

## **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra January 18 and 21 programme complementary content**

Are these the most famous four notes in history? Ludwig van Beethoven shakes his fist at Fate and launches the symphony to end all symphonies.

From tragedy to triumph, Beethoven's Fifth is the ride of your musical life, but today, Domingo Hindoyan is all about adventure: whether the heroism of Beethoven's *Egmont*, or Richard Strauss' fantastical retelling of the escapades of *Don Quixote*. With the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's own Jonathan Aasgaard taking the role of the crazy knight, you'll believe a cello can fly.

### **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 music 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 this position in September 2021. He has now extended his contract until 2028.

### **Jonathan Aasgaard interview**

A 22-year-old [Jonathan Aasgaard](#) had recently graduated from the Guildhall School of Music when he spotted a job being advertised in The Strad magazine. It was 1999, and the [Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra](#) was looking for a new Principal Cello.

While he had never performed in Liverpool, Jonathan had 'a friend of a friend' in the Orchestra and also knew it by reputation – forged under the baton of Libor Pešek and underscored with a string of well-received recordings. So he threw his hat into the ring, and this year he celebrates quarter of a century in the city.

"I was very young," he recalls. "It was quite unusual. Very unusual even. I was one of the youngest people in the Orchestra, if not the youngest, when I joined, and now I'm one of the oldest! It was definitely challenging at first, because you're young and you have personalities a little bit older than yourself, also who are a lot more experienced."

He also discovered there was a key difference between English and European orchestras. "In Europe they don't call it principal, they call it solo cello, and basically you lead musically from the front and play the solos," he explains. "In England, and nowhere more so than in Liverpool in my experience, you're not just a solo cello you're a sort of line manager. So you deal, sometimes, outside of the purely artistic."

A kind of pastoral role then?

“I’d say so,” he agrees. “There are definitely those elements.” It’s a dual role he has now played for more than half his life, in a section where, Jonathan says, he’s “been blessed really with just incredible colleagues.”

And, of course, he has also enjoyed plenty of ‘solo cello’ moments too – either within wider symphonies, concertos or other pieces, or as a soloist performing works including the world premiere of Carl Davis’ [Ballade for Cello and Orchestra](#) (which was written specifically for him), the European premiere of Giovanni Sollima’s *Double Cello Concerto*, and the UK premiere of Weinberg’s *Cello Concerto*.

For this pair of January concerts, he is taking on the role of the titular knight in Richard Strauss’ [Don Quixote](#), which he previously played with the Orchestra around a decade ago. “And then we were scheduled to play it in 2020, but obviously that didn’t happen,” he says.

“It’s very idiomatic, as opposed to just playing a cello concerto. You have a very clear role to play, and it’s actually quite detailed storytelling. It’s very descriptive, but on top of that it’s all the philosophical angles as well. It’s Cervantes obviously, but then Strauss being Strauss managed to make it a little bit about himself too.

“And by extension, I think he lends it to the performer also to make it to a large degree about themselves, and I think that’s probably his interpretation of the work to begin with – that it’s about all of us.”

It sounds like he carries out quite a bit of research as part of his preparation.

“I do, predominantly from a musical point of view, I have a score and I don’t just look at the cello part, I like to learn the music from the inside out. So, I like to listen to historical recordings, and I read the score, and just try and find all the different relationships that are going on. You can never really be completely on top of a score like that, and any conductor will say the same thing. But preparation for any concert is actually really exciting. That’s when you’re learning and having fun, and then you sit down and do it – and que sera sera!”

Over the past quarter of a century, Jonathan has also forged a busy career playing as guest principal with British and European orchestras, as well as Principal Cello with the John Wilson Orchestra (now Wilson’s [Sinfonia of London](#)), as a member of the [Pixels Ensemble](#), and as a recording artist. He is also a tutor of cello at his old [alma mater, the Guildhall](#).

After so long here (where he and fellow cellist wife Georgina have also raised three children), does he now feel more Liverpudlian or Norwegian – or, like the title of a cartoon a friend drew for him, is he a Scouse Viking?

“Despite my accent I just don’t feel Norwegian at all,” he admits. “I’ve lived in England since my mid-teens really, and Liverpool is my home. I consider it my home and I miss it when I’m away. Wherever I am in the world, I miss Liverpool and am always happy to come back. When I joined, it was to stay a couple of years and take it from there. That was the plan.”

It is, he says, the spirit of the city itself which he finds special – as well as the relationship between the Orchestra and its audience, and indeed the wider public who may not attend regular concerts at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall but still see the Phil as ‘our orchestra’.

With a special anniversary (one which now garners him an asterisk on the Orchestra sheet) this season, does he still have a wish list of works he would love to play for that audience on his 1926 Celeste Farotti cello, which has been on every step of the adventure with him?

“Usually, it’s not my suggestions,” he says. “The artistic team will just say ‘Jonathan, would you mind doing so-and-so?’ and I say, without fail, yes please! But I would like to play the

[Prokofiev](#), it's one of those pieces I feel very near and close to but I haven't been asked to do it. And I would love to play the Brahms Double at the Phil, and there's a concerto by a French composer, Dutilleux, which I'm absolutely mad about and would love to play that as well."

