

## Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra May 4 programme complementary content

Soprano Adela Zaharia makes her Liverpool debut in this special legacy memorial concert which features the UK premiere of a new work by Bernd Richard Deutsch.

Conductor Laureate Vasily Petrenko returns to conduct a programme which also includes Richard Strauss' *Brentano Lieder* and Alexander Scriabin's symphonic *The Divine Poem*.

Watch Stephen Johnson talking about the concert programme [here](#).

In addition, 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.

### Vasily Petrenko

[Vasily Petrenko](#) needs little introduction to Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra audiences.

The Leningrad-born conductor returns to the Hope Street stage in his formal role as Conductor Laureate. Petrenko left the city in 2021 after 15 years at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and is currently music director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and chief conductor of the European Union Youth Orchestra. He is also associate conductor at the [Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León](#).

Recent appearances have included performances in Hong Kong, Madrid, Dresden and Amsterdam, while forthcoming engagements include a tour of Japan with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

His last visit to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall came in November when he conducted a performance of Tchaikovsky's [Manfred Symphony](#).

### Adela Zaharia

[Adela Zaharia](#) has been described as a “true revelation” and is known for “a projection equally powerful and subtle”.

The award-winning operatic soprano was born in Arad, Romania, and learned piano as a child as well as singing with her church and school choirs. She went on to study voice and piano at the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy.

Zaharia made her operatic debut aged 23 as Gilda in *Rigoletto* with the Romanian National Opera, and her many other roles include Violetta in [La Traviata](#), Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, and the title roles in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Mary Stuart*. In 2017, she won the [Operalia](#) competition.

Although this concert marks her debut at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, she previously sang with the Orchestra and Vasily Petrenko at the *BBC Proms* five years ago, where they performed the world premiere of Ian Bell's [Aurora](#).

Listen to Adela Zaharia sing *Regnava nel silenzio* from Donizetti's [Lucia di Lammermoor](#).

## **Bernd Richard Deutsch**

[Bernd Richard Deutsch](#) was born in Austria in 1977 and studied composition at the University of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna.

One of the most internationally respected and sought after composers of his generation, his works have been commissioned and performed by many of the world's leading orchestras and festivals.

Among his most important work is *subliminal* for orchestra, *Murales* for ensemble and orchestra and *Okeanos – Concerto for Organ and Orchestra*.

He is currently Composer Fellow with the [Cleveland Orchestra](#).

*Phantasma*, inspired by the Austrian artist [Gustav Klimt](#), was commissioned by the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. It received its world premiere in Bamberg last October.

Listen to Bernd Richard Deutsch's [Phaenomena](#).

## **Richard Strauss**

When [Richard Strauss](#) sat down to compose a new set of lieder in 1918, it was in the wake of a productive and increasingly high-profile few years for the 54-year-old.

He had started the new century with a catalogue of songs, a ballet and one-act opera, then over the next decade he enjoyed a string of big operatic triumphs - *Salome* (1905), *Elektra* (1909), *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) and not one but two versions of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, the final three in collaboration with the novelist, poet and librettist [Hugo von Hofmannsthal](#).

However, it wasn't to von Hofmannsthal that he turned for his next project, a series of six songs. They were instead based on poems by [Clemens Brentano](#), a major figure in the German Romantic movement of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Strauss was a prolific composer of lieder, and during his long career he would write around 200 songs.

**Did you know? Strauss' advice for aspiring conductors included 'you should not perspire when conducting – only the audience should get warm' and the warning 'never look encouragingly at the brass, except with a brief glance to give an important cue'.**

Listen to Amor from Richard Strauss' [Brentano Lieder](#).

## **Alexander Scriabin**

[Alexander Scriabin](#) was well on his way to creating a new, distinctive musical voice when he sat down to start work on what would become his *Third Symphony*.

Initially influenced by the music of Chopin and Liszt, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the eccentric Moscow-born composer and pianist – a contemporary and life-long friend of Rachmaninov – had

started to turn away from the classical Romantic tradition to something less tonal and more harmonic.

Scriabin's work was informed by his [synesthesia](#) (a natural condition in which musical notes are experiences in terms of colour), but he was also obsessed with mystical and religious symbolism (when he died he left an ambitious unfinished work called *Mysterium*), and the creation of what became known as the '[mystic chord](#)'.

He started work on [The Divine Poem](#) in 1904 while living in Switzerland, and it was premiered at the Chatelet theatre in Paris the following year. Variousy described as a symphony or a tone poem in three movements, it has a sumptuous score.

