



# Concert programme

# London Philharmonic Orchestra



2025/26 season  
at Eastbourne's  
Congress Theatre



**CONGRESS  
THEATRE**  
EASTBOURNE THEATRES

# 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

## Congress Theatre, Eastbourne

Sunday 8 February 2026 | 3.00pm

## Edward Gardner conducts Elgar

### Elgar

Sospiri (5')

### Elgar

Cello Concerto (30')

*Interval (20')*

### Elgar

Enigma Variations (32')

### Edward Gardner

conductor

Generously supported by Aud Jepsen

### Jan Vogler

cello

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

Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra in association with  
Trafalgar Theatres

# Welcome to the Congress Theatre

Venue Director Neil Jones

We extend a warm welcome to the members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and to the artists performing with the Orchestra today – and of course to every one of you, our valued audience members.

The historic theatre in which you are now seated is unique in that it is conceived to be a perfect cube and has fantastic acoustics to enhance your experience of live music. Whether this is your first concert or you are a season regular, we hope you enjoy your experience at our venue. Please speak to a member of our staff if you have any comments you'd like to make about your visit. We thank you for continuing to support the concert series. Please sit back in your seats and enjoy your afternoon with us.

As a courtesy to others, please ensure mobile phones are switched off during the performance. Please also note that photography and recording are not allowed in the auditorium unless announced from the stage. Thank you.

## Printed with the planet in mind

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## LPO news

### LPO Junior Artists: Overture Days in Eastbourne & Worthing

Applications are open for our next LPO Junior Artists: Overture Days, which take place on **Thursday 2 April 2026** in Worthing (in partnership with West Sussex Music) and **Sunday 12 April 2026** in Eastbourne (in partnership with local education hub Create Music).

If you're a young orchestral player aged 10–15 and Grade 3+ standard, this is your chance to join the London Philharmonic Orchestra family for a day. You'll meet some of our musicians, play as an ensemble and find out just what it takes to be part of one of the greatest orchestras in the world – for free! For more information, and to watch a video and hear from previous Overture Day participants, visit [lpo.org.uk/overture](https://lpo.org.uk/overture)

Our Overture Days are free of charge and open to all orchestral players of the appropriate age and standard, but priority is given to young musicians from under-represented backgrounds and communities who may be eligible for our main LPO Junior Artists programme in the future.

*LPO Junior Artists: Overture 2025/26 is generously supported by TIOC Foundation and Garfield Weston Foundation.*

### BrightSparks Schools' Concert

Tuesday 9 June 2026 will see our next BrightSparks schools' concert here at the Congress Theatre! Local Key Stage 2 students (aged 7–11) will be introduced to the Orchestra through an inspiring performance of highlights from Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, along with other brilliant music by Beethoven, Bacewicz and Brahms. Tickets are £3 per pupil (accompanying teachers free). This includes a free INSET session and written resources for teachers.

Booking for schools will open in late February – for more details visit [lpo.org.uk/brightsparks](https://lpo.org.uk/brightsparks)

*BrightSparks 2025/26 is generously funded by Rothschild Foundation, Candide Trust, Dunard Fund, Rivers Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, TIOC Foundation, Gill and Julian Simmonds, and Mrs Philip Kan.*

# On stage today

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## First Violins

Pieter Schoeman\* Leader

Chair supported by Neil Westreich

Alice Ivy-Pemberton Co-Leader

Vesselin Gellev Sub-Leader

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

Katalin Varnagy

Yang Zhang

Nilufar Alimaksumova

Amanda Smith

Ricky Gore

Jamie Hutchinson

## Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal

Chair supported by The Candide Trust

Emma Oldfield Co-Principal

Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Coco Inman

Sophie Phillips

Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra

Marie-Anne Mairesse

Ashley Stevens

Joseph Maher

Kate Birchall

Nancy Elan

## Violas

Benjamin Roskams Guest Principal

David BaMaung

Benedetto Pollani

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden

Michelle Bruil

Shiry Rashkovsky

Jisu Song

Mark Gibbs

## Cellos

Henry Shapard Principal

David Lale

Leo Melvin

Tom Roff

Helen Thomas

Pedro Silva

## Double Basses

Kevin Rundell\* Principal

George Peniston

Tom Walley

Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Lowri Estell

## Flutes

Juliette Bausor Principal

Chair supported by Malcolm & Alison Thwaites

Daniel Shao

## Piccolo

Daniel Shao

## Oboes

Ian Hardwick\* Principal

Alice Munday

Chair supported by David & Yi Buckley

## Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont\* Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