Listen to Jonathan Aasgaard and Ian Buckle perform Debussy's [Sonata for Cello and Piano](#).

## Nicholas Bootiman

[Nicholas Bootiman](#) enjoys a dual career as a conductor and violist, having recently been appointed [joint principal violist](#) of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Prior to this he held a principal position with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London for over a decade and is currently principal viola in the Cercle de l'Harmonie, a Paris-based classical period instrument orchestra.

He is busy as a soloist and recitalist and is also frequently invited to guest lead viola sections in orchestras throughout the country and abroad.

Born near Munich in 1980, he began learning piano and violin from an early age and at 15 he won a scholarship to the Purcell School where he took up the viola. He went on to study at the Royal College of Music, the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and the New England Conservatory of Music.

He also studied conducting in London and Paris and in 2008, he founded the Bedford Chamber Music Festival. He is also a co-founder (along with the Orchestra's Eva Thorarinsdottir and violinist Jonathan Stone) and [Echor Music](#), a groundbreaking chamber orchestra and arts charity based in the Chilterns. In addition, he is also an award-winning composer.

Watch Nicholas Bootiman [talk about the violin](#).

## Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven described it as "the sound of fate knocking at the door". And the opening four notes of his mighty [Fifth Symphony](#) are certainly a ringing calling card. So much so that the work has been known ever since as the Fate Symphony.

While the symphony premiered in Vienna on December 22 1808, [Beethoven](#) had started preliminary sketches for the C minor work five years previously and shortly after completing his Third Symphony.

But it was then set aside while he turned his attention instead to what would become his *Pastoral Symphony* – eventually premiered at that same pre-Christmas Vienna concert, along with his *Piano Concerto No.4* AND a *Choral Fantasy*.

It took a while for the full force and majesty of the Fifth to be recognised however, possibly because the Vienna premiere – a benefit concert conducted by the composer – was a bottom-numbing four hours long, the was theatre freezing, and the orchestra played so badly that at one point a frustrated Beethoven had to stop them and make them replay an entire passage.

Meanwhile the series of incidental music for Goethe's 1787 play [Egmont](#) dates from 1809 when Napoleon was still out conquering Europe, with the French army capturing Vienna. *Egmont* features a hero who faces death for having taken a stand against oppression, and the piece was praised by both Goethe and the influential critic ETA Hoffmann.

**Did you know? During the Second World War, the Allies used the letter V as a symbol for victory, most famously displayed by Winston Churchill. The morse code**

**for V is dot dot dot dash – and the famous four opening notes of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony became the Allies’ aural motif.**

Watch a clip of the 1994 Beethoven biographical film [Immortal Beloved](#) which uses music from the Fifth Symphony.

## **Richard Strauss**

The windmill-charging protagonist of [Miguel de Cervantes’](#) novel *Don Quixote* has inspired artists, playwrights, parodists, filmmakers, choreographers and songwriters since he emerged in print in 1605. In 1897, [Richard Strauss](#) joined an august band including Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Dostoyevsky, Salieri, Donizetti and Mendelssohn when he turned his attention to the story.

The 33-year-old juggled composing with his day job as kapellmeister of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. And it was during his time in the city that he created a quartet of tone poems including his masterly *Also sprach Zarathustra* and the jaunty *Till Eulenspiegel* which the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra played just before Christmas.

In [Don Quixote](#), subtitled *Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character*, Strauss uses the cello to represent the titular questing errant knight, while a viola plays his faithful sidekick Sancho Panza. Meanwhile the brass section becomes a bleating flock of sheep. *Don Quixote* was one of a range of [tone poems](#) Strauss composed over a three-decade period between 1886 and 1915 covering a wide variety of subject matter.

Listen to Strauss’ [Don Quixote](#).

## **About the Music**

### **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Overture to Goethe’s *Egmont*, Op 84**

Composed: 1809-10

First Performed: 15 June 1810, Vienna, Imperial Court Theatre

Revolution was in the air when Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote his play *Egmont* in 1786, inspiring some, terrifying others. America had declared independence from Britain in 1776, and in 1789 the French were to begin the long, bloody process of overthrowing their own monarchy. *Egmont* tells of Count Egmont, who rouses the Flemish people in revolt against Spanish tyranny. Eventually he is arrested and executed, but not before he has had a vision of freedom. Egmont offers his death as a sacrifice for his people, confident that liberty will prevail.

Despite the play’s subversive message, Goethe’s *Egmont* was staged by the Viennese Imperial Court Theatre in 1810, and it was for this production that Beethoven wrote the *Egmont* Overture. Beethoven’s impassioned sympathy for Egmont’s cause can be felt at every stage of this dramatic Overture. The slow introduction, alternately stern and plaintive, leads to an urgent, obsessive *Allegro* that could easily be the first movement of a tragic symphony. But at the end the mood is suddenly catapulted into a blazing F major, and the music hurtles to an ecstatic conclusion.

