

## Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra March 26 programme complementary content

### Daniela Candillari

Celebrated for her dynamic artistry and insightful leadership, conductor [Daniela Candillari](#) is equally at home premiering bold new works and interpreting classical repertoire. Her international career spans major operatic and symphonic stages, where she is praised for performances that combine “confidence and apparently inexhaustible verve” (*The New York Times*) with “incisive leadership” (*The Wall Street Journal*).

Her 2025-2026 season includes guest engagements with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Canadian Opera Company, London Philharmonic, Cabrillo Festival, Colorado Springs Philharmonic, and Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal. She will also return to the Juilliard School, Louisiana Philharmonic, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL), and others.

Recent engagements have included an acclaimed world premiere of *This House* by Ricky Ian Gordon, Lynn Nottage and Ruby Aiyo Gerber as part of the 50th anniversary season at OTSL, the world premiere of Nina Shekhar’s *Accordion Concerto* with the St Louis Symphony Orchestra, Camille Saint-Saëns’ rarely performed French masterpiece, *Samson and Delilah*, at the New Orleans Opera and debuts with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony and Tucson Symphony Orchestra.

As a composer, Candillari has been commissioned by established artists including instrumentalists from the Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, and Pittsburgh Symphonies, as well as the three resident orchestras of Lincoln Center: the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and the New York City Ballet.

She was Principal Opera Conductor with Music Academy of the West from 2022-2024 and has been Principal Conductor of the [Opera Theatre of St Louis](#) since 2022. [Candillari](#) grew up in Serbia and Slovenia. She holds a Doctorate from the Universität für Musik in Vienna; a MM from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music; and a MM and bachelor’s degree from the Universität für Musik in Graz.

## **Rory Musgrave**

Irish baritone [Rory Musgrave](#) made his international opera debut singing the role of Young Kelvin in *Solaris* at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. In 2022 he enjoyed a UK operatic debut singing the title role of Eugene Onegin for Opera Holland Park's Young Artist Programme.

Other recent roles include Doctor Falke in *Die Fledermaus* at the Lyric Opera Studio Weimar, Schaunard in *La Boheme* (Lyric Opera Productions and Boyle Arts Festival), Le Podestat in *Le Docteur Miracle* (Wexford Festival Opera/The Merrion Hotel), Silvio in *Pagliacci* (Cork Opera House), Mayor of Youghal in the world premiere and national tour of *Vagabonds* (Opera Collective Ireland), Taddio in *L'italiana in Algeri* (Blackwater Valley Opera Company) and Eumete in *The Return of Ulysses* for Opera Collective Ireland.

A founding member of Irish Opera Artists, Musgrave also performs extensively in concerts and recitals including the National Concert Hall, Kilkenny Arts Festival, Clifden Arts Festival and Wexford Festival Opera. He made his debut with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in 2015 as a guest soloist at its lunchtime concert series and has gone on to perform with numerous other ensembles including Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, RTÉ Concert Orchestra and Crash Ensemble.

His oratorio repertoire includes Handel's *Messiah*, *Carmina Burana* and Haydn's *Paukenmesse*. Musgrave, who hails from Connemara, is a graduate of University College Dublin and the Royal Irish Academy of Music, with a Masters in Vocal Performance. From 2014-16 he was an OTC Opera Hub Emerging Artist with Opera Theatre Company and was also awarded the PWC Emerging Artist Bursary and the Arnholm Bursary by Wexford Festival Opera.

## **EXAUDI**

One of the world's leading vocal ensembles for new music, [EXAUDI](#) was formed in London in 2002 and its members include some of the UK's top ensemble singers and new music soloists. The ensemble has collaborated with hundreds of composers, evolving a unique and expanding repertoire that is blazing new trails in contemporary vocal composition.

EXAUDI's special affinity is for the radical edges of music both new and old, whether mind-bending medieval rhythm, Renaissance or 21st-century microtonality or experimental aesthetics, championing composers as diverse as Cassandra Miller, Michael Finnissy, Jürg Frey,

Catherine Lamb, Evan Johnson and Naomi Pinnock. A strong feature of its programming is the mixing of early and new music in imaginative and arresting combinations: new female perspectives on Gesualdo and the Italian madrigal, or James Weeks' reimagining of Arcadelt in *Book of Flames and Shadows* (Winter & Winter, 2022).

Committed to growing the future of new music, [EXAUDI](#) is also strongly involved with the emerging generation of young composers and singers and regularly takes part in artist development schemes and residencies. It has particularly strong links with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and is an Ensemble in Residence at Durham University. The ensemble is also proud signatory to the Keychange initiative, pledging gender-equal programming across its own-promotion activities.

