

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra – Ensemble 10:10
October 8 programme complementary content

Geoffrey Paterson

Hailed as a conductor with ‘natural and charismatic authority’ (Opera World), [Geoffrey Paterson](#) is renowned for his ‘impressive command’ (the Telegraph) and ‘impeccable grace’ (the Guardian) in repertoire extending from the Baroque to music of the present day.

His work in the concert hall and opera house is praised for his ‘winning combination of assuredness, agility and enthusiasm’ (the Telegraph) as well as his ‘instinct for pace’ (The Spectator) and ‘innate feel for orchestral texture’ (MusicOMH).

In 2020 he made his televised BBC Proms debut with Steve Reich’s *City Life*, returning in 2022 to continue a longstanding collaboration with the London Sinfonietta and Norwegian saxophonist and composer Marius Neset.

Other memorable concert performances in recent years have included Strauss’s own film score reworking of *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in Vienna and London; Nielsen’s *Symphonia Expansiva* with the BBC Scottish Symphony; Strauss’s *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* with the Hamburg Symphony and Bernstein’s *West Side Story* to an audience of 10,000 with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra.

In the current busy season Paterson is making concert debuts with the Warsaw Philharmonic and Arctic Philharmonic and conducts for the first time at the Royal Ballet, Covent Garden.

He enjoys an extensive and varied repertoire and is also renowned for his work in the field of late-20th Century and contemporary music.

Among the numerous world premieres he has conducted are works by Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and James Dillon, and his performance of masterpieces by the greatest composers of the last 100 years (including Boulez, Berio, Stockhausen and Knussen) have been widely praised in the British and international press.

With a background in composition – he was a pupil of Alexander Goehr, alongside masterclass studies with Boulez and Eotvos, he brings insight, technical command and an exacting ear to music whose secrets are only revealed through a rare combination of fastidiousness and inspiration.

Arvo Pärt

According to fellow composer – and friend - Steve Reich, Arvo Pärt is a “brave, talented man” whose music “fulfils a deep human need that has nothing to do with fashion”.

So perhaps it is no surprise the veteran Estonian remains one of the most widely performed of contemporary classical composers, with fans across the world enjoying his hypnotic minimalist music.

[Pärt](#) was born in September 1935 in Paide, a town 55 miles southeast of the Estonian capital Tallinn, and as a small child his family moved to Rakvere, close to the Gulf of Finland.

He went on to study at the Tallinn Music School and the Tallinn State Conservatoire – although his student days were bisected by compulsory service in the Soviet Army.

Pärt's first compositions date from this time, and his earliest music encompasses neo-classical works, children's music and pieces penned for the Estonian State Puppet Theatre, although he only became a fulltime composer after quitting his job at Estonian State Radio at the age of 32.

A leading figure in the avant-garde movement, since the 1970s, Pärt has composed in a distinctive minimalist style, utilising the technique of [*tintinnabuli*](#), meaning 'little bells' and influenced by Gregorian Chant, which he originated in 1976 and which creates a mesmerising and meditative effect.

Tintinnabuli is a musical algorithm. In an interview with composer and conductor Antony Pitts, originally broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Pärt described it as: "The mathematically exact connection from one line to another...the rule where the melody and the accompaniment is one."

In 1980, and with Estonia still under Soviet rule and Pärt becoming involved in the Orthodox Church, he and his family emigrated to Vienna and then on to Berlin where they lived for three decades.

While his work is defined by its "[*silence, simplicity and spiritual depth*](#)", over the past 20 years the harmonies in his music have also become fuller and richer.

A distinctive musical voice, among his many much loved and best-known works are *Fratres*, *Für Alina*, *Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten*, *Spiegel im Spiegel* and *Summa*.

His most recent work, *Für Jan van Eyck* for mixed choir and organ, was performed at the BBC Proms in July 2025 to mark Pärt's 90th birthday.

