

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Future Firsts 2026/27 – Information for Applicants

About the Future Firsts programme

The London Philharmonic Orchestra's Future Firsts programme bridges the transition between education and the professional platform for 16 outstanding early-career orchestral musicians each year. This flagship programme is designed to nurture and develop talented orchestral players, offering mentorship, orchestral experience, skills development, training and work opportunities in community projects, and access to networks to boost your professional career. We are proud that so many Future First alumni can be found working across the music industry, including in the best orchestras and ensembles in the world, including in the LPO.

What's involved?

During your year as a Future First, you'll have the opportunity to:

- play alongside the professionals in London Philharmonic Orchestra rehearsals
- hone your playing technique and receive personal development advice through one-to-one sessions with your LPO mentor (usually the Principal player of your instrument)
- perfect your audition skills
- observe LPO rehearsals to experience the behind-the-scenes preparation
- develop your creative leadership skills on Education & Community projects, and inspire younger generations and the wider community
- play side-by-side with LPO members in chamber performances at the Royal Festival Hall, and in our annual Debut Sounds concert featuring new works by our LPO Young Composers
- learn about wider skills needed to be a freelance professional in the music industry (e.g. finances, communication skills)
- form chamber groups with fellow Future Firsts, receive mentoring from LPO players and opportunities to lead workshops and perform
- enjoy free tickets to LPO concerts at the Southbank Centre
- become part of the LPO network of musicians, artists, conductors, staff and other Rising Talent programme participants and alumni



Time commitment

The Future Firsts programme is not a full-time course, and while there are some obligatory key dates, there is also a lot of flexibility on some of the elements of the scheme. There are roughly 25 obligatory dates spread across the year, with a flexible number of other sessions that you sign up for based on your availability (e.g. orchestra sit-ins, sessions with your mentor). The key dates will be shared with you at the point of offer and we expect you to commit to all key dates in order to accept your place.

Bursary and financial support on the scheme

Each Future First receives a bursary of £1,500, paid in two instalments over the year. Participants will otherwise need to be able to support themselves financially during their time as a Future First. The programme is not a full-time course, and it is not considered equivalent to employment by the Orchestra.

As well as the bursary, Future Firsts are also paid an honorarium (£50) per session for specific projects on the scheme. This includes the FF showcase performance, Junior Artist showcase, FUNharmonics workshops, Overture Days, any other Education & Community project and Debut Sounds. Some of these projects don't apply to every instrument, so the exact number of honorarium-paid sessions may vary between Future Firsts. A rough average income through honorariums would be around £1,200 over the year, on top of the bursary. This amount is also dependent on taking part in all the relevant dates. Separate portage is not paid (though we will endeavour to assist with parking for e.g. harpists where possible).

There is further financial support of up to £3,000 available to applicants from lower socio-economic backgrounds. To be eligible, candidates must fulfil at least one of these criteria:

- UK applicants who were entitled to free school meals during their schooling
- Applicants who were eligible for the Maintenance Loan (from UK government student finance) for their Higher Education in the UK
- Applicants who received any other means-tested bursary for UK Higher Education study, e.g. from their academic institution, charity or other bursary fund (you will need to provide details of this)
- Applicants who can otherwise prove they come from a low-income household at the point of applying for higher education or equivalent (you will need to provide details)

If you are eligible for this and would like to apply, you will need to complete the relevant section in the application form.

Who can apply?

Instrument and level

Applicants must play one of the following orchestral instruments (1 place per instrument unless stated): Violin (2 places available), viola, cello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone or bass trombone, tuba, percussion including timpani, harp, piano.

Applicants for percussion and timpani do not need to stipulate a specialism at the point of application – auditions will be undertaken in both disciplines combined.



The Future Firsts programme is for UK-based musicians who have completed an undergraduate or postgraduate performance degree, or those at an equivalent playing standard. You will need to be playing at a level where you can sit in an LPO rehearsal and play alongside LPO musicians.

You should not apply if you will be undertaking your undergraduate degree in 2026/27 – you must have completed your undergraduate course before the September that you begin the Future Firsts programme with us. You may apply if you are undertaking a postgraduate degree in the same academic year.

Future Firsts criteria – what we are looking for

During the audition and interview process, we will be looking for candidates to demonstrate excellence in the following areas:

- **Technical standard:** ability to play in an orchestra at professional level – sound quality, control of instrument, articulation, intonation, rhythm, keeping consistent tempo
- **Musicality:** musical personality in playing, character, instinct, understanding styles across different periods
- **Potential for development:** flexibility and speed of reacting to musical and technical instruction, willing to learn and get the most out of their time with the LPO, open mindset, willing to collaborate and work with others

To be a great Future First once on the scheme, participants will also be expected to meet the following criteria, which we hope the programme will also be able to help them develop further:

- **Orchestral awareness:** understanding ensemble and blend, recognising how individual parts fit within the orchestra, appreciating different acoustic spaces and delays, knowing when to follow colleagues
- **Professional attitude:** reliable, punctual, respectful, responsive to communications
- Interest in the role a modern orchestra plays in society and the community

Residency status

In order to participate in the scheme, you must have the right to work in the UK as a performer between September 2026 and August 2027. If your application is successful, you will need to be able to show proof of your eligibility to work in the UK in advance of accepting a place on the programme. If you are unable to supply a copy of the necessary documents you will not be accepted onto the Future Firsts Programme. We cannot sponsor visa applications.

