

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra September 25 programme complementary content

Andrew Manze

Since 2018, [Andrew Manze](#) has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. A great favourite of Philharmonic audiences, he made his debut with the Orchestra over a decade ago and has appeared regularly on the Hope Street stage ever since.

With boundless energy and warmth and an extensive and scholarly knowledge of the repertoire, Manze is in great demand from some of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles and is widely celebrated as one of the most stimulating and inspirational conductors of his generation.

He began his career as an Early Music specialist, becoming Associate Director of the Academy of Ancient Music at the age of 31. Along with a busy conducting career he also teaches, edits and writes about music and is in demand as a broadcaster. As a violinist, he has released an astonishing variety of recordings, many of them award-winning.

He was Chief Conductor of the NDR Radiophilharmonie from 2014-2023, and last September he took up his role as Principal Guest Conductor of the [Scottish Chamber Orchestra](#).

Timothy Ridout

Award-winning [Timothy Ridout](#) is one of the most sought after violists of his generation, and with his remarkable range and commitment to expanding the instrument's repertoire, his performances captivate audiences across the globe. Recent seasons have seen him appear with orchestras including the Bavarian Radio Symphony, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Hamburger Symphoniker, Camerata Salzburg, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, and with some of the world's leading conductors.

In December 2024, he performed the world premiere of Mark Simpson's *Hold Your Heart in Your Teeth* at the [Berlin Philharmonie](#) where he appeared with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under the baton of Robin Ticciati.

A stellar chamber musician, London-born [Ridout](#) continues to present both solo and ensemble programmes across venues such as the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Alice Tully Hall New York. He is also in demand at festivals across Europe. In addition, he is an acclaimed and award-winning recording artist and one of Konzerthaus Dortmund's Jung Wilde, which champions young rising stars in the classical music world.

Ridout performs on a 1565-75 viola by Peregrino di Zanetto, generously on loan from a patron of the Beare's International Violin Society.

George Butterworth

Cut down at the Somme aged just 31, composer and folk song collector George Butterworth left a small [body of work](#) which hinted of a major talent snuffed out before its time. [George Sainton Kaye Butterworth](#) was born in London in 1885 and educated in Yorkshire (his father Sir Alexander Kaye Butterworth was general manager of the North Eastern Railway Company), Eton and Oxford, where he was president of the musical club. A stint as music critic of *The Times* followed graduation before he became, briefly, a music master at Radley College.

In the years before the First World War, Butterworth played a significant role in the revival of English folk music alongside his friends Ralph Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp, collecting and preserving hundreds of examples of traditional song which would influence his own

compositional work. He was also a founder of the English Folk Dance Society, and a member of Sharp's morris dancing demonstration team.

Butterworth's most famous surviving works are the 1913 orchestral idyll *The Banks of Green Willow*, based on a Sussex folk tune, and *A Shropshire Lad* – composed between 1909 and 1911 as two song cycles for voice and piano, using a dozen of AE Housman's elegiac poems. An orchestral rhapsody version of *A Shropshire Lad* was debuted at the [Leeds Festival](#) in October 1913 to much praise (although the *Liverpool Daily Post* ran a decidedly sniffy review, dismissing it as “a well-written student work”).

At the outbreak of war, however, Butterworth signed up to fight almost immediately. He served with the Durham Light Infantry and was awarded the Military Cross and bar. One citation lauded his “conspicuous gallantry in action” at the Somme where, after his captain had been wounded, he “commanded his company with great ability and coolness, and with his energy and utter disregard of danger he set a fine example on the front line”. However on August 5, 1916, at Pozieres, gallantry couldn't save him from [a German sniper](#). He was buried by his men, but his grave subsequently became lost, and he is remembered instead on the Thiepval Memorial.

After the war, Butterworth's music won increasing recognition, and even the *Daily Post* revised its opinion of the young composer, allowing how in his existing works he had left “to modern music a small legacy of rare loveliness”.

