Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
May 17 programme complementary content

There's rhythm in the air, and it's not just confined to Roberto Sierra's toe-tapping *Fandangos*. It's also the driving force behind the nostalgic melodies of Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* – the sound of a Russian composer stranded in Centerport, New York, and amid the freeways and palm trees of 1940s California. In between, Pablo Ferrández summons up the quiet power and deep poetry of Elgar's hugely popular *Cello Concerto*. "A star in the making" says one critic: we say he's already up there!

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.

Pablo Ferrández *cello*

Spanish cellist **Pablo Ferrández** has been hailed as a "new cello genius", winning acclaim for his "pop-idol magnetism, superb technique and exhilarating musicality". Born into a family of musicians in Madrid in 1991, he was 13 when he joined the prestigious Escuala Superior de Musica Reina Sofia where he studied with Natalia Shakhovskaya. He went on to train at the Kronberg Academy and at the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation.

A prize winner at the XV International Tchaikovsky Competition, he records exclusively for SONY Classical. His 2021 debut album *Reflections* won him Young Artist of the Year at the Opus Klassik Awards, while his second album, released last year, includes Brahms' *Double Concerto* performed with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Czech Philharmonic under conductor Manfred Honeck.

In demand as both a soloist and recitalist, he is also frequently invited to international festivals including Salzburg, Dresden, Verbier and Dvořák Prague Festival. Future engagements this season include performances with the Czech Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra. In 2018 he performed the Haydn and Korngold cello concertos with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Alpesh Chauhan, and he returned in September 2023 to play Dvořák's lyrical *Cello Concerto*.

Ferrández plays the 1689 Archinto Stradivarius on generous lifelong loan from a member of the Stretton Society.

Watch Pablo Ferrández practise the Elgar ***Cello Concerto***.

Roberto Sierra *Fandangos*

On Domingo Hindoyan's first visit to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall in January 2020, he introduced Hope Street audiences to the work of the multi-award winning **Roberto Sierra**. At that concert, Pacho Flores performed the world premiere of the Puerto Rican composer's ***Salseando for Trumpet and Orchestra***, with Sierra appearing on stage to take a well-earned bow.

That was followed in October 2021 by the world premiere of his **Sixth Symphony**, a co-commission with the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Boston Symphony. In 2023, there was not only a welcome repeat of the *Salseando*, but the Orchestra went on to record an **entire album** of Sierra's music including his *Symphony No.6*, *Sinfonietta* – and *Fandangos*.

Commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra and premiered at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC in 2001, *Fandangos* is an orchestral fantasy built on the fandango for harpsichord by the 18th Century Spanish composer **Antonio Soler**. Sierra himself describes it as a 'super-fandango' which takes Soler's work as a starting point and also incorporates elements of fandango from a Boccherini guitar quintet, with Sierra's own Baroque musical thoughts. Over the last quarter of a century, it has become one of his most performed and best-loved works in Europe, Asia and the USA, with it chosen to open the *BBC* Proms in 2002.

Listen to Roberto Sierra's ***Fandangos***.

Elgar *Cello Concerto*

Edward Elgar was deeply affected by the appalling devastation wrought by the First World War. His response came as the conflict entered its final months, and through music – he wrote three chamber works in the summer and autumn of 1918 at his bolthole cottage near Petworth in West Sussex which embraced a new, more sombre tone than his pre-war compositions. Then, as 1919 dawned, Elgar turned to a new piece.

As early as 1900, the cellist Carl Fuchs had wrung a promise from the composer for a concerto. Now, Elgar finally produced one, pouring all his energies into the **new work** – a meditative, melancholy and yet exquisitely beautiful lament for a lost world. The concerto, composed chiefly at his London home Severn House, was dedicated to Elgar's friends, the head of the British Museum's department of prints and drawings **Sir Sidney Colvin** and his wife Frances.

It was premiered by Felix Salmond and the London Symphony Orchestra at the Queen's Hall on October 27, 1919. Elgar conducted the piece but circumstances beyond his control meant the orchestra was woefully under-rehearsed and the premiere was an **unmitigated disaster**. Saying that, not all the reaction was negative. *The Daily Mail* described the work as 'the most beautiful cello concerto in existence' and the *Daily Chronicle* talked of the third movement's 'music of serene loveliness'.

While he lived for another 15 years, the *Cello Concerto* was to be Elgar's final major work. And despite the bruising experience of its premiere, it has gone on to become one of the two (with Dvořák's) most popular and most frequently performed pieces for the instrument.

Watch Jacqueline du Pre play Elgar's ***Cello Concerto in E minor***, conducted by Daniel Barenboim.

Did you know? In 1891 Elgar suffered from severe tonsillitis, and in March 1918 when it flared up again, he had his tonsils removed in an operation in London. The night he returned to his own bed he jotted down the melody which would later become the heart of his *Cello Concerto*.

Rachmaninov *Symphonic Dances*

He may have been one of Russia's greatest musical talents, but composer, virtuoso pianist and conductor **Sergei Rachmaninov** was to die in exile in America, 6,000 miles away from his birthplace. In fact, Rachmaninov spent the last 25 years of his life in the United States after quitting his home Ivanovka in the wake of the October Revolution.

While he forged a career there as a pianist and conductor, for many years after his departure his composing mostly took a back seat – he only returned to it with vigour in the 1930s when he built himself a Swiss summer retreat where he stayed every year until the outbreak of the Second World War. Unable to travel to Europe, Rachmaninov instead composed the nostalgia-filled ***Symphonic Dances*** at his home on the north shore of Long Island, and completed it in October 1940 – following the completion of a two-piano version produced in August. It would turn out to be the only work which Rachmaninov would produce in its entirety in America before his death in California in March 1943.

