



**Free concert
programme**

London Philharmonic Orchestra



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



**SOUTHBANK
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London Philharmonic Orchestra

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Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis supported by Richard Buxton

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Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Wednesday 8 April 2026 | 7.30pm

Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony

Anna Thorvaldsdottir

CATAMORPHOSIS (20')

Bruch

Violin Concerto No. 1 (23')

Interval (20')

Beethoven

Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral) (40')

Kirill Karabits

conductor

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider

violin

Part of



**Harmony
with Nature**

Music for a sustainable future

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

Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

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Tonight in 2 minutes

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

The vibe

Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony

Tonight is a journey through nature in all its moods. The opening work, *CATAMORPHOSIS*, unfolds in shifting, elemental textures, before the lyrical warmth of Bruch's First Violin Concerto brings a more human, singing voice. After the interval, Beethoven invites us into the countryside with his Symphony No. 6 – a vivid, joyful vision of harmony with nature.

Who's on stage?



Kirill Karabits – conductor

Kirill is tonight's guest conductor. However, he's no stranger to the UK classical scene, having been Chief Conductor of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for 15 years, where he's built an internationally celebrated partnership. As well as regular appearances with them at major UK venues including the BBC Proms, he works widely with leading orchestras across Europe, Asia and North America. We're thrilled to welcome him tonight!



Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider – violin

Danish violinist and conductor Nikolaj is a multi-talented artist, equally at home both conducting orchestras and performing as a violin soloist at the highest level. He works with many of the world's leading ensembles, bringing a deep musical understanding to everything he does. Tonight, we hear him in his role as violinist, taking centre-stage in the second piece, Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1.



London Philharmonic Orchestra

Tonight there are over 80 LPO musicians on stage. All at the very top of their game, they've studied and practised for years to perfect their craft. Our musicians represent over 14 different nationalities, and many enjoy busy solo, chamber and teaching careers alongside their orchestral roles.

Turn to page 6 for tonight's full player list.

What to expect

Take your seats...

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



20 min

Anna Thorvaldsdottir *CATAMORPHOSIS*

Written in 2020 by Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir, *CATAMORPHOSIS* opens almost imperceptibly, with low rumbling sounds and slowly-shifting textures. During the piece, the orchestra creates an evolving landscape of dark colours, surges of energy and moments of stillness. We're especially excited that the composer herself is here tonight to hear it!



3 movements

23 min

Max Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1

A concerto is a showpiece for a solo instrument accompanied by the orchestra, and it's easy to hear why Bruch's First Violin Concerto is one of the best-loved. From the very start, the solo violin steps forward with a rich, expressive voice. We'll hear the soloist in constant dialogue with the orchestra, from the warm, lyrical middle movement to the lively finale.

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

Maybe an **encore!** The soloist might play a little extra surprise piece, if the applause is loud enough!



5 movements

40 min

Interval 20 min

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral)

Beethoven's Sixth Symphony – nicknamed the 'Pastoral' – is a musical picture of the countryside. It begins gently, with relaxed, flowing music that feels like arriving in the fresh air. As the five movements unfold, we'll hear birdsong, a bubbling brook, a lively village dance and a sudden storm.

After the final piece, we applaud the performers. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Alice, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause, with several 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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Tonight's free pre-concert talk: 'The Nature Dialogues'

At 6pm tonight in the Royal Festival Hall, we welcome Earth system scientist Johan Rockström and environmentalist Tony Juniper for a free pre-concert talk. Johan and Tony are joined by Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir, whose insights offer a lens through which to experience her work *CATAMORPHOSIS*, which opens this evening's concert – a powerful musical reflection on our fragile relationship with the planet.

This event is part of 'The Nature Dialogues' – a series of free pre-concert talks by environmentalists, scientists and composers, offering fresh perspectives on the music and our season theme, *Harmony with Nature*. Turn to page 10 for details, or find out more and book your free tickets at lpo.org.uk/harmony-with-nature

After Dark with the LPO

Our 'After Dark' series is back at the Southbank Centre this spring, bringing relaxed late-night performances to the Queen Elizabeth foyer after selected concerts. Our 'After Dark' performances are free for main concert ticket-holders, or just £10 otherwise.

On **Wednesday 15 April**, following Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals* in our main 7.30pm concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, we celebrate ZSL's 200th anniversary with a lively 'After Dark' performance by the Orchestra's brass and percussion players. Find out more and book now via lpo.org.uk/whatson

Coming soon: our 2026/27 season!

