

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra June 8 programme complementary content

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is dedicated to presenting new work and this Thursday night programme includes a very special UK premiere. Join the wonderful Katia and Marielle Labèque as they play Nico Muhly's *In Certain Circles* – a concerto for two pianos – in one of three concerts by the stellar siblings over four days.

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.

Karel Deseure

Flemish conductor [Karel Deseure](#) has been described as “a magician in the pit” and now there is the chance to watch him create magic on stage in Liverpool for the first time.

Deseure started his musical career as a flautist, studying for a masters at the Royal Flemish Conservatoire in Antwerp before going on to train as a conductor at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague.

In 2012 he was awarded the prestigious Anton Kersjes Foundation Scholarship for conductors, and in 2014 he took masterclasses with Bernard Haitink at the Lucerne Festival. Four years ago he was appointed professor of conducting at the [Amsterdam University of the Arts](#).

Deseure is sought after as both a concert and opera conductor, with highlights this season including *Hansel and Gretel* with the Dutch Reisopera and *Così fan Tutti* at the Toulon Opera, as well as the world premiere of Roukens' *Dorian* at the Dutch National Opera and Ballet.

Katia and Marielle Labèque

Sisters [Katia and Marielle Labèque](#) return to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall where they have become firm favourites with audiences.

The French siblings are renowned for their amazing synchronicity and energy. Born in Bayonne to a French father and Italian mother, they graduated from the Paris Conservatoire in the late 1960s and began working on four hands/two piano repertoire.

They announced themselves on the international stage in 1980 with their contemporary rendition of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (their recording of the work selling more than half-a-million copies) and have gone on to forge a stellar career, in demand in concert halls and at festivals across the globe.

The pianists have also worked with a host of leading composers including Thomas Adès, Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Michael Nyman, Bryce Dessner, [Philip Glass](#), György Ligeti and Olivier Messiaen.

They record on their own label, KML Recordings. Future engagements in a busy schedule include appearances in Athens, Copenhagen, Gstaad, Bucharest, Turin and New York.

Watch the Labèque sisters play Gershwin's [Rhapsody in Blue](#) on television in 1985.

John Adams

[John Adams](#) was born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1947 and grew up in New England where, as a youngster, he played clarinet in marching bands and community orchestras.

He was only ten when he started composing and went on to study at Harvard. There, he conducted the Bach Society Orchestra and became a proponent of 20th Century modernism, although his work also encompasses wider orchestral textures and a strong lyrical voice.

[The Chairman Dances: Foxtrot for Orchestra](#) dates from 1985. It was composed while Adams was working on his opera [Nixon in China](#) and was commissioned by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. He has described it as an “outtake” from the opera, and a “[vast fantasy of a slightly ridiculous but irresistible image](#)” of a young Mao Tse-Tung dancing with his wife – the Chinese film actress Chiang Ch’ing. The piece ends with the sound of an old gramophone winding down.

Listen to [The Chairman Dances: Foxtrot for Orchestra](#).

Nico Muhly

Prolific American composer [Nico Muhly](#) was born in Vermont in 1981 and raised in Rhode Island.

He started playing the piano at ten and sang in an Anglican boys’ choir. He went on to study English at Columbia University and a master’s in music at the Juilliard School in New York, where he studied composition with Christopher Rouse and John Corigliano.

Muhly’s influences range from American minimalism to the Anglican choral tradition, and he writes orchestral, chamber and sacred music along with works for the stage and screen.

His operas include *Two Boys*, premiered by the English National Opera in 2011, and [Marnie](#), commissioned by the Met and premiered in London in a co-production with the ENO in 2017.

He composed scores for films *The Reader* (2008) and *Kill Your Darlings* (2013), and the 2017 BBC adaptation of EM Forster’s [Howards End](#).

[In Certain Circles: Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra](#) was written for the Labèque sisters and they premiered it in Paris in 2021. The work is in three movements, with the opening movement including a fragment of *l’Enharmonique* by Jean-Philippe Rameau.

Did you know? Muhly worked with Philip Glass for eight years, starting as an archivist when he was still at the Juilliard.

Watch an [interview](#) with Nico Muhly.

Sergei Prokofiev

In 1919, a 28-year-old [Sergei Prokofiev](#) embarked on what became one of his most ambitious works – his opera [The Fiery Angel](#).

The demonic five-act tale of sorcery, superstition and mass exorcism, set in 16th Century Germany, went on to become a 10-year labour of love for the composer. But Prokofiev, who had a passion for writing for the stage, would never see it performed in his lifetime.

While *The Fiery Angel* remained stubbornly earthbound, Prokofiev was persuaded by a friend to take some of the themes from it and adapt them into something new.

The result was the darkly dramatic [*Symphony No. 3 in C minor*](#), started in the summer of 1928 and – with most of the music already in his head or noted down – completed quickly.

Its premiere came in Paris on May 17 1929, where it was performed by the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris under the baton of Pierre Moteux.

Listen to the opening movement of Prokofiev's [*Symphony No. 3 in C minor*](#).