



**Free concert
programme**

London Philharmonic Orchestra



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



**SOUTHBANK
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London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jepsen

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis supported by Richard Buxton

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

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

Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Wednesday 12 November 2025 | 7.30pm

Romeo and Juliet

Gabriela Lena Frank

Contested Eden (*UK premiere*) (13')

Walton

Cello Concerto (30')

Interval (20')

Prokofiev

Romeo and Juliet (*excerpts*) (37')

Elim Chan

conductor

Nicolas Altstaedt

cello

Part of



**Harmony
with Nature**

Music for a sustainable future

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

Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

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

LPO Friends – Behind-the-scenes

Earlier today, LPO Friends enjoyed exclusive, behind-the-scenes access to a Private Members' Rehearsal with the Orchestra, Elim Chan and Nicolas Altstaedt ahead of tonight's concert.

If you'd like to see for yourself what goes into putting on an LPO concert – plus enjoy a host of other amazing benefits, like a private bar space and meeting our musicians – join our family of LPO Friends today, from just £6 per month!



Scan the QR code or visit lpo.org.uk/friends to find out more.

LPO Merchandise – on sale tonight

Did you know we've launched a brand new range of LPO merchandise? From handy tote bags and eco-friendly water bottles to stylish stationery and cosy clothing – all featuring the iconic LPO pink star – it's the perfect way to take a little piece of the Orchestra home with you! With prices from just £2, there's something for every taste and budget.



Check out the merch stall tonight next to the Welcome Desk in the Level 2 Foyer. You can also browse the range and order online at shop.lpo.org.uk

Printed with the planet in mind

The paper used for LPO concert programmes has been sourced from well-managed FSC®-certified forests, recycled materials, and other controlled sources. It is also Carbon Balanced, meaning the carbon impact of its production is offset by the World Land Trust. If you don't want to take your programme home, please use the recycling bins in the Royal Festival Hall foyers.



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On stage tonight

First Violins

Pieter Schoeman* Leader
Chair supported by Neil Westreich
Kate Oswin
Chair supported by Eric Tomsett
Lasma Taimina
Chair supported by Irina Gofman & Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave
Minn Majoe
Chair supported by Dr Alex & Maria Chan
Martin Höhmann
Thomas Eisner
Chair supported by Ryze Power
Katalin Varnagy
Nilufar Alimaksumova
Sylvain Vasseur
Amanda Smith
Rebecca Dinning
Caroline Heard
Ruth Schulten
Tayfun Bomboz
Katherine Waller

Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal
Chair supported by The Candide Trust
Emma Oldfield Co-Principal
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews
Nynke Hijlkema
Joseph Maher
Nancy Elan
Sophie Phillips
Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra
Kate Birchall
Ashley Stevens
Harry Kerr
Sioni Williams
Vera Beumer
Sheila Law
Olivia Ziani

Violas

Dunia Ershova
Guest Principal
Lucia Ortiz Sauco
Benedetto Pollani
Jisu Song
Laura Vallejo

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden
James Heron
Shiry Rashkovsky
Alistair Scahill
Raquel López Bolívar
Jill Valentine
Jenny Poyser

Cellos

Wayne Kwon Principal
Chair supported by an anonymous donor
David Dale
Francis Bucknall
Daniel Hammersley
Leo Melvin
Hee Yeon Cho
Tom Roff
Julia Morneweg
Jane Lindsay
Victoria Harrild

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal
Tom Walley
Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton
Laura Murphy
Chair supported by Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter
Charlotte Kerbegian
Lowri Estell
Adam Wynter
Ben Havinden-Williams
Catherine Ricketts

Flutes

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

Piccolos

Stewart McIlwham* Principal
Hannah Grayson

Oboes

Ewan Millar Guest Principal
Alice Munday
Chair supported by David & Yi Buckley
Sue Böhling*

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
Paul Richards*

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Tenor Saxophone

Martin Robertson

Bassoons

Ben Hudson Guest Principal
Helen Storey*
Simon Estell*

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

John Ryan* Principal
Annemarie Federle Principal
Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE
Martin Hobbs
Mark Vines Co-Principal
Gareth Mollison

Trumpets

Paul Beniston* Principal
Chair supported by the Williams family in memory of Grenville Williams
Tom Nielsen* Principal
Anne McAneney*

Cornet

Tom Nielsen*

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
Feargus Brennan
Oliver Butterworth

Harp

Rosanna Rolton
Guest Principal
Tomos Xerri

Piano

Catherine Edwards

**Professor at a London conservatoire*

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

Sir Simon Robey
Bianca & Stuart Roden

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



Elim Chan

conductor



© Marco Borggreve

Previous debuts include those with the San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin.

