ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Scheherazade

Sun 8 Nov, 2pm

Please note that all timings are approximate and may be subject to change. Performers are correct at time of uploading.

Karel Deseure *conductor*
Lily Mo Browne *mezzo-soprano*
Sam Marston *tenor*
Matthew Hamilton *Director of Choirs and Singing*

Mel Bonis *Trois femmes de légende: Salomé, Ophélie et le Songe de Cléopâtre* (18')

Lili Boulanger *Psalm 130, "Du fond de l'abime"* (26')

- INTERVAL – (20')

Rimsky-Korsakov *Scheherazade* (47')

I. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
II. The Story of the Kalendar Prince
III. The Young Princess and the Young Princess
IV. Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Sea Breaks Against a Cliff Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman

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First Violins
Zoë Beyers
Mihkel Kerem
Peter Liang
Martin Richardson *
Concettina Del Vecchio
Stephan Mayer *
Ruth McNamara
Susanna Poole
Elizabeth Lamberton
Emily Mowbray
Qian Wu
Momoko Arima
Helen Boardman
Nathan Fenwick

Second Violins
Kate Richardson *
Sophie McQueen
Kate Marsden
James Justin Evans *
Sally Anne Anderson
David Rimbault
Olga Smoleń
Frances Evans
Chu Yu Yang
Pak Ho Hong
Natalie Purton
Dewi Tudor Jones

Violas
Catherine Marwood
Gwendolyn Cawdron
Sarah Hill
Fiona Stunden *
Rachel Jones
Ian Fair
Amy Hark
Daniel Sanxis
Jayne Coyle
Emily Davies

Cellos
Karen Stephenson
Hilary Browning *
Ian Bracken *
Ruth Owens
Alexander Holladay
Mark Lindley
Anna Crawford
Lucy Hoile

Double Basses
Marcel Becker
Nathan Knight
Ashley Frampton *
Nigel Dufty *
Anthony Williams
Filipe Dandalo

Flutes
Cormac Henry
Helen Wilson
Abi Fletcher

Piccolo
Sameeta Gahir

Oboes
Helena Mackie
Catrin Ruth Davies *

Cor Anglais
Drake Gritton

Clarinets
Miquel Ramos Salvadó
Emma Burgess

Bass Clarinet
Elliot Gresty

Bassoons
Josh Wilson
Rebekah Abramski

Contrabassoon
Gareth Twigg

Horns
Timothy Jackson
Simon Griffiths
Catherine Hewitt
Timothy Nicholson
Bob Ashworth
Molly Bielecki

Trumpets
Corey Morris
Hannah Mackenzie
James Nash

Trombones
Simon Cowen
Simon Powell
Paul Exton McGuiness

Bass Trombone
Simon Chappell

Tuba
Robin Haggart *

Timpani
Neil Hitt

Percussion
Matthew Brett
Josephine Frieze
Scott Lumsdaine
Ben Gray
Tom Hall
Stan Talman

Harp
Elizabeth McNulty
Lauren Scott

Celeste
Ian Buckle

Organ
Richard Lea

*Denotes 25 years' service

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir

Sopranos
Suzanne Bell
Ruth Brown *
Anne-Marie Brzezicki
Effie Cadwallader
Gemma Caro
Emily Rose Copping
Shelagh Crosbie *^
Laura Duthie
Hannah Dutton
Sarah Dyas +
Holly Fane de Salis
Beatrix Flynn
Patricia Heyes
Charlotte Krahé
Atim Laber-Craig
Clare Ledingham +
Lindsey Macdonald
Nina Maryanji
Melissa McCarthy
Fiona Miller
Katharyn Parry
Ella Ryrie
Laura Smoult
Hannah Williams *
Cassie Worsley
Alexandra Worthington

Altos
Helen Allwood
Kirsty Carpenter
Maggie Casaus *
Sarah Cole
Barbara Davison ^
Sophie D'Souza
Isabel Ewart
Greta Fenney
Edith Firth
Clare Hulme
Jan Jones
Alison Knight *
Jo Lynes +
Michelle Maskell
Jenny McLardy
Athena Florence Mensah
Samantha Mills
Helen Pritchard
Sarah Pumfrey
Helen Beatrice Rice
Camellia Richards
Karine Sá Brasil
Susan Smith *
Helena Thomas
Rachel Tuson
Emma Ward
Rebekah Wilkinson
Nichola Wright

Tenors
Peter Bates *
David Blake
Richard Costain
Taran Harris
Andrew Hobson
Bill Kingdon +
Ellis G Marston
Marco Roda
Phil Sykes
Jon Wimpeney
Robert Paul Wynn +