Our new 2026/27 concert season will be announced on **Tuesday 21 April**. LPO Friends receive our new season brochure ahead of the general public, and priority booking for Friends will open on Wednesday 22 April, before general booking from Tuesday 28 April.



LPO Friends enjoy many other amazing benefits, including a private bar space and opportunities to meet our musicians. Membership starts from just £6 per month. To find out more, scan the QR code or visit lpo.org.uk/friends

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

Alice Ivy-Pemberton

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. We also recently 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.



Alice Ivy-Pemberton joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra as Co-Leader in February 2023.

Praised by *The New York Times* for her 'sweet-toned playing', Alice has performed as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician to international acclaim. While growing up in New York City and studying with Nurit Pacht, Alice made a nationally televised Carnegie Hall debut aged ten, and was a finalist at the Menuhin International Competition at the age of 12.

Alice earned her Bachelors and Masters degrees at The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho as a fully-funded recipient of the Kovner Fellowship. During her studies she won Juilliard's Violin Concerto Competition, performed extensively with the New York Philharmonic and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and led orchestras under the baton of Barbara Hannigan, Xian Zhang and Matthias Pintscher. Upon graduating in 2022 she was awarded the Polisi Prize and a Benzaquen Career Advancement Grant in recognition of 'tremendous talent, promise, creativity, and potential to make a significant impact in the performing arts'.

An avid chamber musician, Alice has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Anthony Marwood, Gil Shaham and members of the Belcea, Doric, Juilliard and Brentano string quartets, and performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Festival appearances include Music@Menlo, Moritzburg and Yellow Barn. Also a passionate advocate for new music and its social relevance, Alice created *Drowning Monuments*, a noted multimedia project on climate change that brought together five world premieres for solo violin.

On stage tonight

First Violins

Alice Ivy-Pemberton Leader

Vesselin Gellef Sub-Leader

Kate Oswin

Chair supported by Eric Tomsett

Minn Majoe

Chair supported by Dr Alex & Maria Chan

Yang Zhang

Thomas Eisner

Katalin Varnagy

Cassandra Hamilton

Sylvain Vasseur

Nilufar Alimaksumova

Grace Lee

Rasa Zukauskaite

Ronald Long

Second Violins

Emma Oldfield Principal

Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Kate Birchall

Nynke Hijlkema

Marie-Anne Mairesse

Joseph Maher

Sophie Phillips

Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra

Ashley Stevens

Sioni Williams

Ricky Gore

Sheila Law

Violas

Shira Majoni Guest Principal

Benedetto Pollani

Lucia Ortiz Saucó

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden

James Heron

Michelle Bruil

Shiry Rashkovsky

Linda Kidwell

Jisu Song

Cellos

Henry Shapard Principal

Wayne Kwon

Chair supported by an anonymous donor

David Lale

Francis Bucknall

Leo Melvin

Auriol Evans

Tom Roff

Helen Thomas

Double Basses

Hugh Kluger Principal

George Peniston

Tom Walley

Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Laura Murphy

Chair supported by Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter

Charlotte Kerbegian

Adam Wynter

Flutes

Thomas Hancox

Guest Principal

Ellie Blamires

Piccolo/Alto Flute

Stewart McIlwham*

Principal

Chair supported by The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

Oboes

Ian Hardwick* Principal

Jack Tostevin-Hall

Cor Anglais

Sue Böhling* Principal

Chair supported by Dr Barry Grimaldi

Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont*

Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

Thomas Watmough

Chair supported by Roger Greenwood

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

Paul Boyes Guest Principal

Helen Storey*

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

John Ryan* Principal

Martin Hobbs

Mark Vines Co-Principal

Gareth Mollison

Trumpets

Paul Beniston* Principal

Chair supported by the Williams family in memory of Grenville Williams

Anne McAneney*

Trombones

David Whitehouse Principal

Andrew Cole

Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

Tubas

Lee Tsarmaklis* Principal

Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Jonathan Rees

Timpani

Simon Carrington*

Principal

Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE

Percussion

Karen Hutt Principal

Chair supported by Joe Topley & Tracey Countryman

Oliver Yates

Feargus Brennan

James Crook

Harp

Tamara Young

Guest Principal

Piano

Clíodna Shanahan

**Professor at a London conservatoire*

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

David & Yi Buckley
The Candide Trust
Gill & Garf Collins
Irina Gofman & Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave
Sir Simon Robey
Bianca & Stuart Roden
Malcolm & Alison Thwaites
Neil Westreich