Did you know? Butterworth's *The Banks of Green Willow* received its premiere at West Kirby Town Hall in February 1914 with his friend Adrian Boult conducting an orchestra comprised of musicians from Liverpool Philharmonic and the Hallé.

Enjoy listening to George Butterworth's [A Shropshire Lad](#).

Mark Simpson

In 2006, a 17-year-old [Mark Simpson](#) won BBC Young Musician of the Year with his superb clarinet performance in a thrilling final at Gateshead, and also took the BBC Proms/Guardian Young Composer of the Year accolade. Two decades on, he remains the only person to do ‘the double’. Since then, the Liverpool-born composer and clarinetist has forged successful parallel careers, establishing himself as a major figure in the contemporary music world.

As a clarinetist he appears in venues worldwide, both as a concert soloist and chamber musician. He made his Wigmore Hall debut at 17, while in 2019 he performed the world premiere of his own [Clarinet Concerto](#) in Manchester.

Simpson also enjoys a prolific and high-profile composing career, writing music for the stage, orchestra, voices and chamber forces across a myriad of forms, in which poetic intensity is matched by technical assurance. His tone poem *A mirror-fragment* was composed for Liverpool Philharmonic in 2008, and in 2011, Ensemble 10:10 gave the world premiere of his work [Straw Dogs](#). The following year [sparks](#) – described as an ‘orchestral firecracker’ – was given its world premiere at the Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall. Simpson was presented with a South Bank Sky Arts Award for Classical Music in 2016 for his ‘blazingly original’ oratorio *The Immortal*, informed by the world of Victorian occultism. In the same year, his opera *Pleasure* – set in the loos of a gay bar (inspired by Liverpool's GBar), starring Lesley Garrett as a cloakroom attendant, and with a libretto by Melanie Challenger – was staged at the Liverpool Playhouse.

A former member of Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Simpson went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music and from there gained a first in music at Oxford before studying composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Julian Anderson. He has also been a BBC New Generation Artist.

Listen to a performance of **Mark Simpson's** [2020/21 Violin Concerto](#).

Graham Fitkin

A former Liverpool Philharmonic Composer in Residence, Graham Fitkin's impressive musical catalogue spans genre, style and form. Working with acoustic instruments, electronic instruments and audio recordings too, he writes for live performance, but also composes scores for dance, art and media installations.

Fitkin has received commissions from ensembles including the BBC Philharmonic, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and Athens Camerata, whilst his chamber works have seen him collaborate with everyone from Yo-Yo Ma and Kathryn Stott to Ensemble Bash.

The multi award-winning composer has also taken part in innovative art projects, worked with dance and ballet companies including the New York City Ballet, Munich Ballet and San Francisco Ballet, and delivered masterclasses and workshops to students around the world.

Claude Debussy

The late 19th and early 20th Century was a time of brilliant creativity in French classical music, driven by the rise of a generation of superstar composers. Among those born between 1835 and 1875 were Fauré, Saint-Saëns, Delibes, Bizet, Massenet, Dukas, Satie, Roussel, Ravel and – in August 1862, just outside Paris – Achille Claude Debussy.

Debussy enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 10. And it was later, while still a student, that he was taken under the wing of none other than Tchaikovsky's patroness [Nadezhda von Meck](#); over the course of three summer holidays he travelled to the von Meck's summer residences across Europe to play piano duets with her children.

Debussy won the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1884 with his cantata *The Prodigal Son*, although he spent most of his year in the Italian capital socialising with artists and writers rather than composing. Over the next decade he developed and matured his own distinctive style, and it was his dreamlike symphonic poem *Prelude L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1894) which really brought him to the public's attention. His other major works include *La Mer*, the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Suite Bergamasque* – which includes the iridescent *Clair de Lune* – and 24 piano preludes. His music, with its ethereal, shimmering soundscapes, has often been associated with [Impressionism](#), but Debussy himself always rejected that label.

