

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra April 26 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.

Alim Beisembayev

Kazakh pianist [Alim Beisembayev](#) rose to international prominence after winning First Prize at The Leeds International Piano Competition in 2021 with a performance of Rachmaninov's [Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini](#) alongside the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Andrew Manze. He was also awarded the medici.tv Audience Prize and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society Prize for Contemporary Performance and went on to perform at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall.

In 2023, Beisembayev became one of the highlights of the [BBC Proms](#) when, with just two days' notice, he stepped in to perform Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto* with Sinfonia of London and John Wilson. Later that season he received the prestigious Critics' Circle Young Artist Award 2024. In the same year he gave the world premiere of [Eleanor Alberga's](#) *Piano Concerto* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, prompting The Telegraph to write: "There's no pianist under 30 in the world I would rather hear."

Highlights of the current season include debuts with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Philharmonia, Ulster Orchestra, Gävle Symphony Orchestra, Belgrade Philharmonic and Macedonian Philharmonic. He also returns to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Recent seasons have seen him appear with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Xiamen Philharmonic Orchestra, Sinfonietta Cracovia and Janáček Philharmonic, Ostrava among others.

As a recitalist, he has performed at major venues and festivals worldwide including the BBC Proms, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Wigmore Hall, Seoul Arts Centre, Carnegie Hall, Victoria Concert Hall (Singapore), Chopin Institute (Warsaw), Oxford Piano Festival, Fondation Louis Vuitton (Paris), and Cliburn Concerts. He has toured Europe with the Steinway Prizewinner Concerts Network and South Korea with the World Culture Network.

His debut recording, Liszt's *12 Transcendental Études*, was released on Warner Classics in 2022 to critical acclaim. Born in 1998, Beisembayev began his musical education in Kazakhstan and Russia before continuing at the Purcell School for Young Musicians in the UK. He won numerous awards as a young pianist, including at the Junior Van Cliburn Competition in Fort Worth, Texas. A major part of his musical training was under the guidance of Tessa Nicholson, with whom he studied from the age of 14 and throughout his studies at the Royal Academy of Music. In 2023, he completed both a Master of Performance and an Artist Diploma at the Royal College of Music under the guidance of Professor Vanessa Latache.

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov

But for a 180-degree change of career, [Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov](#) might have made a name for himself not as a composer but as an officer in the 19th Century Imperial Russian Navy.

As it turned out, the Tsar's fleet's loss was classical music's gain when the 27-year-old – at that point sailing a desk ashore - was offered a professorship at the St Petersburg Conservatory despite having no real experience. He would eventually lose his post there after supporting students' right to demonstrate as part of the 1905 Revolution.

Born into an aristocratic Russian family in 1844 (an ancestor was a short-lived lover of Catherine the Great), Rimsky-Korsakov was expected to go to sea and joined the navy aged 12.

After six years of training, he set off on a three-year, around-the-world voyage which included stops in New York, England, Italy, France, Spain and Norway and during which he composed what would become the first of three symphonies.

Ahead of that, aged 18, Rimsky-Korsakov had been introduced to Mily Balakirev who in turn introduced him to Cesar Cui and Modest Mussorgsky. Little can the teenager have known then the quartet, along with Alexander Borodin, would one day come together to promote and create a distinctly 'Russian' body of music and would be known as [‘The Mighty Handful’ or ‘The Five’](#).

Initially, Rimsky-Korsakov ran both naval and musical careers in parallel (he apparently taught classes in naval uniform) but eventually he jumped ship and made teaching and composition his sole occupation. He also became the holder of posts including Inspector of the Navy Chorus and Assistant Director of the Imperial Chapel Choir.

From the 1870s onwards, he enjoyed a musical mutual admiration society with [Tchaikovsky](#).

He remains best known for his exotic symphonic suite *Scheherazade*, inspired by the One Thousand and One Nights tales, *Capriccio Espagnol*, *The Flight of the Bumblebee* from the opera *The Tale of Tsar Sultan*, *The Snow Maiden*, and the *Russian Easter Festival Overture*. Troubled with angina from the 1890s, Rimsky-Korsakov died at his estate in Liubensk, 120 miles south of St Petersburg, in June 1908 at the age of 64.

Did you know? Rimsky-Korsakov’s older brother Voin was a renowned navigator, hydrographer and explorer who was initially much more famous than his younger sibling. In the 1850s and 60s, Captain Rimsky-Korsakov researched an area of the Sea of Japan and there is small archipelago near Vladivostok named after him.

Enjoy Rimsky-Korsakov’s [Russian Easter Festival Overture](#).

