

**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra – Ensemble 10:10**  
**April 29 complementary content**

## **George Jackson**

London-born [George Jackson](#) is quickly making a name for the breadth and commitment of his work, whether in opera, symphonic repertoire or contemporary scores, building strong relationships with the orchestras he conducts. He has served as Music Director of [Amarillo Symphony](#) since September 2022.

This season with Amarillo Symphony he conducts the world premieres of works by Christopher Lowry and Gavin Higgins, and the US premiere of Dani Howard's *The Butterfly Effect*. His skill in preparing complex scores has led to an ongoing relationship with Ensemble Intercontemporain. Together they released the world premiere recording of Steve Reich's *Reich/Richter* on Nonesuch Records, following successful performances of the work in Rome, Paris and Luxembourg.

Recently, he conducted the group at Festival Présences and Tokyo Spring Festival, in programmes featuring Reich, Werner, Boulez, Varèse and Webern. With Collegium Novum Zürich, Jackson conducted Isabel Mundry's new work *Noli me tangere*, and with Brussels Philharmonic he led the world premiere of Claire-Mélanie Sinnhuber's *Chahut*.

Jackson is increasingly sought-after as a guest with European orchestras who appreciate his fearless conducting and thorough rehearsal technique. Current highlights include Opéra Orchestre National de Montpellier, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León and Brussels Philharmonic and Ensemble 10:10.

Praised for his natural affinity for opera, he has received acclaim for his work in productions of *Hänsel und Gretel* and *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* (Grange Park Opera), *La bohème* and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Opera Holland Park), and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Theater an der Wien).

The son of actor parents, [Jackson](#) actually started his career as a 'heavy metal' drummer before studying at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. Formative experiences include his

participation at Lucerne Festival Academy, Deutsche Bank's Akademie Musiktheater heute and at Aspen Music Festival where he was awarded the Aspen Conducting Prize in 2015.

## **Mark Simpson**

He's a much sought-after clarinetist and contemporary classical composer with awards on his mantelpiece and commissions on his book. And this year is also a special one, marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of him doing 'the double' – when he was crowned both [BBC Young Musician of the Year](#) and BBC Proms/Guardian Young Composer of the Year. But [Mark Simpson's](#) ambitions to conquer the classical music world were forged long before that, in the auditorium of Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall. "Those big and wild ambitions were formulated while I was sitting watching concerts in the Phil, or playing in the National Youth Orchestra," the 37-year-old says. "It was just a sense, 'this is what I'm going to do, I'm doing it'."

Simpson recently had a chance to reflect on his formative years, when he performed in Barrow as part of his year-long residency with Liverpool Philharmonic and was interviewed in front of an audience of young people in the Cumbrian port town. He explains: "I was talking to the guy who was interviewing me about my life and my teenage years, the same age as they were – and everything was to do with Liverpool and to do with the music support service, the free instruments, the music lessons after school and Saturday morning music school, and then the Phil and the Merseyside Youth Orchestra, Ensemble 10:10. The council used to run a music competition, of which I did all different variations, and that started a whole thing about competing and playing and I got obsessed with that – and that led to Young Musician. So, I had everything at my disposal at that age which meant I was able to have these wild ambitions."

It was also the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, specifically Ensemble 10:10, that gave Simpson the composer his first commission at the age of 15 – the first of what has turned out to be four commissions so far. So, it feels like coming home to perform with the group at The Tung Auditorium this spring. Simpson's had a busy schedule as the Orchestra's Artist in Residence this year, a collaboration which Simpson says has been on the cards for a number of years. "One of the things we spoke about was that it would showcase the breadth of what I can do, as a performer and as a composer," he says. "And then the other thing the Phil really wanted to do was to present a premiere of some kind."

In September, Timothy Ridout performed the UK premiere of Simpson's *Hold Your Heart in Your Teeth* concerto for viola and orchestra. And then in March, the Orchestra presented a new version of *The Immortal*, the supernatural oratorio for [baritone, chorus and orchestra](#) which won Simpson the prestigious 2016 Southbank Sky Arts Award for Classical Music. "I've reduced the percussion," he says of the differences with the original. "And there are usually two choirs in the piece, a full chorus and a semi-chorus. I always did put the full chorus as optional, so this is the first time without it. It's a slightly pared down version so it can fit on the stage!"

With his performing hat on, in addition to this Ensemble 10:10 concert – where he plays John Adams' *Gnarly Buttons*, a long-time favourite – and an appearance in Barrow, the clarinettist performed Mozart's *Gran Partita* and his own work *Geysir* at The Tung Auditorium in January, a venue he praises for its fantastic acoustic.

Then he will finish his season with a recital in the Music Room on May 11. He says: "It's going to be almost like a homage to my growing up in Liverpool and will feature music by two of my former composition teachers that have written for me as a clarinettist, and music from Young Musician of the Year." All this has fit snugly into his wider 'day job' which, alongside performing, sees him up with the lark at his home on the Kent coast to spend each morning locked away in his studio composing. "I'm working on a new big piece," he smiles. "I can't say much, but it's something large scale that's going to take me three years to write."

