

## **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra May 4 programme complementary content**

What do you get when you combine the energy of Domingo Hindoyan and the heart-stopping virtuosity of pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii, with the dark passion and unforgettable melodies of Rachmaninov? Tonight, we'll discover the answer.

And with Walton's dazzling overture, plus the sweeping melodies and drama of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony after the interval, let's just say that you might want to hold on to your seat.

### **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. Last July he announced he had extended his contract until 2028.

### **Nobuyuki Tsujii**

[Nobuyuki Tsujii](#) returns to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall after performing Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* in October 2022. Over the last decade, Tsujii has become a real favourite of Liverpool audiences.

The Japanese superstar pianist also toured his home country with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra **in 2015** to great acclaim, and returns with the Orchestra this month where he will perform Rachmaninov's Second and Third Piano Concertos. The award-winning pianist also performed a chamber recital at Hope Street last month, and appeared at the [BBC Proms](#) with the Orchestra last September.

Tsujii was born in Tokyo in 1988 and has been blind since birth, but at the age of two he played 'do-re-mi' on a toy piano after hearing his mother sing the tune. He began piano lessons at the age of four and gave his first recital in Tokyo's Suntory Hall at 12.

He learns new works by ear and performs with orchestras by "[listening to the conductor's breath and sensing what is going on around me](#)". The 2014 film [Touching the Sound](#) depicts his life from birth to his Carnegie Hall debut in 2011.

Along with being in great demand as a performer on stages across the world, Tsujii – who is known to audiences as Nobu – is also a composer.

Listen to Nobu play Rachmaninov's [Third Piano Concerto](#) with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra at the 2023 BBC Proms.

## William Walton

[Sir William Walton](#) was 37 when the Second World War broke out. The Lancashire-born composer was called up in 1941 but exempted from military service on the understanding he would create soundtracks for a series of films of ‘national importance’ and was attached to the Army Film Unit.

While he did indeed create some memorable soundtracks – not least the score for director-actor Leslie Howard’s *The First of the Few*, the invasion drama *Went the Day Well?* and Olivier’s stirring [Henry V](#) – Walton composed other pieces too, including music for the stage and *Music for Children* (a suite of orchestral miniatures).

He had started work on his *Scapino* ‘comedy’ overture in the summer of 1940, and completed it by the end of the year – although he heavily revised it at the end of the decade. It was commissioned to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [Chicago Symphony Orchestra](#) and was premiered in its original form in April 1941. Meanwhile the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra recorded the work in 1969 under the baton of Sir Charles Groves.

Incidentally, Walton may have been exempt from military service, but the war did come to his doorstep – his Belgravia home was struck by Luftwaffe bombing in May 1941 which also destroyed the Queen’s Hall.

Enjoy a performance of Walton’s [Scapino Overture](#) conducted by the composer.

## Sergei Rachmaninov

Ever wondered what [Sergei Rachmaninov](#) had in common with Franz Liszt? It appears both had a huge [hand span](#) which enabled them to stretch across 12 or 13 notes on a standard piano keyboard.

When it comes to the 6ft 6in tall Russian, this might well explain why so many of his piano pieces can prove challenging for those with more modest digits. Not least his [Piano Concerto No.3](#), which is deemed the most technically challenging, not only of the four concertos Rachmaninov wrote for the instrument, but of ANY concertos in the piano repertoire.

Composed eight years after his still better-known Second Piano Concerto, the 36-year-old completed the piece in Dresden ahead of what turned out to be a hectic and demanding three-month concert tour of the United States. And it was there in the US that Rachmaninov premiered the work on [November 28 1909](#), playing with the New York Symphony Orchestra. Two months later he gave a second performance of the concerto in the Big Apple, this time with [Mahler](#) conducting.

**Did you know? Rachmaninov didn’t have time to properly practice the new concerto before he left for the United States, so he rehearsed during his transatlantic voyage on a ‘silent’ piano he had brought with him.**

Listen to Rachmaninov performing his own [Piano Concerto No.3](#).

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

In the spring of 1888, a 47-year-old [Pyotr Tchaikovsky](#) wrote to his younger brother Modest, telling him: “In the summer [I intend to write a symphony](#).”

It was 10 years since the Russian had premiered his Fourth Symphony, although in the intervening decade he had composed one symphonic work, the [Manfred Symphony](#), which has been described by some as a collection of four symphonic poems.

Intention or not, it appears inspiration was slow to strike the composer – he confided in his patroness Nadezhda von Meck that ‘**at first progress was very arduous**’ – but, despite frustrating periods of writer’s block, by August the body of **the four movement piece** was complete.

Tchaikovsky himself conducted the first performance at St Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theatre in November 1888, but was depressed by the lukewarm response from audiences and critics, later declaring the work ‘a failure’.

Since his death however, it has gained proper recognition, and its message of ‘victory through strife’ made it particularly popular in the Second World War. In 1941 it was broadcast live to London during the Siege of Leningrad.

Watch Vasily Petrenko conducting Tchaikovsky’s ***Symphony No.5 in E minor***.