Thomas Watmough

Chair supported by Roger Greenwood

## Bassoons

Jonathan Davies\* Principal

Chair supported by Sir Simon Robey

Helen Storey\*

## Contrabassoon

Simon Estell\* Principal

## Horns

Annemarie Federle Principal

Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE

Martin Hobbs

Mark Vines Co-Principal

Gareth Mollison

Duncan Fuller

## Trumpets

Paul Beniston\* Principal

Chair supported by the Williams family in memory of Grenville Williams

Tom Nielsen\* Principal

Anne McAneney\*

## 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

Francesca Lombardelli

## Harp

Céline Saout Guest Principal

*\*Professor at a London conservatoire*

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

An anonymous donor  
Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter  
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Bianca & Stuart Roden  
Ryze Power

# London Philharmonic Orchestra

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© 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 share wonder with the modern world through the power of orchestral music, 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. In 2023 we were the most successful orchestra worldwide on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, and 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 some of the greatest 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. 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'll 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

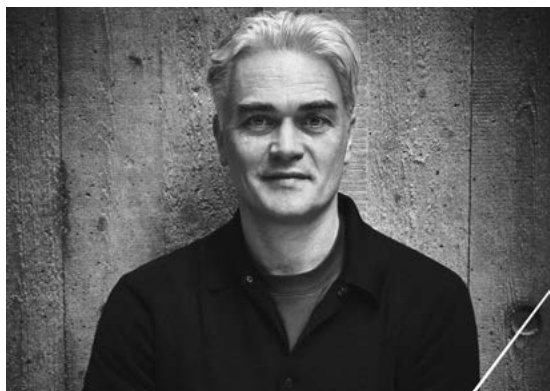


# Edward Gardner

Principal Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra

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© Jason Bell



Edward Gardner has been Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 2021. He is also Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet and Honorary Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, following his tenure as Chief Conductor from 2015–24.

Earlier this week, Edward conducted the LPO in two programmes at London's Royal Festival Hall spotlighting 20th-century Central European composers; other highlights this season include symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Brahms and Rachmaninov, and a semi-staged performance of Berg's opera *Wozzeck* to end the season. In October 2025 he and the Orchestra embarked on a tour to South Korea, and December saw a tour of major cities in Germany.

Edward opened his second season as Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet with *Rusalka* and concert performances of Kurtág's *Fin de partie*. Later this spring he will conduct *Don Carlos* and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. June sees concert performances of Wagner's *The Ring Without Words*, and next season the opera house will begin its journey towards a complete *Ring Cycle* in the 2028/29 season.

In demand as a guest conductor, this season Edward returns to orchestras in the USA including the Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Dallas Symphony and National Symphony orchestras, and makes his debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. In Europe he conducts the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. In Tokyo he makes his debut

with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra.

An acclaimed opera conductor, in spring 2025 Edward was re-invited to London's Royal Opera House to conduct the world premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Festen*, having made his Covent Garden debut with *Káťa Kabanová*. In June 2025 he returned to the Bavarian State Opera for *Rusalka*, following *Peter Grimes* in 2022 and Verdi's *Otello* in 2023. Music Director of English National Opera for eight years (2007–15), he has also built a strong relationship with New York's Metropolitan Opera, and has conducted at La Scala, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera and the Opéra National de Paris.

Edward Gardner has recorded extensively with the Bergen Philharmonic on the Chandos label, including most recently *Salome*, as well as a Grammy-nominated Janáček *Glagolitic Mass*. Other recent critically acclaimed releases include *Der fliegende Holländer* with Lise Davidsen, Gerald Finley and the Norwegian National Opera for Decca.

