



**Free concert
programme**

London Philharmonic Orchestra



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



**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**
RESIDENT

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 29 October 2025 | 7.30pm

New World Symphony

Chinary Ung

Water Rings (*European premiere*) (6')

Sibelius

Violin Concerto (31')

Interval (20')

Dvořák

Symphony No. 9 (From the New World) (40')

Kahchun Wong

conductor

Himari

violin*

* 2025/26 Alexandra Jupin Award recipient: an annual award for an artist making their debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

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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**SOUTHBANK
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RESIDENT



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ENGLAND**

Welcome

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.

LPO news

'The Nature Dialogues' Free pre-concert talks this season

As part of this season's *Harmony with Nature* theme, some of today's leading scientists and storytellers – including Kate Humble and Jeremy Wade – will join us throughout the season for a fascinating series of free pre-concert talks at the Southbank Centre. The first talk is this Friday, when wildlife biologist & broadcaster Liz Bonnin and physicist & oceanographer Helen Czerski share their insights ahead of a concert of ocean-inspired works by Vaughan Williams and Sibelius. Turn to page 8 for full details. Find out more and book your free tickets at lpo.org.uk/harmony-with-nature

New on the LPO Label: Karina Canellakis conducts Tchaikovsky

Last week, we released the first full album with our Principal Guest Conductor, Karina Canellakis, on our own LPO Label. It's a pairing of Tchaikovsky's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, recorded live in concert here at the Royal Festival Hall in 2023 and 2024.

The album is available to stream via all major platforms including Spotify, Apple Music Classical and Amazon Music. You can also download the album or order a CD via our LPO online store: lpo.ochre.store



Printed with the planet in mind

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If you don't want to take your programme home, please use the recycling bins in the Royal Festival Hall foyers. Please also use these bins to recycle any plastic drinks glasses after the concert. Thank you.



On stage tonight

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
Martin Höhmänn
Francesca Barritt
Nilufar Alimaksumova
Amanda Smith
Ricky Gore
Alice Apreda Howell
Caroline Heard
Simon-Philippe Allard

Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal
Chair supported by The Candide
Trust
Emma Oldfield Co-Principal
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews
Marie-Anne Mairesse
Sophie Phillips
Chair supported by Friends of the
Orchestra
Joseph Maher
Kate Birchall
Nynke Hijlkema
Nancy Elan
Sioni Williams
Vera Beumer
Sarah Thornett
Kate Cole
Eriko Nagayama

Violas

Dunia Ershova
Guest Principal
Stephanie Block
Laura Vallejo
Katharine Leek
Martin Wray
Chair supported by David & Bettina
Harden
Benedetto Pollani
Lucia Ortiz Sauco
James Heron
Alistair Scahill
Kate De Campos
Jenny Poyser
Jill Valentine

Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal
Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart
Roden
Henry Shapard Co-Principal
Wayne Kwon
Chair supported by an anonymous
donor
David Lale
Francis Bucknall
Miguel Ángel Villeda Cerón
Leo Melvin
Sue Sutherley
Tom Roff
Helen Thomas

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal
Sebastian Pennar*
Co-Principal
Hugh Kluger
Tom Walley
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton
Laura Murphy
Chair supported by Ian Ferguson
& Susan Tranter
Charlotte Kerbegian
Antonia Bakewell
Thea Sayer

Flutes

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

Piccolo

Hannah Grayson

Oboes

Tom Blomfield
Guest Principal
Alice Munday
Chair supported by David & Yi
Buckley

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

Bassoons

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

Horns

Annemarie Federle
Principal
Chair supported by Victoria
Robey CBE
Martin Hobbs
Mark Vines Co-Principal
Gareth Mollison
Alec Ross

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
Oliver Yates

**Professor at a London
conservatoire*

The LPO also
acknowledges
the following chair
supporter whose
player is not present
at this concert:
Ryze Power

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 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 two 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 Elim Chan. Our lineup of soloists this season includes violinists Anne-Sophie Mutter, Alina Ibragimova, James Ehnes and Himari; cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason; 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.