Born in Hong Kong, Elim Chan studied at Smith College in Massachusetts, and at the University of Michigan. In 2014, she became the first female winner of the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, and went on to spend the 2015/16 season as Assistant Conductor at the London Symphony Orchestra, where she worked closely with Valery Gergiev. The following season, Elim joined the Dudamel Fellowship programme at the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She also owes much to the support and encouragement of Bernard Haitink, whose masterclasses she attended in Lucerne in 2015.

One of the most sought-after artists of her generation, conductor Elim Chan embodies the spirit of contemporary orchestral leadership with her crystalline precision and expressive zeal. She served as Principal Conductor of the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra from 2019–24 and Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2018–23.

Tonight's concert marks Elim Chan's debut with the LPO, and will be followed by a second performance tomorrow evening at The Glasshouse in Gateshead.

Having conducted the First Night of the Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 2024, Elim Chan returned this year to conduct the renowned Last Night of the Proms. Summer 2025 also saw her reunite with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic and The Cleveland Orchestra, as well as touring with the Concertgebouw Orchestra Young and making her debut at the Musikfest Berlin with the Staatskapelle Berlin.

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include return engagements with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester, Staatskapelle Dresden, Luxembourg Philharmonic and Orchestre de Paris, among others; she also makes her subscription debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra as well as debuts with the Munich Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphony and Montréal Symphony, and the Orchestra of Zürich Opera.

Nicolas Altstaedt

cello



© Marco Borggreve

Highlights of 2025/26 include debut appearances with the Vienna Radio Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber, Hallé, Philharmonia Zurich and Freiburg Baroque orchestras, as well return engagements with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, NAC Orchestra Ottawa, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre National de Lille, among others. Nicolas is Artist-in-Residence at the 2026 Bodenseefestival, while his chamber music highlights include tours of Australia and North America with lutenist Thomas Dunford – including an appearance at Carnegie Hall.

German-French cellist Nicolas Altstaedt enjoys a multifaceted career as a soloist, conductor and artistic director. His acclaimed 2010 debut with the Vienna Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel at the Lucerne Festival launched collaborations with leading orchestras worldwide including the Royal Concertgebouw, Budapest Festival, Philharmonia, Bavarian Radio Symphony and NHK Symphony orchestras, working with conductors such as Iván Fischer, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Lahav Shani, François-Xavier Roth, Gianandrea Noseda and Paavo Järvi. He often performs on period instruments, and regularly collaborates with Il Giardino Armonico and Giovanni Antonini, Philippe Herreweghe, René Jacobs, Jean Rondeau and Thomas Dunford.

Joint appearances and premieres with Thomas Adès, Sofia Gubaidulina, Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann, Fazıl Say, Heinz Holliger and Liza Lim make Nicolas Altstaedt a passionate advocate for contemporary music. He was chosen by Gidon Kremer as Artistic Director of the Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival in 2012, and is Artistic Partner of the Tapiola Sinfonietta for the next three seasons. His recordings have received numerous accolades, including the BBC Music Magazine Concerto Award and a Gramophone Classical Music Award.

Nicolas has appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra several times, in concerts across the UK and on tour internationally. His most recent Royal Festival Hall appearance with the Orchestra was in April 2024, when he performed Dvořák's Cello Concerto under Edward Gardner.

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 eminent 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

'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

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

The first work in tonight's concert, *Contested Eden*, reflects American composer Gabriela Lena Frank's response to the wildfires that have reshaped her native California. Written in two movements, the piece moves from reflection to resilience, tracing a path through loss towards cautious hope. Frank describes it as both a personal reckoning and a tribute to nature's power to renew. *Contested Eden* reminds us that living in harmony with the natural world requires awareness, adaptation and resolve in the face of change.

Programme notes

Gabriela Lena Frank

born 1972

Contested Eden

2021 (UK premiere)

1. *Canto para California*

2. *in extremis*



© Mariah Tauger

‘With each new piece,
Frank becomes a more exciting
and necessary voice.’