While he died in 1918, Debussy's influence lived on through the work of both fellow Frenchmen and composers like Stravinsky and Bartók, leading to him being seen as one of the father figures of 20th Century music.

Listen to Debussy's [La cathédrale engloutie](#) arranged by Henry Wood.

Modest Mussorgsky

Modest Mussorgsky may have been one of his country's most innovative and exciting composers but, by all accounts, he wasn't the easiest of men. The Russian was what some might describe as a 'tortured genius' whose dedication to alcohol saw him dead from heart failure at just 42. His demise in 1881 left a catalogue of work packed with original ideas which often harnessed the harmonies and rhythms of Slavic folk music, as he sought to forge music that spoke of a unique Russian identity.

[Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky](#) was born into a landowning family at Karevo, south of St Petersburg, in 1839. Something of a piano prodigy, he swiftly outgrew his early tuition under his mother and by 12 he had already started composing. One of his earliest works was a bright

keyboard polka. He was still a teenager when he befriended Alexander Borodin at a military hospital in St Petersburg where the two were both serving, Mussorgsky having just graduated from cadet school and the older Borodin a military doctor.

The pair would later become the heart of what was known as **'The Five'** (or perhaps more descriptively 'The Mighty Handful'), a collective of Russian composers who aimed to develop a uniquely Russian musical identity drawing inspiration from the country's native culture. Mussorgsky, who enjoyed mixing with what have been described as 'wild intellectuals', was always seen as the most radical. He composed many of his pieces in his spare time from a day job as a civil servant, his style often raw and vividly painted. Among his works were four song cycles, including the dramatic and intense *Songs and Dances of Death*.

If opera audiences were asked about Mussorgsky's work, they would likely proffer *Boris Gudonov*, widely considered his masterpiece. Concertgoers on the other hand would no doubt namecheck his *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the 1874 piano suite which was later arranged by others to become a popular and much-played orchestral piece.

Listen to ***Heroes at the Gate of Kiev*** from Sir Henry Wood's arrangement of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

About the Music

George Butterworth (1885-1916): *A Shropshire Lad*

Composed: 1911

First Performed: 2 October 1913, Leeds Festival, cond. Arthur Nikisch

George Butterworth's death, at just 31, at the Battle of the Somme, was one of the most devastating wartime losses in British music. He didn't leave a great deal of music, but what survives is precious, especially the eleven exquisitely sensitive settings of poems by A.E. Housman, and the orchestral rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad*, also based on Housman. Housman's poems evoke an ideal, almost dreamlike rural existence, but behind the idyll is an acute sense of impending loss. Did Butterworth sense that the old pastoral way of life was doomed, and that he might die with it? Although *A Shropshire Lad* has moments of almost voluptuous beauty, it is framed by a desolate prelude and epilogue. He may not have meant it as an elegy but, especially when you know what was to come, that's how it sounds.

Mark Simpson (b. 1988): *Hold Your Heart in Your Teeth* Concerto for viola and orchestra (UK premiere)

Composed: 2024

First Performed: 15 December 2024, Berlin Philharmonie, Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin, Timothy Ridout (viola), cond. Robin Ticciati

We live in worrying times, a fact which Liverpool-born composer, and Artist in Residence Mark Simpson, has attempted to confront in several of his works. His new Viola Concerto, *Hold Your Heart in Your Teeth*, is a prime example. The title comes from a Romanian saying, meaning 'face your fears head-on and move forward with courage', but it was the stark vividness of the original that set Simpson's imagination working. The first of the three movements begins with an explosion, from whose shadowy aftermath the viola emerges, singing what is clearly an impassioned, ultimately tender lament, delivered in what Simpson calls four 'stanzas'. A fast, scherzo-like movement follows, with complex dance rhythms of the kind often encountered in Balkan folk music. A solo cello begins the finale, in time passing the lyrical baton to the viola.

There's a reminder of the first movement, and with it pain and loss, but the Concerto ends as its title urges, determined to face the future bravely.