**Did you know? Scriabin died of blood poisoning after a spot on his lip became infected.**

Enjoy the *Lento-vivo* from Scriabin's Symphony No3 - [The Divine Poem](#).

## About the Music

**Bernd Richard Deutsch (b. 1977): *Phantasma*** (UK premiere: co-commissioned with the Concertgebouw, Cleveland Orchestra and Bamberger Symphoniker)

Composed: 2022

First Performed: 6 October 2022, Konzerthalle Bamberg, Bamberg Symphony Orchestra cond. Jakub Hrusa

Pieces of music inspired by pictures aren't uncommon, but *Phantasma*, by the Austrian composer Bernd Richard Deutsch, goes one better: it's a piece of music inspired by a picture inspired by a piece of music. The visual imagery comes from Gustav Klimt's famous *Beethoven Frieze*, a beautiful and brilliant response to the musical 'story' outlined by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Deutsch read that, to gain entry to Klimt's studio in Vienna, one had to knock on the door to a secret rhythm, so *Phantasma* begins – and ends - with Deutsch's own special 'secret signal' on claves (wooden sticks). *Phantasma* falls into three linked sections, each taken from Klimt's own 'programme note' for the *Beethoven Frieze*: 'Yearning for Happiness' (lyrical and increasingly impassioned), 'Hostile Forces' (menacing and dramatic), and finally '...into the ideal realm...', which leads to a climax which Deutsch calls 'almost triumphal', before the knocking figure returns to show us that it was all a dream.

## **Richard Strauss (1864-1949): Brentano Lieder (Six Songs)**

1. An die Nacht (To Night)
2. Ich wollt ein Sträußlein binden (I wanted to make you a posy)
3. Säus'le, liebe Myrte! (Sigh, beloved myrtle)
4. Als mir dein Lied erklang (When I heard your song)
5. Amor (Cupid)
6. Lied der Frauen (Song of the women)

Composed: 1918 (for soprano and piano), orchestrated 1933 & 1940

First Performed: 30 May 1919, Berlin Singakademie, Birgit Engel (soprano), Georg Schumann (piano)

The poet and novelist Clemens Brentano (1778-1842) was one of the leading figures of the German Romantic movement. Amongst other influential publications, he was co-creator of the folk-anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ('Youth's Magic Horn'), to which Strauss' part-friend,

part-rival Gustav Mahler turned again and again in his songs. Strauss had a particular flair when it came to writing for the soprano voice (his wife, Pauline, was a noted soprano), and it seems he had the great Lieder and opera singer Elizabeth Schumann in mind when he composed these six songs – the collection is certainly dedicated to her. But while the middle songs suit Schumann's light coloratura (agile, virtuosic) voice very well, the first song, and even more the last one, demand something more dramatic, so it requires a special kind of singer to take them all on in one go. The first five are all love songs, composed in a passionate, opulent, mellifluous style that will surprise no one who knows the *Four Last Songs* or the opera *Der Rosenkavalier* (The Chevalier of the Rose). But the final song tells of the women left behind when their men are at war, which must have struck directly at many hearts when the cycle was first heard, with the First World War a very recent, traumatic memory.

### **Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915): Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op 43, *The Divine Poem***

Introduction – 1. Luttés (Struggles) – 2. Voluptés (Delights) – 3. Jeu divin (Divine Play)

Composed: 1902-4

First Performed: 29 May 1905, Paris, Théâtre Châtelet, cond. Arthur Nikisch

Effectively orphaned at the age of one, and condemned to a lonely, remote upbringing, Alexander Scriabin developed an intense bond with music, and with the piano in particular (very few of his works don't at least feature a piano). One could say that music almost took the place of a mother for him. Unsurprisingly he also developed some very strange ideas, coming to see himself as the mystical focus of a new world religion, even declaring at one point, 'I am the apotheosis of world creation; I am the aim of aims, the end of ends'. Such messianic delusion has often produced some pretty terrible art, but in Scriabin's case it resulted in a large quantity of exquisite, increasingly daring solo piano music and a set of orchestral works which truly storm the heavens and plumb the depths. Scored for a very large orchestra, the Third Symphony takes on a spiritual journey from a stark, arresting opening theme (marked 'Divine. Grandiose'), through a dramatic depiction of the mystic's internal, through the lyrical depiction of luscious 'Delights' (effectively the symphony's slow movement), to the wild, joyous evocation of 'Divine Play'. After this, it comes as no surprise to discover that Scriabin's next symphonic work would be entitled 'Poem of Ecstasy'!