

**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**March 2 programme complementary content**

César Franck seemed like the quiet type until, late in life, his music suddenly exploded with passion and power. His *Symphony in D minor* begins in gothic grandeur and ends with a tune that you'll never forget. Domingo Hindoyan loves it, and it's a thrilling complement to the sunlight and wit of Saint-Saëns' delightful 'Egyptian' concerto. Javier Perianes has been called its "ideal interpreter", and you're about to hear why.

**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.

**Javier Perianes piano**

The international career of [Javier Perianes](#) has led him to perform in the world's most prestigious concert halls, with the world's foremost orchestras, working with celebrated conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Gustavo Dudamel, Gianandrea Noseda, Vladimir Jurowski and Simone Young.

Perianes also frequently appears in recitals across the globe, with performances in Bilbao, Frankfurt, Regensburg, San Francisco, Montreal, Vancouver and the Canary Islands Festival in the last season.

A natural and keen chamber musician, he regularly collaborates with violist Tabea Zimmerman and the Quiroga Quartet, and appears at festivals such as the BBC Proms, Lucerne, Argerich Festival, Salzburg Whitsun, Prague Spring, Ravello, Stresa, San Sebastian, Vail and Granada.

Career highlights have included concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Yomiuri Nippon and Danish National Symphony Orchestras, Oslo, London, New York, Los Angeles and Czech Philharmonics, Orchestre de Paris, Swedish and Norwegian Radio orchestras, Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Budapest Festival Orchestra.

Recording exclusively for [harmonia mundi](#), he has developed a diverse discography ranging from Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Grieg, Chopin, Debussy, Ravel and Bartok to Blasco de Nebra, Mompou, Falla, Granados and Turina.

Perianes was awarded the National Music Prize in 2012 by the Ministry of Culture in Spain and named Artist of the Year at the International Classical Music Awards in 2019.

Watch Javier Perianes perform Saint-Saëns' [Piano Concerto No.5, 'Egyptian'](#).

## **Debussy (arr. Ansermet) - *Six épigraphes antiques***

In the summer of 1914, [Claude Debussy](#) – feted as the greatest of France’s living composers – was based in a fashionable neighbourhood close to Paris’ Bois de Boulogne. The 51-year-old enjoyed fame and a fine standard of living. He had recently been interviewed by America’s [Etude Magazine](#) about his views on contemporary music including that of Russian, Spanish and ‘young Hungarian’ composers like Bartók and Kodály, as well as modern Italian opera.

But all in the jardin was not necessarily rosy. The truth was that Debussy was living beyond his means. His composing output had slowed dramatically in recent years, coinciding with what would finally be diagnosed in 1915 – after six years of suffering terrible pain controlled with morphine and cocaine – as cancer. Paying for ‘treatments’ also added to his financial woes.

Despite all that, and with storm clouds gathering in the wake of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Debussy sat down to compose what would be his *Six épigraphes antiques* – completing the composition in July.

The major portion of the work wasn’t entirely new, however. It was material he had originally written back in 1901 as incidental music for a dramatic reading of his friend **Pierre Louÿs’** prose poems about Sapphic love, *Chansons de Billitis*. Each of the six études is a meditation on a prayer or dedication of the kind found on the walls of tombs or ancient sites. Composed as a piano duet, in 1939 the Swiss conductor [Ernest Ansermet](#) – formerly conductor of the Ballets Russes, and who had met and worked with Debussy – orchestrated it for large ensemble.

Listen to Debussy’s [Six épigraphes antiques \(arr. Ansermet\)](#).

## **Saint-Saëns - *Piano Concerto No.5***

[Camille Saint-Saëns](#) was an avid traveller who made visits to every continent except Australasia and Antarctica. As he got older, he spent his winters at Biskra, an Algerian spa town at the gateway to the Sahara which was popular with artists, writers and composers – it also later attracted Bartók and Karol Szymanowski. It was in the capital Algiers where he suffered a fatal heart attack in December 1921.

Long before that, over the winter of 1895-6, a 60-year-old Saint-Saëns found himself in Egypt, one of his favourite destinations, enjoying a sunny break. Saint-Saëns had composed his first piano concerto in 1858 as a fresh-faced 23-year-old, and three more had followed between 1869 and 1875. Now 20 years later, he set to work on [a new concerto](#) in the surroundings of Cairo and at Luxor on the Nile, although he maintained it was a sea voyage he had recreated within its bars – perhaps an unsurprising choice of theme for such [a well-travelled man](#).

