

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra January 16 programme complementary content

New York, New York – it's a helluva town! Here in Liverpool, we've always had a special connection with our sister city across the pond, so naturally, the dynamic young American maestro Joseph Young is making his Liverpool debut with Leonard Bernstein's electrifying, all-dancing salute to the Big Apple. First, though, Chloë Hanslip weaves modern-day magic from Philip Glass – and if you enjoy Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, you're going to love his *Essay No.2*.

Joseph Young

American [Joseph Young](#) is among the most gifted conductors of his generation, balancing his flourishing career as a guest conductor with leadership roles as Music Director of the Berkeley Symphony and Artistic Director of Ensembles at the Peabody Conservatory. He is committed to amplifying a range of musical voices – both historical and contemporary – that animate his consistently compelling programmes which have included works by Brian Raphael Nybors, Florence Price and Carlos Simon alongside iconic composers such as John Adams, Brahms, Dvořák, Prokofiev and many others.

Highlights of previous and upcoming engagements include the San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, Mzansi National Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfonica RTVE and Opera of Chicago. In July last year he conducted the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in Cincinnati Opera's [world premiere staging](#) of Sir Paul McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio* – originally commissioned by Liverpool Philharmonic and co-composed by Carl Davis – for orchestra, chorus and soloists.

Earlier in his career, Young, who grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, served as Assistant Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony under Robert Spano, and he has also served as the resident conductor of the Phoenix Symphony and the League of American Orchestras Conducting Fellow with the Buffalo Philharmonic and Baltimore Symphony. He holds an Artist's Diploma in Conducting from the [Peabody Conservatory](#) and a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of South Carolina. He has been mentored by many world-renowned conductors, including Marin Alsop.

Listen to a [radio interview](#) with Joseph Young.

Chloë Hanslip

British violinist [Chloë Hanslip](#) has already established herself as an artist of distinction on the international stage. Prodigiously talented, she performed at the Purcell Room in 1991, aged four, and played for Yehudi Menuhin when she was five, later being invited to study at his school. When she was seven, she moved to Germany to continue her studies.

She became the youngest ever recording artist signed to Warner Classics UK when she joined the label aged 13 and released her debut album – recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra – in September 2001, the first of an extensive discography including recordings with Hyperion and with [Rubicon Classics in collaboration with pianist Danny Driver](#).

Hanslip made her BBC Proms debut at 14 and her US concerto debut aged 15. In 2003 she was named Best Young British Classical Performer at the Classical BRITS. She has performed at

major venues in the UK, Europe, the US and Far East, and with many of the world's leading orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, CBSO, Hallé, BBC Symphony Orchestra of Wales (performing the premiere of the Michael Berkeley *Violin Concerto*), Hamburg Symphoniker, Tampere Philharmonic, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Singapore Symphony, Adelaide Symphony, Houston, Seattle, Detroit and Cincinnati Symphony. Meanwhile [Hanslip](#) has enjoyed a relationship with the [Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra](#) stretching back more than 20 years.

Her wide-ranging repertoire includes concertos by Britten, Brahms, Beethoven, Barber, Bernstein, Bruch, Korngold, Delius, Mendelssohn, Elgar, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius, as well as many contemporary composers.

Listen to Chloë Hanslip play Gershwin's [Summertime](#) alongside pianist Danny Driver.

Samuel Barber – *Essay No.2*

In early 1942, [Samuel Barber](#) was lecturing on orchestration and composition at his alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, when he was called up for military service.

The 32-year-old joined the US Army Air Corps, but his poor eyesight meant that rather than being sent to the front line, he was given special duties which involved continuing to write music. Among the works he would go on to compose over the next three years were *Commando March* (which became part of the US Army bands' repertoire), and his Second Symphony, known as the *Symphony Dedicated to the Air Forces*. He later destroyed the score, although a second copy was [discovered in Britain](#) in 1984.

But ahead of that, in March 1942 he sat down to fulfil [a commission](#) to mark the centenary of the New York Philharmonic. Barber had composed his first *Essay for Orchestra* in 1938, and the one movement work was performed in the same concert in which his much more famous *Adagio for Strings* received its debut. [Essay No.2](#) was premiered at Carnegie Hall in April 1942 and went on to become one of his most popular orchestral compositions.

The work was dedicated to Robert Horan, a member of what WH Auden dubbed the '[Activist](#)' poets of the 1940s and a friend of Barber's. Horan returned the compliment by dedicating his only book of verse – the 1948 volume *A Beginning* – to Barber and his fellow composer (and life-long companion) Gian Carlo Menotti.

