

2026/27
season at the
Southbank
Centre

London
Philharmonic
Orchestra

Free concert
programme

The power of listening



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The power of listening

What happens when we really listen? This season we're exploring the extraordinary ways that listening can inspire creativity, connection and new perspectives.

To begin our journey, we asked eight Royal College of Art students to listen to a piece of music featured in our London season, from Stravinsky's *The Firebird* to Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. From there, the artists unleashed their imagination, each creating an original artwork based on their personal response to the music.

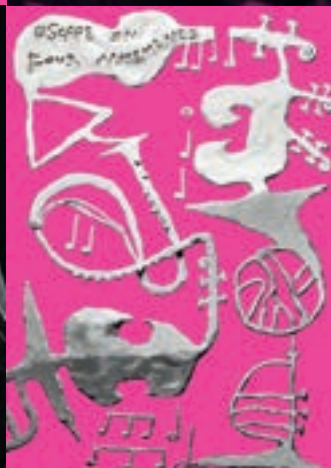
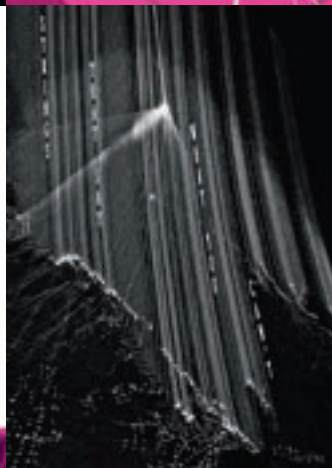
You can see how varied their visual interpretations of the music were from the artworks on this page and on the programme cover.

If you haven't had the chance to see the artworks on billboards around London, you can view them all in detail on our website. You can also find out more about each of the artists and the processes they used, as well as listen to the music that inspired them.

Check out the artworks and the pieces that inspired them:
lpo.org.uk/listening



Artworks designed by (clockwise from top left) Megan Peng, Zengyue Zhao, CTZ, Yunqi Peng, Anna Korbel, Yejin Seo, Ishita Sharma, Ruwani Rajapakse



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

Friday 2 October 2026 | 7.30pm

Brighton Dome Concert Hall

Saturday 3 October 2026 | 7.30pm

Kian Soltani plays Dvořák

Dvořák

Cello Concerto (40 min)

Interval (20 min)

Franck

Symphony in D minor (41 min)

Marie Jacquot

conductor

Kian Soltani

cello

Approximate concert finish time: 9.30pm

Sunday 3 October | Brighton Dome

Free pre-concert performance | 6.45pm

Enjoy a free pre-concert performance in the foyer from Soundcastle's People's Music Collective, an ensemble that celebrates creativity, connection and community through music.

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Please note the timings shown are given only as a guide.

Friday 2 October

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 southbankcentre.co.uk to sign up.

Tonight's programme covers

2 October, Southbank Centre: Artwork by Royal College of Art student Yunqi Peng: 'Heavy brass, lighter mind'. Designed while listening to Stravinsky's *The Firebird* (Finale), performed by the LPO under Vladimir Jurowski.

Hear it live on 23 October 2026 at the Royal Festival Hall, with Edward Gardner and the LPO: book now at lpo.org.uk

3 October, Brighton Dome: Artwork by Royal College of Art student Yejin Seo: 'Strings that say what you can't'. Designed while listening to Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony (fourth movement), performed by the LPO under Karina Canellakis.



Part of The Power of Listening project:
lpo.org.uk/listening

Saturday 3 October

Welcome to Brighton Dome

Welcome to tonight's concert by the London Philharmonic Orchestra here at Brighton Dome. We hope you enjoy the performance and your visit here. For your comfort and safety, please note the following: thank you for your co-operation.

Latecomers may not be admitted until a suitable break in the performance. Some performances may contain no suitable breaks.

Interval drinks may be ordered in advance at the bar to avoid queues.

Photography is not allowed in the auditorium.

Recording is not allowed in the auditorium.

Mobiles and watches should be switched off before entering the auditorium.

This concert is presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra in association with Brighton Dome.



Brighton Dome gratefully acknowledges the support of Brighton & Hove City Council and Arts Council England.

Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival with Create Music

Situated in the Royal Pavilion Estate at the heart of the city, Brighton Dome is an arts charity, three historic contemporary live arts venues, a music education service across the region – Create Music – and the biggest curated cross-arts festival in England.

brightondome.org | brightonfestival.org
createmusic.org.uk

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programme.



Tonight in 2 minutes

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

The vibe

Kian Soltani plays Dvořák

Love, loss and longing run through tonight's programme. Dvořák's Cello Concerto opens the concert – a piece full of warmth, yearning and heartbreak. After the interval, Franck's Symphony takes us from tension and uncertainty to a melody that stays with us. Two very different works, but both full of powerful emotions and searching for something beyond words.

Who's on stage?



Marie Jacquot: conductor

French conductor Marie is tonight's guest conductor. As well as holding the positions of Principal Conductor of the WDR Symphony Orchestra in Germany and Principal Conductor of the Royal Danish Theatre, she is in demand as a guest conductor with orchestras and opera companies around the world. This is Marie's first appearance with the LPO.



Kian Soltani: cello

Kian is tonight's guest soloist – he'll join us for the first piece in the concert: Dvořák's Cello Concerto. One of today's most renowned cellists, Kian is particularly known for the depth and warmth of his playing – perfect for this heartfelt piece.



London Philharmonic Orchestra

Tonight there are over 70 London Philharmonic Orchestra musicians on stage. Our talented members represent over 14 different nationalities, and many of them enjoy busy solo, chamber and teaching careers alongside their orchestral roles.

Turn to page 6 for tonight's player list.

What to expect

Take your seats...

The Orchestra tune up their instruments, then the conductor, Marie, and solo cellist, Kian, come on stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...



40 min

Antonín Dvořák Cello Concerto *with soloist Kian Soltani*

A concerto is a showpiece for a solo instrument accompanied by the orchestra. Czech composer Dvořák's Cello Concerto is one of the most loved – full of warmth, longing and heartbreak. Its three movements move from passionate and dramatic, through tender and reflective, to a powerful and deeply moving finale.

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

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

Interval 20 min



41 min

César Franck Symphony in D minor

Belgian-born composer César Franck spent most of his life in France, where he was celebrated as an organist and teacher before finding fame as a composer. His only symphony (a large-scale musical work written for an orchestra) has three contrasting movements – dark and dramatic, gentle and mysterious, then bright and lively – with musical themes returning throughout to bring the whole work together.

At the end of the performance, we applaud the performers. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Pieter, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause. Several rounds of bows will bring the evening to a celebratory close. You're welcome to take photos during the applause!

Want to read more? Turn to page 10 for a deeper dive into tonight's works.

About us: London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

Uniquely groundbreaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, since 1932 we've been recognised as one of the world's leading orchestras, celebrated for our excellence, versatility, invention and inclusivity. Our mission is to create unrivalled orchestral experiences on stage and cultivate human connections beyond it. We achieve this through our exceptional live performances, pioneering education and community projects, acclaimed recordings, online activity and trailblazing international tours.

Our home is at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, where we're at the beating heart of London's cultural life. You can also hear us at our resident venues in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden, and on tour worldwide. For over 60 years we've been Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, combining the magic of opera with Glyndebourne's glorious setting in the Sussex countryside.

Life's big 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*.

Connecting worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. We're the most followed UK orchestra on Instagram, the most followed orchestra globally on TikTok, and the third most followed globally across all social platforms. Our 2024 Sky Arts documentary series, 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', was nominated for a 2025 BAFTA, and a second series, 'Inside the Music', will be broadcast this autumn.

Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included great historic names like Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2021 Edward Gardner became our 13th Principal Conductor, and Vladimir Jurowski became Conductor Emeritus in recognition of his impact as Principal Conductor from 2007–21. Karina Canellakis is our current Principal Guest Conductor, and Sir George Benjamin is 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 collaboration and inclusivity, our OrchLab and

Pieter Schoeman

Leader

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 offer a range of opportunities to support their progression. Our LPO Junior Artists programme creates pathways into the profession for young players from under-represented backgrounds, and our LPO Young Composers and Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. The LPO Conducting Fellowship supports the development of outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds under-represented in the profession.

