

**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**April 3 programme complementary content**

Some pieces are classics for a reason – and let's face it, when it comes to Dvořák's *New World* symphony it's been a long time since the Hovis ad! This great symphony of exile, hope and nostalgia has been touching hearts since 1893. Shostakovich's uproarious *Piano Concerto* is a bit newer, and Anna Tsybuleva and Fábio Brum make it sparkle tonight. First, though, guest conductor Erina Yashima shares a piece of pure magic from a young Dutch composer with a huge imagination.

**Erina Yashima** *conductor*

German-born conductor [Erina Yashima](#) is the First Kapellmeister at the Komische Oper Berlin. She was previously the Assistant Conductor at the Philadelphia Orchestra between 2019 and 2022, where she assisted music director Yannick Nezet-Seguin and conducted the orchestra in concerts in Philadelphia and Saratoga.

As a rising star in the industry, Yashima has performed all over the world with acclaimed orchestras and ensembles including the Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra. Recent highlights include debuts with the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Seoul Philharmonic and North Carolina Symphony.

At the [Komische Oper Berlin](#) Yashima has conducted a variety of productions and programmes including *The Magic Flute*, *Così fan tutte*, a new children's opera – *Wondrous Adventures* – from Nils Holgersson and the 75 Years KOB Anniversary Gala. Last season she also made her English National Opera debut conducting *The Magic Flute*.

Since winning the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Sir Georg Solti conducting apprenticeship in 2015, she has been mentored by Riccardo Muti. Yashima began her training at the Institut zur Früh-Förderung musikalisch Hochbegabter (IFF) at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien in her hometown of Hanover, and studied piano with Bernd Goetzke. She received her first conducting lessons at 14 and after studying in Freiburg with Scott Sandmeier and in Vienna with Mark Stringer, she completed her conducting studies at the Hans Eisler School of Music Berlin with Christian Ehwald and Hans-Dieter Baum.

**Anna Tsybuleva** *piano*

Russian pianist [Anna Tsybuleva](#) shot into the international spotlight in 2015 when she was crowned first prize winner at the [Leeds International Piano Competition](#). She received wide acclaim for her winning performance and was described as 'a pianist of rare gifts: not since Murray Perahia's triumph in 1972 has Leeds had a winner of this musical poise and calibre' (*International Piano Magazine*).

Now a regular performer in major cities worldwide, Tsybuleva's early experiences were more modest. Born in 1990, she was raised in the mountains of Nizhny Arkhyz, a small village of around 500 inhabitants, in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic of Greater Caucasus. Her surroundings proved a constant inspiration and have served to feed directly into the development of her unique performance style today, which is described as one of captivating intimacy.

She received her first piano lessons from her mother aged six before attending the Shostakovich Music School in Volgodonsk at nine. From the age of 13 she continued her studies at the Moscow Central Music School and Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatoire, graduating in 2014 with the title of 'best student'.

Tsybuleva has gone on to triumph in recital on many of the greatest international stages including Concertgebouw Amsterdam, KKL Luzern, Palais Des Beaux-Arts, Philharmonie Luxembourg, Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, Tonhalle Zurich and at the Wigmore Hall. Recent and forthcoming highlights include engagements with the Dortmunder Philharmoniker, hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Luzerner Sinfonieorchester, Orquesta Extramadura and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra.

Keen to share the beauty of her home with others, in 2022 she launched the AlterSono festival in her hometown (also now the site of the world's largest space telescope), which combines music, science, space and people.

Tsybuleva is signed to Signum Classics for a multi-disc deal, with her most recent release being the 2024 recording [\*Debussy's Preludes for Solo Piano\*](#).

Enjoy Anna Tsybuleva playing Shostakovich's [\*Piano Concerto No.1\*](#).

### **Fábio Brum** *trumpet*

Fábio Brum is an internationally acclaimed trumpet player known for his versatility, virtuosity, and refined musicianship. He has performed across Europe, North, Central, South America and Asia, captivating audiences with his expressive playing and technical brilliance. A former member of the renowned Canadian Brass, he has also served as principal trumpet for the Royal Seville Symphony Orchestra and the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra.

Currently, Brum is the section leader trumpet of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, where he continues to shape the orchestra's brass sound with his leadership and artistry. A prizewinner at several international competitions, he has released 3 acclaimed solo CDs and collaborated with over 20 composers, many of whom have dedicated works to him—most of which he has recorded. His career includes collaborations with prestigious ensembles and solo appearances in major concert halls worldwide. Beyond performing, he is dedicated to mentoring young musicians and expanding the trumpet repertoire.