November 2025 saw the release on the LPO Label of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* conducted by Edward Gardner, recorded live at the 2022 BBC Proms. In September 2025, the label released his recording of Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra & Choir. This was Edward's third Tippett release on the label, following *The Midsummer Marriage* – which won a 2023 Gramophone Award – and the Second Symphony and Piano Concerto with Steven Osborne in 2024. He has also released on the label works by Berlioz, Rachmaninov, Dvořák, Schumann and Britten. In 2024, he and the LPO featured in a Sky Arts series: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', which was nominated for a BAFTA.

A passionate supporter of young talent, Edward founded the Hallé Youth Orchestra in 2002 and regularly conducts the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. He has a close relationship with the Juilliard School of Music, and with the Royal Academy of Music.

Born in Gloucester in 1974, Edward was educated at the University of Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music, and gained early recognition as Assistant Conductor of the Hallé and Music Director of Glyndebourne Touring Opera. His many accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor of the Year Award (2008), an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera (2009) and an OBE for Services to Music in The Queen's Birthday Honours (2012).

Edward Gardner's position at the LPO is generously supported by Aud Jebsen.

## Jan Vogler

cello

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© Marco Grob

German cellist Jan Vogler's distinguished career has brought collaborations with renowned conductors and internationally acclaimed orchestras around the world, such as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. His exceptional ability allows him to expand the cello's soundworld and work in close dialogue with contemporary composers and artists. This includes regular world premieres, including works by Tigran Mansurian (with the WDR Symphony Orchestra and Semyon Bychkov), John Harbison (with Mira Wang and the Boston Symphony Orchestra), Udo Zimmermann (Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra), Wolfgang Rihm (Double Concerto with Mira Wang), Jörg Widman (*Dunkle Saiten*, dedicated to Jan Vogler himself), Nico Muhly, Sven Helbig and Zhou-Long (*Three Continents*, also composed for Jan) and Sean Shepherd (*On a Clear Day*, based on a cycle of poems by Ulla Hahn, for cello, choirs and orchestra).

Jan returns to the LPO on 26 May 2026, performing Elgar's Cello Concerto at Germany's Dresden Music Festival with Edward Gardner.

In addition to his classical concert activities as a soloist, Jan is constantly looking for new ways to combine music with other arts. In February 2024, he gave a highly acclaimed concert with poet Amanda Gorman, performing Gorman's contemporary poems alongside Bach's Cello Suites in the Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall. The duo also appeared on the popular 'Late Night Show with Stephen Colbert' in March 2024. Jan has also collaborated with actor Bill Murray in a joint musical-literary project 'Bill Murray, Jan Vogler & Friends – New Worlds'. The innovative programme drew

international attention and brought together works by Twain, Hemingway, Whitman, Cooper, Bernstein, Bach, Piazzolla, Mancini, Gershwin and Foster for an exciting exploration of the relationship between literature and music.

Highlights of Jan Vogler's career as a soloist include concerts with the New York Philharmonic – both in New York and in Dresden at the occasion of the reopening of the rebuilt Frauenkirche under the direction of Lorin Maazel in 2005. He has also performed with the Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh and Montreal symphony orchestras, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra dell' Accademia di Santa Cecilia, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Munich Philharmonic, as well as with The Knights. He has collaborated with conductors such as Andris Nelsons, Fabio Luisi, Sir Antonio Pappano, Marin Alsop, Valery Gergiev, Thomas Hengelbrock, Manfred Honeck and Kent Nagano.

Under the artistic direction of Jan Vogler and Kent Nagano, Wagner's *Ring* tetralogy is being reworked as part of the Dresden Music Festival's 'The Wagner Cycles' project, based on the latest performance practice research and integrated into an extensive supporting programme. This includes the world premiere next month of Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* on historical instruments, with an ensemble of international soloists and chamber musicians.