Sergei Prokofiev

Like many of his fellow composers, [Sergei Prokofiev](#) could be included in the category of child prodigy. Born in modern day Ukraine in 1891, his keen amateur pianist mother spotted the young Sergei’s early promise, which included playing the piano, and at five, starting to compose. At eight he produced his first opera, *The Giant*. In 1904, aged 13, Prokofiev

was accepted into the St Petersburg Conservatory, the youngest student ever to be admitted. He studied piano, composition and conducting, his tutors including Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Anatoly Liadov.

A decade later, the young avant-garde composer met the great Sergei Diaghilev. In the same year he also started working on what became his first full-length opera, *The Gambler*, based on a novella by Dostoyevsky. It had taken six years of writing and heavy revision, but in 1921 his first completed ballet *Chout* was staged by the Ballet Russes in Paris with the composer conducting.

In the meantime, revolution at home had turned the world upside down. Prokofiev had been initially enthusiastic – he was a member of the Council Workers in the Arts. However, in 1918 he decided (with an official nod) to seek opportunities abroad. While he retained his connection with the new Soviet Union, he spent more than 15 years living and working in Europe and the United States. In the late 20s, he started to make trips back to Russia and [in 1936](#) he decided to come home for good. In America he had resisted the lure of Hollywood, but in the Soviet Union he composed the score for Sergei Einstein's 1938 film *Alexander Nevsky*, and in 1945 for *Ivan the Terrible*. His later work also included the much-loved 'symphonic tale for children' *Peter and the Wolf*, and the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* which was performed by the Kirov in 1940.

A flagbearer for the Modernist movement of the 1900s, Prokofiev's work across ballet, orchestral suites, concertos and symphonies embraced lyrical melodies and vivid storytelling, but also dramatic shifts in dynamics, dissonance, chromaticism and rhythmic propulsion. The composer suffered a brain haemorrhage and died in Moscow on March 5, 1953, at the age of 61. He wasn't the only major Soviet figure to die that day. Eight miles away, Joseph Stalin – who had been all but comatose since a stroke several days earlier – also drew his last breath.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

When Tchaikovsky died suddenly in November 1893, supposedly from cholera, he was at the height of his musical powers. Nine days earlier his *Symphony No. 6* – the *Pathétique* – had been premiered at the Russian Musical Society in St Petersburg with its composer conducting. The Christmas before, *The Nutcracker* had been showcased at the city's Imperial Mariinsky Theatre in a double bill

with his opera *Iolanta*. And if he had lived, he had new cello and flute concertos in his sights. Still, despite being struck down so early – allegedly thanks to a [glass of unboiled water](#) – he left a huge legacy of innovative work, and memories of a tortured personal life that was a drama all of its own.

[Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky](#) was born at Votkinsk in 1840 where his father was the manager of a local ironworks. Young Pyotr was earmarked for the civil service, and studied at the St Petersburg School of Jurisprudence before, aged 19, becoming a clerk in the Ministry of Justice. But his real love was music, and in 1862 he was among the first cohort of students to enrol in the city's new Conservatory where he studied composition with Anton Rubinstein. After graduation, Tchaikovsky himself taught musical theory, albeit at the Moscow Conservatory.

In his early years he produced works that have been described as 'robustly' Russian in spirit. He retained a particular fondness for his First Symphony, which dated from just after he graduated from the St Petersburg Conservatory.

Throughout his career he was given long-distance support – both financial and emotional – from his patroness [Nadezhda von Meck](#) whom, famously, he never met in person. Even when her son married his niece Anna in 1884! Among a wide-ranging output, his most famous or best-loved works include his three ballets (*Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*), his *1812 Overture*, the opera *Eugene Onegin*, the *Pathétique*, his First Piano Concerto, *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture* and his only Violin Concerto.

About the Music

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908): *Russian Easter Festival Overture*

Composed: 1887-8

First Performed: 15 December 1888, St Petersburg, Russian Symphony Concert orch, cond. Rimsky-Korsakov

Rimsky-Korsakov claimed not to be a believer, but he was fascinated and moved by the Russian Orthodox liturgy and its music. The Easter festivities particularly gripped him. In composing his *Russian Easter Festival Overture* he was, he said, keen to portray 'the legendary and

heathen side of the holiday, the transition from the gloomy and mysterious evening of Passion Saturday to the unbridled pagan-religious merrymaking on Easter Sunday morning.'