### **Mathilde Wantenaar** *Prélude à une nuit américaine*

The versatile Amsterdam-born composer [\*Mathilde Wantenaar's\*](#) music has been described as lyrical, charming, eclectic but authentic. The daughter of a singer mother and an accordionist father, Wantenaar studied classical composition at the Amsterdam Conservatory and classical voice at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague. She spent three years dividing her time between composition practice and vocal studies, until 2019 when she received both her first opera commission (from the Dutch National Opera) and her first orchestral commission from the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

That orchestral work was *Prélude à une nuit américaine*, [\*based on a musical motif\*](#) she had been toying with while she was experimenting with a 12-tone melody, and which the Rotterdam Philharmonic premiered in October 2019 with Andre de Ridder conducting.

Wantenaar works with individual musicians as well as small ensembles, large orchestras and everything in between, and is particularly interested in creating opera. She has written for, and collaborated with, the Netherlands Philharmonic, Dutch Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Choir, Dutch Wind Ensemble, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Liza Ferschtman, Ralph van Raat, Johannette Zoma and Simone Lamsma among others. Recent [\*commissions\*](#)

include *Meader*, for the Rotterdam Philharmonic; a *Violin Concerto*, performed by Simone Lamsma and the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest; *Suite 5*, commissioned by Ailsa Weilerstein; *Accordion Concerto* for solo accordion and symphony orchestra; and *Serenade*, commissioned and performed by the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra.

Watch a performance of [Prélude à une nuit américaine](#).

### **Shostakovich** *Piano Concerto No.1*

**Dmitri Shostakovich** wrote his Second Piano Concerto in 1957 as a birthday present for his teenage son Maxim to play at his graduation. But almost a quarter of a century earlier, when he sat down to compose his [Piano Concerto No.1](#), it was all for himself. Well, almost all.

Because when Shostakovich embarked on the new work (his first attempt at a concerto of any kind) in the spring of 1933, and around six months after he completed the score of his ambitious opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, he initially had the idea of composing a trumpet concerto for Alexander Schmidt who played in the [Leningrad Philharmonic](#). Technical challenges meant that initial idea soon morphed into what became a piano concerto – albeit one also scored extensively for solo trumpet, which indeed has equal prominence with the keyboard in the final movement. In fact, an alternate title for the piece was *Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and String Orchestra*.

Its 27-year-old composer debuted the new work in the Bolshoi Hall in October 1933 as part of the new season at the Leningrad Philharmonic, with Schmidt taking the other solo role. And Shostakovich, who continued to write extensively for piano throughout his life, later also recorded the concerto.

Watch Shostakovich play the [finale of his piano concerto](#) in 1940.

**Did you know? Shostakovich once worked for TRAM, a Soviet proletarian youth theatre in Leningrad. He wrote incidental music for its productions, including a 1931 piece titled *Rule, Britannia!* for chorus and orchestra, which accompanied a stage play about the prospect of revolution in Western capitalist countries.**

### **Dvořák** *Symphony No.9, 'From the New World'*

It was a deal [Antonín Dvořák](#) eventually found hard to turn down. In 1892, with his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday just behind him, the Czech composer was approached by [Jeannette Meyer Thurber](#), the wealthy American music patron and founder of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, to see if he would agree to become the institution's new director. It was a generous offer – the salary alone was more than 20 times what he had been earning teaching at the Prague Conservatory, and Thurber promised he would only have to teach the American college's most talented students. In addition, he would get four months' holiday each summer so he could go home to Europe.

Dvořák was eventually swayed, and in September 1892 he, wife Anna and two of their six children embarked on what was a stormy transatlantic passage from Bremen to New Jersey. The following spring, having decided not to make the trip home to Bohemia for the summer but instead to go to [Iowa](#) where there was a large expat Czech community, the Dvořáks called for their other children to join them and they enjoyed a contented summer together.

Meanwhile in January 1893, inspired by his new surroundings and by his discovery of Afro-American and American Indian song, Dvořák embarked on a new symphony. What became *Symphony No.9 'From the New World'* – more often known simply as his [New World Symphony](#) – was completed in May, ahead of the family's summer break in Spillville, and it

received its premiere courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Society on December 13. The symphony quickly made its way across the Atlantic, and was included in the opening concert of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society's 56<sup>th</sup> season in October the following year, conducted by [Sir Charles Hallé](#).

Listen to the [opening movement](#) of *Symphony No.9*.