Los Angeles Times

I am a believer of human-driven climate change, reluctantly so. That is what four straight years of apocalyptic fires in your beloved home state will do. My husband and I diligently thin the forests on our California property, installing water tanks and ponds, and covering edifices in fire-resistant stucco. We are regulars at classes at the fire station, and during fire season, have solar power at the ready for electrical outages, and emergency bags in the cars. And at the small music academy that I founded, my staff and I have begun leading classes for musicians about the climate crisis, and talk frankly about lifestyle changes needed in our field.

Contested Eden, in two movements, was a difficult project for me. A few months before the deadline, when asked if I could consider addressing the wildfires of California in my piece for the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, I was caught off guard. Then, I burst into tears and blurted out yes. What followed was a humbling period of apprehension against tackling the subject. When I did roll up my sleeves, I first wrote what could best be described as a melodramatic soundtrack for a theoretical film documentary on fire. Here's the fire climbing up a Douglas fir: scurrying violins. There's the ominous ascending column of smoke over hills before it sinks to the valley floor: horns in sixths to fifths to fourths to thirds to seconds, harmonised to descending bassoons. A solo flute could be the lonely bird hovering over a burned nest. Windchimes for ... well, wind and maybe a charred kite. And riffing Ennio Morricone is always good for a firefighter's vista shot surveying husks of homes against steam and ash.

Continued overleaf

Programme notes

This went on for a while, a couple of weeks. Ultimately, it was a useful, if mortifying, exorcism of tired clichés I'll never show anyone, leaving behind just a couple of small usable germs: an original secular psalm, *Canto para California*, that forms an intimate lyrical first movement, followed by a second movement centred around the concept of *in extremis*, Latin for 'in extreme circumstances'.

In extremis ... What an apt description for life in California during the past four seasons, a Herculean effort of normality on the part of Californians while death is constantly imminent. Something inside, deep in one's spirit, simply perseveres even while surrounded by unimaginable chaos and loss.

After an initial slow build-up, the heart of the second movement is a slowly moving violin line that elegiacally descends, over several minutes, moving from the stratospheres down to its lowest register before handing off to the violas, who eventually hand off to the cellos, who hand off to the basses. All the while, against this almost too-long falling arc, brief bits and pieces of earlier pieces I've authored come to life, albeit transformed, in the surrounding orchestral landscape before vanishing. Nothing coheres or makes sense, like memories that are of little help and comfort. That's life *in extremis*.

Yet, the piece ends hopefully, a hint of the work's opening and original secular psalm in tribute to the Eden that's my beloved native state. So, while I honestly sometimes want to lie back in a comfortable bed of yesteryear, I recognise the past is going to stay there, and forward is what we've got. California's never been a sleepy state, and an ultimately optimistic embrace of challenges to come is all I see for our future.

Gabriela Lena Frank, 2021

Contested Eden was commissioned by the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa Cruz, California, and received its full orchestral premiere at the 2022 Festival under Cristian Măcelaru on 29 July 2022. Tonight is its first performance outside the USA.

About the composer: Gabriela Lena Frank

Cultural heritage has always been at the centre of Gabriela Lena Frank's musical life. Born in Berkeley, California, to a mother of mixed Peruvian/Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian/Jewish descent, Gabriela is constantly exploring her multicultural ancestry through her compositions. Inspired by the likes of Bartók and Ginastera, she has travelled extensively throughout South America in pursuit of folklore and indigenous musics that are then incorporated into her own Western classical framework.

In 2025, Gabriela concluded a long-term residency with The Philadelphia Orchestra, marked by the world premiere of *Picaflor: A Future Myth*. In 2026, her first opera *The Last Dream of Frida and Diego* will be staged at both the Metropolitan Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. With a libretto by the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Nilo Cruz, *The Last Dream of Frida and Diego* is one of the most successful American operas of the decade, with acclaimed runs at Los Angeles Opera and San Francisco Opera following its 2022 world premiere at San Diego Opera. Later this month, Naxos will release a recording of her and Nilo Cruz's oratorio *Conquest Requiem*, with the Nashville Symphony and conductor Giancarlo Guerrero.

Winner of a Latin Grammy, Gabriela Lena Frank also holds a Guggenheim Fellowship and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. *The Washington Post* cited her as one of the most significant women composers in history. She has received commissions from leading American orchestras including the Chicago Symphony and Cleveland orchestras. In 2017, she founded the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music (GLFCAM), which helps composers of any aesthetic and demographic, from emerging through to mid-career levels, to develop self-determined 21st-century lives.