Basses
Edward Abrahamson
Andrew Barney
Ken Black *
Toby Cannon
Simon Cleaver +
Jim Cooke *
Jonathan Davies
Patrick Dumican
Julian Eyre
John Findlow
Charles Fisher
Robert Gregory
James Hawkins *
Timothy Hill
Joe Houghton
John Keogh
Douglas Ligertwood
Robert Macdonald
Stuart Perkins
Matteo Ressa

*Denotes Honorary Life Membership of the Society (for 25 years continuous service)
^ Choir Librarians
+ Choir Consultation Group

Scheherazade
Programme Notes

About the Music

Mel Bonis (1858-1937): Trois femmes de légende

I. Salomé
II. Ophélie
III. Le Songe de Cléopâtre

Composed: 1909

Mel Bonis' *Trois femmes de légende* (Three Legendary Women) for Orchestra offers a captivating glimpse into the world of French Romanticism. Composed in a period that saw the emergence of other significant orchestral works like César Franck's *Symphony in D Minor* and Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Bonis' composition distinguishes itself through its evocative storytelling and innovative orchestration.

The orchestral suite unfolds with three distinct movements, each dedicated to legendary female figures from mythology. Bonis' ability to infuse each movement with distinctive character and atmosphere reflects her mastery in orchestral storytelling.

Bonis demonstrates a keen sense of orchestral balance and a nuanced understanding of each instrument's capabilities. The integration of French Impressionist elements, evident in her harmonic language and delicate instrumental timbres, adds a layer of sophistication to the suite*. Trois femmes de légende* thus demonstrates Mel Bonis' significant contribution to the orchestral repertoire, offering a synthesis of Romantic expressiveness and innovative orchestral techniques.

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918): Psalm 130, *Du fond de l'abîme* ('From out of the depths')

Composed: 1914-17
First Performed: 8 November 1923, Paris, cond. Henri Büsser

Outwardly, it must have seemed that the world lay at the young Lili Boulanger's feet. Her exceptional talent had been recognised and encouraged by her father when she was tiny. His death, when Lili was only six, was heavy blow, but Gabriel Fauré stepped in generously to help. She won the world's most prestigious composition prize, the Prix de Rome, at just 19, first time round (Berlioz and Ravel weren't so lucky), and the mostly conservative Parisian press predicted a starry future. But Boulanger's health had never been

strong. Her final years were painful, and she died – either of intestinal tuberculosis or Crohn's disease – at the agonisingly early age of 24.

Even so, what Boulanger managed to achieve in her roughly five years of maturity is breathtaking, especially in the fields of song and choral-orchestral music. For many, her setting of Psalm 130 for chorus, large orchestra, alto and tenor soloists, is her masterpiece. It certainly contains some of the most starkly original, at time almost painfully beautiful music she ever wrote – and that's saying a great deal. Boulanger has an utterly distinctive feeling for expressive harmony, and in the half-aspiring, half-desolate alto solo at the heart of the work she takes us to harmonic regions unlike those of any other composer. (Her contemporary, the young radical Arthur Honegger, was deeply impressed, and cited her years later as an influence.)

It's hard to resist the impression that Boulanger is here working through her own struggle with impending mortality, with the horror, grief and injustice of it all. There is also consolation in faith, and towards the end the word '*espère*' ('hope') leads to one exquisite visionary moment, but this fades, and the anguished struggle resumes. At the end however there's an extraordinary sense of stoic resilience. Perhaps, in this dark but steely ending, we can hear something of the remarkable strength that kept Lili Boulanger hoping and creating, even when the prospects looked grim.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908): Scheherazade, Op. 35

I. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
II. The Story of the Kalendar Prince
III. The Young Princess and the Young Princess
IV. Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Sea Breaks Against a Cliff Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman

Composed: 1888

First Performed: 28 October 188, St Petersburg, Russian Symphony Concerts series, cond. Rimsky-Korsakov

As well as being a magician when it came to orchestration, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was a master musical storyteller. At first it was Russian folklore that got his imaginations working, but in the late 1880s he began to look more widely for inspiration - to the dismay of some of his nationalist friends. An encounter with Wagner's operas left a deep impression, and around the same time he began to look to other cultures for inspiration – Spain for the popular *Capriccio Espagnol* ('Spanish Caprice', 1887), followed by perhaps his most famous work, the 'symphonic suite for orchestra *Scheherazade* (1888), based on the famous collection of stories known as 'The Arabian Nights'. Here we meet the Sultan Shakriar, one of literature's most spectacular misogynists. Convince of the falsity of all women, the Sultan vows to execute each one he takes to

wife after their first night together. But the wily Scheherazade gets the better of him by telling him stories, each finishing on an enticing cliff-hanger. Gradually the Sultan's heart melts, and he renounces his vow.

