

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
April 12 programme complementary content

“The fragrance of the trees was like incense,” declared Leoš Janáček. “I felt a cathedral grow from a great forest.” And with its jubilant trumpets, thundering organ and raw, unbuttoned lust for life, there’s nothing quite like the *Glagolitic Mass*. It’s an ear-tingling, soul-shaking adventure of a lifetime for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and fast-rising guest conductor Dinis Sousa. First though, there’s no better way to set the mood than with Beethoven’s leafiest (and loveliest) symphony.

Dinis Sousa *conductor*

Dinis Sousa is Principal Conductor of the Royal Northern Sinfonia, a position he has held since April 2021. During his tenure, the orchestra has performed twice at the BBC Proms. Last season they presented a complete cycle of Robert Schumann’s symphonies, as well as his choral masterpiece *Das Paradies und die Peri*, along with a world premiere by Cassandra Miller and several performances around the UK. Meanwhile this season has marked both the start of a second three-year term as Principal Conductor and the Sinfonia’s 20th anniversary at Gateshead’s The Glasshouse.

Sousa is much in demand on concert stages and at leading festivals, and has recently appeared with the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic, CBSO and Graz Opera, where he conducted *Così Fan Tutte*. Future engagements this season include leading the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and pianist Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, concerts in San Sebastian, Vitoria, Pamplona and Bilbao with the Euskadiko Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

Sousa is Associate Conductor of the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestras, and founder and Artistic Director of **Orquestra XXI**, an award-winning orchestra which brings together some of the best young Portuguese musicians from around Europe to perform in Portugal’s most prestigious venues. In recognition of his work with the orchestra, Sousa has been awarded the title of Knight of the Order of Prince Henry of Portugal.

Born in Portugal, **Sousa** moved to London at 18 to study film before switching to piano studies at the Guildhall School of Music, starting to conduct and organise concerts soon after.

Evelina Dobračeva *soprano*

Russian soprano **Evelina Dobračeva** began her career under the tuition of Professor Norma Sharp, Snežana Brzaković and Professor Julia Varady at the Hanns Eisler Music College in Berlin. Her discography includes Dargomyzhsky’s *Rusalka* recorded with the WDR conducted by Mikhail Jurowski, and Britten’s *War Requiem* with the Nederlands Radio Philharmonic. She also features on the *Rachmaninov Songs* disc recorded with pianist Ian Burnside.

In 2022, she appeared in the *Glagolitic Mass* with the Czech Philharmonic at several concerts including one at the Barbican. Recent highlights include a magnificent performance as Olga in Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Maid of Pskov* at Grange Park Opera, Verdi’s *Requiem* with the CBSO, and a concert performance of *Götterdämmerung*, the conclusion to Vladimir Jurowski’s acclaimed run of the Wagner *Ring Cycle* with the London Philharmonic. This season, she has featured in Strauss’ *Vier Letzte Lieder* with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife.

Listen to Evelina Dobračeva sing Rachmaninov’s *Dreams*.

Katarina Karnéus *mezzo-soprano*

Born in Stockholm, [Katarina Karnéus](#) studied at London's Trinity College of Music and at the National Opera Studio. In 1995, she won the *BBC Cardiff Singer of the World* competition, which launched her international career. Since then, she has appeared throughout the world in opera, concert and recital, and has worked with leading conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Mark Elder, Sir Roger Norrington, and Michael Tilson-Thomas.

Opera engagements have included the New York Met, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Glyndebourne, Opéra National de Paris, Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, Netherlands Opera, La Monnaie Brussels, Geneva Opera and Frankfurt Opera. Her repertoire includes the great mezzo roles of Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Wagner, Bizet and Strauss. In concert she has worked with many of the world's leading orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, NDR Symphony, Vienna Symphony, San Francisco Symphony and at the BBC Proms, Edinburgh Festival and Salzburg Festival. As a recitalist she has been heard in many major venues in Europe and North America including the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Lincoln Center, and in Frankfurt, Washington and San Francisco.

Enjoy Katarina Karnéus singing Copland's [Heart, We Will Forget Him](#).