Luciano Berio

When Luciano Berio died in 2003, tributes flowed in for the man who – in one [*obituarist's words*](#) not only "wrote some of the most moving and beautiful scores" of the post-war world but who also "redrew the landscape" of composition.

And Berio undoubtedly stands tall among the leading figures of the 20th Century's musical avant-garde.

Born on Italy's Ligurian coast in 1925, the composer, conductor and teacher's father and grandfather were both organists and leading figures in the musical life of his hometown.

After the Second World War (in which a teenage Luciano had quite the time – he was conscripted into the Italian army, was accidently wounded in one hand and later fled to hide with partisans) he studied at the Milan Conservatory and then Tanglewood in Massachusetts.

It was when he attended the International Festival of New Music in Darmstadt that he became influenced by the avant-garde and interested in electronic music, leading to him co-founding the Studio di fonologia musicale in Milan for experimental electronic contemporary classical music.

From 1965 onwards he was a professor of composition at the prestigious Julliard in New York.

Along with his pioneering of electronic music, Berio was a prolific composer who wrote for a wide range of instruments and voice. He was particularly known for his experimental work like the 1968 composition *Sinfonia* (commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for its 125th

anniversary and featuring eight amplified voices) and his *Sequenza* solo series which both showcased his fertile imagination.

Along with his original compositions which spanned many styles, Berio also arranged or transcribed works by Kurt Weill, Purcell, Monteverdi, Mahler, Brahms, Bach and – in a commission from La Scala Theatre Orchestra in 1975 – 18th Century Classical era composer and cellist Luigi Boccherini.

Exacting in the rehearsal room – there are stories of him [reducing singers to tears](#) – he was much in demand as a conductor both of his own work and that of others.

Listen to Luciano Berio's adaptation of Boccherini's *Ritirata notturna di Madrid*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rs9Rmrn2mWc>

Cameron Biles-Liddell

When [Cameron Biles-Liddell](#) was interviewed for the Royal Philharmonic Society Composers' development programme he came with a short wish list.

As part of the [year-long scheme](#), participants are commissioned to create a new work for a British-based ensemble, venue or festival.

"I remember saying two things that were on my mind," recalls the Llangollen-based composer. "One was that I would really appreciate a gig close to home and to build a relationship with a local band.

"As a composer I've been very lucky to have high-profile performances at festivals like Cheltenham and the [Three Choirs](#). I've also recently had performances in Scotland and several in London.

"But never in either North Wales or the Northwest, which have been my joint homes because I studied at university in Manchester, where I did my PhD.

"And then I also hoped to write for a large ensemble rather than a solo piece. So, when I got Ensemble 10:10 I was really pleased."

Composer and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic were introduced in August last year, and it's turned out to be a very rewarding piece of matchmaking which has culminated in the world premiere of *Ghost Dances (Concerto for Chamber Orchestra)* in this October concert at the Tung Auditorium.

Biles-Liddell describes the work as "a suite of three interrelated movements that explore momentum, repeating patterns and gesture, taking inspiration from the folkloric depiction of ghosts and ritualistic practices to ward off (and sometimes invite) spirits."

He has regularly used folklore and local stories in previous orchestral pieces as a source of musical inspiration. However, in *Ghost Dances*, he explains he has sought to explore something more abstract using the musical material as the narrative driving force, rather than the music fitting into a pre-existing extra-musical narrative.

"At the same time," he adds, "I wanted to create something that really champions and showcases the pyrotechnics and colours found in an orchestra, as this was sound that initially drove me to become the composer I am today."

The RPS scheme takes a hands-off approach to these commissions, allowing composers and the organisations they are writing for to collaborate on the form and content.

Biles-Liddell has fulfilled a number of similar commissions during his career so far but admits to being both surprised and delighted by the response he received from Liverpool, the Orchestra's 'can-do' attitude, and the latitude he was afforded in composing this new work.