Equity

The LPO is committed to improving diversity, equity and inclusion across the organisation and music industry. We have recently revised the Future Firsts scheme and its application process to aim for an equitable opportunity for musicians from all backgrounds to apply and be able to participate fully in the programme if selected. This has included ensuring round 1 is anonymous, to reduce the risk of bias, increasing the bursary and number of paid sessions for Future Firsts on the scheme, as well as offering additional financial support to candidates from low-income backgrounds. We welcome and encourage applications from musicians from backgrounds currently under-represented in the classical music industry, including under-represented gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and disabled musicians. We also encourage applications from musicians whose prior lack of access to networks or opportunities may have led to barriers in their music career pathway so far, e.g. first-generation to higher education, musicians from non-metropolitan areas, musicians who lacked access to ensembles in their learning, musicians with caring responsibilities, musicians with non-linear or unorthodox pathways to date.

Application process

- Round 1:** Online application form and Video Audition (*application form only for Percussion/Timpani*)
Round 2: In-person audition and short interview

Round 1 – Application form and Video audition

All applicants complete an online application form including sharing a link to a video audition (video audition materials are downloadable below).

- The application form includes details of your education, musical experience, why you'd like to do the Future Firsts programme and what you would bring to it, and your demographic information.
- If you are from a low-income background and would like to apply for additional financial support if you're offered the place on the scheme, you must fill out the relevant section of the application form. You may also apply for reasonable, UK travel reimbursement to attend a live audition, if you are offered one.
- The online form will prompt you to add your video audition link (YouTube or Vimeo).

Rules and advice on recording your round 1 audition video:

- Your video must be filmed on a mobile phone
- You and your instrument must be visible on camera
- We advise that you record c2-3m away from the recording device
- You must not use an external microphone or similar, nor any technological equipment to support your audition (e.g. headphones, mics, other recording devices, monitors)
- Your video must be recorded in one continuous take, unedited
- Record the pieces/excerpts in the order they appear in the requirements
- Don't include anything in the video other than the piece(s) and excerpt(s) in the requirements (e.g. tuning, any other music)
- Do not speak or make any sound that could compromise the anonymity of your recording
- Only submit 1 video. No more than 1 video will be considered.
- Your video needs to be titled like this: **Surname, Firstname – instrument** (e.g. Bloggs, Joe – violin)
- Pieces must be unaccompanied as specified in the audition pack

You should upload the footage to the internet using YouTube, Vimeo or an equivalent which makes it

instantly accessible (rather than something that requires a download or password), then include the link to it in your application form. The footage should remain fully accessible online until the end of our recruitment process in June. Before sending us the link, please check that your footage is definitely visible, ensuring that you have deactivated privacy settings so that we can view it easily. We recommend that your Youtube or Vimeo link is unlisted (so that it is only available to people who have the link, and is not findable through search).

Once all applications are received, the LPO Education & Community department will check videos to ensure they comply with the rules. The videos will then be converted to anonymous audio files which will be listened to by the LPO panel (who will not have access to the application forms). The LPO panel will then decide on which candidates to offer a live audition to, based on the audio.

Due to the high volume of applications, we are unable to offer any feedback to unsuccessful candidates at round 1.

After the audition process is complete, all videos and audio files will be deleted.

Percussion applicants: please note, due to the potential challenges of accessing a range of percussion instruments for one recording, for percussion applicants, round 1 is via online application form only (no video audition). The applications will have all names and personal information removed before sharing with the LPO panel for shortlisting to round 2.

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Round 2 – In person audition and short interview

If you are successful in round 1, you will be invited to an in-person audition in London which will include a short interview. We will supply an accompanist for the instruments that this is applicable for. Please note the live audition dates for each instrument are listed on the website, so please make a note in your diary at the point of application to ensure you're available. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer alternative audition dates. Please find audition requirements below.

Audition materials for both round 1 and round 2 can be downloaded here:

Violin	video round live audition round
Viola	video round live audition round
Cello	video round live audition round
Double Bass	video round live audition round
Flute	video round live audition round
Oboe	video round live audition round
Clarinet	video round live audition round
Bassoon	video round live audition round
French Horn	video round live audition round
Trumpet	video round live audition round
Tenor trombone/bass trombone	video round live audition round
Tuba	video round live audition round
Harp	video round live audition round
Piano	video round live audition round
Percussion/timpani	live audition round

Timeline

- Applications close – **9.00am (UK time) on Wed 6 May 2026**
- LPO assess round 1 video submissions (percussion: LPO assess anonymous applications)
- Invitations for round 2 (live audition) are sent – by end of May 2026 for June auditions, by mid June for July/August auditions
- Round 2 live auditions – June-August 2026 – see audition date for your instrument on the LPO website

- Offers – We aim to let you know within 2 weeks of the audition date. Unsuccessful candidates may request feedback on their live audition. Unsuccessful candidates from under-represented backgrounds who show promise at their audition may be offered CPD opportunities at this stage.
 - Future Firsts programme begins – early October 2026
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Questions?

If you want to know more about the application process or the Future Firsts programme in general, you can sign up for our information sessions on Zoom on Tuesday 21 April at 3.30pm and/or Monday 27 April at 12pm. In these sessions, LPO staff will be available to answer any questions you may have.

To sign up for either of these sessions please email ff@lpo.org.uk

Otherwise, if you have any queries about the Future Firsts programme, please contact Lowri Thomas, Education and Community Project Manager, on 07932 636 373 or email ff@lpo.org.uk

The Future Firsts programme 2026/27 is generously supported by Purposeful Ventures, alongside the Foyle Foundation, the Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust and Scops Arts Trust, and with additional support from individual chair supporters.