Ladislav Elgr *tenor*

Czech tenor Ladislav Elgr studied at the Plzen Conservatory and Academy for Performing Arts in Prague. He went on to join the Nuremburg Staatstheater Opera Studio and Hamburg Staatsoper before becoming a member of the Vienna Volksoper for two seasons. He is a regular collaborator with the Theater an der Wien. Elgr is much sought-after on the [international opera stage](#) and enjoys a busy career, with his wide-ranging repertoire including the Prince in *Rusalka*, Eric in *The Flying Dutchman*, Jose in *Carmen* and Froh in *Das Rheingold*.

Highlights of recent seasons include *Káťa Kabanová* under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle, Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* in Paris, Lyon and at Covent Garden, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in Naples and Barcelona, Prokofiev's *The Gambler* in Antwerp and the *Glagolitic Mass* with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. Meanwhile on the concert stage Elgr has sung, among others, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, Bruckner's *Te Deum*, Handel's *Messiah*, the Verdi *Requiem*, and Mendelssohn's *Elias*.

Watch Ladislav Elgr perform in [Jenůfa](#) in Berlin.

Jan Martiník *bass*

Czech opera singer [Jan Martiník](#) has won several awards throughout his career, including the [2009 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Song Prize](#). He studied at the Janáček Conservatory with Eliška Pappová and took masterclasses with Peter Dvorský. In 2003, he won the Antonín Dvořák International Vocal Competition and in 2004 took second prize in the Mikuláš Schneider-Trnavský International Vocal Competition. He was a finalist in Operalia in 2007 and in 2009 he also won Förderpreis in Das Lied competition in Berlin.

For more than 10 years he has been a soloist at Berlin's Staatsoper Unter den Linden where he has performed roles including Colline in *La Bohème*, Daland in *The Flying Dutchman* and Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*. Martiník regularly performs with leading international orchestras including the Czech Philharmonic, Bamberger Symphoniker, BBC Symphony Orchestra, CBSO, LSO, Pittsburgh Symphony and Rotterdam Philharmonic, and with many of the world's most important conductors including Daniel Barenboim and Sir Simon Rattle. One of his most recent recordings – Schubert's *Winterreise* – received five Diapasons.

Watch Jan Martiník perform at the [BBC Cardiff Singer of the World](#) competition.

Daniel Greenway *organ*

Daniel Greenway began his musical studies as a chorister at Liverpool Cathedral and while there he developed a keen interest in the organ, becoming a student of Ian Tracey and then later an organ scholar. He studied at the Blue Coat School and junior department of the Royal Northern College of Music and went on to take up an organ scholarship at Keble College, Oxford, graduating with a First in Music. During his time at Oxford, he was organist to Campion Hall and principal accompanist for the Oxford Bach Choir. He has also performed on organ and piano with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra and Southbank Sinfonia and as a continuo player with the Instruments of Time and Truth at the London Mozart Players.

He has won recital prizes to play at venues across the country, including [Coventry](#) and Truro cathedrals and at Oxford's Queen's College and Merton College. In 2023, the multi-award-winning Greenway was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and has also been awarded the Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. He is currently an organ scholar at [Westminster Cathedral](#) where he accompanies the cathedral choir on a regular basis.

Watch Daniel Greenway give a [recital](#) at Truro Cathedral.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir

When the Liverpool Philharmonic Society was founded in 1840 it saw the birth not only of an orchestra but of a chorus too. [The Choir](#) added 'royal' to its title in 1990 and is led by Director of Choirs and Singing Matthew Hamilton.

In recent years, the Choir has performed Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and *Mass in B minor*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Mahler's *Symphony No.2*, Rachmaninov's *Vespers*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Karl Jenkins' *Stabat Mater*, James MacMillan's *St John Passion*, Beethoven's *Mass in C*, Britten's *War Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah*. It has also appeared in many of the UK's major concert venues and has sung on a number of foreign tours.