"The thing that struck me from the off is actually how laid back and open they were with the commission," he says recalling initial conversations with the Orchestra's artistic consultant Andrew Cornall.

"Andrew basically said – here's the greatest number of players you can write for, and aside from that we're happy for you to do anything you want really. Which took me pleasantly by surprise because it's such a different way of working.

"As composers we say restrictions often breed creativity, so I've always thrived on that."

Faced with the novelty of complete creative freedom, it took the 28-year-old several months to finally settle on what he describes as "something that I wanted to meaningfully write.

"But equally, it gave me the scope to do something different and actually really push what I wanted to write as an artist further."

The result is a 15-minute work written for 40 players which is, he says, the biggest ensemble he has written for so far outside of another composer development programme.

And the fruitful working partnership has endured over the course of the past 12 months.

Over this summer, Biles-Liddell came to Liverpool to take part in a workshop of his (practically) finished piece at the Orchestra's rehearsal rooms in Everton, with the Philharmonic Youth Orchestra's principal conductor Robert Guy leading the session.

The composer found the Phil musicians "really welcoming and friendly. They just wanted to make it as good as they could.

"Every orchestra is friendly," he points out. "But this was like, I don't know how to describe it, it was just warm and very relaxed, but professional.

"It's the element of family that you really get, from the players through to the management, and I feel like I've been really welcomed into that family."

The happy experience has evidently come through in his music as Guy, who has also conducted several of his other pieces elsewhere, noted.

"He knows my work very well, and he said there was something different about this piece," says Biles-Liddell. "It still sounded like me but there was more confidence now with what I wanted to say.

"It's been a fabulous opportunity really."

Ghost Stories (Concerto for Chamber Orchestra) composer's note.

From the outset, this piece is an energetic and dramatic work leaning into the nimbleness that can be achieved in a Chamber Orchestra, clearly marked in three sections through tempo and mood. However, rather than segregating each section into separate themes or melodies, I wanted to create a work that is cohesive to complement the dramatic contrasts prevalent throughout. Instead, the music revolves around three melodic fragments often characterised through their

rhythm and interval content to unify the structure and material. The fragments are loosely drawn from old dance forms such as the gigue, forlane and sarabande, but now distorted with only hints of these rhythmic devices heard throughout the piece.

The piece opens with a frantic orchestral tutti, presenting the first fragments of material the skittish semiquaver pattern with percussive stabs in the brass, timpani and lower strings characterised by a pentatonic modality. After a while, the secondary fragment appears which is a slower, more melodic material which draws from the sarabande and forlane. After seemingly running out of momentum, the music becomes darker and brooding with a slithering ostinati between the celli and double basses signal the second section of *Ghost Dances*. This passage is reflective and more melodic focused. However, the opening material begins to seep into the calmness, building to an emphatic climax with brass fanfares to segue into the final section. This last dance acts as a small rondo, weaving together the previously heard material in-between a quaver motor rhythm. The piece ends with the music running out of control, with the dances becoming more frenetic and the rhythmic ostinati beginning to disintegrate - dawn is approaching.

By the end, the music has broken down to its intervallic content, with only glimmers of the past material heard before concluding with one final emphatic gesture by the orchestra, bringing this vibrant piece to a close.

Luke Bedford

Acclaimed as one of the finest composers of his generation, Luke Bedford has quietly made a significant name for himself with a series of award-winning scores which are performed nationally and internationally.

Bedford was born in Berkshire in 1978 and studied composition with Edwin Roxburgh and Simon Bainbridge at the Royal College of Music, followed by a Foundation Scholarship.

He subsequently gained a further scholarship to study for a Masters at the Royal Academy of Music, again with Simon Bainbridge.

From 2008 to 2011 Bedford was the Wigmore Hall's first ever composer in residence.

It was also in 2011 that he composed his first opera, [*Seven Angels*](#), with a libretto by Glyn Maxwell. Both *Seven Angels* and Bedford's second opera, *Through his Teeth*, have been performed at the Royal Opera House.