Jan has been working successfully with the Sony Classical label since 2003, with around 20 CDs released so far. The most recent releases include the cello concertos of Edouard Lalo and Enrique Casals in 2023, 'The Dvořák Album' in 2022, and 'Pop Songs' also in 2022, in which Jan Vogler explores the history of popular song with Omer Meir Wellber and the BBC Philharmonic. 2020 saw the release of Jan's recording of the cello concerto *Three Continents* written especially for him by Nico Muhly (USA), Sven Helbig (Germany) and Zhou Long (China) with the WDR Symphony Orchestra conducted by Cristian Măcelaru, as well as Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 2 with the Mariinsky Orchestra under Valery Gergiev.

Jan has been a director of the renowned Dresden Music Festival since 2008 and Artistic Director of the Moritzburg Festival since 2001.

Jan Vogler plays the Stradivari 'Ex Castelbarco/Fau' 1707 cello, and is dressed by TÉCHIN New York.

## Programme notes

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Edward Elgar

1857–1934

*Sospiri*, Op. 70

1914

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© From the collection of Arthur Reynolds

Edward Elgar at his house, Craeg Lea in Malvern, in 1904

This orchestral version of *Sospiri* was premiered by Sir Henry Wood, who conducted it in London's Queen's Hall on 15 August 1914, eleven days into the Great War. Then, this profound 'slow movement' was emotionally out of place for an audience anticipating victory 'by Christmas', and Alice Elgar reported to her husband, who was away conducting in Leeds, only of the 'wonderful effect of "Land of Hope and Glory", which was also performed. *Sospiri* ('Sighs' in Italian) is Elgar at his most heartfelt. It is an example of contained emotion and enters a Mahlerian world of detached reflection. For a country involved in a world war which would continue for another four years, *Sospiri* would become more and more relevant.

Dedicating the piece to the violinist W H Reed, Elgar composed *Sospiri* quickly for strings and harp (with optional parts for harmonium and organ) during December 1913 and January 1914, in response to a commission from the publisher Elkin. However, the seriousness and depth of emotion present in *Sospiri* were not what Elkin had anticipated, and the work was eventually published by Breitkopf und Härtel.

Programme note © Andrew Neill

# Programme notes

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Edward Elgar

1857–1934

Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85

1919

Jan Vogler *cello*

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*1. Adagio – Moderato*

*2. Lento – Allegro molto*

*3. Adagio*

*4. Allegro – Moderato – Allegro, ma non troppo*

When Elgar's Cello Concerto was first performed on 27 October 1919, it took its audience at the Queen's Hall in London by surprise. To them, the music simply didn't sound much like Elgar's. It's well documented that the performance that night was a little ropery. But if the orchestra felt its way hesitantly through Elgar's score 'as if it seemed not to have any idea of what the composer wanted' (in the words of the critic Ernest Newman), then perhaps it reflected the nature of Elgar's stylistic shift as it did so. Gone were the victorious swagger of the composer's symphonies and the rhapsodic virtuosity of his Violin Concerto. In their place was a musical conversation founded on shyness and economy and a virtuosity that spoke of reactive anger and even bitterness.

Was it the shattering impact of the First World War, the nostalgia-tinged angst of old age, or simply a new aesthetic directness that lay behind the Cello Concerto's style and shape? All three, probably. Besides, any cello concerto is bound by some basic science. The instrument's range and tonal capacities render it inaudible against full-blown orchestral textures, and in this Concerto the solo cello sounds more-or-less continuously. That helps explain Elgar's taut orchestration. More surprising is the conciseness with which the composer deals with his musical material. The Concerto encompasses a great deal in its emotional range, but it also appears to have shaken off

anything superfluous. Beautiful orchestral colours are achieved by simple means.

The Concerto opens with a brave, angry statement from the soloist with hints of oration, almost like an operatic recitative. The idea is referenced again at the first movement's close, and again towards the end of the last movement. Elgar marks the passage *noblimente* ('nobly'), but it often sounds more like an outburst. Deep-toned violas then introduce the rocking, world-weary melody that is later taken up by the soloist and then the entire orchestra.