Kirill Karabits

conductor



© Konrad Cwik

Kirill Karabits has been Chief Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for 15 years, and their relationship is celebrated worldwide. Together they have made many critically acclaimed recordings, performed regularly at the BBC Proms, celebrated the re-opening of Bristol Beacon, and appeared together at London's Barbican Centre as part of the 'Beethoven Weekender' 250th celebrations in 2020, and here at the Southbank Centre in Kirill's bold 'Voices from the East' series.

Kirill has worked with many of the leading ensembles in Europe, Asia and North America, including the Cleveland, Philadelphia, Dallas, San Francisco and Chicago symphony orchestras, and the Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre de Lyon, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Filarmonica del Teatro La Fenice and the BBC Symphony Orchestra – including a concertante version of *Bluebeard's Castle* at the Barbican Centre.

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include returns to the Royal Scottish National, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Trondheim Symphony, BBC Symphony and Strasbourg Philharmonic orchestras, and to the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra during the Beethoven Festival in Poland. Kirill also embarks on a major Chinese tour culminating at the Macau International Music Festival, followed by an appearance at the Seoul Arts Center for the closing concert of the Seoul International Music Festival. The season will conclude with a two-month residency at the Bregenz Festival, conducting *La traviata* with the Vienna Symphony.

Recent highlights include returns to the Theater an der Wien for a new production of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, to the Opernhaus Zürich for *La bohème*, to The Grange Festival for *Così fan tutte*, and to the Weimar Staatskapelle for the Hungarian premiere of Liszt's opera *Sardanapalo*. Last season, Kirill made debuts with the Orchestre de Paris and the SWR Symphonieorchester Stuttgart, and return visits to the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France at the Montpellier Festival, and to the RAI National Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, Norwegian Radio and City of Birmingham Symphony orchestras, as well as to The Norwegian Opera for a new production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. He also completed a South African tour with the Mzansi National Philharmonic Orchestra.

A prolific opera conductor, Kirill has appeared at Glyndebourne Festival Opera (*La bohème* and *Eugene Onegin*, both with the LPO), English National Opera (*Don Giovanni*, *Die tote Stadt*), Deutsche Oper (*Don Giovanni*), Opernhaus Zürich (*Boris Godunov*, *La bohème*), Oper Stuttgart (*Death in Venice*), Hamburg State Opera (*Madama Butterfly*) and The Grange Festival (*Così fan tutte*). In 2013 he conducted a performance of *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Wagner Geneva Festival in celebration of the composer's bicentenary. Music Director of the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar from 2016–19, he conducted acclaimed productions of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Tannhäuser*, as well as Mozart's Da Ponte Cycle (*Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*).

Working with the next generation of bright musicians is of great importance to Kirill. As Artistic Director of the I, Culture Orchestra, he conducted them on a European tour in 2015 with soloist Lisa Batiashvili, and a summer festivals tour in 2018 including concerts at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and the Montpellier Festival. In 2012 and 2014 he conducted the televised finals of the BBC Young Musician competition (with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra), and he has collaborated with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain on a UK tour, including a critically acclaimed performance at the Barbican.

Kirill Karabits was named Conductor of the Year at the 2013 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards.

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider

violin



© Lars Gundersen

Danish violinist and conductor Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider is one of those rare musicians who has 'transitioned uncommonly well to the podium, bringing his violinist's insight and profound musicality' (*Cleveland.com*). This season marks his sixth as Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lyon. He also regularly appears as a guest conductor with the world's leading orchestras, such as the New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. An imminent return to the Chicago Symphony continues a flourishing relationship: 'His mastery showed in a thousand details [...] An almost steely clarity marked every measure of the performance, and yet the conductor never lost sign of the music's essential humanity, its vitality and warmth.' (*Chicago On The Aisle*).

On the operatic front, following an outstandingly successful 2017 debut conducting *The Magic Flute* at the Dresden Semperoper, Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider was immediately re-invited to conduct *Der Rosenkavalier* in 2019. He also recently made debuts with the Royal Danish Opera, the Bavarian State Opera and Zurich Opera House.

