

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Serenades programme notes

A tortured genius, Brahms was known for his serious and sombre style, but here we see a different side to the composer, and we're treated to the whimsical and sun-drenched *Serenade No.2*. And rumour has it we can thank Brahms for another work in today's programme. Dvořák's *Wind Serenade* – a fun and joyous celebration of the Czech folk tradition – was allegedly inspired by music the composer heard while on his way to visit, you guessed it, Johannes Brahms.

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 musical 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 his position in September 2021. He has now extended his contract with the Orchestra to 2028.

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 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) of [Echor Music](#), a groundbreaking chamber orchestra and arts charity based in the Chilterns. In addition, he is also an award-winning composer.

Antonin Dvořák, *Wind Serenade*

In 1877, [Antonin Dvořák](#) was still mostly unknown outside his Czech homeland – despite having five symphonies, a number of string quartets, nocturnes, the *Moravian Duets* and a comic opera (*The Cunning Peasant*) to his name. The year was one of terrible heartache for Dvořák and his wife Anna, who lost their two surviving children to illness in the space of a month.

But professionally, things were starting to look up. And in December, the 36-year-old was awarded his third Austrian State Scholarship (for talented but financially needy composers), with the jury in Vienna including Johannes Brahms and the influential critic Edward Hanslick.

Brahms was impressed enough with the Czech's work to put him in contact with his own publisher [Fritz Simrock](#).

While in Vienna, Dvořák also attended a concert where the programme included Mozart's *Serenade for winds in B flat major* – scored for 13 instruments and often known by its subtitle *Gran Partita*. The experience evidently inspired him, because on his return home Dvořák composed his own [Serenade for Winds](#) in the space of a fortnight, the music harking back to the 18th Century but also hinting at Czech folk tunes within its four movements.

The serenade was premiered in Prague in November the same year, performed by the Provisional Theatre Orchestra – in which a young Dvořák had played viola for a decade - and conducted by its composer. It was part of an all-Dvořák programme.

Brahms, who heard it played in Vienna, was [enthusiastic about the work](#), saying 'a more lovely, refreshing impression of real, rich and charming creative talent you can't imagine'.

Meanwhile hot on the heels of the serenade would come the *Slavonic Dances*, which finally put their composer on the international map.

Listen to Dvořák's [Wind Serenade](#).

Paul Hindemith, *Kammermusik No.5*

Kammermusik translates as 'chamber music', and a young [Paul Hindemith](#) composed eight pieces for different – and often unconventional – ensembles of instruments during the 1920s.

Hindemith was one of the most important and prolific composers working in the first half of the 20th Century, and a key figure in the cultural life of the Weimar Republic – the period between the end of the First World War and Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

Born in the city of Hanau in 1895, he had an impoverished childhood but showed early musical promise and was encouraged to play by his parents. He later won a scholarship to the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. Hindemith joined the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra in 1914 and became leader of the orchestra at the age of 21. It was during this time that he started what became a series of violin sonatas. He combined composing with a successful career as a solo violist and also as a member of a professional string group, the Amar Quartet, which he founded in 1921.

[Kammermusik No.5](#) dates from the latter half of the 20s and is structured as a (difficult) viola concerto for solo instrument and large chamber orchestra. The work is in four brief movements: *Schnelle Halbe* (fast half-notes) is a toccata-like movement for soloist and ensemble; *Langsam* a broad and richly-timbred slow movement with a recitative central section; a scherzo-like *Mäßig schnell* (it translates as moderately fast); and finally *Variante eine Militärmarsches*, a variant of a (Bavarian) military march. It was dedicated to [Arnold Mendelssohn](#) – a cousin of Felix and Fanny – who had been Hindemith's tutor at Frankfurt and was premiered in Berlin in 1927 (where Hindemith had moved to teach composition) with the composer himself taking the solo viola part.

Listen to Hindemith's [Kammermusik No.5](#).

Johannes Brahms, *Serenade No.2*

In the late 1850s, [Johannes Brahms](#) spent time each autumn teaching piano and leading a women's choir at the court in Detmold, east of Dusseldorf. He had secured the position with the

assistance of [Clara Schumann](#), who, like her late husband Robert, was an enthusiastic supporter of the young pianist and composer's work.

Brahms had been introduced to the couple in 1853, and Robert Schumann had been so impressed with the younger man's talent that it made the self-critical Brahms concerned he would never be able to live up to the public's expectations excited by Schumann's lavish praise.

While Brahms spent several years, on and off, working on his turbulent *Piano Concerto in D minor*, he also found time to compose a pair of serenades for his employer at Detmold.