Rimsky-Korsakov later insisted that he didn't follow any of Scheherazade's stories in detail: 'All I had desired was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as *symphonic music*, should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an Oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on themes common to all the four movements.' But the stern, brassy opening theme has to be the Sultan, while the soaring solo violin and harp tendrils that follows is clearly Scheherazade herself, weaving her poetic spell as she sets the scene for her first tale. The swirling string figures in the first movement then vividly evoke Sinbad's ship ploughing through the waves.

Rimsky did have a point –perhaps it's best to let the 'theatre of the mind' work for itself and picture our own heroic adventures for 'The Tale of the Kalender Prince', while any pair of star-crossed lovers will do for 'Young Prince and Young Princess'. It's possible to follow Rimsky's synopsis stage by stage in the finale (the ship crashing onto the rock to a loud gong stroke), or you can simply to treat it as a wonderfully colourful and dramatic symphonic summing up. At the end though the symbolism is unmistakable: Scheherazade's free-floating solo violin and the Sultan's stern opening theme are combined in harmony, and the last word is left to Scheherazade herself.

About the Artists

Karel Deseure

Flemish conductor Karel Deseure is an artist of natural conducting talent and authority, as those who have seen him conduct at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall in the past will attest.

Deseure started his musical career as a flautist, studying for a Masters at the Royal Flemish Conservatoire in Antwerp before going on to train as a conductor at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague. In 2012 he was awarded the prestigious Anton Kersjes Foundation Scholarship for conductors, and in 2014 he took masterclasses with Bernard Haitink at the Lucerne Festival. Five years ago, he was appointed professor of conducting at the Amsterdam University of the Arts.

Deseure is sought after as both a concert and opera conductor, with recent concerts and productions including Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Puccini's *Le Villi* with Opera Zuid, and Mozart and Beethoven with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

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. The Choir is led by Matthew Hamilton, who was appointed as Director of Choirs and Singing in October 2023. Under the direction of Matthew, the Choir boasts an impressive schedule of concerts every season. In recent years, the Choir has performed Brahms' *A German Requiem*, Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, Mahler's *Symphony No.3*, Verdi's *Requiem* and Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and alongside annual performances at the Spirit of Christmas and Handel's *Messiah*.

Although maintaining an amateur status, the Choir strives for high professional standards which has led to frequent recordings and broadcasts. The Choir's 2024/25 performances of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* were broadcast on *BBC Radio 3* as part of their *BBC Radio 3 in Concert* series.

Lily Mo Browne
Described by The Times as having 'a richly hued, deep voice,' which 'generated expressive, emotional and dramatic power' mezzo-soprano Lily Mo Browne joins the Jette Parker Artist Programme at the Royal Ballet and Opera in 2026. She studies with Ben Johnson, is an alumnus of the Royal College of Music, and the National Opera Studio, London.

She won the Kathleen Ferrier competition in 2025. Lily made her international debut last summer as Filipyevna in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at the Verbier Festival. Other roles include Dido *Dido and Aeneas*, Old Lady *Candide*, Zweite and Dreite Dame *Die Zauberflöte,* La Regina *La bella dormente nel bosco* and Marie *Airtime* with the RCM International Opera Studio.

During her first season at the Royal Ballet and Opera, Lily's roles include Dritte Dame *Die Zauberflöte,* Fekluša *Katya Kabanova* and Maestra delle Novizie *Suor Angelica.* She has performed solos in Handel's *Messiah*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Mahler's *2nd Symphony* and Mozart's *Requiem,* and Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* under Martyn Brabbins.

As an avid recitalist, Lily has performed with pianist Graham Johnson, Roger Vignoles, James Baillieu and Simon Lepper. More competition success includes 1st prize in the Somerset Song Prize, where she also received the Audience Prize, 1st prize in the AESS's Patricia Routledge Senior Song Prize, and the Sarah Harrison Prize in Hurn Court Opera's Singer of the Year competition. Lily was awarded with the *Laurus Florentiae* in Florence in 2025, where she also won the award for the Best Performance of an Italian Aria.

Sam Marston
Sam Marston is a tenor who was a recipient of The Grange Festival Prize 2024.