Graham Fitkin (b. 1963): *Metal*

Composed: 1995

First Performed: 22 November 1995, Liverpool, Philharmonic Hall, RLPO, cond. Petr Altrichter

Cornish composer Graham Fitkin wrote *Metal* for the reopening of Liverpool Philharmonic Hall in 1995, during the two years when he was the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's Composer in Residence. It's an unabashed celebration, packing plenty of vigour and brilliant colour into its brief span. Metal elements appear throughout the piece, from the sounds of the scaffolding poles at the opening to the use of the orchestra's four tuned ship's bells near the end – a clear tribute to the city's great shipbuilding past. As so often with Fitkin's music, driving, exciting rhythm is the hook. Surrender to its pulse, and *Metal* will speak for itself.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918): *La cathédrale engloutie* (orch. Henry Wood)

Composed: 1910

First Performed (solo piano version): 3 May 1911, Paris, Salle Pleyel, Jane Mortier (piano)

Debussy could have made a career as a solo pianist. But the thought of devoting himself to a rigorous practice regime was just too daunting for this 'desperately careless' man (as one teacher described him), and in any case the lure of composition was much stronger. The piano remained central: a large proportion of his works were written for solo piano or feature a piano, and many of his orchestral masterpieces were initially written down in piano score – the instrumental colours were applied later. He might well have orchestrated his magnificent brief tone poem *La cathédrale engloutie* ('The Submerged Cathedral') himself, had someone offered him the money. Fortunately for us, others – like the conductor Henry Wood (father of the Proms) – were prepared to do it for him.

La cathédrale engloutie comes from Book One of Debussy's *Préludes* for piano. It illustrates an old Breton legend of a cathedral engulfed by seas, which on certain clear days rises out of the ocean – choir chanting, organ playing, bells pealing – only to vanish beneath the waves again. The *Préludes* are often described as 'impressionistic', but *La cathédrale engloutie* sounds much more like old-fashioned storytelling, of the most vivid and gripping kind.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-81): *Pictures at an Exhibition* (orch. Wood)

Promenade – The Gnome – Promenade – The Old Castle – Promenade – Tuilleries (Childrens games and quarrel) – Cattle – Promenade – Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks – Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle – Promenade – The Market in Limoges – Catacombs (Roman Tomb) – 'With the dead in a dead language' – The Hut on Hen's Legs (Baba Yaga) – The Bogatyr Gates (The Great Gate of Kiev)

Composed: 1874

First performed: (original piano version) 1886?, (Wood's orchestration) 1915, (Ravel's orchestration) 19 October 1922

Few composers can have caused their friends and admirers more heartache than Mussorgsky. So long as he stayed sober, Mussorgsky would work quickly: *Pictures at an Exhibition* was written in

a three-week creative spurt in the summer of 1874. But in the end, his drinking killed him. He was just forty-two.

Mussorgsky originally wrote *Pictures at an Exhibition* for solo piano. He was a fine, if somewhat eccentric pianist, and he loved doing musical impressions at the keyboard: it's said that his impersonation of 'a young nun playing *A Maiden's Prayer* on an out-of-tune piano' could reduce his audience to helpless laughter. If only we could have heard Mussorgsky himself play *Pictures*! But since his death, more and more people have felt that the music needed to be orchestrated to make its full effect. Various composers attempted this, including Henry Wood, whose orchestral version is daring, spectacular and now rarely-heard, as it was Maurice Ravel's version in 1922 that stuck *Pictures* in the repertoire for good.

The 'Exhibition' of the title is an imaginary one, but the pictures are real. Mussorgsky was a close friend of the painter Victor Hartmann, who also died young. *Pictures at an Exhibition* was written as a memorial to Hartmann, in which Mussorgsky depicts together his impressions of ten of his friend's paintings, linked by a series of five 'Promenades', in which we follow Mussorgsky's private thoughts and feelings as he walks around the gallery. The titles are listed above: follow them if you like, but perhaps it's best to let these vivid, flavoursome musical pictures speak for themselves.