



**Free concert
programme**

London Philharmonic Orchestra



**2025/26 season
at the
Southbank Centre**



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London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jepsen

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis supported by Richard Buxton

Conductor Emeritus Vladimir Jurowski KBE **Patron** HRH The Duke of Kent KG

Artistic Director Jesús Herrera **Chief Executive** David Burke

Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Wednesday 25 March 2026 | 7.30pm

Voices from Finland

Lotta Wennäkoski

Zelo (*world premiere*)* (20')

Interval (20')

Sibelius

Kullervo (70')

Robin Ticciati

conductor

Miina-Liisa Väreälä

soprano

Shenyang

bass-baritone

YL Male Voice Choir

Chorusmaster: Pasi Hyökkä

*Commissioned by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

6.00pm | Free pre-concert performance | Royal Festival Hall
LPO Showcase: Crisis Creates

Members of Crisis – all adults who have experienced homelessness – perform original music they have devised with LPO musicians and workshop leader Aga Serugo-Lugo during a week-long creative project.

Free and unticketed – all welcome.

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The timings shown are not precise and are given only as a guide.

Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

Tonight in 2 minutes

New to classical? Short on time? Your quick guide to tonight's concert.

The vibe

Voices from Finland

This concert pairs a brand-new contemporary work and an epic classic. First we hear the world premiere of Lotta Wennäkoski's *Zelo*, a new orchestral piece by one of today's leading Finnish composers. After the interval comes Sibelius's *Kullervo* – a vast late-19th-century work for orchestra, two solo singers and a male-voice choir, drawing on Finnish legends.

Who's on stage?



Robin Ticciati – conductor

British conductor Robin Ticciati is Artistic Director of Glyndebourne Festival Opera, where working closely with singers shapes his expressive and dramatically-charged conducting style. Robin enjoys a longstanding partnership with the LPO, collaborating regularly both in the concert hall and in the opera pit.



Miina-Liisa Väreä & Shenyang – singers

Miina-Liisa and Shenyang join us after the interval as soloists in Sibelius's *Kullervo*.



Both have made names for themselves on the world stage, both in opera and in concert. This is Shenyang's second appearance with the LPO, while it's Miina-Liisa's concert debut with us.



YL Male Voice Choir

Our guest choir tonight is the world's oldest Finnish-language choir. With the language and sound of Finnish composer Sibelius in their DNA, they'll bring something very special to his work *Kullervo*.



London Philharmonic Orchestra

Tonight there are over 80 LPO musicians on stage. Many of our talented members enjoy busy solo, chamber and teaching careers alongside their orchestral work.

Turn to page 6 to see a full player list.

What to expect

Take your seats...

The Orchestra tune up their instruments, then the conductor, Robin, enters the stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...



20 min

Lotta Wennäkoski *Zelo*

This new orchestral piece by Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski receives its first ever performance tonight. Lotta grew up steeped in the music of Jean Sibelius – who composed the other work in tonight's concert – and that cultural backdrop helped shape her five-movement piece.

As a world premiere, this is a rare chance to hear a new work come to life for the first time, and we're delighted that the composer herself is here tonight to hear it.

Longer classical pieces are often made up of **movements**, or shorter sections. Applause is usually saved for after the final movement.

Interval 20 min



70 min

Jean Sibelius *Kullervo*

Sibelius's *Kullervo* is a vast, five-movement work inspired by Finnish myth and folk traditions. It tells the story of the eponymous anti-hero from the *Kalevala*, Finland's national epic poem.

The Orchestra, two solo singers and a male choir join forces to tell the story, tracing *Kullervo*'s troubled youth, his fatal mistakes, and ultimately his downfall. Listen for contrasts between quiet passages and big climaxes, simple repeating folk-style tunes inspired by traditional sung storytelling, and the choir's powerful narrative role.

After the final piece, we applaud the performers. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Pieter, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause, with several rounds of bows bringing the evening to a celebratory close.

Want to read more? Turn to page 10 for a deeper dive into this evening's pieces.