Recent engagements have included Gastone *La Traviata* (The Grange Festival), Mercury *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Nauta/Historicus *Historia Joane* (If Opera).

Previous engagements include the role of Henrik Egerman *A Little Night Music* (Opera North) and the Royal Opera House's *Lost & Found* project, performing newly commissioned pop-up opera as part of the Europalia Festival.

He has performed as Frederic *The Pirates of Penzance*, Nanki-Poo *The Mikado*, Ralph Rackstraw *HMS Pinafore* and Luiz *The Gondoliers* (National G & S Opera Company at Buxton Opera House). His rules also include Beppe *Pagliacci* (Mid Wales Opera), covering the role of Tom Rakewell *The Rake's Progress* (The Grange Festival) and he performed as a tenor soloist in a semi-staged tour of Handel's *Messiah* (Wild Arts).

Sam is a graduate of The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he completed the MMus Opera course. During his time at the *RCS*, Sam performed the roles of *Dr. Oliver Sacks* in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (Nyman), Hérisson* in *L'étoile (Chabrier)* and the *Young Man* in *A Feast in Time of Plague (Cui).*

Sam regularly performs as a tenor soloist on the concert platform across the UK.

About the Composers

Mel Bonis

She was a contemporary of Faure, Debussy, Chausson, Dukas and Satie – but compared to this rollcall of French composing luminaries, Mel Bonis remains relatively unknown by the concert-going public.

Born Mélanie Hélène Bonis in Paris in January 1858, Bonis taught herself piano and despite her family not being in favour of a musical career, they were finally persuaded to allow her to study formally at the city's prestigious conservatoire. She also started to compose. When she was 16, she was introduced to César Franck who gave her piano lessons and showed interest in her early compositions.

With student contemporaries like Debussy, Bonis attended classes in accompaniment, harmony and composition, and during her time there she won prizes in accompaniment and harmony. But in her early 20s her parents – opposed to her romantic attachment to a singing student Amédée Landély Hettich - forced her to leave the Conservatoire.

Instead, they arranged a marriage with a twice widowed successful businessman, Albert Domange, who was more than 20 years older than Bonis

and had five motherless boys. He also had no interest in music, and Bonis was plunged into a world of genteel domesticity and motherhood.

In the 1890s, Bonis reconnected with Hettich, by now a vocal teacher, who encouraged her to start composing again. The pair also embarked on affair which culminated in the birth of an illegitimate daughter, Madeleine, whom a former chambermaid fostered. It was only following Domange's death in 1918 that Bonis took over her daughter's care again.

Meanwhile over the following decades, Bonis's musical output proved prolific running to around 300 works including a wide range of piano pieces, vocal compositions, 30 works for organ or harmonium, chamber pieces and a dozen orchestral works.

She became a member of the Société des Compositeurs de Musique (SCM), becoming its secretary in 1910.

Her best-known pieces include *Suite en forme de Valse* and *Gavotte* for piano, *Sonata for Violin and Piano* and her chamber work *Fantaisie*. In her own lifetime she was often performed, pianist Francis Planté added her *Variations pour deux pianos* to his concert repertoire, while her 1905 *Cello Sonata* was premiered at the Salle Berlioz by the renowned cellist Louis Fournier and pianist Ricardo Viñes.

Bonis spent her final few years bedridden with arthritis and died in Sarcelle in March 1937 aged 79. She was buried at the Cimetière de Montmartre. Almost anonymous for the best part of eight decades, in 2017 her gravestone was restored.

Did you know? As a young woman, Bonis chose to shorten her name to the more ambiguous 'Mel' in an attempt to overcome prejudice against and ambivalence towards female composers.

Find out more about French composer Mel Bonis.

Lili Boulanger

She spent much of her short life as an invalid, but ill-health (which culminated with her death from intestinal TB aged 24) didn't stop Lili Boulanger from composing some exceptional music.

Marie Juliette Boulanger was born in Paris on August 21, 1893. Her father Ernest, who was 77 when she was born, was a composer and conductor, her mother Raissa a Russian princess and one of his singing students. Ernest's father had been a noted cellist and Lili's paternal grandmother a famous mezzo soprano.

Oh, and her elder sister Nadia would grow up to become a conductor, composer and one of the most important music teachers of the 20th Century. Her pupils included Aaron Copland and Philip Glass.

Perhaps it's not surprising that aged two, Lili was discovered to have perfect pitch – by Gabriel Fauré, no less, who was a friend of the family. Aged five, the child prodigy was accompanying the older Nadia to lessons at the Paris Conservatoire. The young Lili sang and played piano, violin, cello and harp as well as composing.