## About the Music

### **Mathilde Wantenaar (b.1993): Prélude à une nuit américaine (UK premiere)**

Composed: 2019

First Performed: 11 October 2019, Rotterdam, De Doelen Hall, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Lahav Shani

If the title stirs echoes of Debussy's voluptuous classic *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, that's intentional. Amsterdam-born composer Mathilde Wantenaar has loved the exquisite, dreamlike scores of the French tone poets Debussy and Ravel since childhood. But she also loves the warm-blooded lyrical eloquence of the arch Russian Romantic Tchaikovsky, and one of her aims in writing *Prélude à une nuit américaine* was to create 'equally beautiful long-held string lines'. So why not *Prélude à une nuit russe*? Because American jazz, its richly expressive harmonies even more than its vibrant rhythms, left a powerful imprint on the long-abandoned fragment she decided to take as her starting place. Imagine what Wantenaar called 'French, nocturnal sultriness' recreated in America's Deep South, and you're already several steps along the right track.

### **Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75): Piano Concerto No.1 (Concerto in C minor for piano, trumpet and string orchestra), Op 35**

1. Allegro moderato -
2. Lento -
3. Moderato -
4. Allegro con brio

Composed: 1933

First Performed: 15 October 1933, Leningrad (now St Petersburg), Conservatory Great Hall, Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, Shostakovich (piano), Alexander Schmidt (trumpet), cond. Fritz Stiedry

When Shostakovich wrote his First Piano Concerto, the Western musical classics, previously dismissed as 'bourgeois' by some Soviet ideologues, were beginning to be rehabilitated – especially the Russian classics. But Shostakovich was evidently in no mood to produce a purely serious virtuoso concerto in the manner of Beethoven, Brahms or Tchaikovsky. The First Piano Concerto walks a tightrope between respect for the great tradition and mockery at the manners of high art, offset by elements that clearly derive from urban popular music and jazz. His youthful experience improvising at the piano for silent films also left a strong imprint on this concerto, which at times would make a wonderful accompaniment for a riotous, no doubt bitingly satirical animation.

It isn't all naughty, or even dark fun and games though. There are moments when something more serious seems to stir beneath the surface, as in the slow-waltz Lento second movement – or does it? Is that a joke too? The finale has something of the wicked naughtiness of the then-notorious Parisian group of composers, 'Les Six', especially that inspired prankster Francis Poulenc. But there's a sharper edge here, and the sense of unease behind the fun and games is

more marked. Shostakovich's barbed sense of humour was soon to explode in his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* – and to get him into serious trouble.

### **Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904): Symphony No.9 in E minor, Op 95, From the New World**

1. Adagio – Allegro molto
2. Largo
3. Scherzo: Molto Vivace
4. Allegro con fuoco

Composed: 1893

First Performed: 16 December 1893, Carnegie Hall, New York, New York Philharmonic, cond, Anton Seidl

Having shown his fellow Czechs how to write truly 'national' classical music in his Slavonic Dances, Dvořák set out to do the same for the much younger nation of North America in his Ninth Symphony, composed while he was director of the newly-formed New York Conservatory. As in his native country, Dvořák hoped to show how turning to indigenous folk music could provide the roots of a national American style, and in a newspaper article he argued that it was the music of the Black and Native Americans who provided the most vibrant and fertile examples. Dvořák wasn't prepared for the indignation this provoked, much of it unashamedly racist in character. But he soldiered on: if White Americans wouldn't accept his thesis expressed in words, would it be different if he expressed it in music?

It turns out he was right. The premiere of the New World Symphony was a sensational success, and it has been hugely popular – and influential – ever since, and not just with classical musicians. Steeped in folk music from boyhood, it's not surprising that Dvořák could create 'Czech' melodies of his own at will. What is really surprising is how much he was able to do the same with North American music, particularly Black American spirituals. The beautiful cor anglais melody in the Largo sounds so 'authentic' that for years it was taken to be a genuine spiritual – one that Dvořák had perhaps heard sung by his Black pupil Harry Burleigh. The debt to Native American music is less obvious, but apparently the pounding rhythms of the Scherzo were inspired by seeing and hearing native dancers at the Czech community in Spillville, Iowa. What is most remarkable though is the way Dvořák draws all these elements together into a panoramic symphonic statement – there's so much more to this than a collection of musical postcards.

But finally, a question: what about the ending? The symphony seems to be powering to a loudly affirmative conclusion, but the final chord dies away slowly, on winds. Not so affirmative after all? Is doubt mixed in with the hope? Given the way race relations developed (or failed to develop) in the 20th Century, this could be genuine foresight.