The work was written for the Philadelphia Orchestra and premiered by them under the baton of its musical director **Eugene Ormandy** on January 3 1941. Ahead of that, during what was described as 'an impromptu gathering' at Ormandy's home in December 1940, Rachmaninov played the *Symphonic Dances* on piano to demonstrate how he wanted it performed – and **a recording** was captured. Recently rediscovered, it has now been released.

Listen to an excerpt of Rachmaninov playing his ***Symphonic Dances*** on piano in 1940.

About the Music

Roberto Sierra *Fandangos*

Composed: 2000
First Performed: 28 February 2001, Washington DC, John F. Kennedy Centre, National Symphony Orchestra, cond. Leonard Slatkin

One of Puerto Rican composer Roberto Sierra's key childhood memories was hearing the great Spanish cellist Pablo Casals playing on TV while, outside in the street, salsa music blared, thrummed and stamped. The idea of combining the Old and New Latin worlds musically was in his thinking from early on, but its most striking fruit is the enduringly popular *Fandangos* – listen to Domingo Hindoyan's YouTube recording and you'll probably want to join in the audience whoops at the end! Why *Fandangos* – plural? Partly because Sierra had two classical fandangos in mind, one originally for harpsichord by the Spanish baroque composer Antonio Soler, the other by the classical-era Luigi Boccherini – Italian born but a star in Spain. But there are also echoes of Ravel's famous *Bolero*, and of the wonderful Latin American dance music, itself grown from so many different cultural roots, which was Sierra's heritage. Add some brilliant and atmospheric orchestral effects, a splash of avant-garde collage technique, and you have a piece that sounds modern and earthed in the past at the same time. No wonder it's such a hit.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934): Cello Concerto in E minor, op 85
1. Adagio – Moderato –
2. Lento – Allegro molto
3. Adagio –
4. Allegro – Allegro man non troppo

Composed: 1918-19
First Performed: 27 October 1919, London, Queen's Hall, London Symphony Orchestra, Felix Salmond (cello), cond. Albert Coates

The Concerto is the last major work Elgar completed. Its failure at its first performance depressed him deeply. Then the following year his wife Alice died, and without her stalwart support his creative spark dwindled almost to nothing. Even though Alice was still alive when Elgar wrote the Concerto, it has a strongly elegiac quality – did Elgar sense that his creative end was near? He certainly knew that the world was changing. The catastrophe of World War One had destroyed what he'd called the 'glad confident morning' of the Edwardian era – the age which had seen his rise to international fame. Elgar's music was soon to drift out of fashion, both at home and abroad. A sense of loss, greater than mere nostalgia, haunts the Cello Concerto, especially towards the end.

Yet for all its bitter-sweet lyricism, the Cello Concerto is much more than a sustained lament. The cello writing is glorious – no wonder it's become such a favourite with cellists across the world. And while the moods and colours are often autumnal, this Concerto is also a reminder of how beautiful autumn can be. The opening solo suggests that we're about to hear an impressive elegy, but when the main movement begins it has a lilting, tender sadness – for Elgar it was closely associated with his beloved Malvern Hills. The second movement is racing, dancing exhilaration, while the memories evoked by the gorgeous Adagio are warm, despite the odd spasm of regret. Then the finale seems to bring us back to the bluff forward-striding Elgar of the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, but in time confidence and momentum ebb, and the cello begins a slower, heart-rending outpouring. The martial music resumes, but only briefly, bringing the Concerto to a stoically resolute ending.

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943): Symphonic Dances, op 45
1. Non allegro
2. Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
3. Lento assai - Allegro vivace

Composed: 1940
First Performed: 3 January 1941, Philadelphia Orchestra, cond. Eugene Ormandy

By 1940, Rachmaninov already had three symphonies to his name. But writing a piece called 'Symphonic Dances' rather than 'Symphony' allowed him to forget about conforming to traditional symphonic models, and to indulge his fabulous orchestral imagination to the full. Rachmaninov would surely never have allowed himself to use a saxophone in a 'proper' symphony, but here this instrument sings an unmistakably Russian melody as the centrepiece of the first dance – an outpouring of homesickness, from an unhappy exile in the USA.

Rachmaninov's original working title was 'Fantastic Dances', and at first there were hints of a descriptive programme: the three movements were to have the subtitles 'Morning', 'Twilight' and 'Midnight'. These were eventually dropped, but the music fits well with the implied youth-to-death sequence. At the end of the initially vigorous first dance there's a quiet reminiscence of Rachmaninov's First Symphony, whose catastrophic premiere in St Petersburg in 1897 had plunged Rachmaninov into a profound depression. (The score was subsequently withdrawn.) But here he seems to look back on it with a kind of forgiving tenderness. Pain, it seems, is at last forgotten.

As for 'Twilight', this second movement is dominated by waltz rhythms - a symbol of the opulent, decadent old world into which Rachmaninov, as a member of the Russian gentry, had been born, and which had been so violently swept aside by the 1917 Revolution. But this waltz music has a definite sinister side: there is a serpent in this paradise.

If the final dance is 'Midnight', it is the Midnight of the Soul. A driven dance soon begins, whose main theme resembles the old Catholic funeral chant *Dies irae* ('Day of wrath'), a lifelong, grim favourite of Rachmaninov's. After a slow central section, the dance begins a long final ascent, in which a life-and-death struggle begins between fragments of the *Dies irae* and an almost literal quotation (low strings and woodwind, brass and pattering side drum) from Rachmaninov's

magnificent setting of the Russian Orthodox Easter Vigil service. In the manuscript at this point Rachmaninov wrote just one word, but it says everything – 'Hallelujah!'