Programme notes

William Walton

1902–83

Cello Concerto

1956

Nicolas Altstaedt *cello*

1. Moderato

2. Allegro appassionato

3. Tema ad improvvisazioni: Lento – Allegro molto



William Walton's international reputation as a composer was made in the decade leading up to the start of the Second World War, with the First Symphony, the oratorio *Belshazzar's Feast*, and the concertos for viola and violin: works which, though traditional in form, struck listeners as refreshingly radical. After the war, his reputation dimmed as commentators began to accuse him of losing touch with the exciting modernity he had

formerly seemed to embody, yet at heart Walton had always been an artist who primarily followed his own compositional instincts, one of which, he declared, was 'a strong feeling for lyricism'. Time offers perspective, and where some commentators in the 1950s and 60s regretted a 'creative relaxation' and 'lowering of tension', others might now relish his maturing creative ease and technical refinement.

Few compositions reflect this post-war period of serene craftsmanship more affectingly than the Cello Concerto. Composed in 1956, it was the first important work he produced following the lukewarm reception of his first opera, *Troilus and Cressida*, and must indeed have seemed an old-fashioned work at a time when 'modern' might mean Messiaen, Stockhausen or Boulez, not lyrical Romanticism. Walton's wife Susana apparently later claimed that the work was a celebration of their marriage, but while that may be so, in fact (and as was usually the case in Walton's later career) it was the result of a commission, on this occasion from the great Russian cellist Gregor Piatigorsky. Piatigorsky premiered it with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Charles Munch in January 1957, and was thrilled with it: 'I can't thank you enough for the wonderful concerto you gave to the world', he wrote. 'I will play [it with the] great love and admiration I have for it and you.'

It is not hard to imagine it as a player's dream. However modern it may or may not have seemed 70 years ago, there is no mistaking the touching poetic voice that

Programme notes

speaks through it, established right at the opening where a brief, atmospherically scored oscillating figure from the orchestra quickly gives on to a tenderly meditative solo cello theme, which intertwines delicately with the woodwind. The form of the movement is loose, the skilfully drawn melodic lines apparently enough in themselves to help it find its way, though there are hints of sonata form in the return of the opening theme, as well as in the appearance of what seems like a formal 'second theme', richer and more expansive, and instigated by four gentle notes on solo horn.

The second movement is the fastest of the three, a *scherzo* of recognisably Waltonian flavour and orchestral brilliance. The cello part is virtuosic,

the music in general nervy, as if with a hint of the night; even when two slower episodes come to calm the mood, the solo role remains vulnerable to the jitters.

The title of the finale reflects the fact that its solemn and stately slow theme is subjected to a process perhaps too free to be called variation. The dramatically contrasted 'improvisations' include two for solo cello and one for orchestra; after the second cello solo, the music shifts unexpectedly to the mood of glinting tranquility in which the Concerto had begun. In a peaceful epilogue, the first movement's opening theme eventually reappears, along with that of the finale, to bring the work to a peaceful close.

Programme note © Lindsay Kemp

Interval – 20 minutes

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

Coming soon on the LPO Label

ELGAR: THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

Recorded live at the 2022 BBC Proms

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Edward Gardner *conductor*

Allan Clayton *Gerontius* | James Platt *Priest/Angel of the Agony*

Jamie Barton *Angel* | London Philharmonic Choir | Hallé Choir

Out Friday 21 November
on CD and all major streaming platforms



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Programme notes

Sergei Prokofiev

1891–1953

Romeo and Juliet (*excerpts*)

1935

Montagues and Capulets

Juliet as a Young Girl

Friar Laurence

Masks

Romeo and Juliet

The Death of Tybalt

Romeo and Juliet Before Parting

Romeo at Juliet's Tomb



From 1933 onwards, after 15 years in the West, Sergei Prokofiev started to return more and more frequently to Moscow. Genuinely idealistic about his new life, in 1934 he wrote of his creative aims in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiya*. 'Soviet music must be melodious; moreover the melody must be simple and comprehensible [...] not an old-fashioned simplicity, but a new simplicity.' So when the radical theatre director Sergei Radlov suggested a collaboration on a ballet version of *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev saw it as chance to show the 'new simplicity' in action. The Bolshoi Theatre gave him the use of a country house at Polenovo, and between July and September 1935 Prokofiev wrote the entire score.