During the 2024/25 season, members of the Choir have also performed in Holst's *The Planets Suite*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, the Spirit of Christmas concert series, Handel's *Messiah*, and Mahler's *Symphony No 3*. In July they will sing Verdi's *Requiem*.

Beethoven *Symphony No.6*

[Ludwig van Beethoven](#) may have been a fixture of the metropolitan music scene in early 19th century Vienna, but he also enjoyed a profound and lifelong love of the natural world around him. Declaring in his diary: "Nature is a glorious school for the heart!", Beethoven embarked on regular afternoon walks in which he carried a pocket sketchbook to capture the sights and sounds he encountered. And as his hearing declined, he found comfort in nature rather than the manmade cacophony of the city. Birdsong was a particular delight to him and can be found threaded through his works. It's been suggested the opening motif of Beethoven's Fifth (dah-dah-dah-daaa) was inspired by the call of the [ortolan bunting](#) or possibly the yellowhammer.

The apogee of this inspiration came in 1808 with his [Sixth Symphony](#), subtitled the *Pastoral*, composed concurrently with the Fifth and famously described by Beethoven himself as "more the expression of feeling than painting". Each of the work's five movements has a descriptive title, and perhaps the most indicative of Beethoven's deep love of the great outdoors and how it moved

him, is the opening allegro titled 'awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the country'. The symphony was premiered alongside the Fifth in a marathon, woefully under-rehearsed and bitterly cold concert in Vienna days before [Christmas 1808](#).

Enjoy the [second movement](#) of Beethoven's *Symphony No.6*.

Janáček *Glagolitic Mass*

The last decade of his life turned out to be a particularly creative time for [Leoš Janáček](#). Things had really started to look up in 1916 with a hugely successful performance of *Jenůfa* at Prague's National Theatre. Janáček's private life also had a bearing on his work – the same year as his Prague success, his marriage, which had long been less than happy, came under more strain when it became clear he'd been carrying on with a singer from the production behind his wife Zdenka's back. Then in 2017 he met the married [Kamila Stösslová](#), more than 35 years his junior, and became passionately obsessed with her, carrying on a torrid two-year correspondence. Despite (or perhaps because) his love remaining unrequited, it was Kamila who became the inspiration for heroines in three of the four operas he composed in the 1920s - *Káťa Kabanová* in 1921, *The Cunning Little Vixen* in 1924 and *The Makropulos Case* in 1926.

Meanwhile away from the opera stage, Janáček also wrote a pair of string quartets, and, in 1926, he finished his [Sinfonietta](#). Janáček was hugely proud of his Slavic roots and his music underscored his nation's desire for independent statehood and self-determination. Something that was finally achieved in the final weeks of the First World War.

The year 1926 also saw the birth of his *Glagolitic Mass* which took its name from the Glagolitic alphabet which is believed to be the oldest Slavic alphabet in existence, created in the 9th century to translate liturgical texts from Latin to 'Old Church Slavonic'. The mass was composed at his favourite resort spa, Luhačovice, and Janáček declared he wanted it to be seen as an article of faith in the permanence of the new nation rather than as a purely ecclesiastical work. It was premiered in Brno in December 1927, and the composer partly revised it for its Prague premiere the following April – four months before his death, in his homeland, at the age of 74.

Listen to Janáček's [Glagolitic Mass](#).

About the Music

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Symphony No 6 in F major, op 68, 'Pastoral'

1. Allegro ma non troppo ('Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the country')
2. Andante molto mosso ('Scene by a brook')
3. Allegro ('Peasants' merrymaking')
4. Allegro ('Thunderstorm')
5. Allegretto ('Shepherds' Hymn - happy, thankful feelings after the storm')

Composed: 1807-8

First Performed: 22 December 1808, Theater an der Wien, Vienna, cond. Beethoven

'More the expression of feeling than tone-painting', was how Beethoven summed up his *Pastoral* Symphony (1807-8). There are moments of wonderful tone-painting: the thunder in the fourth movement for instance, or the birdcalls in the closing pages of the second. But Beethoven believed that truth lay more in feeling than in fact, and that is what counts in the end. The first movement has a relaxed, open, song-like quality quite unlike the taut, muscular thematic springboards that set the *Eroica* and the Fifth symphonies in motion - not an explosion of emotion, but a gradual 'awakening of cheerful feelings'. 'Scene by a brook' begins with flowing harmonies for lower strings, while first violins sing heart-easing melodies. Near the end we hear the calls of nightingale, quail and cuckoo before the movement ebbs gently to its close.