Several traditional Russian chants formed the inspiration for the Overture, some quoted directly, others transformed or echoed distantly. Either way, the flavour is unmistakable: the austere but magical chanting of the priest and the choir, the joy at the sunrise after the darkness of the Easter Saturday night (all the more intense after the long, harsh Russian winter) – one can virtually smell the incense. Easter, rather than Christmas, has always been the high point of the Orthodox religious calendar. Rimsky's music captures that sense of something primal, of the joy of human beings everywhere – indeed of all life – at the return of light and warmth.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953): *Piano Concerto No 2 in G minor*, Op 16

1. Andantino
2. Scherzo: Vivace
3. Intermezzo: Allegro moderato
4. Finale: Allegro tempestoso

Composed: 1912-13, revised 1924

First Performed: 5 September 1913, Pavlovsk (Russia), Prokofiev (piano)

'Disgracefully difficult and mercilessly tiring' was Prokofiev's verdict on his Second Piano Concerto, as he struggled to learn the piano part for the premiere. Others were even more damning, but then few composers seem to have revelled in adversity as thoroughly as the young Prokofiev did. The *Petersburg Gazette* reported the premiere as follows:

'A youth with the face of a high school student appears on the platform. It is Sergei Prokofiev. He seats himself at the piano and starts either wiping the keyboard or testing the keys. All this is done with a dry, sharp touch. The audience is bewildered. Some people are indignant. One couple gets up and moves towards the exit, exclaiming "Such music is enough to drive you mad". More listeners follow the first couple. Prokofiev plays the second movement of his concerto. The more daring members of the audience stay to hiss.'

Prokofiev's response was to play an encore!

The Second Piano Concerto certainly shows Prokofiev at his most wickedly provocative, delighting in the kind of sinister magic that was to prove so unsettling in his opera *The Fiery Angel*, begun six years later. But there's more to the concerto's dark tone than devilish naughtiness. The Concerto is dedicated to the pianist Max Schmidthof, a very close friend of the composer - wonderfully entertaining company, but also prone to deep depression. While Prokofiev was working on his Second Piano Concerto, he learned that Schmidthof had killed himself, and shortly afterwards he received a farewell letter in Schmidthof's hand, with what feeling we can only guess.

Many believe that the Second Piano Concerto is shadowed by this devastating loss, and that those shadows deepen as the work progresses – not so much in the opening Andantino, despite the melancholy tinge of its opening piano melody, though in the epic solo cadenza that forms the movement's climax the sense of struggle goes beyond the technical. The tiny but manically articulate Scherzo that follows hints at darker things below its constantly bubbling surface. But the sense of foreboding grows in the thuggish 'Intermezzo', and it reaches its fruition in the beautiful and deeply serious tune that emerges from the Finale's initial frenzy, and in the piano's haunting funereal bell sounds later on. Prokofiev summons another display of wicked high spirits for the very ending, but the lasting impression is ambiguous, as though a mask had been temporarily dropped, and at the last minute hurriedly replaced.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-93): *Symphony No.5 in E minor*, Op. 64

1. Andante – Allegro con anima
2. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza
3. 'Waltz'. Allegro moderato
4. Finale. Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace

In 1877, Tchaikovsky startled his close friends by announcing that he was going to marry one of his students. Wasn't he the typical 'confirmed bachelor', with all the implications that phrase normally carried? It may be that Tchaikovsky saw marriage as a mask, behind which he could hide his homosexuality: if so, his bride clearly misunderstood the 'terms and conditions.' The marriage lasted nine weeks, after which

Tchaikovsky fled, attempted suicide and experienced a serious mental collapse. Both his Fourth Symphony and his opera Eugene Onegin appear to have been conceived in an attempt to come to terms with the whole disastrous episode.

Like the Fourth, the Fifth Symphony has a 'Fate' motif, one which again returns to haunt later movements, though it is very different in character from the thrilling grim fanfare that opens *Symphony No 4*. Low clarinets sing a mournful, funereal theme, while string chords underscore the sense of heavy, weary movement. The Allegro con anima that follows has its exhilarating highs and dark lows, but the end echoes the beginning: a bassoon sombrely descending to a cavernous low B, the mode implacably minor key.

A wonderful long horn melody – unmistakably a 'Love' theme – dominates the second movement. But as the mood grows more ardent, 'Fate' returns dramatically, twice. After this there is no return of the Love theme, but a tender, possibly resigned coda. The third movement's elegant, lilting Waltz tune could have come straight from a ballroom scene in one of Tchaikovsky's operas or ballets, with 'Fate' a dim but ghostly presence towards the end. Then Tchaikovsky begins his finale by transforming the Fate theme into a resolute major-key march tune. A turbulent Allegro vivace soon explodes onto the scene, but at the end 'transformed' Fate marches back in to launch one of Tchaikovsky's most positive symphonic conclusions. Or is it? Not every listener finds this final affirmation convincing, but that may be the point. 'Fate', the symphony could be saying, is not so easily vanquished.