ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Season Opening Concert: Unveiling the Enigma

Thurs 17 Sept, 7:30pm

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

Andrew Manze *conductor*
Guy Johnston *cello*

Shostakovich *Festive Overture* (06′)

Britten *Cello Symphony* (34′)

I. Allegro maestoso
II. Presto inquieto
III. Adagio – Cadenza ad lib.
IV. Passacaglia: Andante allegro

- INTERVAL – (20′)

Elgar *Enigma Variations* (29′)

This concert is sponsored by:

RATHBONES

First Violins
Thelma Handy *
Andrew Harvey
Peter Liang
Martin Richardson *
Concettina Del Vecchio
Stephan Mayer *
Ruth McNamara
Susanna Poole
Elizabeth Lamberton
Emily Mowbray
Qian Wu
Tze Hin
Laura Embrey
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
Malena Benavent Gimeno
Dewi Tudor Jones
Emily Pettet

Violas
Gwendolyn Cawdron
Nadia Debono
Sarah Hill
David Ruby *
Fiona Stunden *
Ian Fair
Amy Hark
Daniel Sanxis
Emily Davies
Harriet Mitchell

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

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

Flutes
Cormac Henry
Helen Wilson

Piccolo
Sameeta Gahir

Oboes
Helena Mackie
Catrin Ruth Davies *

Cor Anglais
Drake Gritton

Clarinets
Miquel Ramos Salvadó
Marianne Rawles

Bass Clarinet
Cathal Killeen

Bassoons
Luke Tucker
Rebekah Abramski

Contrabassoon
Gareth Twigg

Horns
Timothy Jackson
Simon Griffiths
Stephen Nicholls
Timothy Nicholson
Kristina Yumerska

Trumpets
Jonathan Holland
Hannah Mackenzie
James Nash
Jim Bulger

Trombones
Simon Cowen
Simon Powell

Bass Trombone
Simon Chappell

Tuba
Robin Haggart *

Timpani
Neil Hitt

Percussion
Matthew Brett
Josephine Frieze
Scott Lumsdaine
Ben Gray

Harp
Elizabeth McNulty

Organ
Ian Tracey

*Denotes 25 years' service

Season Opening Concert: Unveiling the Enigma
Programme Notes

Andrew Manze

Andrew Manze is widely celebrated as one of the most stimulating and inspirational conductors of his generation. His extensive and scholarly knowledge of the repertoire, together with his boundless energy and warmth, mark him out. He held the position of Chief Conductor of the NDR Radiophilharmonie in Hannover from 2014 until 2023. Since 2018, he has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. In April 2024, he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, starting in September of that year.

Highlights of the 2026/27 season include returns to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Philharmonia and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, alongside engagements with the Bamberg Symphony and Orchestra of St Luke's, before concluding the season with performances in New Zealand and Australia.

Manze's time as Chief Conductor in Hannover saw him lead the orchestra in highly successful tours to China in 2016 and 2019, as well as a return to Japan in 2022. Manze and the orchestra made a major series of award-winning recordings for Pentatone, focused on the works of Mendelssohn and Mozart. The first recording in the Mendelssohn series won the Preis der Deutschen Schallplatten Kritik. Manze has also recorded a cycle of the complete Vaughan Williams symphonies with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for Onyx Classics to critical acclaim. His recording of Vaughan Williams's *Job: A Masque for Dancing* won the 2024 Gramophone Award for Orchestral Recording of the Year.

In great demand as a guest conductor across the globe, Manze has long-standing relationships with many leading orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouworkest, Munich Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphoniker, Oslo Philharmonic, Finnish Radio, Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, RSB Berlin, and the Dresden Philharmonic among others.

In North America, Manze has conducted the Boston Symphony, New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics in recent seasons as well as Atlanta, Minnesota and Houston Symphonies. In 2023, Manze made his operatic debut with the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, conducting performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* alongside Schoenberg's *Erwartung.* Other highlights of recent seasons include debuts with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic and Swedish Radio Orchestras.