EXAUDI's many international engagements include Wittener Tage, Darmstadter Ferienkurse, Musica Viva (Munich), Muziekgebouw (Amsterdam), IRCAM and Festival d'Automne (Paris), Voix Nouvelles (Royaumont), Musica (Strasbourg), MAfestival (Bruges), CDMC (Madrid), Milano Musica (Milan/Turin), Fundació BBVA (Bilbao) and L'Auditori (Barcelona). The ensemble has also collaborated with many leading ensembles including musikFabrik, Ensemble Modern, L'Instant Donné, London Sinfonietta, BCMG, Talea (NY), Linea, Helsinki Philharmonic and Ensemble InterContemporain, and has appeared at many leading UK venues and festivals, including BBC Proms, Aldeburgh, Spitalfields and Manchester International Festival.

It broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and European radio stations and has released 20 [critically acclaimed recordings](#) on the Winter&Winter, Kairos, NMC, ÆON, Métier, Mode, Confront and HCR labels.

### **Sir Edward Elgar**

The most important English composer since Purcell, [Sir Edward Elgar](#) was born at Lower Broadheath, a small village just outside Worcester, on June 2, 1857 – the middle child of seven children.

Elgar's father William was a piano tuner who ran a music shop in the city's High Street. Yet although the family would 'live above the shop' as the young Edward grew up - influenced by his mother Ann, a farmer's daughter from the Forest of Dean, he always retained a love of the rolling English countryside, particularly the nearby Malvern Hills which he captured, famously, in his music.

While he had piano and violin lessons as a child, Elgar never had any formal musical training. He taught himself to compose, and his early career was spent as a freelance musician and as a violin and music teacher at the Worcester High School for Girls (a job he reputedly detested). He was also bandmaster at the Worcester City and County Pauper Lunatic Asylum at Powick.

He was associated with the [Three Choirs Festival](#) for more than half-a-century, from the age of 24, when he played second violin in the orchestra, to a year before he died. As a boy, he had attended concerts and his father and uncle had performed in the festival themselves. Elgar's earliest compositions included a *Gloria*, written while still a teenager, *Mass for choir and organ* and *Romance for Violin and Piano*. His 1888 work *Salut d'Amour* was written as an engagement gift for his future wife (Caroline) Alice, while the 1892 *Serenade for Strings* was based on a melody he had actually written much earlier in his life.

His most famous and enduring works date from the mid-1890s onwards, including the [Enigma Variations](#) – premiered in London in June 1899 with Hans Richter conducting, *Dream of Gerontius* (1900), his *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1* (1901), *Symphony No.1* (1908), *Violin Concerto* (1909-10), and his 1919 masterpiece the *Cello Concerto*.

Elgar was knighted in 1904, and the following year was made a Freeman of Worcester and became the first Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham. He received the Order of Merit in 1911, was made a KVCO in 1928 and in 1931 was given a baronetcy, taking the title Lord Elgar of Broadheath. From 1924-34 he was [Master of the King's Music](#). Elgar died in Worcester on February 23, 1934. He was buried in the churchyard at St Wulstan's RC Church in Little Malvern.

**Did you know? When Elgar's song cycle *Sea Pictures* was premiered at the Norwich Festival in 1899, with its composer conducting, the statuesque 6ft 2in English contralto Clara Butt appeared dressed as a mermaid.**

Listen to Elgar's [Serenade for Strings](#).

### **Mark Simpson**

In 2006, a 17-year-old [Mark Simpson](#) won BBC Young Musician of the Year with his superb clarinet performance in a thrilling final at Gateshead, and also took the BBC Proms/Guardian Young Composer

of the Year accolade. Two decades on, he remains the only person to do ‘the double’. Since then, the Liverpool-born composer and clarinettist has forged successful parallel careers, establishing himself as a major figure in the contemporary music world. As a clarinettist he appears in venues worldwide, both as a concert soloist and chamber musician. He made his Wigmore Hall debut at 17, while in 2019 he performed the world premiere of his own [Clarinet Concerto](#) in Manchester.

Simpson also enjoys a prolific and high-profile composing career, writing music for the stage, orchestra, voices and chamber forces across a myriad of forms, in which poetic intensity is matched by technical assurance. His tone poem *A mirror-fragment* was composed for Liverpool Philharmonic in 2008, and in 2011, Ensemble 10:10 gave the world premiere of his work [Straw Dogs](#). The following year [sparks](#) – described as an ‘orchestral firecracker’ – was given its world premiere at the Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall. Simpson was presented with a South Bank Sky Arts Award for Classical Music in 2016 for his ‘blazingly original’ oratorio *The Immortal*, informed by the world of Victorian occultism. In the same year, his opera *Pleasure* – set in the loos of a gay bar (inspired by Liverpool’s GBar), starring Lesley Garrett as a cloakroom attendant, and with a libretto by Melanie Challenger – was staged at the Liverpool Playhouse.