Welcome

LPO news

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

We're the UK's largest centre for the arts and one of the nation's top five visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. As a charity, we bring millions of people together by opening up the unique art spaces that we care for.

The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward Gallery, National Poetry Library and Arts Council Collection. We're one of London's favourite meeting spots, with lots of free events and places to relax, eat and shop next to the Thames.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you need any information or help, please ask a member of staff. You can also email hello@southbankcentre.co.uk or write to us at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX.

Subscribers to our email updates are the first to hear about new events, offers and competitions. Just head to our website to sign up.

Printed with the planet in mind

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Prefer paper-free?

Scan here for PDF versions of all our programmes to read or download on your phone or tablet.



Welcome – Crisis Creates

This evening we welcome members of Crisis – adults who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness – to give a pre-concert performance on the Royal Festival Hall stage at 6pm, and to join us in the audience this evening.

Working with national charity Crisis UK, our 'Crisis Creates' project offers a safe space for participants to express themselves, work together and create a high-quality performance that inspires, connects and empowers. Over four days of workshops, the participants have devised music and lyrics as a group alongside LPO musicians and workshop leader Aga Serugo-Lugo, inspired by the Orchestra's repertoire. We hope you enjoy it! To find out more, visit lpo.org.uk/project/crisis-creates

LPO Fellow Conductors 2026/27

We're thrilled to announce our new LPO Fellow Conductors for the 2026/27 season: **Enyi Okpara** and **Shira Samuels-Shragg**, who will join the LPO family from September. We can't wait to work with them!



Londoner Enyi (left) is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, and currently the Calleva Assistant Conductor at Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, while American Shira (below left) is a Juilliard School graduate and currently Assistant Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.



Launched in 2023, our flagship LPO Conducting Fellowship seeks to support the development of world-class conductors of the future. Each season, the programme offers an intensive opportunity to work closely with the Orchestra to outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds currently under-represented in the profession.

© Frances Marshall/Kathy Tran

Find out more at lpo.org.uk/conductingfellowship

London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

Uniquely groundbreaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been celebrated as one of the world's great orchestras since Sir Thomas Beecham founded it in 1932. Our mission is to create unrivalled orchestral experiences on stage and cultivate human connections beyond it, which we accomplish through live performances, online, and an extensive education and community programme, cementing our position as a leading orchestra for the 21st century.

Our home is at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, where we're at the beating heart of London's cultural life. You'll also find us at our resident venues in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden, and on tour worldwide. In 2024 we celebrated 60 years as Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, combining the magic of opera with Glyndebourne's glorious setting in the Sussex countryside.

Soundtrack to key moments

Everyone will have heard the Grammy-nominated London Philharmonic Orchestra, whether it's playing the world's National Anthems for every medal ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, our iconic recording with Pavarotti that made *Nessun Dorma* a global football anthem, or closing the flotilla at The Queen's Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant. And you'll almost certainly have heard us on the soundtracks for major films including *The Lord of the Rings*.

Sharing the wonder worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. We're the most followed UK orchestra on Instagram, the most followed orchestra globally on TikTok, and overall the third most followed globally across all social platforms. In 2024 we featured in a TV documentary series on Sky Arts: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', which was nominated for a 2025 BAFTA. During 2025/26 we're once again working with Marquee TV to broadcast selected live concerts to enjoy at home.

Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included great historic names like Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2021 Edward Gardner became our 13th Principal Conductor, and Vladimir Jurowski became Conductor Emeritus. Karina Canellakis is our current Principal Guest Conductor, and Sir George Benjamin our Composer-in-Residence.

Next generations

We're committed to nurturing the next generation of musicians and music-lovers: we love seeing the joy of children and families experiencing their first musical moments, and we're passionate about inspiring schools and teachers through dedicated concerts, workshops, resources and training. Reflecting our values of

Pieter Schoeman

Leader

collaboration and inclusivity, our OrchLab and Open Sound Ensemble projects offer music-making opportunities for adults and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

Today's young instrumentalists are the orchestra members of the future, and we have a number of opportunities to support their progression. Our LPO Junior Artists programme leads the way in creating pathways into the profession for young artists from under-represented communities, and our LPO Young Composers and Foyle Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. In 2023 we launched the LPO Conducting Fellowship, supporting the development of outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds under-represented in the profession.