From 2006 to 2014, Manze was Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra. During this time he made a number of recordings with them including Beethoven *Eroica* (Harmonia Mundi) and a cycle of Brahms symphonies (CPO). He was also Principal Guest Conductor of the Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra from 2008 to 2011 and held the title of Associate Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra for four seasons.

After reading Classics at Cambridge University, Manze studied the violin and rapidly became a leading specialist in the world of historical performance practice. He became Associate Director of the Academy of Ancient Music in 1996, and then Artistic Director of the English Concert from 2003 to 2007. As a violinist, Manze released an astonishing variety of recordings, many of them award-winning.

Manze is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, Visiting Professor at the Oslo Academy, and has contributed to new editions of sonatas and concerti by Bach and Mozart, published by Bärenreiter, Breitkopf and Härtel. He also teaches, writes about, and edits music, as well as broadcasting regularly on radio and television. In November 2011 Andrew Manze received the prestigious 'Rolf Schock Prize' in Stockholm.

Guy Johnston

Guy Johnston is one of the most exciting British cellists of his generation. His early successes included winning the BBC Young Musician of the Year and other significant awards, notably the Shell London Symphony Orchestra Gerald MacDonald Award, Suggia Gift Award and a Young British Classical Performer Brit Award.

He has performed with many leading international orchestras including the London Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, St Petersburg Symphony and Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo. Recent seasons have included a BBC Prom with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, concertos with The Hallé, Philharmonia Orchestra, Aurora Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia and Orchestra of the Swan. In 2024 he received critical acclaim the featured soloist of Taverner's *The Protecting Veil* for Britten's Sinfonia UK and Ireland tour.

Performances and recordings with eminent conductors have included collaborations with Alexander Dmitriev, Sir Andrew Davis, Daniele Gatti, Ilan Volkov, Leonard Slatkin, Mark Wigglesworth, Robin Ticciati, Sir Roger Norrington, Sakari Oramo, Vassily Sinaisky, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Yuri Simonov.

Johnston is a passionate advocate for chamber music and recitals as founding Artistic Director of the Hatfield House Music Festival and performs regularly at

prestigious venues and festivals across Europe, collaborating with leading instrumentalists.
A prolific recording artist often championing contemporary British composers, his recent releases include Dobrinka Tabakova's *Cello Concerto* with The Hallé and Rebecca Dale's *Night Seasons* with the Philharmonia Orchestra. His latest recording is of Xiaogang Ye's *My Faraway Nanjing* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

In addition to a busy and versatile career as an international soloist, chamber musician and guest principal, Johnston was Associate Professor of Cello at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York (2018-2024) and a guest Professor of Cello at the **Royal Academy of Music**, where he was awarded an Hon. ARAM in 2015. He has recently been appointed President of the European String Teachers Association and is patron of several charities promoting music education for young people.

He plays the 1692 Antonio Stradivari cello known as the "Segelman, ex Hart" kindly loaned to him through the Beare's International Violin Society by a generous patron and is a Larsen Strings Artist.

Dmitri Shostakovich

Composer, pianist and a figure both celebrated and condemned in his homeland whose struggles were chronicled through his music – **Dmitri Shostakovich** was a giant of 20th Century music. Born in St Petersburg in 1906, his talent as a pianist was recognised early on and at 13, he entered the city's Conservatory where his tutors included Alexander Glazunov.