We're also looking forward to tours to South Korea and across Europe, as well as another season bursting with 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



Kahchun Wong

conductor



© Angie Kremer

Internationally acclaimed for his electrifying stage presence and thoughtful exploration of Eastern and Western legacies, Singaporean-born Kahchun Wong is Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Hallé, where he succeeded Sir Mark Elder last season. In addition to leading one of the UK's most prestigious orchestras, he also serves as Chief Conductor of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, while maintaining close artistic partnerships with leading ensembles across Europe and the United States.

Tonight's concert is his Royal Festival Hall debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, following successful concerts in Brighton and Eastbourne in February 2024.

Kahchun Wong's first season with the Hallé won widespread acclaim in the British press, marked by recordings of Britten's *The Prince of the Pagodas* and Bruckner's Symphony No. 9 – hailed by *Gramophone* as 'a must-hear for all Brucknerians' (June 2025). Their forthcoming release of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 from the Bridgewater Hall follows his BBC Proms debut of the same work in August 2025, memorably described by *The Times* as worthy of 'six stars'.

Since winning the Mahler Competition in 2016, Kahchun Wong has appeared with leading orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland, BBC Symphony, Czech Philharmonic, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony orchestras. This season he returns to the Seattle Symphony, the National Centre for the Performing Arts Orchestra in Beijing, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Osaka Philharmonic and the Singapore Symphony, as well as making debuts with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, Bergen Philharmonic

Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo (OESP). The season also includes a major tour of China with the Hallé, culminating in Mahler's Symphony No. 8 at Suntory Hall to celebrate the Japan Philharmonic's 70th anniversary.

Kahchun Wong is a leading advocate for contemporary composers and cross-cultural dialogue. He has conducted the premieres of Tan Dun's *Fire Ritual* (New York Philharmonic), Toshio Hosokawa's *Prayer* (BBC Symphony Orchestra) and Reena Esmail's *Concerto for Hindustani Violin* (Seattle Symphony). He commissioned Narong Prangcharoen's *Reflection of Shadow* during his tenure as Principal Guest Conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic, and, in his final concert as Chief Conductor of the Nuremberg Symphony, unveiled his orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, reimagined for five Chinese folk instruments and orchestra, performed before 75,000 at the Klassik Open Air and broadcast internationally on 3SAT and BR-Klassik. His second season with the Hallé features a landmark Max Richter co-commission with organist Anna Lapwood, and the world premiere of Unsuk Chin's newly revised *Le Chant des Enfants des Étoiles*.

Kahchun has collaborated with distinguished soloists including Nelson Freire, Thomas Hampson, Barbara Hannigan, Gerhard Oppitz, Christian Tetzlaff, Gautier Capuçon, Daniel Lozakovich, Mao Fujita, Sergei Nakariakov and Vilde Frang.

In 2019, Kahchun Wong became the first Singaporean artist to be awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, recognising his role in strengthening Singapore-German cultural ties and bringing German music to audiences worldwide.

Himari

violin

© Meredith Truax



Born in 2011 in Japan, Himari has been described as a once-in-a-generation talent. She has captured the attention of the classical music world with her incredible technique, playful and imaginative interpretations, and ability to convey emotional depth – all from the unique and refreshing perspective of a young artist. She is one of the youngest-ever students at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where she studies with renowned teacher Ida Kavafian.

Tonight is Himari's debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. This season she also makes debuts at the Ravinia Festival under Marin Alsop, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Jaap van Zweden, with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Manfred Honeck, and with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva under Jonathan Nott. An established and celebrated artist in Japan, Himari will also appear with the New Japan Philharmonic performing Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2, as well as with the NHK Symphony and Hiroshima Symphony orchestras.