2025/26 season

This season's theme, *Harmony with Nature*, explores humanity's bond with the natural world through works by Beethoven, Sibelius, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Dvořák; masterpieces of an era that saw nature as a mirror of human emotion. Closer to our own time, we'll hear from composers as diverse as Duke Ellington, John Luther Adams and Anna Thorvaldsdottir, who have all found a source of creative energy in the processes of nature.

Highlights with Principal Conductor Edward Gardner include symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Brahms and Rachmaninov; a pair of concerts spotlighting 20th-century Central European composers; an evening dedicated to Elgar; and a performance of Berg's *Wozzeck* to end the season. We also welcome back Karina Canellakis and Vladimir Jurowski, as well as guest conductors including Robin Ticciati, Kirill Karabits, Mark Elder and Kahchun Wong. Our lineup of soloists this season includes violinists Anne-Sophie Mutter, Alina Ibragimova, James Ehnes and Himari; cellist Nicolas Altstaedt; and pianists Yefim Bronfman, Alexandre Kantorow and Tomoko Mukaiyama. The season features nine world and UK premieres, including Tan Dun's choral 'Ode to Peace' *Nine*, and *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* by jazz icon Terence Blanchard.

This season also sees tours to South Korea and across Europe, as well as a wide range of performances and community events in our Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden residencies.



© Benjamin Lalovega

Pieter Schoeman was appointed Leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2008, having previously been Co-Leader since 2002. He is also a Professor of Violin at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance.

Pieter has performed worldwide as a soloist and recitalist in such famous halls as the Amsterdam

Concertgebouw, Moscow's Rachmaninoff Hall, Capella Hall in St Petersburg, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, and the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. He has also appeared as Guest Leader with many prestigious orchestras across the world. As a chamber musician, he regularly appears at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall. His chamber music partners have included Anne-Sophie Mutter, Veronika Eberle, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Boris Garlitsky, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Martin Helmchen and Julia Fischer.

Pieter has performed numerous times as a soloist with the LPO. Highlights have included an appearance as both conductor and soloist in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, the Brahms Double Concerto with Kristina Blaumane, Florence Price's Violin Concerto No. 2, and the Britten Double Concerto with Alexander Zemtsov, which was released on the LPO Label to great critical acclaim.

Pieter's chair in the LPO is generously supported by Neil Westreich.

New video series: 'Humans of the Orchestra'

Scan the QR code to watch our interview with Pieter



On stage tonight

First Violins

Pieter Schoeman* Leader
Chair supported by Neil Westreich
Kate Oswin

Chair supported by Eric Tomsett
Lasma Taimina
Chair supported by Irina Gofman &
Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave
Minn Majoe
Chair supported by Dr Alex & Maria
Chan

Martin Höhmann
Thomas Eisner
Yang Zhang
Katalin Varnagy
Grace Lee
Rasa Zukauskaite
Alison Strange
Ronald Long
Daniel Pukach
Victoria Gill
Camille Buitenhuis
Rebecca Dinning

Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal
Chair supported by The Candide
Trust
Emma Oldfield Co-Principal
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews
Coco Inman
Nancy Elan
Kate Birchall
Marie-Anne Mairesse
Ashley Stevens
Sophie Phillips
Chair supported by Friends of the
Orchestra
Sioni Williams
Kate Cole
Emma Crossley
Olivia Ziani
José Nuno Cabrita Matias

Violas

Dunia Ershova
Guest Principal
Samuel Burstin
Benedetto Pollani
Laura Vallejo
Lucia Ortiz Saucó

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina
Harden
Katharine Leek
James Heron
Shiry Rashkovsky
Raquel López Bolívar
Kate De Campos
Pamela Ferriman

Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal
Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart
Roden
Henry Shapard Co-Principal
David Lale
Francis Bucknall
Leo Melvin
Tom Roff
Helen Thomas
Iain Ward
Hee Yeon Cho
Tamaki Sugimoto