A lightly dancing scherzo, with a stomping trio section in two-time suggestive of earthy country dances is suddenly and dramatically cut off. Hushed bass tremolos and pattering violin figures evoke distant thunder and the first raindrops. Before long the storm is fully upon us, with terrific thunderclaps on brass, timpani and growling cellos and basses. A quiet hymn-like figure is heard on woodwind and upper strings (famously compared to a rainbow), then a rising solo flute heralds the beginning of the finale. A solo clarinet imitates a shepherd's pipe, echoed by a solo horn. Violins transform these fragments of themes into a long, fully-fledged melody. At length the finale builds to an ecstatic climax, again very hymn-like, then muted horn – the shepherd now distant perhaps – pronounces a benediction. As an 'Ode to Joy' it's every bit as convincing as the Ninth Symphony's famous finale. It's worth remembering though the man who created these vivid sound-pictures had been deaf for the best part of a decade: the memories were clearly still fresh as ever.

Leoš Janáček (1854-1928): *Glagolitic Mass*

1. *Úvod* (Introduction)
2. *Gospodi pomiluj* (Kyrie)
3. *Slava* (Gloria)
4. *Věřuju* (Credo)
5. *Svet* (Sanctus)
6. *Agneče Božij* (Agnus Dei)
7. *Varhany sólo* (Organ solo)
8. *Intrada* (Entrance)

Composed: 1926

First Performed: 5 December 1927, Brno Arts Society, cond. Jaroslav Kvapil

'So, the old man, in his declining years, turns to thoughts of God!', wrote a critic after the premiere of the *Glagolitic Mass*. 'No old man! No decline! No God!', Janáček fired back. Though well into his seventies, Janáček was at the height of his powers, pouring out passionate, astonishingly youthful masterpiece after masterpiece. As for 'No God' – Janáček declared himself an atheist, but his belief in life, love and nature had a pantheist religious fervour, and this extraordinary Mass is his most direct expression of that faith.

A passionate believer in the culture and destiny of the Slavic peoples, Janáček chose the old Slavonic form of the Roman Catholic Mass, which had been written down in the 9th century in an early form of Cyrillic script called 'Glagolitic', hence the title. But the music isn't so much archaic as elemental. Janáček wrote that he imagined the congregation processing out of the church, to celebrate this 'mass of life' in the open air, before returning to the church at the end – which is why the last movement is called 'Intrada'. It's a crazy idea, of course (acoustically it would be a nightmare), but it tells us something about the kind of experience Janáček had in mind. This man, who felt the life force with such oceanic intensity, even in his seventies, wants us to share his wonder at the miracle of simply being alive, amongst other living beings, human and animal. (The heroine of one of his greatest operas is a fox!)

The orchestral procession (*Úvod*) that begins the *Glagolitic Mass* is a commanding display of brazen splendour. After this, *Gospodi pomiluj* ('Lord have mercy') grows more urgent as the prayer addresses Christ – God in human form. But the following *Slava* ('Glory') is Janáček – 'the great yea-sayer', as one critic put it – at his most ecstatically affirmative. In *Věřuju* ('I believe'), the chorus wrestles with the assertions of traditional dogma, but at its heart is a long orchestral build-up representing the Day of Judgement, culminating in a frenzied organ solo. *Svet* ('Holy') alternates between awestruck devotion and vigorous celebration, then as *Agneče Božij* ('Lamb of God') probes the mystery of sacrificial love, interestingly, Janáček leaves out the final words of the Mass, 'grant us peace'. Instead, a long, wild organ solo summons us back to the church, then *Intrada* brings back the orchestra, for one last dance of primal joy.