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider last appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2023, when he conducted a concert of works by Glinka, Rachmaninoff and Smetana at the Royal Festival Hall. As a violinist, he has also performed with the LPO in London and on tour, and maintains his reputation as one of the world's leading exponents of the instrument, with a busy calendar of concerto and recital engagements. This season, he makes return appearances with the Royal Concertgebouw and Danish National Symphony

orchestras, as well as in the US with the New World and St Louis symphony orchestras. He also embarks on an extensive European recital tour with pianist Daniil Trifonov.

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider boasts an extensive discography of much of the core violin repertoire. A complete collection of Mozart's Violin Concertos with the London Symphony Orchestra, which he directs from the violin, led *The Strad* to declare his playing as 'possibly among the most exquisite violin sound ever captured on disc'. Other recordings of particular note include the Nielsen Violin Concerto with Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic, the Elgar Violin Concerto with Sir Colin Davis and the Dresden Staatskapelle, award-winning recordings of the Brahms and Korngold concertos with Valery Gergiev and the Vienna Philharmonic, the Beethoven and Mendelssohn concertos with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic, Prokofiev's Concerto No. 2 and the Glazunov Concerto with Mariss Jansons and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Mendelssohn Concerto on DVD with Riccardo Chailly and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. He has also recorded the complete works of Brahms for violin and piano with Yefim Bronfman.

Nikolaj plays the 1741 'Kreisler' Guarneri 'del Gesù' violin, on extended loan to him by The Royal Danish Theatre through the generosity of the VELUX Foundations, the Villum Fonden and the Knud Højgaard Foundation.

Harmony with Nature

Tonight's works and our 2025/26 season theme

This season, we invite audiences to join us in exploring one of the most urgent conversations of our time – our relationship with the natural world – through the power of music. We'll marvel at oceans, forests, caves, mountains and wildlife through works by Beethoven, Sibelius, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Dvořák; masterpieces of an era that saw nature as a mirror of human emotion – but also, perhaps, experienced it more immediately and organically than in the digital age.

Closer to our own time, voices as diverse as Duke Ellington, John Luther Adams, Gustavo Díaz-Jerez and Anna Thorvaldsdottir have all found an unquenchable source of creative energy in the processes of nature, from river deltas to volcanic eruptions. For composers such as Anna Korsun, Gabriela Lena Frank and Terence Blanchard (whose powerful meditation on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina receives its UK premiere), humanity enters the picture. As destroyer or protector? Or simply as an organic, inextricable part of nature itself?

Throughout the season, we'll also be partnering with local environmental organisations, and welcoming pre-concert speakers, as we attempt to use the power of classical music to encourage environmental stewardship. We hope you'll join us!

Check out the full season at lpo.org.uk/harmony-with-nature

Nature's voice in tonight's programme

Nature speaks powerfully in tonight's music. In *CATAMORPHOSIS*, Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir reflects on our fragile relationship with the planet. Vast, shifting soundscapes capture a world in flux, pulled between opposing forces – power and fragility, hope and despair – urging us to consider the urgency of environmental change.

After the interval, Beethoven invites us into the countryside with his 'Pastoral' Symphony – a milestone in musical history and a defining moment in our 'Harmony with Nature' season. While earlier composers, such as Justin Heinrich Knecht, had explored similar nature-inspired ideas, Beethoven's Symphony proved transformative, shaping how generations of composers would respond to the natural world. Inspired by his walks outside Vienna, the music evokes flowing brooks, birdsong and a dramatic summer storm, while also expressing a deeper sense of gratitude and renewal – a vision of harmony with nature that continues to resonate today.

The Nature Dialogues

Our final pre-concert talk exploring the season's theme of *Harmony with Nature*

Book free tickets online at lpo.org.uk

Harmony with our Changing Planet

Friday 17 April 2026, 6pm, Royal Festival Hall

As extreme weather events grow more destructive, how can societies adapt – and how can art help us face loss and find hope?

Terence Blanchard's deeply personal response to Hurricane Katrina, *A Tale of God's Will*, transformed grief into powerful symphonic jazz, capturing both the devastation of his native New Orleans and the enduring strength of its people.

This pre-concert talk with Professor Gail Whiteman – head of the Nature & Climate Impact Team at the University of Exeter – explores what it means to live, and make music, in harmony with a changing planet.