As the only major musical figure to remain in Russia following the 1917 Revolution (Stravinsky, Rachmaninov and Prokofiev all either already lived abroad or absented themselves from the country), Shostakovich was feted as the great hope for music in the new Soviet Union. But when Stalin, who had implacable views on what kind of music was acceptable in the Soviet state, rose to power, and especially after he consolidated his position as supreme leader in the early 1930s, Shostakovich – his music informed by suspiciously Western modernist influences – found himself yo-yoing in and out of favour. In January 1936 he was **publicly denounced by Stalin** as 'an enemy of the people', and he was cancelled again in the 1940s for the crime of so-called 'formulism'. So perhaps it's no surprise that he kept a packed bag by the door in case of a midnight knock from the secret police and a sudden relocation to somewhere much further east. The Siberian sojourn never came to pass however, with Shostakovich carefully maintaining a balancing act between mollifying the system and retaining his own musical ideals, and after Stalin's death in 1953 he enjoyed more creative freedom.

Amid the decades of political and social turmoil, Shostakovich kept working and his catalogue of compositions covers a wide range of orchestral and chamber pieces, along with works for piano, voice, opera and ballet, and many

film scores. Renowned for his symphonies (the subject of an acclaimed **set of recordings** by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Vasily Petrenko), Shostakovich composed his first at 19, as a graduation piece from the Petrograd Conservatory, and his 15th and final symphony in 1971 to mark his 65th birthday. His final completed work was a violin sonata, written not long before he died in August 1975.

Did you know? While orbiting in space in 1961, Russian Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin sang Shostakovich's song *The Homeland Hears* – part of the composer's 1951 work *Four Songs for Voice and Piano*. It later became the theme song of the Soviet space industry.

Listen to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra playing the **opening movement** of the *Leningrad Symphony*.

Benjamin Britten

"Composing is like driving down a foggy road towards a house," explained Benjamin Britten. "Slowly, you see more details of the house – the colour of the slates and bricks, the shapes of the windows. The notes are the bricks and the mortar of the house." **Britten** himself was one of the most important musical housebuilders in 20th Century British music. And his own bricks-and-mortar home for almost two decades, **The Red House** at Aldeburgh (which he shared with his life partner Peter Pears and which now houses the Britten-Pears Foundation), was also a place of great creativity for him. It was just down the road in 1948 that he started what became the Aldeburgh Festival.

A prolific child prodigy, he had started composing by the age of 10 and as a teenager studied with composer Frank Bridge, really taking on board Bridge's maxim of being true to your own artistic vision. He later attended the Royal College of Music on a scholarship, where his tutors included Vaughan Williams and John Ireland. He developed a distinctive musical voice, informed by **a diverse range of influences**, from Henry Purcell to Schoenberg and Anton Berg, English folk music and Japanese Noh theatre.

Britten is perhaps best known for his operas – among them *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, *Albert Herring*, *Death in Venice* and *The Turn of the Screw* – but he also produced song cycles, choral works, film music (notably his 1936 documentary soundtrack *Night Mail* with words by poet, and friend, WH Auden) and chamber and orchestral pieces. His popular Christmas choral piece *A Ceremony of Carols* dates from 1942 and was composed at sea as Britten and Pears were returning from a three-year stay in America. Twenty years later, he was commissioned to write the *War Requiem* for the consecration of Coventry's new cathedral.

In the final year of his life, Britten was made a life peer, taking the title Baron Britten of Aldeburgh. And it was there that he died in December 1976, aged 63.

Did you know? The British premiere of Britten's *Violin Concerto* was given at the Queen's Hall in London in 1941. The soloist was Birkenhead-born Thomas Matthews, former leader of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. In March 1947, Matthews also gave the first performance of the work at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, conducted by Charles Groves.

Sir Edward Elgar

The most important English composer since Purcell, **Sir Edward Elgar** was born at Lower Broadheath, a small village just outside Worcester, on June 2, 1857 – the middle child of seven children.

Elgar's father William was a piano tuner who ran a music shop in the city's High Street. Yet although the family would 'live above the shop' as the young Edward grew up - influenced by his mother Ann, a farmer's daughter from the Forest of Dean, he always retained a love of the rolling English countryside, particularly the nearby Malvern Hills which he captured, famously, in his music.