There's no better example of Elgar's creative use of minimal material than the opening of his second movement. The cello's main statement – another recitative-like idea that flutters up and down (a minor third) and then down and up (a single tone) – sounds five times; each time Elgar asks for different expressions from the soloist. That sort of quick-wit continues until a beautifully distilled *Adagio*, a soliloquy with a broad, elegiac theme.

Perhaps we glimpse the confident swagger of the pre-war Elgar in the malleable, whistle-able main theme of the Concerto's final movement. But the music is troubled as well as joyous, the cello frequently left in isolation by an orchestra that offers it redemption but snarls with anger too. If there is any of the 'massive hope for

## Programme notes

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the future' of Elgar's First Symphony, or even a sweet nostalgia in the soaring theme in which the orchestra eventually supports the cello, it's quashed: just after

the reprise of the Concerto's opening statement, Elgar slams the door of his Concerto shut.

*Programme note © Andrew Mellor*

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Interval – 20 minutes

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

### Edward Elgar

1857–1934

### Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma'), Op. 36

1899

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'Through and over the whole set a larger theme "goes" but is not played.' Thus Elgar teased the world with his *Enigma Variations*, the work which took his reputation – almost overnight – from provincial writer of salon music to international composer. Its premiere, given in London in 1899, was a huge success and performances further afield soon followed: by 1904 it had even reached Russia, where Rimsky-Korsakov rated the *Variations* 'the best since Brahms'.

So what is the 'larger theme'? Is it musical ('Auld Lang Syne' and 'God Save the Queen' are among the numerous suggestions), or is it, as some have proposed, personal or philosophical? These questions are still exercising musicological minds over a century later, but actually they are of limited significance when set beside what we do know about the work: that in it Elgar first found his true artistic voice, and at the same time created what was the most important work by a native English composer since Purcell. Beautifully designed, exquisitely wrought and brimming with charm and elegance, it is a piece whose purely musical eloquence renders the enigma's solution superfluous.

Whatever the 'enigma' may be, there is one subject that the *Variations* undoubtedly embrace: friendship. Elgar dedicated the work 'to my friends pictured within', and although he did not publicly reveal their identities at the time, he later wrote an article explaining these smaller enigmas. Each friend was allotted one variation, as follows:

- 1 **C.A.E:** His wife Alice.
- 2 **HDS-P:** Hew David Steuart-Powell, an amateur pianist.
- 3 **RBT:** Richard Baxter Townshend, and his broken-voiced participation in amateur theatricals.
- 4 **WMB:** William Meath Baker, a country squire who was in the habit of giving house-guests brisk instructions for the day.
- 5 **RPA:** Richard, son of the poet Matthew Arnold, who mixed serious conversation with witty remarks.
- 6 **Ysobel:** Isabel Flitton, a tall and statuesque amateur viola player.
- 7 **Troyte:** Arthur Troyte Griffith, a boisterous character and somewhat clumsy pianist.
- 8 **WN:** The graceful ladies of the Norbury family – in particular Winifred.
- 9 **Nimrod:** A.J. Jaeger, Elgar's publisher and loyal supporter; his famous variation, the emotional core of the work, recalls a conversation about Beethoven's slow movements.
- 10 **Dorabella:** Dora Penny, a lively and frequent guest at the Elgars' house.
- 11 **GRS:** G.R. Sinclair, the organist of Hereford Cathedral – or rather his dog Dan, who is depicted

falling into the River Wye and climbing out again with a bark.

**12 BGN:** Basil Nevinson, an amateur cellist.

**13 \*\*\* Romanza:** Lady Mary Lygon, who left England for Australia by sea in 1899; the timpani rumble is supposed to represent the low hum of the ship's engines. Elgar's use of asterisks in the score, as well as the subtitle, have prompted commentators to speculate that he was alluding to some other more meaningful relationship.