2026/27 season

Our season theme, *In Search of Purpose*, explores the human spirit's resilience and quest for meaning, inspired by Beethoven's triumph over despair and the ways subsequent composers have used music as a vessel to confront life's big questions. Principal Conductor Edward Gardner returns with programmes including Britten's *War Requiem*, Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, and Composer-in-Residence George Benjamin's opera *Lessons in Love and Violence*. We'll also welcome back titled conductors Karina Canellakis and Vladimir Jurowski, as well as Chief Conductor & Artistic Advisor Designate Paavo Järvi.

Our lineup of soloists this season includes Alice Sara Ott, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Hilary Hahn, Pekka Kuusisto, Renée Fleming and Mitsuko Uchida, and we join the London Philharmonic Choir in celebrating its 80th anniversary year with Fauré's *Requiem* alongside a choral world premiere by Dame Judith Weir. The season concludes on 24 April with Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, again with the LPC. New music remains a core pillar this season, with further premieres by Mark Simpson, Jacob Mühlrad, Dai Fujikura and Kevin Puts.

The season also sees tours to China, Spain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the Canary Islands, as well as 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.

As well as at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, Pieter has performed worldwide as

a soloist and recitalist at famous venues including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Moscow's Rachmaninoff Hall, Capella Hall in St Petersburg, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin and Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. He has also appeared as Guest Leader with many leading 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 London Philharmonic Orchestra. Highlights have included 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.

Video series: 'Humans of the Orchestra'

Scan the QR code to watch our interview with Pieter



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

Chair supported by Hans-Wilhelm

& Evelyn Jenckel

Katalin Varnagy

Daniel Pukach

Amanda Smith

Camille Buitenhuis

Ronald Long

Eve Kennedy

Kay Chappell

Gabriel Bilbao

Alice Hall

Rasa Zukauskaite

Nilufar Alimaksumova

Second Violins

Emma Oldfield Principal

Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Chair supported by anonymous

donors

Marie-Anne Mairesse

Ashley Stevens

Joseph Maher

Sophie Phillips

Fiona Higham

Nancy Elan

Lyrít Milgram

Sheila Law

Mitzi Gardner

Matthew Bain

Nynke Hijlkema†

Sioni Williams

Violas

Fiona Bonds

Guest Principal

Laura Vallejo

Lucia Ortiz Saucó

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina

Harden

Benedetto Pollani

Michelle Bruil

Jisu Song

Rachel Robson

Mark Gibbs

Jenny Poyser

Pamela Ferriman

Jill Valentine

Cellos

Wayne Kwon Principal

Chair supported by an anonymous

donor

David Lale

Francis Bucknall

Auriol Evans

Leo Melvin

Colin Alexander

Iain Ward

Marion Portelance

George Houlit

Rasmus Støier Andersen

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal

George Peniston

Laura Murphy

Chair supported by Ian Ferguson

& Susan Tranter

Yijia Cui

David Brown

Martin Ludenbach

Lewis Reid

Tom Walley†

Chair supported by William & Alex

de Winton

Flutes

Juliette Bausor Principal

Chair supported by Malcolm &

Alison Thwaites

Stewart McIlwham*

Piccolo

Stewart McIlwham*

Principal

Chair supported by The Thompson

Family Charitable Trust

Oboes

Ian Hardwick* Principal

Jack Tostevin-Hall

Cor Anglais

Helen Vigurs

Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont*

Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel

Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

Thomas Watmough

Chair supported by Roger

Greenwood

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

Simon Estell* Principal

Ruth Rosales

Horns

Annemarie Federle

Principal

Chair supported by Victoria

Robey CBE

John Ryan* Principal

Martin Hobbs

Will Scotland

Jonathan Quaintrell-Evans

Trumpets

Paul Beniston* Principal

Chair supported by the Williams

family in memory of Grenville

Williams

Tom Nielsen* Principal

Anne McAneney*

Chair supported by anonymous

donors

Cornets

Tom Nielsen*

David Hilton

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

Harp

Rosanna Rolton Principal

** Professor at a London
conservatoire*

† 2 Oct concert only

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

David & Yi Buckley
The Candide Trust
Friends of the Orchestra
Dr Barry Grimaldi
The Hodson family
Sir Simon Robey
Bianca & Stuart Roden
Joe Topley & Tracey
Countryman
Louise Worthington

Marie Jacquot

conductor

© Julia Wesely



At the start of this season, French conductor Marie Jacquot took up the position of Principal Conductor at the WDR Symphony Orchestra in Germany – an orchestra with whom she already built close connections through a variety of previous collaborations. She is also Principal Conductor of the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen, where, as well as conducting recent productions of Manfred Trojahn's *Orest*, Gounod's *Faust*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Puccini's *Il trittico* and Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, she also regularly conducts concerts with the Royal Chapel of Copenhagen, considered the world's oldest orchestra. From 2023–26 she was Principal Guest Conductor of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, with whom she gave concerts at the city's Konzerthaus and Musikverein, at the Bregenz Festival, and on tour.