[Serenade No.2](#) dates from the autumn of 1859, and was dedicated to Clara. Composed in the key of A major, the five-movement work is scored for wind instruments, horns, violas, cellos and double basses – but, unusually, no violins. Light and sunny, the piece opens with a charming wind theme. The serenade's fulcrum is the solemn, almost mystical, third movement, its longest and in adagio form. It's flanked by two spirited dance movements – a scherzo and a 'quasi menuetto', while the work comes to a close with a bright and breezy rondo.

It was first publicly performed at a concert in Hamburg in February 1860 with its composer conducting.

Enjoy a performance of Brahms' [Serenade No.2](#).

About the Music

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904): Serenade for winds in D minor, Op 44

1. Moderato, quasi marcia
2. Minuetto: Tempo di minueto
3. Andante con moto
4. Finale: Allegro molto

Composed: 1878

First Performed: 17 November 1878, Prague, Provisional Theatre Orchestra, cond. Dvořák

Dvořák wrote his *Serenade* shortly after his breakthrough success with the first set of his orchestral *Slavonic Dances*. People were now looking to him eagerly for more concert music with the same appealing Bohemian folk flavouring, and for the moment Dvořák was happy to oblige. But he decided against following up his success with another set of *Slavonic Dances*. Instead he wrote this *Serenade* – an imitation of the kind of courtly entertainment music that flourished in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but which was now beginning to sound romantically old-fashioned. Dvořák's audiences would have probably conjured up images of castles, furnished to suit the Czech aristocracy, but with ordinary people very much a presence too in their song and dance music. The Minuet, for instance, is very much an 'upper class' dance, but at its heart is a Presto 'furiant', a folk dance with lively cross-rhythms. It was a perfect combination for the then-fashionable nationalist tastes, and it can still charm today.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963): Kammermusik No.5, for viola and large chamber orchestra

1. Schnelle Halbe (Fast half-notes)
2. Langsam (Slow)
3. Mäßig schnell (Moderately fast)
4. Variante eines Militärmarsches (Alternative version of a military march)

Composed: 1925

First Performed: 3 November 1927, Berlin, Kroll Opera House, Staatskapelle Berlin, cond. Otto Klemperer, Hindemith (viola)

At the time Paul Hindemith wrote his eight pieces called 'Kammermusik' ('Chamber Music'), his native Germany was in a dangerously chaotic state. Humiliation in World War I had been followed by seething unrest and economic catastrophe. All manner of movements were putting themselves forward as potential 'saviours' of Germany, many with a questionable romantic-nationalist spin. Hindemith was having none of this (he later left Germany after Hitler came to power). He chose the title *Kammermusik* because it sounded so *un-romantic*, and made it clear that the Brandenburg Concertos of J.S. Bach were his model. At the same time, Hindemith had a delightfully subversive sense of humour (he was an excellent cartoonist). When the First *Kammermusik* came out, one critic wrote that it represented 'an artistic attitude no German composer has even dared think of, music of a lewdness and frivolity only possible for a very special composer.'

The Fifth *Kammermusik* was written for Hindemith's own instrument (the viola) as soloist, and it's particularly challenging to play. Hindemith's love for the viola, the often sidelined or even scorned member of the string family, does emerge here, but the satirical side comes across most strongly in the finale, a parody of a Bavarian nationalist march, in which the viola is deliberately 'out of step' – rather like Hindemith himself in the Germany of the late 1920s.

Johannes Brahms (1833-97): Serenade No.2 in A major, Op 16

1. Allegro moderato
2. Scherzo: Vivace
3. Adagio non troppo
4. Quasi menuetto
5. Rondo: Allegro

Composed: 1859

First Performed: 10 February 1860, Hamburg

Brahms spent a great deal of his twenties and thirties grappling with that most prestigious orchestral form, the symphony. At twenty he had been rapturously welcomed and proclaimed a 'genius' by his hero Robert Schumann, who had prophesied that his young protégé would inherit the crown of Beethoven, the supreme master of the symphony. But with that came a colossal burden of expectation – made worse when Schumann died, in an insane asylum, in 1856 – which the hyper-sensitive, self-doubting Brahms struggled to fulfil. Several of his larger chamber works are in part trial run-throughs for symphonic form, while the two serenades show him trying out orchestral writing. The First Serenade is scored for a full classical orchestra, but the Second is for reduced forces (no violins, trumpets or timpani), which it uses with considerable delicacy.

Brahms had just finished another important orchestral work, the turbulent, grandly impassioned First Piano Concerto, in which he'd worked through some of his feelings about Schumann's death, and about Schumann's widow Clara, for whom he had intense but complicated feelings. But this Second Serenade, which is actually dedicated to Clara Schumann, seems to inhabit a different world – intimate, playful, sometimes tender and pensive, sometimes full of folksy good humour. Clara was delighted with it.