## **Richard Strauss (1864-1949): Don Quixote, 'Fantastic variations on a theme of knightly character', op 35**

1. Introduction: Whilst reading knightly tales, Don Quixote sinks into madness and decides to become a knight.
2. Theme: Don Quixote, the Knight of the Woeful Countenance
3. (Theme) Sancho Panza
4. Variation I: The adventure with the windmills
5. Variation II: The victorious battle with the army of the Emperor Alifanfaron (the battle with the sheep)
6. Variation III: Conversation between the knight and his squire
7. Variation IV: Adventure with the pilgrims
8. Variation V: The knight's vigil
9. Variation VI: The encounter with Dulcinea
10. Variation VII: The ride through the air
11. Variation VIII: The voyage on the enchanted boat
12. Variation IX: The contest with the two magicians
13. Variation X: Duel with the Knight of the Bright Moon
14. Finale

Composed: 1897

First Performed: 8 March 1898, Cologne, Friedrich Grützmacher (solo cello), cond. Franz Wüllner

Richard Strauss loved painting pictures and telling stories in music, and *Don Quixote* is surely the most extravagant, outrageously vivid example in his entire output. It's based on the (mostly) comic adventures of a deluded, would-be superman, portrayed by the classic Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes. It isn't just a ragbag of fantastical effects though. The marrying of a broadly classical theme-and-variations scheme to the story of Don Quixote and his adventures is worked out with great skill – you could call it 'Variations on an Obsession'. Strauss gives prominent role to a solo cello, representing the noble but crazed Don Quixote, shadowed by solo viola, bass clarinet and tenor tuba, standing for his earthy, seemingly stupid but eminently sane servant Sancho Panza. Before we hear the 'theme of knightly character' (Don Quixote himself), there's a substantial Introduction, in which we hear Don Quixote gradually losing his grip on reality as he reads of chivalrous deeds. Next, the cello enters with a rugged theme representing Don Quixote, 'The Knight of the Woeful Countenance', followed by the comic alter-ego, Sancho Panza and his unlikely trio of solo instruments.

The pair set forth, encountering windmills (high fluttering flutes and violin trills) which Don Quixote believes to be giants and attempts to fight, disastrously. Then come encounters with sheep (rasping muted brass, flutter-tongued), which the Don again attacks, and chanting religious pilgrims. A bizarre little dance in five-time (woodwind and tambourine) introduces the rough country girl Quixote takes as his ideal love, Dulcinea. Variation VII brings the spectacular climax: astride a wooden horse, Quixote believes that he is flying through the air (swirling woodwind, harps and high strings, plus wind-machine). Eventually the 'Knight of Bright Moon' (one of the Don's friends in disguise) easily defeats him, and the bittersweet Finale depicts Quixote's painful disillusionment and death. But there's a touch of wry humour at the very end – Sancho Panza has the last word?

## **Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No.5 in C minor, Op 67**

1. Allegro con brio
2. Andante con moto
3. Allegro
4. Allegro

Composed: 1804-8

First Performed: 22 December 1808, Vienna, Theater an der Wien, cond. Beethoven

Beethoven began work on what was to be his Fifth Symphony soon after completing his *Eroica* Symphony (No.3). But it took him another four years of hard work to finish it, during which he completed and published *another* symphony, No.4, as a kind of creative R&R exercise. Bringing such a revolutionary, searingly urgent work to perfection demanded special effort, but there was another possible reason why it took him so long. Beethoven's political idealism had suffered a terrible blow. He'd intended to dedicate the *Eroica* to the French revolutionary hero Napoleon Bonaparte; but when he learned that Napoleon had proclaimed himself Emperor he tore out the dedication and turned his back on his former hero.

But Beethoven's belief in the French revolutionary ideals of 'Liberty, Fraternity, Equality' was more robust. The first movement's famous da-da-da-DA motif can be heard as a gesture of embattled hope, in which case the music's driven obsession with this figure acquires a distinctly political, as well as a personal edge. The first movement is unmistakably tragic, and in the end the dark minor key prevails; but 'tragic' doesn't necessarily mean despairing. The da-da-da-DA rhythm also overshadows the more lyrical second movement in form of brass and timpani fanfares that repeatedly interrupt the melodic flow; it's also clearly audible in the horns' call to action after the Scherzo's shadowy opening. Eventually the shadows return, with quietly throbbing repeated timpani notes, building a massive *crescendo*, then the finale storms in triumphantly, enhanced by piccolo, contrabassoon and three trombones (a combination unprecedented in a classical symphony). The da-da-da-DA rhythm is heard again in the second theme, and it is later sung out defiantly by trombones at the movement's central climax. But soon afterwards there's another eerie hush, and the ghost of the Scherzo returns briefly on plucked strings, with plaintive woodwind – a moment of doubt? The finale theme storms back in again, leading eventually to a long, accelerating coda, insisting almost manically on the bright major key - certainty of victory or a desperate effort to hang on to hope against all odds? Either way, it's thrilling.