Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
December 1 programme complementary content

In this concert, we welcome back young star saxophonist, Jess Gillam, who has taken the classical world by storm since she first appeared on stage in Liverpool five years ago.

Gillam will play Glazunov's nostalgic *Saxophone Concerto* in a concert that also gives a starring role to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's own brass and wind players.

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

Andris Poga

Award-winning Andris Poga was born in Riga in 1980 and studied trumpet and conducting at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, then conducting at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna.

From 2007-10 he was artistic director and principal conductor of the Professional Symphonic Band Riga, from 2011-14 he was assistant conductor at the Orchestre de Paris and in 2012-14 he was also assistant conductor at the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

He was musical director at the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra for eight years, and is currently chief conductor of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

Poga, who is praised for his outstanding technical prowess and artistic finesse, has appeared as a guest conductor with many of the world's leading orchestras.

Recent and upcoming highlights include engagements with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestre National de France.

Jess Gillam

Superstar saxophonist Jess Gillam returns to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall to play Glazunov's *Saxophone Concerto*.

Ulverston-raised Gillam first appeared with the Orchestra in July 2017 when she performed in a Last Night of the Summer Pops concert.

Gillam began playing saxophone at the age of seven and attended the Junior Royal Northern College of Music while still at school. She studied at the college with Rob Buckland and was mentored by John Harle.

She burst onto the music scene in 2016 when, aged 18, she became the first saxophonist to reach the final of BBC Young Musician of the Year.

She is also the first saxophonist to be signed to Decca Classics, with her debut album RISE reaching the top of the UK Classical chart.

Gillam made her Proms debut in 2017, following it with a Classic BRIT Award, and last year she was awarded an MBE for services to music.

Henri Tomasi

Born in Marseille in 1901 to Corsican parents, Henri Tomasi initially wanted to be a sailor, not a musician, and felt pushed by his father to perform.

When the First World War delayed his entrance to the Paris Conservatoire, the talented teenager earned money playing in Marseille's hotels, restaurants, cinemas and even brothels.

Even when he finally made it to Paris at the age of 20, he continued to play in cafes and cinemas to help fund his studies.

In 1927 he won the second Grand Prix de Rome for his cantata *Coriolan*, and first prize for orchestral conducting.

During the 1930s, as well as acting as musical director of the Radio-Colonial Orchestra in French Indochina, he was a member of Triton, a contemporary chamber music society in Paris – other members included Poulenc, Milhaud, Arthur Honegger and Prokofiev.

Fanfares Liturgiques for brass ensemble was composed as part of his opera *Don Juan de Manara*, and although *Don Juan* would not be performed until 1956, the *Fanfares* was premiered in Monte Carlo in 1947, where Tomasi had recently taken up the role of conductor of the opera.

Alexander Glazunov

In 1928, Alexander Glazunov left his native Russia for a tour of Europe and the United States.

He was 63 and had been the director of the St Petersburg Conservatory for more than 20 years, steering it through two revolutions and the rise of the Soviet Union, and protecting its staff and students from external interference where he could.

Glazunov never returned to Russia, settling instead in Paris, and claimed his move came for health rather than political reasons. He would spend the remaining eight years of his life abroad, dying at Neuilly-sur-Seine in March 1936.

Always interested in the distinct characteristics of the instruments he composed for, Glazunov learned to play many of them, including cello, trombone, trumpet, clarinet and various percussion instruments.

Urged by the young German-born saxophonist Sigurd Raschèr, in 1934 he wrote his *Saxophone Concerto*. It was premiered by Raschèr in a concert in Nyköping, Sweden, in November that year.

Did you know? Glazunov lived with his mother until he was middle-aged. Rimsky-Korsakov recalls hearing her telling off a maid about 'the child's linen' – the child being the 40-something year-old director of the St Petersburg Conservatory.

Dmitri Shostakovich

In the wake of the Second World War, Dmitri Shostakovich was given a country retreat and a Moscow flat by Josef Stalin.

Yet within two years, his music was denounced for the crime of 'formulism' and many of his works were banned from being performed. He spent the final years of the 1940s in fear of a late-night knock on the door.

Interestingly, although Shostakovich was regarded with suspicion at home, he was still sent abroad to act as a cultural ambassador for the Soviet Union.

But it would not be until the death of Stalin in 1953 that the composer would enjoy a return to favour in his own homeland.

One of his first new works to be heard in the wake of Stalin's demise was his *Symphony No 10 in E minor*, which was given its premiere by the Leningrad Philharmonic in December 1953.

But even then, the shadow of the late Soviet leader loomed over the composer.

In *Testimony* (Shostakovich's disputed 'memoirs' published by musicologist Solomon Volkov four years after the composer's death), the work was described as being 'about Stalin and the Stalin years'.