Last season, Himari received widespread acclaim for her European debut with the Berlin Philharmonic, performing Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 1 – the performance is available on the orchestra's Digital Concert Hall platform. She also appeared with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Marin Alsop in their New Year's Eve concert at Verizon Hall in the Kimmel Center. Tickets for her Japanese recital tour – including performances in Nagoya, Osaka, Fukuoka and Tokyo – sold out in under five minutes.

In 2025, Himari was signed as an exclusive recording artist with Decca Classics – the youngest ever female artist to join the British label. Her debut EP, recorded with pianist Chelsea Wang, features Waxman's *Carmen Fantasie*, Amy Beach's *Romance* and Kreisler's *La Gitana*, and showcases her exceptional musicality and technical command. Her performances have garnered millions of views online, where she has built a dedicated community of over 100,000 subscribers on YouTube. In 2025, the Japanese media company Asahi TV made a documentary about her, which has been viewed over 5 million times. She is a Classic FM Rising Star for 2025.

Himari has won top prizes at several international competitions, including the International Competition for Young Violinists in Honour of Karol Lipiński & Henryk Wieniawski; the 12th Arthur Grumiaux International Violin Competition (Belgium); the 26th Andrea Postacchini International Violin Competition (Italy); the 20th Schedrin 'Schelkunčik' International Music Competition (Russia); and the Kogan International Violin Competition (Belgium). In 2019, she participated in the Mozarteum Salzburg's International Summer Academy. She was the youngest participant in the Academy's concert at the 2019 Salzburg Festival, where she received an award for her performance. Himari won the audience prize at Mini Violini 2023, held as part of the Montreal International Violin Competition. She began her violin studies at the age of three under the tutelage of Koichiro Harada and Machie Oguri.

Himari is the recipient of the 2025/26 Alexandra Jupin Award: an annual award for an artist making their debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

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 Thorvaldsdóttir 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 a host of pre-concert speakers (see right), 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

Join us for 'The Nature Dialogues'

Today's leading scientists and storytellers illuminate the natural world in a fascinating series of pre-concert talks. Free and open to all, 'The Nature Dialogues' invite you to delve deeper into the wonders of nature and discover a fresh perspective on this season's music. Book your free tickets at lpo.org.uk

Friday 31 October 2025 | 6pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with our Oceans**

With wildlife biologist & broadcaster Liz Bonnin and physicist & oceanographer Helen Czerski

Saturday 29 November 2025 | 6pm Royal Festival Hall

Harmony with Distant Planets

With composer Robert Laidlow and astronomer David Kipping

Saturday 17 January 2026 | 5pm Royal Festival Hall

Harmony with the Volcanic World

With broadcaster & writer Kate Humble

Saturday 21 March 2026 | 5pm Queen Elizabeth Hall

Harmony with our Rivers

With extreme angler, author & broadcaster Jeremy Wade

Wednesday 8 April 2026 | 6pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with our Fragile Earth**

With scientist Johan Rockström, environmentalist Tony Juniper and composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir

Friday 17 April 2026 | 6pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with our Changing Planet**

With social scientist Gail Whiteman

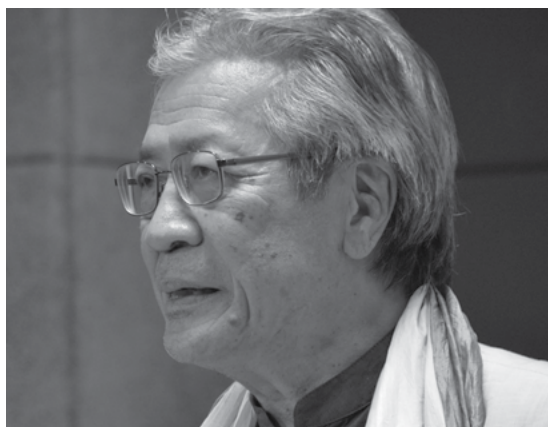
Nature's voice in tonight's programme

Composer Chinary Ung, whose overture *Water Rings* opens tonight's concert, often links his music to natural processes and organic forms. He has said that, alongside talent and hard work, an artist must cultivate 'heart, humanity, friendship, understanding, respect for nature'. Many of Ung's musical works are shaped by the image of a spiral – a form he describes as circling back yet always moving forward, like the growth patterns found in shells or plants. The title of *Water Rings* itself evokes ripples spreading across water, and the music mirrors this with circular, flowing patterns that expand and contract like natural waves.