## **Josephine Stephenson**

[Josephine Stephenson](#) is a French British composer, arranger and performer who works across contemporary classical and indie music. Her music has been commissioned by institutions such as the BBC, Radio France, Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, Nonclassical and Spitalfields Music, and broadcast on France Musique and BBC Radio 3. She had written for performers including Ensemble Intercontemporain, London Sinfonietta, Aurora Orchestra, s t a r g a z e, Explore Ensemble, Tenebrae, Miroirs Étendus, The Hermes Experiment, the Maîtrise de Radio France, tenor Allan Clayton, gambist Liam Byrne and guitarist Laura Snowden.

Interested in harmony, sonority and dynamic immediacy in her music, [Stephenson](#) has collaborated with theatre companies La Raffinerie, L'Éventuel Hérisson Bleu and FellSwoop Theatre and filmmakers Julia Jackman and Scott Vickers. She also regularly works as an arranger for songwriters and bands, which have included Damon Albarn, Daughter, Lisa Hannigan, Evergreen, Arctic Monkeys and others.

Born in Paris, as a child she learned piano and cello and as a teenager attended the choir school of Radio France before studying music as a choral scholar at Clare College, Cambridge, and a master's degree in composition at the Royal College of Music where she studied with Kenneth Hesketh. She was a Britten-Pears Young Artist in 2015-16, a London Sinfonietta Writing the Future composer for 2017-19 and Composer in Residence at Opéra Grand Avignon from 2021 to 2023 which led to the premiere of her first large-scale opera, *Three Lunar Seas*, in spring 2023. The same year she won an Ivor Novello Award for her voice and guitar piece *Comme l'espoir/you might all disappear*.

*In Time Like Air* for large ensemble was commissioned by Ensemble Intercontemporain / Radio France and was given its first performance at the Maison de la Radio in Paris in February 2024 with George Jackson conducting.

Watch the world premiere of Josephine Stephenson's [In Time Like Air](#).

## **John Adams**

John Adams has been described by the *New York Times* as “arguably our greatest living composer”. [The composer, conductor and creative thinker](#) was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1947 and grew up in New England where, as a youngster, he played clarinet in a marching band and community orchestras. He started composing at the age of 10 and went on to study at Harvard where he conducted the Bach Society Orchestra, listened to Hendrix, queued to buy a copy of *Sgt Pepper* the day the seminal album was released – and became a proponent of 20<sup>th</sup> Century modernism, although his work also encompasses wider orchestral textures.

Adams' works, both symphonic and operatic (including the 1987 opera *Nixon in China*), stand out for their expression, brilliance of sound and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes and have helped

turn the tide of contemporary musical aesthetics away from academic modernism towards a more expansive, expressive language. At the start of his career, he wrote several pieces of electronic music for a homemade synthesiser, while in the 1980s his work was driven by harmonies and rhythm. But by the 1990s Adams had started to think more about melody, driven by what he has described as ‘being partially liberated by a new chromatic richness that was creeping into my sound’. His extensive catalogue includes operas, stage works and film scores, orchestral and chamber music, piano pieces, and tape and electronic compositions.

One of his best-known and most performed pieces remains the 1978 composition [Shaker Loops](#), originally written as a string quartet called *Wavemaker* in which he attempted to capture the rippling of water in oscillating musical form. Other often performed works include *Harmonielehre*, *Chamber Symphony*, *Absolute Jest*, *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* and his 1993 [Violin Concerto](#) with its singing line which is an example of ‘hypermelody’.

His many accolades include several Grammys and honorary doctorates, while *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2003) won the Pulitzer Prize for Music. In 2009 he was inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame, and in 2019 he was awarded the [Erasmus Prize](#).

Listen to John Adams talk about his [career and compositional inspiration](#).

## **Steve Reich**

[Steve Reich](#) has been called “the most original musical thinker of our time” (*The New Yorker*) and “among the great composers of the century” (*The New York Times*).

Starting in the 1960s, his pieces *It’s Gonna Rain*, *Drumming*, *Music for 18 Musicians*, *Tehillim*, *Different Trains*, and many others helped shift the aesthetic centre of musical composition worldwide away from extreme complexity and towards rethinking pulsation and tonal attraction in new ways. He continues to influence younger generations of composers and mainstream musicians and artists all over the world.

*Double Sextet* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009 and *Different Trains* – which was performed at Liverpool’s [Edge Hill Station in 2016 to mark](#)

[his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday](#), *Music for 18 Musicians* and an album of his percussion works have all earned GRAMMY Awards.

He has received the Praemium Imperiale in Tokyo, the Polar Music Prize in Stockholm, the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge award in Madrid, the Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall, and the Gold Medal in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has also been named Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France and awarded honorary doctorates by the Royal College of Music in London, the Juilliard in New York, and the Liszt Academy in Budapest among others. One of the most frequently choreographed composers, several noted choreographers have created dances to his music, including Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Jirí Kylián, Jerome Robbins, Justin Peck, Wayne McGregor, Benjamin Millepied, and Christopher Wheeldon. Reich's documentary video opera works - *The Cave* and *Three Tales*, done in collaboration with video artist Beryl Korot - opened new directions for music theatre and have been performed on four continents.

His work *Quartet*, for percussionist Colin Currie, sold out two consecutive concerts at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London shortly after tens of thousands at the Glastonbury Festival heard Jonny Greenwood (of Radiohead) perform *Electric Counterpoint*, followed by the London Sinfonietta performing his *Music for 18 Musicians*.

Listen to the opening of Steve Reich's [Reich/Richter](#).