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal
Hugh Kluger
George Peniston
Tom Walley
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton
Laura Murphy
Chair supported by Ian Ferguson
& Susan Tranter
Charlotte Kerbegian
Yat Hei Lee
Siret Lust

Flutes

Juliette Bausor Principal
Chair supported by Malcolm &
Alison Thwaites
Hannah Grayson

Piccolo

Stewart McIlwham*
Principal
Chair supported by The Thompson
Family Charitable Trust

Oboes

Ian Hardwick* Principal
Alice Munday
Chair supported by David & Yi
Buckley

Cor Anglais

Ben Marshall

Clarinets

Thomas Watmough
Principal
Chair supported by Roger
Greenwood
James Maltby

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

Jonathan Davies* Principal
Chair supported by Sir Simon
Robey
Helen Storey*

Horns

Annemarie Federle
Principal
Chair supported by Victoria
Robey CBE
John Ryan* Principal
Martin Hobbs
Duncan Fuller
Gareth Mollison

Trumpets

Tom Nielsen* Principal
Anne McAneney*
David Hilton

Trombones

Mark Templeton* Principal
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton
David Whitehouse

Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

Tuba

Lee Tsarmaklis* Principal
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton

Timpani

Simon Carrington*
Principal
Chair supported by Victoria
Robey CBE

Percussion

Andrew Barclay* Principal
Chair supported by Gill & Garf
Collins
Karen Hutt Co-Principal
Chair supported by Joe Topley &
Tracey Countryman
Oliver Yates

Harp

Rosanna Rolton
Guest Principal

Piano

Philip Moore

**Professor at a London
conservatoire*

Surtitles

Andrew Kingsmill

The LPO also
acknowledges
the following chair
supporters whose
players are not present
at this concert:

An anonymous donor
Sir Nigel Boardman &
Prof. Lynda Gratton
Dr Barry Grimaldi
The Williams family in
memory of Grenville Williams

Robin Ticciati

conductor



© Benjamin Ealovega

Robin Ticciati OBE is Music Director of Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Honorary Member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He was Music Director of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin from 2017–24 and Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra from 2009–18.

Robin regularly collaborates with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, both on the concert stage and in opera at Glyndebourne – last summer he conducted the Orchestra in performances of Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová* and Wagner's *Parsifal*, and this summer they will reunite for Puccini's *Tosca* and Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In March 2025, he conducted the Orchestra in a Royal Festival Hall concert pairing Mahler's Symphony No. 5 and Schumann's Piano Concerto with soloist Francesco Piemontesi.

Robin is also a regular guest conductor with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Budapest Festival Orchestra. Other recent highlights have included appearances with the Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and Dresden Staatskapelle. In the US, he has appeared with The Cleveland Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

This season, Robin returns to the Vienna Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the BBC Proms with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He makes debuts with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and with the Montreal and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras.

A renowned opera conductor, Robin has led productions at the Teatro alla Scala Milan, Berlin State Opera and the Metropolitan Opera, New York. In November 2025, he made his debut at the Vienna State Opera with Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and future plans include his debut at the Bavarian State Opera.

Born in London, Robin Ticciati is a violinist, pianist and percussionist by training. He was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain when, aged 15, he turned to conducting under the guidance of Sir Colin Davis and Sir Simon Rattle. He holds the position of Sir Colin Davis Fellow of Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music. Robin was awarded an OBE for services to music in The Queen's Birthday Honours 2019.

Miina-Liisa Väreälä

soprano

Shenyang

bass-baritone



© Illusia Photography



© Gaoqiang Xia

Building a strong profile in the German dramatic repertoire, Finnish soprano Miina-Liisa Väreälä is a sought-after interpreter of The Dyer's Wife in Strauss's opera *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, a role she performed most recently at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden with the Berlin Philharmonic under Kirill Petrenko, and at the Semperoper Dresden under Christian Thielemann. Established as a leading Wagnerian, she has also garnered tremendous acclaim as Isolde (*Tristan und Isolde*) with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel, and at both Glyndebourne Festival Opera and the BBC Proms with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Robin Ticciati. She made her Bayreuth Festival debut in 2025 as Ortrud in *Lohengrin*.

