

## **RLPO October 21 programme complementary content**

Scandinavian sangfroid meets swashbuckling seductiveness in Northern Lights - one of two concerts this October which celebrate the music of the far North, with an added hint of Spanish fire.

You can learn more in our programme notes which this year are being presented in a new and accessible way.

And in addition, this companion page draws together a range of complementary content which we hope will help shine additional light on the pieces, the people who composed them and the performers bringing them to life here in Hope Street.

### **Andrew Manze**

**Andrew Manze** has long been a great favourite of audiences at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. So, it was welcome news earlier this summer that he was extending his contract as Principal Guest Conductor until 2023.

It's now 10 years since he made his debut with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and he has held the post of Principal Guest Conductor since 2018.

Last month, he directed the Orchestra in its role supporting the finalists at the Leeds International Piano Competition.

And along with this concert, and its Northern Lights sister concert on Sunday, he is also due to conduct **Messiah** in January and return for a programme of **English music** on May 31.

### **Anders Hillborg**

The multi award-winning leading Swedish composer **Anders Hillborg** studied composition, counterpoint and electronic music in Stockholm in the 1970s and has been a full-time freelance composer for almost 40 years.

Along with works for orchestra, chamber orchestra and voices he also composes for the big and small screen, with his energetic and expressive music striking a chord across countries and cultures.

He has written concertos for violin, piano, flute, oboe, clarinet, trombones, percussion and – most recently – cello.

But this **special new co-commission** from the Liverpool Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio, Swedish Radio, Basel Sinfonieorchester, Aspen Music Festival, Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra and **Viola Commissioning Circle** – which aims to help soloist Lawrence Power commission 10 new concertos for the instrument in 10 years - is the 67-year-old's first viola concerto.

Listen to a performance of Hillborg's haunting Cello Concerto (2020):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mHq\\_8i\\_a24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mHq_8i_a24)

## Lawrence Power

British virtuoso Lawrence Power is one of the leading violists in the world – and a passionate advocate for the instrument.

Unlike some other viola players, he began learning the instrument at eight without having first studied the violin, and went on to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama followed by a year at the Juilliard in New York.

Power plays a rare 400-year-old viola crafted by Antonio Brensi of Bologna, which he likened – when he first picked it up nearly 20 years ago – **to newly-qualified driver getting behind the wheel of a Porsche.**

The 44-year-old is following in the footsteps of 20<sup>th</sup> Century viola players like **Lionel Tertis** and **William Primrose** in encouraging composers to create a richer repertoire for the instrument – hence his work with the Viola Commissioning Circle.

“It shouldn't really exist, the viola!”. Find out what Lawrence Power means in this recorded interview.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTmkAtjXxmA>

## Sibelius Symphony No 5

What do you do to mark a national hero's big '5-0'?

**Jean Sibelius's** birthday had already been declared a national holiday in his beloved Finland before the government hit upon the idea of commissioning the composer to write a new symphony.

The finished work – Symphony No.5 in E-flat Major – was premiered on the big day itself, December 8, 1915, with the birthday boy conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra.

**Swans in flight over the Finnish countryside** are said to have inspired the famous horn motif in the symphony's final movement.

In his diary for April 1915, Sibelius recorded an encounter with the birds near Ainola, his secluded retreat at Järvenpää, writing: “Today at ten to eleven I saw 16 swans. One of my greatest experiences! Lord God, what beauty! They circled over me for a long time. Disappeared into the solar haze like a gleaming silver ribbon.”

Find out what the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's principal oboe Jonathan Small has to say about Symphony No.5.

<https://www.jonathansmalloboe.com/writings/2018/1/2/sibelius-5th-symphony>

**Did you know? Sibelius began his musical career as a violinist but turned to composing after he failed an audition for the Vienna Philharmonic.**

Watch a documentary about Sibelius's early life and inspiration.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3bDgJJhnes>

## **Strauss Don Juan**

Literature's legendary libertine Don Juan was brought colourfully to life by Richard Strauss in a work which would **make the 24-year-old's name**.

Strauss, whose father Franz was one of Germany's leading horn players and whose mother Josephine's family were brewers, had begun composing at the age of six. He also played the piano and violin.

He conducted the premiere of the famous tone poem in Weimar in 1889 where he was the kapellmeister, and would return to it throughout his long six-decade career, first recording it as early as 1917, and again in an acclaimed 1929 recording with the **Berlin State Opera Orchestra**.

((<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoGl7U8OPYY>))

Listen to a recording of Richard Strauss conducting Don Juan in 1944, an occasion marking his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sa4auTQmas8>

## **Dag Wirén**

The son of a roller blind manufacturer, pianist and composer **Dag Wirén** was born in 1905 at Striberg in central Sweden.

He studied at the Stockholm Conservatory and later in Paris where he met Stravinsky and was exposed to the music of the Montparnasse-based 'Les Six' – Ravel, Poulenc, Honegger, Mimhaud, Auric and Durey.

It was when he returned to Sweden in the mid-1930s that he composed what would become his most famous work, the spirited **Serenade for Strings (1937)**.

**Did You Know? Wirén wrote the music for Absent Friend, Sweden's entry in the 1965 Eurovision Song Contest – the first song in the competition NOT performed in the singer's native tongue. It finished 10<sup>th</sup> out of 18 entries.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrPiw8gILOY>