The composer himself acted as soloist at the concerto’s premiere at a special ‘jubilee’ festival concert in [Paris in June 1896](#), celebrating 50 years since he had made his public debut at the venue – the Salle Pleyel – as a 10-year-old.

Enjoy a recording of Saint-Saëns’ [Piano Concerto No.5](#).

**Did you know? A musical prodigy, Saint-Saëns started playing the piano at two years old and demonstrated perfect pitch.**

## **Franck - *Symphony in D minor***

During the best part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, [César Franck's \*Symphony in D minor\*](#) was a favourite in concert halls and with leading conductors, and dozens of recordings were made. Despite its enduring popularity, for some reason it fell out of favour with programmers, which makes this performance a proper treat.

The symphony, Franck's only full surviving venture into the form (a symphony in G major, composed in his teenage years, is lost to history), came late on in the intense creative final decade of his career. Franck had been a child prodigy; he studied at the Conservatory in his birthplace Liège from the age of eight and entered the Paris Conservatoire at 14.

His ambitious father [Nicolas-Joseph](#), who had seen the economic benefits of taking his young son on tour, later pushed him to leave the Conservatoire early to become a virtuoso concert performer, but eventually Franck took control of his own destiny, disengaging himself from parental control and securing organ playing posts and teaching.

Franck was invited to become Professor of Organ at his Parisienne alma mater in 1872 although when it was discovered he was still technically Belgian, he had to apply formally for French citizenship to take up the role. There, he also took to teaching composition.

With his contemporaries busy premiering major new orchestral works, he finally returned to the symphonic form, and in 1887 sat down to start composing, completing the score the following year. Rejected by conductor Charles Lamoreaux for performance by his influential Société des Nouveaux-Concerts, [the symphony](#) was finally premiered in February 1889 by students at the Conservatoire. The work split opinion among Franck's contemporaries, and only became fully appreciated following its composer's death, 18 months after its original performance.

Listen to the third movement of Franck's [Symphony in D minor](#).

**Did you know? Among those who attended Franck's funeral were Delibes, Saint-Saëns, Gigout, Fauré and Charles-Marie Widor, while Rodin was commissioned to sculpt a plaque for his tomb in the cemetery at Montparnasse.**

## **About the Music**

### **Claude Debussy (1862-1918): *Six Épigraphes Antiques* (orchestrated by Ernest Ansermet)**

1. Pour invoquer Pan, dieu du vent d'été (For invoking Pan, god of the summer wind)
2. Pour un tombeau sans nom (For a tomb without a name)
3. Pour que la nuit soit propice (So that the night may be propitious)
4. Pour la danseuse aux castagnettes (For the dancer with the castanets)
5. Pour l'Égyptienne (For the Egyptian)
6. Pour remercier la pluie au matin (For thanking the morning rain)

Composed: 1914 (Ansermet's arrangement: 1939)

First performed: 11 February 1916, Geneva, Casino Saint-Pierre, Marie Panthès & Roger Steimetz (piano duet)

*Six Épigraphes Antiques* started life as music for a public recitation of poetry by Debussy's friend Pierre Louÿs in 1900, advertised as 'translations' of verse fragments by the Ancient Greek poetess Sappho. In fact, Louÿs had gone on a fantasy journey of his own, foregrounding the still-scandalous lesbian themes in Sappho's poetry. For the romantics, Ancient Greek art had been a world of purity, serenity, grace. Later thinkers had challenged this, painting the so-called 'cradle

of civilisation' as a place of dark erotic passions, only just contained. Louÿs' poetry strives to reconcile both.

Debussy steers a more delicate middle course. The music moves between the cool, poised chant like-music of the opening, and mysterious, alluring, sometimes faintly disturbing sounds, yet neither one threatens or dominates the other. When Debussy condensed his original score into the *Six Épigrapbes Antiques* he scored it for two pianos, then piano duet, which the conductor and Debussy champion Ernest Ansermet later orchestrated, and it shows how well he understood Debussy's orchestral style: the sensuous subtleties and telling ambiguities in this piece of imaginative time-travel are, if anything, enriched and enhanced.