Miina-Liisa's 2025/26 season is no less impressive. It includes her anticipated debut as Brünnhilde (*Die Walküre*) – first in concert with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Daniel Harding, before bringing the role to the stage in Tobias Kratzer's new production at the Bavarian State Opera under Vladimir Jurowski. She also returns to Oper Frankfurt as Isolde under Thomas Guggéis, and continues her celebrated new association with the Bayreuth Festival as Kundry (*Parsifal*) under Pablo Heras-Casado.

Miina-Liisa Väreälä is a regular presence on the concert platform, with a repertoire including Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14, Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* and Strauss's *Four Last Songs*. Earlier this season, she joined the Orchestre de Paris and Daniel Harding as Sieglinde in a concert performance of the first act of *Die Walküre*.

Tonight is Miina-Liisa Väreälä's concert debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

From the moment Shenyang won the prestigious BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition in 2007, his ascent to international prominence was assured. His career, defined by elegant and precise singing, was launched with early acclaim for interpretations of Mozart, Rossini and Handel, and in recent years, he has ventured into more dramatic and psychologically complex repertoire, embracing the works of Beethoven, Strauss and Wagner.

Shenyang created the title role in Tan Dun's *Buddha Passion*, premiered at the Dresden Festival in 2018. In January 2023, he made his London Philharmonic Orchestra debut in the UK premiere of the work at the Royal Festival Hall under the composer's baton.

Recent performances as Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*) with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich under Paavo Järvi have marked a major evolution in both his vocal power and dramatic intensity, and his portrayal of Jochanaan (*Salome*) with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra under Alexander Liebreich was hailed for its visceral force. Shenyang's affinity for Wagner has also become a defining feature of his calendar, and his portrayal of Wotan (*Das Rheingold*) with the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, and his upcoming debut in *Die Walküre* next month as part of 'Bayreuth in Shanghai', further confirm his growing stature in this repertoire.

Further highlights this season include his debut as Amonasro (*Aida*) at Washington National Opera under Kwamé Ryan, concert performances of *Fidelio* at the Beethoven Easter Festival under Leopold Hager, and *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra under Hannu Lintu.

YL Male Voice Choir



© Lauri Tamminen

For more than 130 years, the YL Male Voice Choir has been at the cutting edge of the art of male choir singing in Finland. Established in 1883 as Ylioppilaskunnan Laulajat (Helsinki University Chorus), the YL Male Voice Choir is Finland's best-known male choir and a national institution. It is the oldest Finnish-language choir, and as such, an integral part of Finland's history.

The YL Male Voice Choir has always premiered and recorded works by major living composers. The Choir is particularly known as a champion of the music of Jean Sibelius, whose most prominent male choir works were commissioned by the YL Male Voice Choir. In addition to its broad *a cappella* repertoire spanning numerous eras and styles, the Choir performs and records works for male choir and symphony orchestra with internationally distinguished conductors.

With many award-winning recordings and extensive foreign tours to its credit, the YL Male Voice Choir has made itself known and respected worldwide. This has also resulted in bringing the Finnish choral art into the canon of international classical music. Today, the Choir often seeks to transcend the conventional bounds of choral music through collaboration with soloists and musicians from various genres. In addition to performing with world-class orchestras, the Choir has appeared with stars of Finnish popular music and on the club scene in Helsinki. At the same time, it naturally cherishes and upholds its valued traditions, such as the traditional 1 May open-air concert and the traditional Christmas Concert series, attracting around 10,000 listeners each year.

Pasi Hyökki *chorusmaster*

Pasi Hyökki MMus (b. 1970) is a choral conductor and sopranoist. He has been Artistic Director of the YL Male Voice Choir since 2010. He is also Artistic Director of the Tapiola Choir and Principal Guest Conductor of the EMO Ensemble chamber choir, which he founded. He has won several choral and ensemble competitions with the EMO Ensemble, the Talla vocal ensemble and the Cantabile chamber choir, and has received numerous awards for his outstanding work. He is also a frequent jury member in international choral competitions.