A former member of Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Simpson went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music and from there gained a first in music at Oxford before studying composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Julian Anderson. He has also been a BBC New Generation Artist.

### **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.

## About the Music

### Edward Elgar (1857-1934): Serenade in E minor, Op. 20

1. Allegro piacevole
2. Larghetto
3. Allegretto

Composed: 1892

First Performed: 21 (or 23) July 1896, Antwerp, cond. Elgar

The Serenade for string orchestra was the earliest of Elgar's pieces to find a firm footing in the concert repertoire. Elgar himself was very pleased with it, judging it his first real success – a big admission from a composer prone to lacerating self-doubt. The score was completed when Elgar was 37, and still little-known outside his Worcestershire homelands. The melodies in the Serenade are so delightful that they alone might have been enough to score a hit, but the ideas are developed and contrasted with great skill and imagination - the mature mastery of the Enigma Variations, completed seven years later, doesn't seem so very far away. The writing for strings too is wonderful: it's no surprise to discover that Elgar was a more than competent violinist.

After the lilting, sweetly melancholic first movement comes the eloquent, beautifully sustained Larghetto, an outpouring of instrumental song as fine as anything in Elgar's two great string concertos. The finale begins as an idyllic dance, which then morphs delicately into a return of the first movement's second theme – it seems the most natural thing in the world. With the formal circle deftly squared, this exquisite miniature concludes.

### **Mark Simpson (b. 1988): The Immortal (new version)**

Composed: 2015

First Performed: 4 July 2015, Manchester, Bridgewater Hall, Mark Stone (baritone), Exaudi, Manchester Chamber Choir, BBC Philharmonic, cond. Juanjo Mena

Mark Simpson says that he composed the music for *The Immortal* in a kind of trance, so suggestive were the words and images of Melanie Challenger's libretto. It's probably the best way to approach such a challenging concept. We are plunged into the disturbing world of the world of late Victorian seances – a phenomenon that spread rapidly as conventional religious belief began to decline and people sort other ways to deal with grief and the fear of death. In the early days of the 20th Century, mediums scattered across the globe started receiving messages from Frederic Myers, a pioneering psychical researcher who had died of grief when the woman he loved killed herself. But instead of offering the usual comforting accounts of life beyond the veil – benign light, reunion with loved ones, etc, - 'Myers' offered something terrifying. There was nobody to welcome him when he 'crossed over', only darkness, emptiness and bewilderment. Simpson's music conveys this sense of agonising confusion and loneliness with devastating, uniquely compelling power. If it's possible to imagine a nihilist *Dream of Gerontius*, this is it.

### **Sibelius: Symphony No 2 in D major, op 43**

1. Allegretto

2. Tempo Andante, ma rubato

3. Vivacissimo - Lento e suave - Tempo primo - Lento e suave -

#### 4. Allegro moderato

Composed: 1901-2

First performed: 8 March 1902, Helsinki, Helsinki Philharmonic, cond. Sibelius

On first impression, Sibelius' Symphony No.2 seems the sunniest and most positive of his seven numbered symphonies. Add the fact that it was begun shortly after Sibelius' first trip to Italy and it all begins to make sense. Surely this has to be Sibelius' Mediterranean symphony, even if it is the Mediterranean viewed through Nordic eyes.

In fact, the holiday was a disaster. Sibelius' daughter became desperately ill; money ran short and then came worrying news from Finland: the Russians had intensified their efforts at cultural colonisation - the country's very identity was in peril. Sibelius deserted his family and fled to Rome, where he busied himself with plans for a tone poem about the legendary womaniser Don Juan - a figure with whom he clearly identified.

It was only after his return to Finland that Sibelius began to see the way his musical ideas were really heading. Soon he was busy on a four-movement symphony, with no title or literary programme. The first movement is a joyous demonstration of Sibelius' new-found 'organic' thinking, in which everything grows from the opening three-note rising motif like a plant from a seed. But something of the Don Juan project survives in the slow second movement. It's possible to hear this darkly dramatic movement as a struggle between Death and Life for the soul of Don Juan - with Death ultimately the victor.

Life returns in abundance in the Scherzo: a hurtling, Beethovenian dance-movement, twice interrupted by the slower, more reflective Trio. Then the mood becomes increasingly stormy, and the first movement's three-note 'seed' motif returns, leading to a splendid song-theme on violins, trumpets and horns - the finale has begun. The ending is triumphant, with a new theme born from the old, fortissimo on trumpets. The beleaguered Finns welcomed it ecstatically, hailing it as 'Symphony of Liberation'. It can still sound like that today, well over a century later.