Programme notes

Chinary Ung
born 1942

Water Rings (*European premiere*)
1993



© Kenneth Kwan

‘Above all, in metaphor, if the Asian aesthetic is represented by the colour yellow and the Western aesthetic is represented by the colour blue, then my music is a mixture – or the colour green.’

– Chinary Ung

Born in Cambodia in 1942, Chinary Ung is often associated with that group of Asian-born composers whose music incorporates aspects of Eastern musical characteristics into a Western classical music setting. Aside from specific cultural and generational distinctions, the principal difference between Ung’s work and theirs is that for many years he was prevented from engaging directly with the source of his cultural heritage as his native country was being torn apart by the scourge of the Khmer Rouge – the brutal communist regime that ruled Cambodia from 1975–79, responsible for mass killings and forced labour that led to about two million deaths. Indeed, as the people and culture of Cambodia were being systematically destroyed, Ung took it upon himself to rescue some facets of the traditional music he had known as a child, reconstituting Cambodian musical traditions through his performances on the *roneat-ek* – the Cambodian xylophone. This project reflects the qualities of responsibility and hopefulness that are so strongly a part of Ung’s personality.

Ung’s Cambodian roots are woven into the fabric of his identity, but the musical aspects are, as a result of his peculiar circumstances, keenly related to memory. He moved to the United States in 1964, studying clarinet at the Manhattan School of Music. He soon discovered an interest and talent in composition, and continued at Columbia University, where he received his PhD in 1974. For many years – through the late 1980s – Ung’s music had a plaintive character in its modally-inflected, melodic behaviours, as if he were reaching back to another time uncorrupted by political tumult. His work of this period established him as a major figure in American music, winning citations from virtually every major musical arts institution in his adopted country. He was the first American composer to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award, for *Inner Voices*.

Continued overleaf

Programme notes

Ung's extensive orchestral catalogue has been commissioned and performed by major orchestras throughout the United States and further afield, including those in Philadelphia, Louisville, Pittsburgh, Tokyo, Sydney and Basel, as well as the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the American Composers Orchestra.

Composed in 1993 for the Sun Cities Symphony in Arizona, the orchestral overture *Water Rings* represents Chinari Ung at his most restrained. The composition incorporates Cambodian dance rhythms and folk melodies, and although the instrumental writing is less elaborate than in many of his other works, it still displays his hallmark subtlety, graceful shaping and expressive detail. Tonight is the work's first performance in Europe.

Programme note © Dr Adam Greene

You might also enjoy ...

Saturday 28 March 2026, 7.30pm
Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Beethoven's Ninth

Tan Dun Choral Concerto: Nine (UK premiere)
Beethoven Symphony No. 9

Tan Dun conductor
Elizabeth Watts soprano
Hongni Wu mezzo-soprano
John Findon tenor
Dingle Yandell bass-baritone
London Philharmonic Choir
London Chinese Philharmonic Choir

Beethoven sought to embrace all humanity in his Ninth Symphony, and Tan Dun follows suit in his choral concerto *Nine*, blending ancient Chinese and European poetry into an 'ode to peace'. He joins the London Philharmonic Orchestra & Choir, plus the London Chinese Philharmonic Choir, to conduct its UK premiere alongside Beethoven's world-changing Ninth.

lpo.org.uk/whatson

Programme notes

Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47

1902–05

Himari violin

1. *Allegro moderato*

2. *Adagio di molto*

3. *Allegro, ma non tanto*

'I dreamt I was twelve years old, and a virtuoso violinist', Jean Sibelius told his diary, wistfully, in 1915. It was a boyhood dream that had once looked like becoming a reality – in November 1890 he had auditioned for the violin section of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. 'Not at all bad' noted the audition panel, before rejecting him because of his nerves. No wonder, then, that when he finally began to write a violin concerto of his own, the strain showed. 'I've got some marvellous ideas for a violin concerto' he told his wife Aino, and he worked at the Concerto in Helsinki between September 1902 and September 1903.