**14 EDU:** Elgar himself.

While these descriptions are fun, and do indeed form a wonderful testament to friendly affection and playful 'japes' (as Elgar would have called them), *Enigma* can be enjoyed perfectly well without any knowledge of them, such is its strength. But as the late Michael Kennedy pointed out in his wonderful *Portrait of Elgar*, there is

an immensely touching personal note to these skilful variations and the place they hold at a crossroads in the composer's life, for they 'sum up the world Elgar was leaving for the world into which they took him'.

*Programme note © Lindsay Kemp*

## We'd love to hear from you

We hope you enjoy today's concert. Could you spare a few moments afterwards to complete a short survey about your experience? Your feedback is invaluable to us and will help to shape our future plans.

Just scan the QR code to begin the survey. Thank you!



# Elgar on the LPO Label



**Elgar** Introduction and Allegro  
**Britten** Our Hunting Fathers  
**Elgar** Enigma Variations

**Bernard Haitink** conductor | **Heather Harper** soprano  
**London Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**LPO-0002**



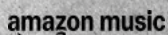
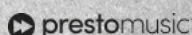
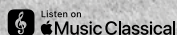
**Elgar** The Dream of Gerontius

**Edward Gardner** conductor  
**Allan Clayton** | **Jamie Barton** | **James Platt**  
**London Philharmonic Choir** | **Hallé Choir**  
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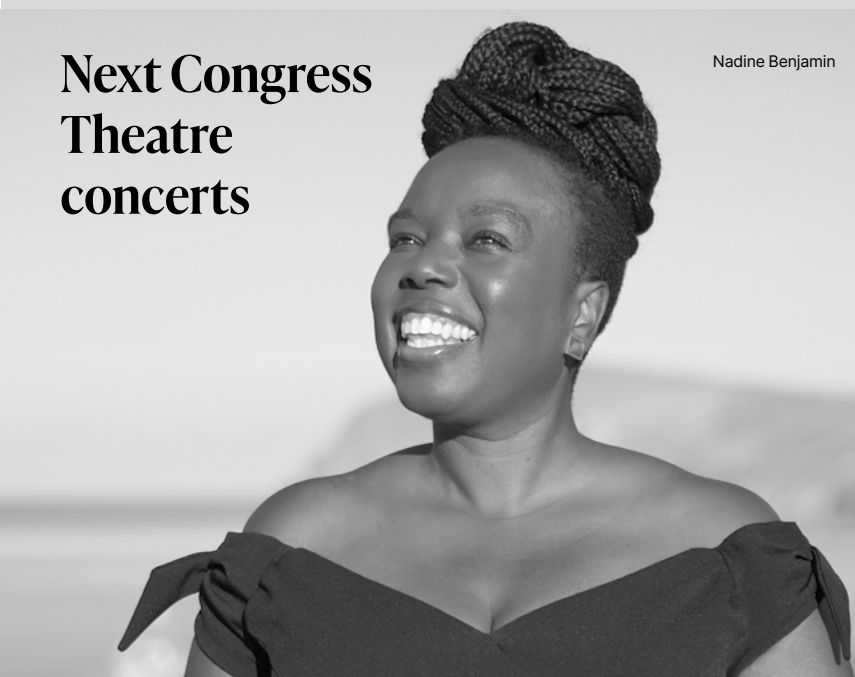
Lukas Sternath



Nefeli Chadouli

# London Philharmonic Orchestra

Next Congress  
Theatre  
concerts



Nadine Benjamin

## The Firebird

**Sunday 15 March 2026,  
3.00pm**

**Mendelssohn** Hebrides Overture

**Mozart** Piano Concerto No. 23 in  
A major, K488

**Debussy** Prélude à l'après-midi  
d'un faune

**Stravinsky** Firebird Suite (1919  
version)

**Dionysis Grammenos** conductor  
**Lukas Sternath** piano

## Sibelius's First

**Sunday 19 April 2026, 3.00pm**

**Price** Andante moderato for string  
orchestra

**Barber** Knoxville: Summer of 1915

**Gershwin** Selections from Porgy  
and Bess

**Sibelius** Symphony No. 1

**Nefeli Chadouli** conductor<sup>†</sup>  
**Nadine Benjamin** soprano

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