### **Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921): Piano Concerto No. 5 in F, Op. 103 ('Egyptian')**

1. Allegro animato
2. Andante – Allegretto tranquillo quasi andantino – Andante
3. Molto allegro

Composed: 1896

First Performed: 6 May 1896, Paris, Salle Pleyel, Orchestre de Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, Saint-Saëns (piano)

In his younger days, Saint-Saëns was viewed as a dangerous modernist – one critic went so far as to brand him an 'anarchist'. But by the end of his long life his profile had changed to that of the arch-traditionalist: impassioned, sometimes waspish defender of French music against the scandalous innovations of Debussy and Stravinsky. If you put the first and last movements of the Fifth Piano Concerto beside Debussy's almost contemporary *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Saint-Saëns does seem fairly conservative. But in the central Andante there are echoes of the Javanese gamelan music that had so excited Debussy at the Paris Exposition in 1889, and the extraordinary bell-like widely spaced piano chords seem to have lodged in the memory of another rising young French radical, Maurice Ravel. 'Never have we heard a work more colourful or gripping' wrote one critic. 'It is from Rubens, from Raphael, from Michelangelo, for one finds in it fantasy, grace and power'.

It was a trip to Egypt at the beginning of 1896 that got Saint-Saëns' imagination working so vividly. He later referred to the Fifth Concerto as 'a kind of voyage in the East'. The cheerful freshness of the first movement reflects the rejuvenating effects of the composer's Egyptian holiday. Then comes the remarkable Andante, its piquantly flavoured melody in the piano's left hand against harp-like ripples in the right, apparently based on the composer's memory of hearing a Nubian love song sung by a Nile boatman. Gamelan music is subtly suggested by quiet gong strokes, and the castanet-like figures in the piano after that are said to have been inspired by the croaking of Nile frogs. Saint-Saëns described the finale as expressing 'the joy of a sea crossing, a joy that not everyone shares' - maybe not, but the exhilaration of this music is unmistakable.

### **César Franck (1822-90): Symphony in D minor**

1. Lento - Allegro non troppo
2. Allegretto
3. Allegro non troppo

Composed: 1886-88

First performed: 17 February 1889, Paris Conservatoire, Orchestre de Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, cond. Jules Garcin

For most 19<sup>th</sup> Century French musicians, the symphony was the archetypal German form, embodied in the intensely serious, intellectually challenging symphonies of Beethoven, all very

alien to supposed Gallic ideals of wit, subtlety, charm. The devastating humiliation of France in the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1) by a newly unified Germany, added another, bitter twist. For patriotic French musicians, writing an abstract Germanic symphony in this post-war climate was close to treason.

César Franck was Belgian by birth but French-speaking, and from the age of thirteen he had lived in Paris, where he had built up a formidable reputation as an organist. Franck's Symphony went down particularly badly at its premiere. The Symphony did include such flavoursome instrumental novelties as cor anglais, bass clarinet and harp, but the orchestral sound and texture were unmistakably Germanic: rich, solid and intricately contrapuntal, unmistakably influenced by Franck's experience as an organist, and especially by his German musical hero, Johann Sebastian Bach. One reviewer found it 'morose': Franck had 'very little to say, but he proclaims it with the conviction of a pontiff defining dogma'. But outside France, Franck's Symphony caught on quite quickly, and before long even French critics were having to admit that it was an impressive, even a rather beautiful achievement. Alas, Franck didn't live to see his Symphony vindicated: he died the year after the premiere.

In fact, romantic atmosphere is apparent at the Symphony's very start – in the sombre cello and bass motif that stalks ominously through misty string figurations till the accumulated tension erupts into a darkly driven Allegro non troppo, and later in the trumpet-led theme, soon to be labelled the 'Motif of Faith'.

A lovely melancholic long melody for cor anglais, above plucked harp and string chords, opens the central Allegretto. This movement seems to drift, dreamlike, between the kind of pensive lyricism and faster, light-footed dance music. Uncertainty is finally banished by the resolute Allegro non troppo finale, its strong upbeat theme on cellos, a Gallic cousin to the 'Ode to Joy' theme from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. An image of possible reconciliation? In the end, Franck's Germanic-Gallic 'Ode to Joy' is heard again in full orchestral triumph.