First Tenors

Arttu Brax
Kim Calonius
Kim Calonius
Eemeli Helo
Jouni Jyllinmaa
Santtu Karivalo
Eelis Aukusti Kiuru
Antti Laakso
Joona Lintunen
Joel Lönnrot
Mikko Lötjönen

Second Tenors

Topi Eskelinen
Aleksi Haapanen
Ville Halliseva
Jani Kaitosalmi
Sakari Kauppinen
Sami Kriikku
Kare Ollinen
Paavali Pastila

Jaakko Perälä

Kimmo Rantamäki
Martti Salo
Sampo Smeds
Arttu Soukainen
Olli Viding

First Basses

Kaarle Hartikainen
Paavo Katajavuori
Antti Lindqvist
Janne Löfhjelm
Jarno Oikkonen
Kola Ojares
Severi Ollinen
Ilkka Penttilä
Ville Ryyänen
Paavali Saari
Ville Saukko
Paavo Tikka
Olavi Äikäs

Second Basses

Antti Asumaa
Tom Chydenius
Olli Huuskonen
Riku Innala
Juha-Matti Kahilakoski
Mikko Kuikka
Matias Kylliäinen
Lumi Miinalainen
Teemu Mikkola
Niklas Oksman
Heikki Puolanne
Alpi Ronkainen
Eero Smeds

Programme notes

Lotta Wennäkoski

born 1970

Zelo

world premiere

Commissioned by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

1. Introduction

2. Cradling

3. Zelo

4. Lamento (del vento)

(In the wind I find my fire-place, in the rain I find my sauna – Tuulessa tulisijani, satehessa saunan löyly)

5. Epilogue



Like many Finns, I grew up with the music of Jean Sibelius – as a music-loving teenager, I used to listen to his symphonies over and over again. Sibelius is an inescapable figure in Finland – almost too big a hero for such a small country.

Kullervo (1892) was Sibelius's first orchestral work, full of gloomy spirit and captivating themes. Although this is not the first time I have been prompted to compose a piece inspired by Sibelius – in 2015 I wrote *Verdigris*, with allusions to *En Saga* – I found myself getting excited about *Kullervo*'s energy and roughness while sketching my own orchestral piece *Zelo*.

Both *Kullervo* and *Zelo* have five movements, and each of *Zelo*'s movements refers to an aspect (or two) of the corresponding Sibelius movement. In the first movement, 'Introduction', traces of *Kullervo*'s main theme are woven into the kinetic texture of the music. The pensive second movement, 'Cradling', is built on a motif related to the lullaby motif in Sibelius's second movement, 'Kullervo's Youth'. *Kullervo*'s dramatic third movement lent me the dactyl rhythm (a long note followed by two short ones) that Sibelius uses to evoke a sleigh ride. My third movement – which is in places fierce, too – bears the same title as the complete work: *Zelo* is Italian for 'zeal', or 'enthusiasm'.

Programme notes

Kullervo is one of the most famous characters of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic, and his violent and tragic story has inspired numerous artists over the years. For me, Kullervo is above all an endlessly inconsolable and lonely figure, who has been mistreated from the very beginning of his life. My fourth movement, 'Lamento (del vento)', therefore has a verse from the *Kalevala* as its motto: 'In the wind I find my fire-place, in the rain I find my sauna' (English translation by W. F. Kirby, 1907). In Sibelius's fourth movement, Kullervo goes to war, and the work's last movement very tragically describes his death. I, for my part, wanted to compose a brighter Epilogue: the kinetic energy of the first movement returns.

I wish to express my warmest thanks to the London Philharmonic Orchestra and maestro Robin Ticciati for the opportunity to write this work.

Lotta Wennäkoski, 2026

‘Full of drive and instrumental imagination ... a composer with imagination and a strong ability to move, captivate and impress.’