But it didn't go smoothly, and though he managed to wrestle the Concerto into shape, his confidence wavered even before it was premiered by a local violin teacher, Viktor Nováček, in Helsinki on 8 February 1904. Nováček struggled with the solo part; and the local critic Karl Flodin slated the new Concerto as 'boring'. Sibelius immediately withdrew it, and devoted the summer of 1905 to a complete revision, cutting, trimming and re-shaping the Concerto into the work we know today. It was premiered in its final form in Berlin in October 1905, by Karel Halíř, leader of the Berlin Philharmonic. Richard Strauss was the conductor. Within two decades, Sibelius's Violin Concerto had entered the repertoire as one of the handful of concertos that every serious virtuoso simply has to tackle.

But it's possible to see why those first listeners were so surprised. No concerto has quite the same mixture of fiery passion and glacial coolness; virtuosic display and

elemental strength. Moments of nature-poetry alternate with gruff grandeur; yet the whole adds up to one of the most satisfying and gripping emotional journeys in 20th-century music. Take that first movement – it sweeps from its haunting, *pianissimo* opening (originally inspired by church bells in Italy, but utterly transformed into a desolate and profoundly northern cry of nature) through moments of luscious sentimentality (the violin swooning in double-stopped thirds and sixths) to stirring, storm-blown orchestral climaxes. Despite all the drama, and one of the most fiendishly difficult solo parts in any violin concerto, it feels inevitable; even natural. On one of the sketches for this movement, Sibelius actually drew a sunrise – with the slurs over the notes transformed into wheeling seagulls:



From The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius © Cambridge University Press. Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear

Programme notes

Keening pairs of woodwinds and quiet drumrolls open the *Adagio* coolly, making the violin's deep, richly expressive melody seem all the more of a contrast. The movement unfurls into a lyrical and warmly romantic interlude. Some listeners have heard it – like Sibelius's Second Symphony – as a reflection of his recent travels in the warm climate of Italy. The finale, though, comes as a release: a dance, though it's anything but lightweight. In 1935 the British critic Donald Tovey dubbed it a 'polonaise for polar bears',

and every writer on the Concerto since has borrowed his phrase. Perhaps the violin's glittering gymnastics make the climate of this movement too warm for polar bears – but there's a definite chill in the gales that rise through the Concerto's closing pages. If Sibelius is drawing a line under his own dreams of becoming a violinist, he does so with one of the simplest and most decisive endings even he ever wrote.

Programme note © Richard Bratby

Interval – 20 minutes

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

Star violinists with the LPO this season

Saturday 8 November 2025

James Ehnes plays Beethoven's Violin Concerto

Wednesday 4 February 2026

Josef Špaček plays Martinů's Violin Concerto No. 2

Wednesday 18 February 2026

Anne-Sophie Mutter plays Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto

Concert generously supported by Sir Simon & Lady Robey CBE

Saturday 21 March 2026 (6.30pm at Queen Elizabeth Hall)

Alice Ivy-Pemberton plays Piazzolla's *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* (with live dance)