Watch a performance of Barber's [Essay No.2](#).

Philip Glass – *Violin Concerto*

Over a 60-year career, the prolific [Philip Glass](#) has maintained a prodigious output in a wide range of genres. From early experimental pieces composed for his own Philip Glass Ensemble, through operas (starting with 1975's *Einstein on the Beach*), piano pieces, chamber and choral works, theatre, film and TV, to a baker's dozen of concertos and no fewer than 14 symphonies, his catalogue is impressively broad and extensive.

And yet until the age of 50, this titan of contemporary classical music hadn't composed a full orchestral work since his student days. It was a commission from the [American Composers Orchestra](#) which appears to have opened the floodgates, with Glass choosing to write what would become his [Violin Concerto No.1](#).

The work received its first performance in April 1987 with soloist – and long-time collaborator – Paul Zukofsky playing with the orchestra under the baton of Dennis Russell Davies.

Listen to Philip Glass' [Violin Concerto No.1](#).

Did you know? Early in his career, Glass had to supplement the income he made from playing and composing music by working as a plumber, furniture mover and a taxi driver.

Leonard Bernstein – *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*

In 1955, [Leonard Bernstein](#) and playwright and director [Arthur Laurents](#) were both working in Los Angeles. They met for a drink at the Beverly Hills Hotel, and talked about an idea for a musical which choreographer Jerome Robbins had first outlined some six years earlier. Based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and originally planned to involve a young couple with Jewish and Catholic backgrounds, the early project had fizzled out. But against the backdrop of teen gang warfare breaking out in cities across the US, the seeds of what would become [West Side Story](#) were sown.

The musical – with a book by Laurents, music from Bernstein, lyrics courtesy of Stephen Sondheim and direction by Robbins – had try outs in Washington and Philadelphia in the summer of 1957, before it opened on Broadway in September and ran for more than 700 performances. A film version of *West Side Story* followed in 1961, and earlier that year Bernstein drew together what became his [Symphonic Dances](#) for a fundraising concert for the New York Philharmonic.

The nine movements include dances like a mambo and cha-cha, along with Tony's song 'Maria' and the duet 'Somewhere', but don't follow the chronological route of the source material.

Watch [rare footage](#) of Larry Kert as Tony singing 'Maria', and duetting on 'Tonight' with Carol Lawrence as Maria in the original 1957 Broadway production of *West Side Story*.

Leonard Bernstein – *Three Episodes from On the Town*

[Jerome Robbins](#) was bursting with creative ideas it seems, and more than a decade before *West Side Story*, one of them would become *Fancy Free*. The 1944 work, about three sailors on shore leave in the Big Apple and set to music by Leonard Bernstein, was the first ballet Robbins choreographed – and the first collaboration between the two young Americans, receiving rave reviews and multiple curtain calls. It soon became the inspiration for a full-length musical about the adventures (and misadventures) of the trio of matelots, with *On the Town* premiering on Broadway just after Christmas the same year.

Given its origins, perhaps it's no surprise *On the Town* was filled with dance numbers, and while the 1949 film version (starring Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra) dispensed with all but four of Bernstein's original compositions, with Kelly at the helm – co-directing with Stanley Donen who would reunite with him for *Singin' in the Rain* – the dancing remained.

Before that, in 1945 Bernstein created an orchestral suite [Three Dance Episodes from On the Town](#) with the three episodes in question being the dream scene *The Great Lover*, bittersweet *Lonely Town* and the exuberant *New York, New York*.

Watch Vera Ellen and Gene Kelly in [On the Town](#).

About the Music

Samuel Barber (1910-81): Second Essay for Orchestra, Op 17

Composed: 1942

First Performed: 16 April 1942, New York, Carnegie Hall, New York Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Bruno Walter

In 1938, Arturo Toscanini, already a star in the US for his conducting of the NBC Symphony Orchestra, gave the first performances of Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* and *First Essay for Orchestra* – quite an honour, given that the Italian maestro conducted very little new American music. It was a huge success - Barber's elegantly crafted, intensely melancholic romanticism obviously struck a chord with many – and commissions soon flooded in. When the conductor Bruno Walter asked Barber for a work to celebrate the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's centenary, he responded with his *Second Essay*. It's slightly longer than the first (just over ten minutes), and this time the tone is more tragic-heroic. Not at first: sweetly lyrical figures from flute and bass clarinet suggest we might be in for something pastoral – nostalgically picturesque perhaps. But before long an element of grit enters, and the *Essay* eventually builds to a defiant conclusion. Did the distant but increasingly ominous noise of war leave a mark on the music? If so, Barber refused to say.