MusicWebInternational on Lotta Wennäkoski
(Review of *Flounce/Sigla/Sedecim*, Ondine, 2023)

About the composer

Lotta Wennäkoski was born in 1970 in Helsinki, Finland, and initially studied violin, music theory and Hungarian folk music at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest. She then studied music theory and composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, receiving her diploma in 2000. Her principal composition teachers have been Eero Hämeenniemi, Kaija Saariaho and Paavo Heininen, and she also studied in the Netherlands with Louis Andriessen.

Wennäkoski's output consists of orchestral, chamber and vocal works, and her pieces are frequently performed worldwide. In 2017, the BBC commissioned the orchestral work *Flounce*, which was premiered at the 2017 Last Night of the Proms by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo. To date, the work has now been performed more than 50 times.

Among later notable commissions are the string quartet *Pige* (2022) for the Danish String Quartet, the harp concerto *Sigla* (2022) for Sivan Magen, and the violin concerto *Prosoidia* (2023) for Ilya Gringolts and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Autumn 2025 brought two premieres: in October, Lucie Horsch and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra premiered the recorder concerto *Vents et lyres*. In November, *Alin* for double bass and ensemble received its premiere at the Helsinki Music Centre by Adrian Rigopulos and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. Wennäkoski has also composed an opera, *Regine*, commissioned by the Savonlinna Opera Festival.

Lotta Wennäkoski's orchestral music has been recorded by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra – the album *Soie* was released in 2015 and *Sigla* in 2023, both on the Ondine label. The latter was awarded the Best Contemporary Album of the Year at the 2023 Gramophone Awards.

Interval – 20 minutes

An announcement will be made five minutes before the end of the interval.

Programme notes

Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

Kullervo

1892

Miina-Liisa Värelä *soprano*

Shenyang *bass-baritone*

YL Male Voice Choir

1. Introduction

2. Kullervo's Youth

3. Kullervo and his Sister

4. Kullervo Goes to War

5. Kullervo's Death

Moving abroad is a good way to induce patriotism for your homeland. When Jean Sibelius was studying in Vienna in 1890, the Finland he had left behind was bristling under Russian occupation. Sibelius's teachers Robert Fuchs and Karl Goldmark were urging their 25-year-old pupil to embrace his nationality. This was the context for Sibelius's *Kullervo* – not just a colossal statement of the composer's ambition, originality and nationality, but on its first performance in Helsinki on 29 April 1892, a seismic event for a Finland on the road to musical and political independence.

In Vienna, Sibelius's ears were opened to all sorts of music from Italian opera to stern Germanic symphonies. Two of the latter lodged themselves in his consciousness: Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 3 – music whose expanse and depth mesmerised Sibelius – and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, with its embedding of national poetry, by means of a choir, into a symphonic format.

In response, Sibelius started to consider the creation of a thoroughly Finnish 'symphonic poem'. It was clear where his text would come from. He had been fervently re-reading Finland's national epic poem, the *Kalevala*, from which he turned to the episode telling of the anti-hero Kullervo, a youth unable to distinguish between right and wrong who unknowingly seduces his sister before indulging in a rampage of ultra-violence and eventually committing suicide.

It was a story on the borderline of heathen and Christian times whose ultimate atonement was suggestive of a new dawn. If anyone in 1890s Helsinki missed the nationalistic symbolism in the story, at least they'd have heard it in Sibelius's music. The critic Oskar Merikanto wrote of *Kullervo* that 'we [Finns] recognised the melodies as our own, even though we had not heard them before'.

Programme notes

Merikanto was referring to the distinctive shape and gait of Sibelius's tunes. Before starting work on the score back in Helsinki, Sibelius had visited Finland's most renowned folk singer Larin Paraske, scribbling down what he heard: the chanting of folk stories in long, emotionally strained incantations. Their residue of the distinct, gabbling rhythmic patterns of Paraske's singing can be heard all over *Kullervo* – in its profusion of tight but malleable melodies that obsess over a cluster of close pitches, and in the five-in-a-bar rhythms of the male choir's contributions to the third movement, where the choir's fondness for repeating the identifying phrase 'Kullervo, Kalervan poika / sinisukka äijön lapsi' ('Kullervo, son of Kalervo / With the very bluest of stockings') ratchets up tension.