## About the Music

### **William Walton (1902-83): Overture *Scapino***

Composed: 1940

First Performed: 3 April 1941, Chicago, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, cond. Frederick Stock

Even if we don’t know the name, we’ll have seen those weirdly alluring Italian *Commedia dell’arte*: Harlequin, with his fantastical costume covered in moons, stars and triangles, his lover and sparring partner Columbine, or the impish Scaramouche, who resurfaces in Punch and Judy shows, and famously gets a name-check in Queen’s *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Scapino, with his hooked nose, pointed beard and his green-and-white striped garb is another morally dubious but irresistible character. ‘To tell the truth,’ one playwright has him say, ‘there are few things impossible to me once I set about them.’

Scapino’s gloriously irresponsible high-spiritedness, his Italianate panache, and his love of amorous exploits all appealed directly to Walton. From the start, his *Scapino* seems to explode onto the page, with a starburst of dazzling and scintillating orchestral colours, and rhythmic figures that twist and turn like a lithe, feline acrobat. Later we hear his cunning, flattering charm, with a languorous, song-like melody begun by solo cello. But it isn’t long before Scapino the rogue asserts himself again, and the overture ends in brilliant uproar.

### **Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943): Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor, Op 30**

1. Allegro ma non tanto
2. Intermezzo: Adagio
3. Finale: Alla breve

Composed: 1909, Dresden

First Performed: 28 November 1909, New York, New York Symphony, cond. Walter Damrosch, soloist Rachmaninov

Rachmaninov’s Third Piano Concerto has a formidable reputation, and even some of the most accomplished virtuosos speak of it with awe. Gary Graffman, for one, lamented not learning the concerto as a student, ‘when I was still too young to know fear’. The huge solo cadenza that forms the climax of the first movement inspired such terror that Rachmaninov composed a second version, allegedly easier, but in practice it would be safer to say ‘marginally less terrifying’. The finale’s helter-skelter first section, full of rapid, finger-breaking repeated notes, would be hard enough in itself, but coming as it does after two big, physically and emotionally demanding movements, it’s the stuff of nightmares.

But while this is unquestionably a virtuoso concerto, there's so much more to it than dazzling acrobatics. Rachmaninov the poet of lush, spacious Russian melancholy is here too, right from the start. In concertos from Beethoven's 'Emperor', through Schumann and Grieg to Tchaikovsky's First, the piano's first entry is a magnificent 'Here I am'; but in Rachmaninov's Third the piano emerges almost diffidently, certainly wistfully, with a long, mostly hushed folk-like theme. This turns out to be based on an old Russian religious chant, and that distinctly Russian reflective feel can be made out, not just in the contours of some themes but also in the long-breathed melodic writing – the piano 'sings' as though trying to fill enormous spaces. It is music that breathes Rachmaninov's love of his vast, mysterious native country, perhaps most of all in the mercurial, mostly hushed section at the heart of the finale. As so often in Rachmaninov the dark minor mode largely prevails, but the concerto ends in joy, with a terrific piano-enhanced climax based on the finale's surging second theme – yet another reminder of what a phenomenal, spellbinding pianist Rachmaninov must have been.

### **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-93): Symphony No 5 in E minor, Op. 64**

1. Andante – Allegro con anima
2. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza
3. 'Waltz'. Allegro moderato
4. Finale. Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace

In 1877, Tchaikovsky startled his close friends by announcing that he was going to marry one of his students. Wasn't he the typical 'confirmed bachelor', with all the implications that phrase normally carried? It may be that Tchaikovsky saw marriage as a mask, behind which he could hide his homosexuality: if so his bride clearly misunderstood the 'terms and conditions.' The marriage lasted nine weeks, after which Tchaikovsky fled, attempted suicide and experienced a serious mental collapse. Both his Fourth Symphony and his opera *Eugene Onegin* appear to have been conceived in an attempt to come to terms with the whole disastrous episode.

Like the Fourth, the Fifth Symphony has a 'Fate' motif, one which again returns to haunt later movements, though it is very different in character from the thrilling grim fanfare that opens *Symphony No 4*. Low clarinets sing a mournful, funereal theme, while string chords underscore the sense of heavy, weary movement. The Allegro con anima that follows has its exhilarating highs and dark lows, but the end echoes the beginning: a bassoon sombrely descending to a cavernous low B, the mode implacably minor key.

A wonderful long horn melody – unmistakably a 'Love' theme – dominates the second movement. But as the mood grows more ardent, 'Fate' returns dramatically, twice. After this there is no return of the Love theme, but a tender, possibly resigned coda. The third movement's elegant, lilting Waltz tune could have come straight from a ballroom scene in one of Tchaikovsky's operas or ballets, with 'Fate' a dim but ghostly presence towards the end. Then Tchaikovsky begins his finale by transforming the Fate theme into a resolute major-key march tune. A turbulent *Allegro vivace* soon explodes onto the scene, but at the end 'transformed' Fate marches back in to launch one of Tchaikovsky's most positive symphonic conclusions. Or is it? Not every listener finds this final affirmation convincing, but that may be the point. 'Fate', the symphony could be saying, is not so easily vanquished.