Programme notes

Anna Thorvaldsdottir

born 1977

CATAMORPHOSIS

2020

CATAMORPHOSIS was commissioned by the Stiftung Berliner Philharmoniker, New York Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and was premiered in January 2021 by the Berlin Philharmonic under Kirill Petrenko. The work subsequently received the 2021 Ivors Composer Award for Large Scale Composition. Its UK premiere, by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Ludovic Morlot in June 2022, was chosen among *The Guardian's* 'Classical Highlights of 2022'.

On the impetus for her work, the composer writes: 'The core inspiration behind *CATAMORPHOSIS* is the fragile relationship we have with our planet. The aura of the piece is characterised by the orbiting vortex of emotions and the intensity that comes with the fact that if things do not change it is going to be too late, risking utter destruction – catastrophe. The core of the work revolves around a distinct sense of urgency, driven by the shift and pull between various polar forces – power and fragility, hope and despair, preservation and destruction.'

'The relationship between inspiration and the pure musical feeling and methods, for me, tends to shift at a certain point in the creative process of every work. The core inspiration provides the initial energy and structural elements to a piece and then the music starts to breathe on its own and expand. In *CATAMORPHOSIS*, this point in the process became more apparent and tangible as it aligned with the COVID-19 pandemic, an event that has had such a dramatic impact on our lives and reality. The notion of emergency was already integrated into the music and to counterbalance that, a sense of hope and belief. The meditative state of being needed to gain focus in order to sustain and maintain the globally important elements in life also became increasingly important and provided another layer to the inspiration.'

'*CATAMORPHOSIS* is quite a dramatic piece, but it is also full of hope – perhaps somewhere between the natural and the unnatural, between utopia and dystopia, we can gain perspective and find balance within and with the world around us.'

Anna Thorvaldsdottir, 2020

'[*CATAMORPHOSIS*] was detailed and powerful ... It's a single movement of restrained power, a continuum of shifting, colliding layers of sound, which are minutely detailed in the score yet manage to seem simultaneously massive and delicate as they move from dense chromaticism to moments of almost lucid tonality.'

Andrew Clements of *The Guardian*, reviewing the world premiere, February 2021

Programme notes

About the composer

Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir's 'seemingly boundless textural imagination' (*The New York Times*) and striking sound-world have made her 'one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary music' (*NPR*). Her music is composed as much by sounds and nuances as by harmonies and lyrical material – it is written as an ecosystem of sounds, where materials continuously grow in and out of each other, often inspired by nature and its many qualities – in particular structural ones, like proportion and flow. Her orchestral writing has garnered her awards from the New York Philharmonic, Lincoln Center, the Nordic Council, and the UK's Ivors Academy.

Anna's music has been commissioned by many of the world's leading ensembles and organisations, such as the Berlin Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Danish String Quartet, the BBC Proms, and Carnegie Hall.

In 2018, Esa-Pekka Salonen led the New York Philharmonic in the premiere of Anna's work *METACOSMOS*. The work received its UK premiere at the 2019 BBC Proms, conducted by Edward Gardner. *ARCHORA* was premiered at the 2022 BBC Proms by the BBC Philharmonic and Eva Ollikainen, and a recording of the work was named among the best of 2023 by the *New York Times*, *The Boston Globe* and *NPR*. Anna's major orchestral installation piece, *METAXIS*, was premiered by the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and Ollikainen at Harpa Concert Hall in June 2024. Her cello concerto *Before we fall* was premiered by Johannes Moser and the San Francisco Symphony under Dalia Stasevska in May 2025, and had its UK premiere at the BBC Proms later that year.

Composer-in-Residence with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra from 2018–23, Anna was also resident at the Aldeburgh Festival and the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music in 2023. In 2024, she was selected as a winner of the CHANEL Next Prize, and in 2024/25, she was the Tonhalle Orchestra's Creative Chair. She holds a PhD from the University of California in San Diego.



© Anna Maggý

‘With her music’s humbling vastness and depth of colour, this Icelander is a force to be reckoned with.’