Kullervo launches with a brooding introductory movement whose opening bars channel the spirit and sound of Finland's plucked national musical instrument, the *kantele*, and whose fatalistic ending foreshadows what's still to come. 'Kullervo's Youth' is a lullaby with aggression lurking within. 'Kullervo and his Sister' introduces human voices and the story itself. While soloists represent those two characters, the chorus narrates events with the neutrality of a Norse saga and the plain-speaking of the rune singers. From that, a particular form of tension emerges. 'Kullervo Goes to War' replants elements of a Bruckner-style *scherzo* in the muddy soil of folk music, building to what the musicologist Daniel Grimley has described as 'a brilliant clash of iron and steel'. In 'Kullervo's Death', the singers return to tell of the hero's demise, but it's an orchestral *crescendo* that signals his actual moment of suicide.

Kullervo was only the second piece of music written in Finland that could claim symphonic proportions (German-born Fredrik Pacius composed his *Symphony in D minor* in Helsinki in 1850). To perform, it required the presence on stage of just about every competent musical performer in Helsinki.

In the context of Sibelius's later works, *Kullervo* can seem a little rough-edged and possessed of a certain megalomania. It was long thought the work's experimentalist streak led to Sibelius withdrawing the piece. Recent research suggests a more innocent reason for the lack of performances between 1892 and 1958: the printed parts got lost. Either way, *Kullervo* launched its composer's career like a volcanic eruption. It remains a work, in the words of Sibelius's biographer Glenda Dawn Goss, 'primitive, raw, flawed ... and utterly spellbinding.'

Programme note © Andrew Mellor



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Edward Gardner

Beethoven's Ninth

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Beethoven Symphony No. 9

Tan Dun conductor

Elizabeth Watts soprano

Hongni Wu mezzo-soprano

John Findon tenor

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Pictures at an Exhibition

Wed 1 Apr 2026, 7.30pm

Mark-Anthony Turnage

Three Screaming Popes

Bartók Violin Concerto No. 1

Mussorgsky Pictures at an
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Edward Gardner conductor

Alina Ibragimova violin

Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony

Wed 8 Apr 2026, 7.30pm

Anna Thorvaldsdottir

CATAMORPHOSIS

Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1

Beethoven Symphony No. 6
(Pastoral)

Kirill Karabits conductor

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider violin

6pm | Royal Festival Hall

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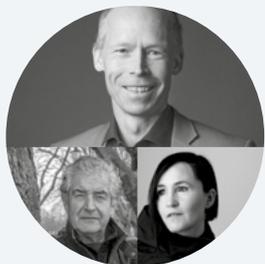
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Such support also enables the LPO to drive lasting social impact through our industry-leading education and community programme, supporting rising talent, those affected by homelessness, and adults and young people with disabilities - designed to build and diversify the talent pipeline and share the unique joy and power of music more widely.



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Whether you make a checkout donation, give to an appeal, or choose to remember the LPO with a gift in your Will, donations of all sizes make an impact. Your support will help us continue to promote diversity and inclusivity in classical music and nurture the next generation of talent.

Join

Joining one of our membership schemes will not only support the Orchestra and our mission, but will also give you access to a host of exclusive benefits designed to enhance your experience and build a closer relationship with the Orchestra and our family of supporters – from private rehearsals, to members' bars, private events and priority booking. Membership starts at just £6 per month.

Partner

We're virtuosos of creative collaboration, expertly crafting bespoke partnerships that hit the right notes. We tailor each bespoke partnership to your strategic business objectives, combining exceptional experiences that deepen client relationships, forge new connections, elevate your brand, and create buzzworthy content that leaves audiences captivated by a compelling brand story.

We're also passionate about using music and our work to increase social value. By partnering together across a shared purpose and values, we can leave a positive, lasting impact on the communities we engage, deepening your CSR and SDG commitments.

Find out how you can support at [lpo.org.uk/support us](https://lpo.org.uk/support-us)



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