Then the political realities began to bite. The Bolshoi declared the ballet 'undanceable' and the ballet was premiered instead in Brno, Czechoslovakia in December 1938. It was 11 January 1940 before it was finally staged in Russia, at Leningrad's Kirov Theatre. Even then, there were difficulties. The choreographer, Leonid Lavrovsky, imposed a political message on the story: 'the conflict between the outmoded beliefs of the Middle Ages, and the progressive ideals of the Renaissance'. Meanwhile,

Programme notes

the dancers were in revolt. A joke ran round the Kirov: 'For never was a story of more woe / Than Prokofiev's music for *Romeo*'.

Yet the performance was a success. Galina Ulanova danced Juliet in that Kirov production, and one night, at a post-show party, she invited Prokofiev to join her in a foxtrot. 'He seemed always to be hearing some rhythm of his own', she recalled. 'But as the dance gradually gathered momentum, I started to feel confident and free. At last I caught my partner's unusual and utterly marvellous rhythm.' *Romeo and Juliet*'s 'unusual and utterly marvellous rhythm' has now entered the repertoire of every major ballet company in the world.

In 1936, when no theatrical performance seemed likely, Prokofiev selected 15 of the ballet's 52 numbers and turned them into two concert suites – a third followed in 1946. Tonight's sequence utilises movements from the first two suites.

Montagues and Capulets: A huge, slowly building discord depicts the moment in the story when the Prince commands the Montagues and Capulets to keep the peace. This leads directly into a menacing, slow-motion dance for the two rival families.

Juliet as a Young Girl: The 14-year-old Juliet portrayed as a vivacious *scherzo*; tender interludes for flutes, saxophone and yearning strings portray her budding emotions.

Friar Laurence: 'We have still known thee for a holy man': chant-like melodies and warmly expressive string writing evoke both the Friar's piety and his compassion.

Masks: Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio enter the Capulets' ball in disguise. Their music is poised and cautious, gradually increasing in confidence.

Romeo and Juliet: Morning in Juliet's bedroom, a lyrical, sunlit love scene.

The Death of Tybalt: Racing strings and clattering xylophone depict the swordfight between Tybalt and Mercutio. Mercutio is killed, and the music turns to a savage march as Romeo moves in to avenge his friend. The brass shriek warnings over slashing chords.

Romeo and Juliet Before Parting: The score's final love duet, tender, fragile and – as befits the two lovers' fate – torn by ominous and anguished premonitions.

Romeo at Juliet's Tomb: Romeo witnesses Juliet's funeral, and an anguished lament for strings becomes the music of the procession itself.

Programme note © Richard Bratby

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!



Edward Gardner

Beth Taylor

Edward Gardner conducts Elgar

Wednesday 26 November 2025
7.30pm

Elgar In the South (Alassio)

Elgar Sea Pictures

Elgar Sospiri

Elgar Enigma Variations

Edward Gardner conductor
Beth Taylor mezzo-soprano

With the generous support of the
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Sheku Kanneh- Mason plays Bloch

Saturday 29 November 2025
7.30pm

Robert Laidlow Exoplanets
(world premiere)

Bloch Schelomo

Rachmaninov Symphony No. 3

Edward Gardner conductor
Sheku Kanneh-Mason cello

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Free pre-concert talk | 6pm
'Harmony with Distant Planets'
With composer Robert Laidlow
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6pm
Royal Festival Hall

Harmony with Distant Planets

With composer Robert Laidlow
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5pm
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5pm
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With extreme angler, author &
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Wednesday 8 April 2026, 6pm
Royal Festival Hall

Harmony with our Fragile Earth

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



Friday 17 April 2026
6pm
Royal Festival Hall

Harmony with our Changing Planet

With social scientist
Gail Whiteman



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We are grateful to the following donors for their generous contributions to our **Sound Futures** campaign. Thanks to their support, we successfully raised £1 million by 30 April 2015 which has now been matched pound for pound by Arts Council England through a Catalyst Endowment grant. This has enabled us to create a £2 million endowment fund supporting special artistic projects, creative programming and education work with key venue partners including our Southbank Centre home. Supporters listed below donated £500 or over. For a full list of those who have given to this campaign please visit lpo.org.uk/soundfutures.

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