

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir April 23 complementary content

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir

When the Liverpool Philharmonic Society was founded in 1840, it saw the birth not only of an orchestra but of a chorus too. [The Choir](#) added 'royal' to its title in 1990. The Choir is led by Matthew Hamilton, who was appointed as Director of Choirs and Singing in October 2023. Under the direction of Matthew, the Choir boasts an impressive schedule of concerts every season. In recent years, the Choir has performed Brahms' *A German Requiem*, Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, Mahler's *Symphony No.3*, Verdi's *Requiem* and Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and alongside annual performances at the Spirit of Christmas and Handel's *Messiah*.

Although maintaining an amateur status, the Choir strives for high professional standards which has led to frequent recordings and broadcasts. The Choir's 2024/25 performances of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* were broadcast on *BBC Radio 3* as part of their *BBC Radio 3 in Concert* series.

Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Choir

Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Choir is Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Company's flagship choir for local young people aged 14 to 19. The choir performs throughout the year, not only at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, but across the region.

A mixed choir of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses, the Youth Choir regularly performs with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir, including singing in the popular annual Spirit of Christmas concerts at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. The choir performs a wide variety of musical styles – everything from classical and jazz, to folk and roots music. The group regularly performs specially composed new works and collaborates with a variety of guest musicians, ensembles and choirs.

In 2008, the Youth Choir performed for Queen Elizabeth II, who served as patron of Liverpool Philharmonic from 1958 until her death. The Youth Choir was also invited to sing at the closing ceremony of the [London 2012 Olympics](#), a performance which was broadcast live to a worldwide audience of more than 900 million people.

Daniella Sicari

Australian/British soprano Daniella Sicari has been steadily building a reputation in the UK as an engaging singer on stage with a warm and sparkling tone. Recent highlights include Poulenc's *Gloria* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the title role in *Maria de Rudenz* by Donizetti with Gothic Opera, Norina at Longhope Opera and with Haffner Orchestra in their productions of *Don Pasquale* and Islington Festival with Peter Rose and Martin Andre, exploring artsong from around the world that have a sense of home.

Lily Mo Browne

Described as having 'a richly hued, deep voice,' which 'generated expressive, emotional and dramatic power' mezzo-soprano Lily Mo Browne is the most recent winner of the Kathleen Ferrier award. She is a recent graduate of the Royal College of Music, London, and is a 2025/2026 Young Artist at the National Opera Studio, London studying under Ben Johnson. She is generously supported by the Drake Calleja Trust and Lionel and Marylynn Anthony.

Lily recently debuted the roles of Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* and made her international debut as Flippyeyna in *Eugene Onegin* at the Verbier Festival as an Academie Lyrique Young Artist, where she also covered Mama Lucia in the main-stage production of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. In 2026, she will join soprano Sonja Yoncheva and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for their concert performance and recording of Dvořák's *Rusalka* as the Third Wood Nymph and will sing Mama Lucia at the Lake District Music Festival.

Amar Muchhala

Amar Muchhala, resident in London, was born in Bombay and studied Business Management and French literature at Franklin & Marshall College, USA, only to pursue an operatic career after his opera studies on the world-renowned opera course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Amar made his ROH debut in 2013 and starred as the lead Alex in the world premiere of *Glare* by Søren Nils Eichberg (ROH, 2014). He covered the role of Pasterz Krol Roger (ROH, 2015), directed by Kasper Holten and conducted by Antonio Pappano. He made a series of house debuts in Germany, including at the Staatsoper Hannover in April 2017 in the world premiere of Giorgio Battistelli's *Lot*, and at Theater

Magdeburg as Camille Desmoulins in Gottfried von Einem's *Dantons Tod*.

Trevor Eliot Bowes

Lyric Bass Trevor Eliot Bowes was born in Victoria, Canada and studied at the University of Toronto and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland before being selected as one of Barbara Hannigan's Equilibrium Young Artists. Based in the UK, Trevor has appeared with the English National Opera, The Royal Opera House, English Touring Opera, Opera North, Opera Holland Park, Glyndebourne, Nevill Holt Opera, Grange Park Opera, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Royal Northern Sinfonia, and London Handel Festival. His international appearances have included the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Valletta Baroque Festival, Le Parlement de Musique and Early Music Russia.

Ben de Souza

Ben de Souza is one of a growing number of British classical accordionists at the forefront of promoting the instrument in this country. His playing shows "great technical assurance and control, beautifully understated expression, and real soul."

Ben is in demand as a solo artist and chamber musician and performs regularly as part of ***Duo Fisarco*** alongside violinist Chlöe Meade. He has worked with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Concertante, West Forest Chamber Ensemble, The Assembly Project, Bloomsbury Festival, and Newbury Spring Festival. Ben has made a name for himself playing the harmonium part of Rossini's ***Petite Messe Solennelle*** with choirs up and down the country. He has also workshopped new music for the accordion with composition students at the Royal Academy of Music, Trinity Laban and the University of Cambridge. The accordion takes Ben across the UK and has seen him perform in venues such as St David's Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Stoller Hall, and Hampton Court Palace.