Andrew Mellor, *Gramophone*

Programme notes

Max Bruch

1838–1920

Violin Concerto No. 1

1864–68

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider violin

1. *Vorspiel (Prelude): Allegro moderato*

2. *Adagio*

3. *Finale: Allegro energico*



It would be good to think that Max Bruch derived some solid financial gain from the huge popularity of his First Violin Concerto. Sadly, the opposite is true. Bruch wrote the Concerto in 1866, when he was 28. Bruch clearly realised that it needed more work, so he took the inspired decision to consult the leading virtuoso Joseph Joachim, who was later to play such an important part in helping his friend Brahms refine and enrich the solo part in his famous Violin Concerto. Joachim gave the premiere of the revised Bruch Concerto in 1868, where it brought Bruch his first big and enduring success. Unwisely, Bruch then sold it to the publisher Crazz for a one-off payment, which meant that for years he had to endure seeing the work appear on concert billings all over the world, eclipsing most of his later works, whilst the takings went elsewhere. At the end of the First World War, when he was pitifully short of money, Bruch tried to raise some cash by offering his copy of the manuscript for sale in America, but he died without receiving a penny.

Just as saddening is the thought that Bruch was not able to take pride in the success of his Violin Concerto, because it really is an outstandingly beautiful and original work. Bruch calls his first movement *Vorspiel* – ‘Prelude’ – and its role is, in many ways preparatory. The opening is hushed, expectant, the violin emerging with a series of improvisatory phrases, gradually growing in strength. A dark, turbulent *Allegro* movement emerges from this. There is a gentler, contrasting middle section, but the storm builds

Programme notes

again. As this reaches its climax we might expect a full 'recapitulation', bringing back both main themes and leading to a virtuosic conclusion. Instead the violin sweeps upwards into a powerful, impassioned outburst for full orchestra, and we sense the scene changing.

As the tempo slows to *Adagio*, the violin enters with a long-breathed, exquisite melody. This is the Concerto's 'Big Tune', and we can now sense that the first movement has in fact been a preparation for this moment, and for the beautifully judged meditation on this melody that follows.

The Finale moves on very effectively from the *Adagio*'s serene ending. Nervously excited at first, it quickly gains in strength until the violin sweeps in with a majestic virtuosic theme. If the slow movement was the great lyrical flowering we had been waiting for, the Finale brings the full explosion of technical display anticipated in that 'Prelude' first movement, building to a rousing conclusion.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Interval – 20 minutes

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



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The advertisement features a black and white photograph of a conductor in a dark suit, gesturing with his right hand raised. In the bottom left corner, there is a smaller image of a woman with curly hair playing a violin. The text 'BBC RADIO 3' is prominently displayed in the upper left, and 'ADVENTURES IN CLASSICAL' is written in large, bold, white letters across the center. At the bottom, it says 'Listen on' followed by a small icon of a sound wave and the word 'SOUNDS'.

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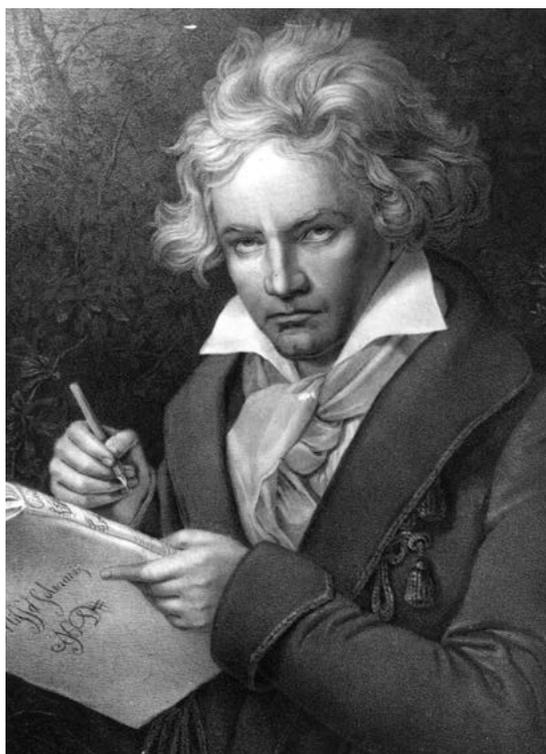
Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68 (Pastoral)

1808

1. *Allegro ma non troppo (Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the country)*
2. *Andante molto moto (Scene by the brook)*
3. *Allegro (Merry assembly of the country folk)*
4. *Allegro (The storm)*
5. *Allegretto (Shepherds' song. Joyous thanksgiving after the storm)*



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

'In the entire history of the symphony,' wrote the British musicologist Hans Keller, 'no composer traversed as much spiritual space as did Beethoven between his First and Ninth symphonies.' The composer may not have consciously designed his symphonies as a chronological journey. But he was acutely aware of creating contrasts in subject matter, character and key from each to each. After the mighty battle of his Fifth Symphony, Beethoven knew he had to express something entirely different.