While he had piano and violin lessons as a child, Elgar never had any formal musical training. He taught himself to compose, and his early career was spent as a freelance musician and as a violin and music teacher at the Worcester High School for Girls (a job he reputedly detested). He was also bandmaster at the Worcester City and County Pauper Lunatic Asylum at Powick.

He was associated with the **Three Choirs Festival** for more than half-a-century, from the age of 24, when he played second violin in the orchestra, to a year before he died. As a boy, he had attended concerts and his father and uncle had performed in the festival themselves.

Elgar's earliest compositions included a *Gloria*, written while still a teenager, *Mass for choir and organ* and *Romance for Violin and Piano*. His 1888 work *Salut d'Amour* was written as an engagement gift for his future wife (Caroline) Alice, while the 1892 *Serenade for Strings* was based on a melody he had actually written much earlier in his life.

His most famous and enduring works date from the mid-1890s onwards, including the ***Enigma Variations*** – premiered in London in June 1899 with Hans Richter conducting, *Dream of Gerontius* (1900), his *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1* (1901), *Symphony No.1* (1908), *Violin Concerto* (1909-10), and his 1919 masterpiece the *Cello Concerto*.

Elgar was knighted in 1904, and the following year was made a Freeman of Worcester and became the first Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham. He received the Order of Merit in 1911, was made a KVCO in 1928 and in 1931 was given a baronetcy, taking the title Lord Elgar of Broadheath. From 1924-34 he was **Master of the King's Musick**. Elgar died in

Worcester on February 23, 1934. He was buried in the churchyard at St Wulstan's RC Church in Little Malvern.

Did you know? When Elgar's song cycle *Sea Pictures* was premiered at the Norwich Festival in 1899, with its composer conducting, the statuesque 6ft 2in English contralto Clara Butt appeared dressed as a mermaid.

About the Music

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75): Festive Overture, Op 96

Composed: 1954
First Performed: 6 November 1954, Moscow, Bolshoi Theatre, Bolshoi Thetre Orchestra cond. Alexander Melik-Pashayev

The story of how Shostakovich's Festive Overture came into being belongs in a Russian black comedy. After the so-called 'Zhdanov Decree' of 1948, in which Shostakovich had been publicly condemned for 'bourgeois individualism' and 'anti-people formalism', a period of anxious uncertainty had followed for the composer. But then, following the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, Shostakovich had been appointed musical consultant at the Bolshoi Theatre. The festivities for the 37th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution were looming when the Bolshoi's conductor Vassili Nebolsin appeared on Shostakovich's doorstep with an urgent request for a new work to mark the festivities. Quite why it was left so late is difficult to say – according to one version, another composer had been approached, but had cried off at the last minute, unable to compose from sheer terror at the burden of responsibility.

Shostakovich rose to the task splendidly. He began composing at once, with a fleet of motorcycle couriers on hand to carry each page of the score to the copyists as soon as the ink was dry. It's said that he helped the process along with liberal quantities of vodka, and by improvising rude words to the tunes as he wrote them down - possibly apocryphal, but in their way such tales are a tribute to the extraordinary verve and vitality of the music. The *Festive Overture* is a masterpiece of 'occasional' music: the tunes are very catchy, and the heroic ending, enhanced (as in the *Leningrad* Symphony) by an extra ten-strong brass chorus, is roof-raising.

Benjamin Britten (1913-76): Cello Symphony, Op 68
1. Allegro maestoso
2. Presto inquieto
3. Adagio – cadenza ad lib.
4. Passacaglia: Andante allegro

Composed: 1963
First Performed: 12 March 1964, Moscow, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Mstislav Rostropovich (cello), cond. Britten

Why not a ‘cello concerto’? The cello part is certainly virtuosic enough, demanding plenty of stamina as well as phenomenal technical precision, and there’s even a substantial solo cadenza – *surely* this is concerto! Moreover, it was written with a star soloist in mind, the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. Britten had been very impressed by Rostropovich’s playing of his soon-to-be close friend Dmitri Shostakovich’s First Cello Concerto (1959), not least by the Russian cellist’s sheer heroism in tackling the ferociously difficult solo part. At first Britten thought of writing a concerto, and Rostropovich was encouraging: ‘Write for the cello everything that your heart tells you’, he told Britten, ‘no matter how difficult it is. My love for you will help me to master every note, even the most impossible ones.’