Wednesday 1 April 2026

Alina Ibragimova plays Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 1

Wednesday 8 April 2026

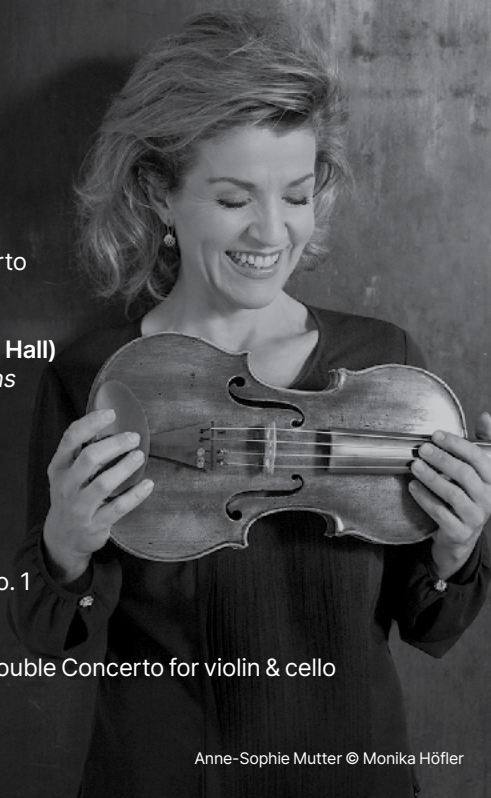
Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider plays Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1

Friday 10 April 2026

Pieter Schoeman & Kristina Blaumane play Brahms's Double Concerto for violin & cello

lpo.org.uk/whatson

Anne-Sophie Mutter © Monika Höfler



Programme notes

Antonín Dvořák

1841–1904

Symphony No. 9 in E minor (From the New World)

1893

1. Adagio – Allegro molto

2. Largo

3. Scherzo: Molto vivace – Poco sostenuto

4. Allegro con fuoco



In June 1891, Antonín Dvořák was approached by Jeannette Thurber, a wealthy American patron of the arts, with an offer he could hardly refuse. Thurber planned to set up a new music conservatory in New York, and she wanted him to serve as its director. A year later, encouraged both by the position's generous salary and the chance to discover 'real American music', Dvořák and his family arrived in America to begin three of the most productive years of his life. As soon as he arrived, he became an instant celebrity and a commission from the New York Philharmonic for a new symphony came just three months later. Although he was busy with his duties at the conservatory, Dvořák was bursting with ideas for new music and accepted the commission with relish. His sketchbooks show that he began work on the new symphony in January 1893 and completed it barely five months later.

Although he was often homesick, Dvořák was fascinated by his new environment, taking every opportunity to discover and absorb the local culture, and actively seeking out the 'real American music' he had moved to America to find. Ragtime was hugely popular in the bars and dancehalls of New York during this time, but it left little impression on Dvořák, who instead became infatuated by the Negro spirituals that were brought to his attention by one of his pupils at the conservatory. 'I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies', he later declared. 'This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States.'

Programme notes

His Symphony No. 9, to which Dvořák gave the subtitle 'From the New World', was inspired in part by this new preoccupation, although he was at pains to point out that the work is not an exercise in ethnography, as some of his critics claimed. 'It is merely the spirit of Negro and Indian melodies which I have tried to reproduce in my new symphony', he wrote. 'I have not actually used any of the melodies.' Aside from a theme that bears a strong resemblance to the traditional spiritual 'Swing low, sweet chariot' in the Symphony's first movement, there are no 'authentic' Negro melodies to be found. Instead, the Symphony gets its sense of 'otherness' from its use of pentatonic melodies, the song-like simplicity of many of its themes, and the pastoral pictorialism that arches across its four movements – features that are no more indigenous to American folk music than they are to many other folk cultures around the world. Rather than hearing it as a musical invocation of his time in America, Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony is better understood as a gift to a country he had grown to love, and a fond letter home to the one he missed so dearly. As he wrote in a letter in 1893, 'I should never have written these works "just so" if I hadn't seen America.'

Programme note © Jo Kirkbride

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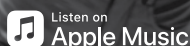
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Brahms Symphony No. 4

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Pavel Kolesnikov piano

Beethoven & John Adams

Saturday 8 November 2025,
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