About the Music

Henri Tomasi (1901-1971): *Fanfares Liturgiques*

1. Annonciation (Annunciation)
2. Evangile (Gospel Reading)
3. Apocalypse
4. Procession du Vendredi-Saint (Good Friday Procession)

Composed: 1944

First Performed: 1947, Monte Carlo Opera, cond. Henri Tomasi

Born in Marseilles, Henri Tomasi first dreamed of being a sailor, but his parents steered him towards a musical career – wisely, as it turned out. Not only did he make a major contribution to the musical life of his home country as a conductor, but as a composer he enriched the repertoire for wind instruments way beyond most of his contemporaries. Apart from writing concertos for all the regular wind instruments in the traditional symphony orchestra, he also composed impressive ensemble pieces like the *Fanfares Liturgiques*. Tomasi originally wrote these four fanfares for his opera *Don Juan de Mañara*, set in medieval Spain, but soon realised that they could have an independent concert life (and a better chance of performance) as a stand-alone piece. Brilliance and contrasting darkness mark the first fanfare, while in the slower second, a solo trombone takes on the role of the priest reading the sacred text. In the chilling third fanfare we meet the four horsemen of the Apocalypse then, in the longer finale, an evocation of the wild festivities of Holy Week in Seville fuses with the prayers of the opera's bereaved hero, Don Juan, for the soul of his wife.

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936): Saxophone Concerto, Op 109

Composed: 1934

First Performed: 25 November 1934, Nyköping, Sweden, Sigurd Raschèr (saxophone)

Nowadays the saxophone is firmly associated with jazz, but it was originally invented as a 'serious' concert instrument. Alexander Glazunov knew little or no jazz, but he liked the saxophone when he heard it, particularly for its lyrical qualities and its closeness to the sound of the human voice. Even so he would probably never have written this concerto if it hadn't been for the persistence of the famous German saxophonist Sigurd Raschèr. Raschèr badgered Glazunov so ferociously that the composer was soon complaining about his 'attacks rather than requests'. But Glazunov was able to complete the Concerto by June 1934. Alas, he didn't live to hear it, or to see how popular it would soon become with saxophonists across the world. In fact, the Concerto is a lovely piece of very late Russian Romanticism, in which the saxophone sounds like an exquisitely gifted Russian peasant singer rather than an American cocktail bar seductress. Glazunov provided an analytical note, showing how the single-movement structure breaks down into four contrasting episodes. But it's probably better just to surrender to the melodic flow and let the sweet singing of the saxophone carry you through to the joyous conclusion.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75): Symphony No 10 in E minor, Op 93

1. Moderato
2. Allegro
3. Allegretto
4. Andante - Allegro

Composed: 1953

First Performed: 17 December 1953, Great Hall, Leningrad Conservatory, Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Yevgeny Mravinsky

Dmitri Shostakovich wrote his Tenth Symphony at one of the lowest points of his roller-coaster career. Raised to national hero status after the triumph of his wartime *Leningrad* Symphony (No 7, 1941), he had then disgraced himself with his half-lightweight, half-darkly satirical Ninth Symphony in 1945 – the public and authorities had been primed to expect a colossal choral hymn to the glorious Soviet victory in World War Two. When Shostakovich was viciously denounced at the First Congress of the Union of Composers in 1948, the Ninth Symphony was held up as evidence of his 'failings'.

Shostakovich now realised that 'serious' composition had to be for the desk drawer only, yet this seems to have concentrated his mind wonderfully. The Tenth Symphony is powerful stuff. Grief and rage well up in the first movement's powerful central climax and throughout the torrential second, while the third is full of the kind of tart, enigmatic humour which had earned him stinging rebuke. But when the Tenth Symphony was heard for the first time, nine months after Stalin's death in March 1953, what struck many critics was how magnificently sustained and structured it was. The long first movement in particular is developed with skilful inevitability – poignant lyricism fused with intricate, almost Bachian counterpoint. Most of the time the orchestral palate is used sparingly, which means that highlighted sonorities stand out: solo clarinet intoning the first main theme after the dark strings-only introduction, low flute in the second theme and the unforgettable sound of two softly intertwining, lamenting piccolos in the coda.

The volcanic but remarkably compact *Allegro* second movement is an outpouring of molten fury, but it's also tremendously exciting. Then in the shadowy, dance-like *Allegretto* we hear two motifs with special personal significance. The four-note motif introduced by high woodwind with percussion, spells out the notes D-E flat-C-B - in German notation D-Ess-C-H, i.e. Shostakovich's own initials (D. Sch). The striking solo horn figure that interrupts the dance cryptically spells out the name of one of Shostakovich's students, with whom he was in love at that time – the feeling, apparently, was not reciprocated. At first the finale seems to promise more wintry introspection, but suddenly a trailing flute figure is transformed into a perky *Allegro* dance, all high-kicking major key energy, with D-S-C-H returning in massive unison at the climax. D-S-C-H persists towards the end through manic dance music. Triumph or tragedy? Perhaps the real answer is, both.