Philip Glass (b. 1937): Violin Concerto No.1

I. ♩ = 104 — ♩ = 120

II. ♩ = c. 108 or c. 96

III. ♩ = c. 150 — Coda: *Poco meno* ♩ = 104

Composed: 1937

First Performed: 5 April 1987, New York, American Composers Orchestra, soloist Paul Zukofsky, cond. Dennis Russell Davies

Philip Glass composed his First Violin Concerto at a time when his reputation was beginning to change markedly. Looked down upon by modernists and high-minded music critics as a 'minimalist', he'd been viewed as a fringe figure – one likely to be forgotten quickly (or so his disparagers hoped). But Glass' operas in particular had begun to score hits with the public, while his rivals could only look on enviously. The conductor Dennis Russell Davies urged Glass to write something on a large scale for orchestra, and Glass responded with his First Violin Concerto – soon established as one of his most enduringly popular works.

Of course, Glass' concentration on simple, easily repeatable musical ideas is one reason why his music is much easier to grasp on first hearing than that of most of his classical contemporaries. But there's much more to his success than that. As this concerto shows triumphantly, Glass has a gift to create motifs, melodic phrases, harmonic twists that carry a powerful expressive charge, and which lodge themselves in the memory, and the way he seems to let the music rise and fall, almost of its own volition, shows a superb feeling for long-term engineering. But there's a personal element here too. Glass dedicated the First Violin Concerto to the memory of his father, Ben Glass. 'I wrote the piece', Glass tells us, 'thinking, let me write a piece that my father would have liked... A very smart nice man who had no education in music whatsoever, but the kind of person who fills up concert halls... It's popular, it's supposed to be — it's for my Dad.'

Leonard Bernstein (1918-90): Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

Composed: 1956 (musical), 1960 (Symphonic Dances)

First Performed: 13 February 1961, New York, Carnegie Hall, New York Philharmonic Orchestra cond. Lukas Foss

Three Dance Episodes from *On The Town*

Composed: 1944 (musical), 1945 (Dance Episodes)

First Performed: 3 February 1946, San Francisco, Civic Auditorium, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, cond. Leonard Bernstein

Leonard Bernstein's *On The Town* was a rip-roaring success - the first production ran for an impressive 462 performances. Its bright, hyper-energetically up-beat tone was exactly the shot in the arm the country needed after a war which had seen huge losses on all fronts and an increasing flood of immigrants from a devastated Europe. *On The Town* tells of the adventures of three American sailors, on 24-hour shore leave in New York, and of the three women they meet and date, including the superb, stridently liberated taxi-driver Hildy. Its use of an ethnically diverse cast and avoidance of racial stereotypes drew comment, mostly approving, though it was the tunes that made the biggest impact, not least the one that became the unofficial city anthem 'New York, New York, a helluva town!'

West Side Story is another portrait of New York, but of a far more complex, nuanced kind. It also broke the unwritten Broadway rule that tragic musicals don't sell. We hear the joy of the city's traumatised immigrants at finding safety and prosperity – or at least the promise of prosperity ('America'). But we also see the dark consequences of cramming people from very different backgrounds together in the vibrant, edgy dances for the rival street gangs, the Jets and the Sharks. Bernstein, together with lyricist Stephen Sondheim and book author Jerome Robbins, brilliantly reworked Shakespeare's tale of two 'star-crossed lovers', from rival communities, into a tale of modern urban life, its glories and its tensions, its joy and despair. Thanks in a big part to Bernstein's supercharged, brilliantly colourful score, it was a sensation – one ecstatic review talked of 'nuclear fallout'. Even today, the music has the ability to conjure the sights, sounds, even the smells of New York into being in an instant. Just a few notes, and you're there.

According to the first programme note, authorised by Bernstein, the *Symphonic Dances* tell the musical's story, as follows:

1. "Prologue": Tensions grow between the two gangs.
2. "Somewhere": In a dream, friendship unites the two gangs.
3. "Scherzo": In the dream, the gangs leave the city and find themselves in a "playful world of space, air, and sun"
4. "Mambo": Returning to the real world, the gangs participate in a competitive dance at the gym.
5. "Cha cha": Maria and Tony first meet and dance together.
6. "Meeting scene": They speak their first words to each other.
7. "Cool": Riff, the leader of the Jets, encourages his gang to harness their impulsive hostility.
8. "Rumble": In a gang battle, Riff, Bernardo (the leader of the Sharks), and Tony are killed.
9. "Finale": The two gangs, realizing that violence is no solution, reconcile and unite, fulfilling the vision of "Somewhere".