Meanwhile *Instability*, a work for large orchestra, was premiered at the BBC Proms in 2015.

Bedford's many accolades include the 2000 Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize for composers under the age of 29, the 2004 BBC Radio 3 Listeners' Award at the British Composer Awards, a 2007 [*Paul Hamlyn Artists' Award*](#) – after which he relocated to Berlin for five years, and, in 2012, the Ernst von Siemens Composer Prize.

In 2023 he was nominated for an Ivor Novello award for *Staggered Nocturne* for 14 players and percussion soloist. And in the same year he released his debut album, *In the Voices of the Living*, on NMC Recordings which brings together a selection of his orchestral and large-scale chamber works composed over the past 15 years.

Bedford is a visiting lecturer in composition at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Watch a performance of Luke Bedford's *In the Voices of the Living*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T3uPrR-UA>

Anna Thorvaldsdottir

London-based Icelandic composer [Anna Thorvaldsdottir's](#) striking sound world and “seemingly boundless textural imagination” (New York Times) has made her “one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary music” (NPR).

Her music is composed as much by sounds and nuances as by harmonies and lyrical material and is often inspired by nature and its many qualities – in particular structural ones like proportion and flow.

Thorvaldsdottir trained as a cellist in her youth and studied composing at the Iceland Academy of the Arts, later gaining a Masters and PhD at the University of California in San Diego.

Her orchestral writing has garnered her awards from the New York Philharmonic, Lincoln Center, Nordic Council and the UK's Ivors Academy as well as commissions by many of the world's top orchestras including Berlin Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, CBSO, Munich Philharmonic, Danish String Quartet, International Contemporary Ensemble, BBC Proms and Carnegie Hall.

And while she “has made the symphony orchestra her own” according to Gramophone Magazine, “her chamber music is cut from the same cloth and somehow sounds different with much the same combination of immensity and intensity.”

Portrait concerts with Thorvaldsdottir's work have been featured at several major venues and music festivals, among them the Wigmore Hall, Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, London's Spitalfields Music Festival, the Leading International Composers series at the Phillips Collection in Washington DC, BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival, Lucerne Festival, Beijing Modern Music Festival and Reykjavik Arts Festival.

From 2018-23 she was composer in residence with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and in 2023 she was in residence at the Aldeburgh Festival and Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music. In 2024 she was selected as a winner of the CHANEL Next Prize and in 2024-25 was the Tonhalle Orchestra's creative chair.

Judith Weir

The work of award-winning British composer [Judith Weir](#) is known for its clarity and distinctive blend of tonal and atonal elements.

Weir was born into a Scottish family in Cambridge in 1954, although she grew up near London. Her father played the trumpet and her mother the viola, and Weir herself played oboe in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain as well as studying composition with Sir John Tavener.

Her first work to be heard professionally was *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* which was performed by the New Philharmonia in 1974. In the same year her work *Campanile* won first prize in the International Festival of Youth Orchestras in Aberdeen. One of the jury members was Aaron Copland.

Weir studied at Cambridge University, where her composition tutor was Robin Holloway, and in 1975 she studied at a summer school at Tanglewood in Massachusetts.

She started her career teaching in schools and then at Glasgow University and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. She has also taught as a visiting professor at Princeton, Harvard and Cardiff Universities.

Weir was composer in association with the CBSO from 1995-98, with several of her works premiered by the orchestra under Simon Rattle, and Master of the Queen's (and King's) Music [from 2014-24](#), the first woman to be appointed to the role.

Words are her inspiration, and she has worked extensively in vocal genres including opera, choral music and solo song. Among her roles she has been an associate composer with the BBC Singers.

Based in London, Weir has had a long association with the Spitalfields Music Festival, and her many honours include Ivor Novello, Critics' Circle, South Bank Show and Elise L Stoecker Awards and the Queen's Medal for Music. In 2024 she was made a Dame for services to music.