Her talent was acknowledged when, in 1913 and aged just 19, she became the first woman to win the prestigious Prix de Rome with her cantata *Faust et Hélène*. Her father had won the same award as a 20-year-old in 1835.

Boulanger composed for piano and solo voice, while her other major vocal and choral works included *Du fond de l'abîme* – an emotionally resonant setting of Psalm 130; *Vieille prière bouddhique* for tenor, chorus and orchestra, and the sacred choral piece *Psalm 24.* She was known for her colourful instrumentation and harmonies.

But sadly, her compositional career was cut tragically short. Having contracted pneumonia as a young child which compromised her immune system, Boulanger was never physically strong and as a young adult developed intestinal tuberculosis (although some have suggested she had Crohn's disease).

Despite a late burst of industry, including *Pie Jesu*, reportedly dictated from her sick bed, she died on March 15, 1918, aged just 24 and was buried at Montmartre. Among work she left unfinished was her opera *La princesse Maleine*.

Listen to Lili Boulanger's *Du fond de l'abîme*

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov

But for a 180-degree change of career, **Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov** might have made a name for himself not as a composer but as an officer in the 19th Century Imperial Russian Navy.

As it turned out, the Tsar's fleet's loss was classical music's gain when the 27-year-old – at that point sailing a desk ashore - was offered a professorship at the St Petersburg Conservatory despite having no real experience. He would eventually lose his post there after supporting students' right to demonstrate as part of the 1905 Revolution.

Born into an aristocratic Russian family in 1844 (an ancestor was a short-lived lover of Catherine the Great), Rimsky-Korsakov was expected to go to sea and joined the navy aged 12.

After six years of training, he set off on a three-year, around-the-world voyage which included stops in New York, England, Italy, France, Spain and Norway and during which he composed what would become the first of three symphonies.

Ahead of that, aged 18, Rimsky-Korsakov had been introduced to Mily Balakirev who in turn introduced him to Cesar Cui and Modest Mussorgsky. Little can the teenager have known then the quartet, along with Alexander Borodin, would one day come together to promote and create a distinctly 'Russian' body of music and would be known as **'The Mighty Handful' or 'The Five'**.

Initially, Rimsky-Korsakov ran both naval and musical careers in parallel (he apparently taught classes in naval uniform) but eventually he jumped ship and made teaching and composition his sole occupation. He also became the holder of posts including Inspector of the Navy Chorus and Assistant Director of the Imperial Chapel Choir.

From the 1870s onwards, he enjoyed a musical mutual admiration society with **Tchaikovsky**.

He remains best known for his exotic symphonic suite *Scheherazade*, inspired by the One Thousand and One Nights tales, *Capriccio Espagnol*, *The Flight of the Bumblebee* from the opera *The Tale of Tsar Sultan*, *The Snow Maiden*, and the *Russian Easter Festival Overture*. Troubled with angina from the 1890s, Rimsky-Korsakov died at his estate in Liubensk, 120 miles south of St Petersburg, in June 1908 at the age of 64.

Did you know? Rimsky-Korsakov's older brother Voin was a renowned navigator, hydrographer and explorer who was initially much more famous than his younger sibling. In the 1850s and 60s, Captain Rimsky-Korsakov researched an area of the Sea of Japan and there is small archipelago near Vladivostok named after him.

Enjoy Rimsky-Korsakov's *Russian Easter Festival Overture*.

Lili Boulanger Text
Psalm 130, "Du fond de l'abime"

Psaume 130: Du fond de l'abîme

Du fond de l'abîme je t'invoque,
Iahvé Adonaï.
Ecoute ma prière!
Que tes oreilles soient attentives
Aux accents de ma prière!

Si tu prends garde aux péchés,
Qui donc pourra tenir, Iahvé?
La clémence est en Iahvé
Afin qu'on le révère.

Mon âme espère en Iahvé,
J'espère, je compte sur sa parole
Plus que les guetteurs de la nuit
N'aspirent au matin.
Israël espère en Iahvé,
Car en Iahvé est la miséricorde.
Et l'abondance de la délivrance.

C'est lui qui délivrera Israel,
De toutes ses iniquités
En Iahvé est la clémence.
Ah! Iahvé Adonaï.

Psalm 130: Out of the Depths
New International Version

[1] Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
[2] Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

[3] If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
[4] But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

[5] I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
[6] I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

[7] Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.
[8] He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

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audition and find out more.