Eve Taylor

Eve Taylor has been rehearsal accompanist for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir since 2009.

She studied music at UCNW, Bangor under William Mathias. She spent more than 30 years teaching academic music and running music departments in various schools before retiring in 2016. Eve has accompanied many choirs and soloists in the northwest including

Chester Music Society Choir and Chester Festival Chorus which she did for well over 25 years. Eve has worked as repetiteur at Buxton Opera House over the last few years for their community theatre musical productions of *Evita*, *Company* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. She has been a repetiteur and performer at the St Endellion Summer Music Festival since 2009.

Algirdas Martinaitis

Algirdas Martinaitis (b. 1950) studied composition with Prof. Eduardas Balsys at the Lithuanian Academy of Music, graduating in 1978. He was among the first Lithuanian composers to receive the highest national artistic distinction - the Lithuanian National Award - in 1989. In 2004, his multimedia performance *The Prayer of the Faithful Word* was announced the best electro-acoustic composition at the composers' competition organized by the Lithuanian Composers' Union. In 2010 the composer was awarded the Prize of the Municipality of Vilnius, for his merits to cultural life in Vilnius. In 2011, he became the first recipient of the M.K.Čiurlionis Prize awarded by the Lithuanian Composers' Union.

Having made a name for himself with his early chamber pieces ("Music of the Last Gardens", "Birds of Eden", "Cantus ad futurum"), Algirdas Martinaitis came to be known as a composer of poignantly introspective and nostalgic music, often fraught with impulsive, poetic character.

Melissa Dunphy

Born in Australia and raised in an immigrant family, Melissa Dunphy herself immigrated to the United States in 2003 and has since become an acclaimed composer specialising in vocal, political and theatrical music. She first came to national attention in 2009 when her large-scale work the Gonzales Cantata was featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *National Review*, *Fox News*, and on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show*, where host Rachel Maddow described it as "the coolest thing you've ever seen on this show." Other notable works include [Totality](#), commissioned by The King's Singers and VOCES8 and premiered at the BBC Proms 2024, song cycle [Tesla's Pigeon](#), which won first place in the NATS Art Song Competition Award, and [What do you think I fought for at Omaha Beach?](#) which won the Simon Carrington Chamber Singers Competition and has been performed around the country by choral ensembles including Chanticleer, Cantus, and the St. Louis Chamber Chorus.

Andrew Barney

Born and raised on Merseyside, Andrew Barney has West African, Caribbean, and Irish heritage which forms the foundation of his artistic identity.

The only musician in his family, he discovered his love for classical music at 13 when he began learning piano and bass guitar at secondary school. In 2024, after a decade of working in various professional fields unrelated to music, he made a complete career change, fully embracing life as a [musician and composer](#). Barney studied French and Spanish at the University of Leeds, where he graduated with distinctions. A polyglot, he speaks 10 languages. He spent a year in Canada at the Université de Montréal (UdeM) studying jazz and classical choir, and he lived in Granada, Spain for two years, teaching languages and singing with the Coro Ciudad de Granada.

Currently, he is the pianist in residence with Liverpool's Arts Bar Orchestra (ABO) under conductor Gaia Ghazaryan. He is also a member of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir under conductor Matthew Hamilton. Committed to cultural celebration and collaboration, Barney has composed and performed original works for piano and voice, which were showcased at St George's Hall to critical acclaim during Liverpool's Black History Month. And as Assistant Producer for PRS Foundation's POWER UP, he works on initiatives that support Black music creators.

His career is marked by ongoing international collaborations and performances, including concerts in Switzerland with Venezuelan folk singer Mario Espinoza. Barney won the Liverpool Philharmonic's [2024 Rushworth Composition Prize](#), part of which included a commission for a new composition for Liverpool.

In 2025 he was one of five [Opera North Resonance Artists](#), during which time he developed ORIGINS; a deeply personal project which explores his multifaceted identity and how it feels to reconnect with one's roots via music. He was also one of the mentees in the 2025 Ivors Academy's Co:Pilot programme.

Gioachino Rossini

The most significant Italian composer of the first half of the 19th Century, [Gioachino Rossini](#) was born in Pesaro on February 29, 1792 – the most famous of a handful of composers who technically only had a birthday every four years. His father Giuseppe was a trumpet and

horn player and his mother Anna, who turned out to be the only stable adult in the young Gioachino's life, was a seamstress-turned successful comic opera singer.

Her profession meant Rossini was familiar with theatres and opera houses growing up. His early musical education was a little more formal however, studying from the age of 10 with a local priest. Rossini had already composed several works by the time he was 12 and at 14 he joined the Philharmonic School in Bologna where he studied singing, harpsichord, violin and horn. He was also 14 when he composed *Demetrio e Polibio*, the first of what would turn out to be 39 operas over a 23-year period including *William Tell*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Cinderella* and *Otello*.

