was his dreamlike symphonic poem *Prelude L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1894) which really brought him to the public's attention. His other major works include *La Mer*, the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Suite Bergamasque* – which includes the iridescent *Clair de Lune* – and 24 piano preludes. His music, with its ethereal, shimmering soundscapes, has often been associated with [Impressionism](#), but Debussy himself always rejected that label.

While he died in 1918, Debussy's influence lived on through the work of both fellow Frenchmen and composers like Stravinsky and Bartók, leading to him being seen as one of the father figures of 20th Century music.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

“It seemed to me that I was hearing the voice of God,” says a marvelling (and insanely jealous) Antonio Salieri in Liverpool playwright Peter Shaffer's [Amadeus](#). Revered down the centuries as a genius who left a legacy of musical masterpieces, Mozart – this ‘voice of God’ – was essentially a jobbing composer for hire, constantly seeking out the next patronage or commission to further his career and pay his often extravagantly large bills. Of all composers, the ‘story’ of his life is perhaps the best-known. And most embroidered.

[Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#) was born in Salzburg in 1756, where his father Leopold was a violinist in the Prince-Bishop's court. Leopold toured the salons of Europe with the young Wolfgang and his equally talented sister Maria Anna, and the children performed at the keyboard for the great and good. In 1764 they came to London and performed for George III. It was where the precocious musical genius composed his first symphony, which included a four-note musical motif, CDFE, which popped up in subsequent pieces including, 24 years later, his longest and last symphony, nicknamed *Jupiter*.

At the advanced age of 17, Mozart followed his father and entered the employ of the Price-Archbishop of Salzburg, for whom he was required to compose masses and other works on the modest salary of 150 florins a year. By the time he was 21, and maturing compositionally, he was keen to fly the nest and after his request for a sabbatical was turned down, he set out on the road in search of new patronage and fresh, more lucrative commissions. He ended up in Vienna where

he would live for the remainder of his days, marry his wife Constance, and compose his best-known works, particularly in the final 'golden' decade of his life. Along with his great operas *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan Tutte* and *The Magic Flute*, they included his mature symphonies, masterful *Piano Concerto No.21* and *Mass in C Minor*. In fact, over the course of his short lifetime, the prolific Mozart composed more than 600 works in a wide range of forms.

Aged just 35, he died in Vienna in December 1791, famously leaving the *Requiem* commission which had filled his final autumn unfinished. His funeral service was conducted at St Stephen's Cathedral, but Mozart, the creator of some of the most remarkable music ever composed, was buried in an unmarked plot.

Did you know? Among the actors to have played Mozart in *Amadeus* on stage are Simon Callow, Tim Curry, Michael Sheen, Peter Firth and, during his *Star Wars* years, Mark Hamill.

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 Prescott) 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 Bénédicte* (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

Claude Debussy (1862-1918): Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

Composed: 1892-4

First Performed: 22 December 1894, Paris, cond. Gustave Doret

According to the arch-modernist composer and conductor Pierre Boulez, 'modern music began with the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*'. Imagine hearing it in a context where 'modern music' meant Mahler, Richard Strauss, even Tchaikovsky, and much of it does seem way ahead of its time. The delicate, voluptuous harmonies may owe something to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, but here they acquire a new ambiguity – faintly unsettling and strangely calm at the same time. Then there are the supple, free-floating rhythms, creating the effect of timeless, ecstatic improvisation. Then there are the fabulous orchestral timbres – take the very opening with its mesmerising, languorous flute solo, where the pitch and sound-colour feel as though they have been born simultaneously.

Instead of looking to traditional forms for a musical framework, Debussy takes as his creative starting point a poem by the French symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé, which depicts a faun – a sensual but benevolent goat-like being of Roman mythology – who dreams lazily of sexual gratification in the full heat of the Mediterranean sun, before finally surrendering to sleep. Phrases, images and feelings in Mallarmé's poem are transformed into music that rises and falls, ebbs and flows with an extraordinary lifelike freedom – an effect close to the 'stream of consciousness' in twentieth century modernist novels. Yet despite its profound and far-reaching newness, the *Prélude* was an instant success. As the conductor Gustave Doret recalled, 'I felt behind me... an audience that was totally spellbound. It was a complete triumph, and I had no hesitation in breaking the rule forbidding encores'.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91): Piano Concerto No 27 in B flat major, K.595

1. Allegro
2. Larghetto
3. Allegro

Composed: 1791

First Performed: 4 March 1791 (?), Vienna, Jahn's Hall, soloist/director Mozart

In 178, after years of humiliations and privations in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg, Prince Hieronymus von Colloredo, the twenty-five year-old composer took the bold step of resigning - or, rather, provoking his own physically violent dismissal (in his own words, 'with a kick in the arse') - and perusing the perilous career of freelance composer and performer in Vienna, in the process defying the sternest warnings of his father, Leopold Mozart. In the four years that followed, Mozart wrote fifteen magnificent piano concertos, all for himself as soloist.

Then, for some reason, came a falling off. Apart from the now rarely heard 'Coronation' Concerto (K.537), there's a long gap until K595 appeared. This was to be Mozart's last Piano Concerto, of the outstanding products of his last year, 1791. While it can easily bear comparison with the earlier masterpieces in this form, K.595 does seem to stand apart from them, in style and in spirit. The dramatic intensity of the two minor-key concertos (K.466 and K.491), and the sometimes startling poignancy of the slow movements of K.467, K.482 and K.488 - all this now seems worlds away. Instead, as Mozart's biographer Hermann Abert put it, the Concerto has a 'more personal and at the same time strangely resigned character', in which Mozart often seems to 'rouse himself and then sink back again'.

New listeners to this Concerto may wonder at first what Abert was talking about. The opening theme wears a serene smile with no apparent effort, its manner as charmingly graceful anywhere else in Mozart. But after the orchestra has built to a relatively robust climax, strings present the first example of what is to be a recurring tendency in this movement: a seemingly carefree tune is undermined by darker, minor-key harmonies which momentarily seems to drag the tune down with it. It's only a moment, but as so often in Mozart it really tells.

Few such shadows seem to ruffle the placid *Larghetto* slow movement that follows, which could signify either otherworldly serenity or unsettling detachment, depending on your point of view. The finale is mostly lilting, dancing elegance, but the opening theme however reworks a song Mozart had just composed, *Sehnsucht nach dem Frühlinge* ('Longing for Spring'): 'Come lovely May, and make the trees turn green again'. At the time of writing this Concerto, Mozart was about to experience his last spring. Listening to this music it's hard to resist the suspicion that, on some level at least, he knew it.

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.