As he was working on the Fifth's successor, Beethoven was enjoying walks in the countryside outside Vienna. He loved the meadows, rocky outcrops, woodland trails and babbling brooks; they gave him strength and stirred something inside him. He decided that the Sixth Symphony would be a picture of the countryside: both a landscape 'painting in music' and narrative description of events therein. It might have seemed odd, but it wasn't unprecedented. The idea of returning to an idealized vision of rural life, an escape from the over-civilised world, had been a recurring theme in art and literature since ancient times. Musically, it had been used in works by Haydn, Handel, and even Bach.

When the Sixth Symphony was published a year after it was finished, Beethoven purposefully played-down the descriptive subtitles that the work's first audience, on 22 December 1808, were presented with. The composer

Programme notes

described the Symphony as 'more an expression of feeling than a painting.' True enough: his score operates on a purely musical level, presenting and developing a number of themes like its predecessor and successors. But it's difficult not to read specific narrative events into the Symphony when they are so vividly described by the composer, in both music and words.

The first movement is subtitled 'Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the country.' Immediately the music feels different to that of the Symphony's predecessors: more restful, static even, with long-held pedal notes in the bass over which melodic fragments nonchalantly repeat themselves. The secondary idea emerges as if from the same headspace, carried on soft broken chords from the violins. The music arrives at a rustic dance, but it's those initial feelings of repose that prevail.

Beethoven subtitled his second movement 'Scene by the brook'. The stream itself is conjured by swaying strings suggesting the gentle lapping of waves, over which the movement's first batch of themes are introduced. The most significant is first heard first on a bassoon but soon spreads to surrounding instruments, despite their laconic state. After the reprise of those themes we hear a little avian cadenza: the birdsong of nightingale, quail and cuckoo.

The *Allegro*, subtitled 'Merry assembly of the country folk', is often viewed as a musical depiction of village musicians striking up a boisterous and sometimes out-of-control dance (particularly in its lunging Trio section). There follows the fourth and extra movement, a short and transitional depiction of a thunderstorm. The music appears to come to a standstill just before errant figurations depict those first, heavy drops of rain that come before the deluge. When the storm breaks after a colossal thunderclap, Beethoven demonstrates his ability to orchestrate with extreme economy: he avoids trombones and drums, instead wreaking havoc with cellos and double basses.

When the thunder and lightning have dissipated, we arrive at Beethoven's finale: 'Shepherds' song – joyous thanksgiving after the storm'. Soon the clarinets introduce a radiant hymn of thanks. At the point when that theme returns, well into the movement and 'sotto voce' (in a whisper), Beethoven wrote the words 'Lord, we thank thee' onto his sketches. A joyous, broad coda – the Symphony's last word – expresses those feelings of gratitude once more.

Beethoven was once described by his colleague Anton Schindler as 'nature personified', referring to the elemental power with which he made his art. The variegated ways in which the 'Pastoral' Symphony conceals its art with art – its transformations and developments, hidden under the simplicity of those stories – demonstrate why the comment was so apt.

Programme note © Andrew Mellor

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Klaus Tennstedt conductor
London Philharmonic Orchestra
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Pieter Schoeman



Kristina Blaumane

Brahms's Double

Fri 10 Apr 2026, 7.30pm
Royal Festival Hall

Dvořák In Nature's Realm
Brahms Double Concerto for violin
and cello
R Schumann Symphony No. 4

Jonathon Heyward conductor
Pieter Schoeman violin*
Kristina Blaumane cello†

*LPO chair supported by Neil Westreich.

†LPO chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden.

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Carnival of the Animals

Wed 15 Apr 2026, 7.30pm
Queen Elizabeth Hall

Dvořák Symphony No. 7
Ryan Carter Piano Concerto
(world premiere)*
Saint-Saëns The Carnival of the
Animals (with film animation by
Sandra Albukrek)

Lidiya Yankovskaya conductor
Tomoko Mukaiyama piano
Bizjak Piano Duo

*This project is supported by the Daniel
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Jonathon Heyward

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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.



Donate

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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