Rossini enjoyed early success in Venice and then Naples where in 1815 he arrived to become director of music for the royal theatres. It was there he wrote some of his most famous works including, in 1816, *The Barber of Seville*. Away from the opera stage, Rossini composed cantatas, sonatas, vocal and sacred music including the *Messe di Gloria*, *Stabat Mater* and *Petite Messe Solennelle*. His *Péchés de vieillesse*, which translates as 'Sins of Old Age', is a collection of 150 vocal, chamber and solo piano pieces composed in the last decade of his life.

Having suffered with ill-health and depression on an off throughout his life, the ageing Rossini was diagnosed with colon cancer and died on November 13, 1868 (another leap year) in Passy, on the outskirts of Paris. He was 76...or 19 in birthday parties.

Did you know? Rossini was something of a bon viveur, and he has a cocktail named after him which was invented at the famous Harry's Bar in Venice. The 'Rossini' is made with sweet sparkling wine and a puree of strawberries.

Listen to Andrea Bocelli sing the Domine Deus from Rossini's [Petite Messe Solennelle](#).

About the Music

Algirdas Martinaitis *Alleluia*

In his recent works, the composer consistently provokes reflection on the boundaries of authorship, opposing categories of individuality and originality with allusions to banality, mimicry, and repetition. Another important part of his oeuvre recently is religious music.

Melissa Dunphy *I Took a Walk with Joy*

Commissioned for the Upper Arlington High School Symphonic Choir, Dr. Brandon Moss and Dr. David Monseur, directors.

A playful, uplifting, and gospel-influenced work for mixed chorus on the nature of joy, with text by Mark A. Boyle.

Andrew Barney *If It Were For Peace*

'If It Were For Peace' unfolds between the zenith and the nadir; points of light and darkness that mirror one another across inner and outer worlds. Setting the composer's own texts in French and Modern Greek, the work draws on his multilingual practice in which language shapes both sound and meaning; each chosen for its colour, resonance and symbolic weight. The opening invocation, zenith, nadir; words of Arabic origin now embedded in English, establishes a central axis of symmetry, reflection and transformation. Inspired by Hermetic philosophy, the music traces a journey through disquiet, illusion and searching, toward the reawakening of inner will, spirituality and above all hope, suggesting that even at our lowest points and in a chaotic world, the possibility of harmony and peace remain.

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868): *Petite messe solennelle* (Little Solemn Mass)

Kyrie - Gloria - Credo – Sanctus - O salutaris - Agnus Dei

Composed: 1863 (chamber version); 1866-7 (orchestral version)
First Performed: 14 March 1864, Paris, Rossini's house (chamber version); 24 February 1869, Paris, Salle Ventadour, Company of the Théâtre-Italien (orchestral version)

'The last of the sins of my old age', was how Gioachino Rossini described his *Petite messe solennelle*. Was he just being whimsical? Or was there something a little more serious behind this? Rossini is known for having created some of the most infectiously funny, brilliantly spirited comic operas in the repertoire – some would say *the* most. But he was a more complicated character than this might suggest. After having produced an astonishing flood of 39 operas, many sensational successes, Rossini suddenly – and very surprisingly – announced his retirement at the age of just 38. Was it exhaustion, the sudden change in political circumstances (and his own fortunes) in his adopted home, Paris, after the 1830 Revolution? He was certainly prone to depression, which – as with so many highly-motivated men – set in with a vengeance after he gave up work.

It has been suggested, authoritatively, that Rossini suffered from bipolar disorder. The pattern of manic production followed by collapse would fit. As too would the way he swung between playful good spirits and dejection, and at times even seemed to manifest both at the same time. A little note he made in the manuscript of the *Petite Messe* suggest that his comment about 'sins' wasn't entirely ironic:

'Dear Lord, here it is finished, this poor little mass. Have I just written sacred music, or rather, sacrilegious music? I was born for opera buffa, as you well know. Not much technique, a little bit of heart, that's all. Blessings to you and grant me Paradise.'

And why 'Petite'? The first version was scored for very small (and rather unusual) forces: four soloists, choir of twelve voices, two pianos and harmonium. But it's longer than most masses in the repertoire, with more movements (Rossini added the prayer 'O salutaris hostia' – 'Oh saving sacrifice' in the later orchestral version. And the orchestra for the second version is quite big. Rossini said that he only orchestrated the Mass 'to prevent anyone else from doing it after my death', but that too may have been a self-deprecating joke. The full orchestral version has proved popular, right from its first performance. Not everyone liked the *Petite Messe* though. Giuseppe Verdi was surprisingly ungenerous:

'Lately Rossini has made progress and studied! Studied what? Personally, I would advise him to unlearn 'music' and write another Barber of Seville.'

But as ideas about what religious music 'should' have relaxed over the decades, more and more musicians and critics have praised the way

Rossini mixes high seriousness with something of his old sense of fun, and what one writer called his genius for 'pure animal spirits.' Full of colour, drama and excitement, it feels at times more like a kind of sacred opera than a church work – in fact, it wasn't allowed to be performed in church at the time because Rossini had scandalously requested female singers! 'A little bit of heart, that's all', Rossini had written. In fact, it's work with a lot of heart, and possibly a more deeply-felt, personal hymn of praise than many more properly behaved religious compositions.