But Britten had also been impressed by the symphonic scale and sweep of Shostakovich’s concerto, and this evidently set him thinking. Britten never wrote a ‘pure’ abstract symphony. Part of him clearly wanted to, but he had qualms about aligning himself with the great European symphonic tradition, especially as defined by Beethoven, about whom Britten had decidedly mixed feelings. The soloist emerges as a fighter, a leader, but also as a thinker, and there are moments when the cello seems to stand to one side, contemplating the work’s heroic symphonic ambitions – ironically perhaps (as for instance in the solo cadenza). Cello and orchestra confront each other, as in a romantic concerto, in the first movement, but in the haunted Presto inquieto the argument turns inward. Stern and rhythmically jagged at first, the Adagio also becomes increasingly contemplative, preparing the way for the long solo cadenza. Then, in the finale, irony comes to the fore, with a defiantly major-key chordal theme and a jaunty trumpet tune, whose upbeat character is at least open to question. The end seems determined to smile in spite of itself – rather as some of Shostakovich’s symphonic endings do. In both composers, the tension between outward affirmation and inner doubt and anguish can be intense.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934): Variations on an Original Theme (‘Enigma’), op 36

Composed: 1898-9
First Performed: 19 June 1899, London, St James’s Hall, cond. Hans Richter

'The Enigma I will not explain’, wrote Elgar, ‘its "dark saying" must be left unguessed... further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme "goes", but is not played.' Several ingenious attempts have been made to find that 'larger theme'. Could ‘Auld Lang Syne’, or even ‘Rule Britannia’, be half-concealed in the music somewhere? Or is it something more – well – *enigmatic*? Elgar loved puns and double meanings, so it is possible that something else, something broader is implied by the word ‘theme’?

A clue to that is provided by his description of how the ‘Enigma’ theme originally came to him. Tired from a day’s teaching, Elgar was improvising at the piano, when suddenly his wife, Alice, interrupted him:

'Edward, that's a good tune.'
I awoke from the dream: 'Eh! Tune, what tune?'
And she said, 'Play it again, I like that tune.'
I played and strummed, and played, and then she exclaimed:
'That's the tune.'

In another version of the story, Alice asks Elgar what he's playing: 'Nothing', says Elgar, 'but something might be made of it'. The more one knows about this ambitious but profoundly insecure composer, the more that sounds like a description of Elgar himself at that time. Though he was already in his forties, Elgar was still far from established on the British cultural scene, and was feeling thwarted and isolated. Years later he told the critic Ernest Newman that the Enigma theme 'expressed when written (in 1898) my sense of the loneliness of the artist ...and to me, it still embodies that sense'.

So, it could be that the 'larger theme' that runs through the *Enigma Variations* is Elgar himself, lonely and pensive at first, but revealing other aspects of his complex character as the fourteen variations progress. The theme remains more or less clearly identifiable, but it goes through rich and ingenious transformations as it encounters each of the 'friends' Elgar tells us are 'pictured with'. It becomes impassioned in the company of Alice (Var I), playful and flirtatious in the company of 'Dorabella' (Var X), profoundly melancholic when unburdening itself to the cellist Basil Nevinson (Var XII) and noble in the famous 'Nimrod' variation (IX), which records how his publisher friend August Jaeger encouraged him to aspire for the most sublime heights.

Then, in the finale (Var XIV), Elgar himself emerges like the butterfly from the chrysalis, wings magnificently outstretched. If Elgar the artist is the 'larger theme' that 'goes' through the *Enigma Variations*, then in this magnificent apotheosis he says to each of those friends, 'See what you have made of me!'