This weekend's concerts in London and Brighton mark Marie Jacquot's first performances with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Other debuts and return engagements this season include with the Staatskapelle Berlin, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Staatskapelle Dresden. In the US this season, she will give concerts in Detroit, San Francisco and Washington. With the Royal Chapel of Copenhagen, she has already this season performed in Amsterdam and Gstaad, while at the Royal Danish Opera she will conduct Massenet's *Werther* and Schreker's *Der ferne Klang*. In her new role with the WDR Symphony Orchestra, she will appear not only in Cologne, but also on tour in Austria, as well as at a 'Beethoven Marathon' in Bonn.

Marie is in high demand as a guest conductor, both in opera and concert. Debuts and re-invitations have taken her to the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Staatskapelle Dresden, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, DSO Berlin, Karajan Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic, Hamburg Philharmonic, Filarmonica della Scala, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Oslo Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre National du Capitôle de Toulouse, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra and The Cleveland Orchestra.

She has conducted productions at the Semperoper Dresden (Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*), Berlin State Opera (the world premiere of Marc-André Dalbavie's *Melancholy of Resistance*), Oper Frankfurt (Magnard's *Guerceur*), Stuttgart State Opera, Komische Oper Berlin, Opéra National du Rhin Strasbourg, Flemish Opera Antwerp/Gent, and Opéra National de Lorraine in Nancy. She made her debut at London's Royal Ballet & Opera in 2025, conducting Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

After studying trombone in Paris, Marie studied conducting in Vienna and Weimar, and received a scholarship from the German Music Council. In 2016 she was named assistant to Kirill Petrenko at the Bavarian State Opera for the world premiere of Miroslav Srnka's *South Pole*, and subsequently conducted two productions at the Munich Opera Festival. From 2016–19 she was First Kapellmeister and Deputy General Music Director at the Mainfranken Theater Würzburg, and from 2019–22 she was Kapellmeister at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein Düsseldorf/Duisburg.

Her awards include the Ernst Schuch Prize in 2019 and the 2024 'Révélation/Conductor' award at France's Victoires de la Musique Classique.

Kian Soltani

cello

© Marco Borggreve



Hailed by *The Times* as a 'remarkable cellist' and by *Gramophone* as 'sheer perfection', Kian Soltani is celebrated for the profound depth of expression, individuality and technical mastery of his playing, complemented by a charismatic stage presence. He appears regularly with many of the world's most esteemed orchestras and conductors, firmly establishing himself as a leading voice among today's generation of cellists.

Kian made his London Philharmonic Orchestra debut in 2019, when he performed Elgar's Cello Concerto under Edward Gardner at the Royal Festival Hall and at Eastbourne's Congress Theatre. He returned in January 2022 to perform Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1 under the baton of Marin Alsop at the Royal Festival Hall.

In the 2026/27 season, Kian makes return appearances with the Staatskapelle Berlin, Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, and returns to the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra to give the world premiere of a new cello concerto by Aftab Darvishi at the Concertgebouw and as part of the Cello Biënnale Amsterdam. He also makes debuts with the Dresden Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony and Danish National Symphony orchestras; together with Anne-Sophie Mutter, he gives the world and European premieres of Golfam Khayam's Triple Concerto in Dallas and Copenhagen, before touring the work across Europe's leading concert halls.

Further highlights of the 2026/27 season include European tours with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and Warsaw Philharmonic orchestras, including concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and the Konzerthaus in

Dortmund, among others. As a dedicated chamber musician, he tours Europe as a trio with Renaud Capuçon and Mao Fujita, and as a quartet with Benjamin Grosvenor, Timothy Ridout and Hyeyoon Park. Later in the season, he returns to Carnegie Hall for an all-Brahms programme alongside Leonidas Kavakos, Gil Shaham, Lawrence Power, Antoine Tamestit and Alisa Weilerstein.

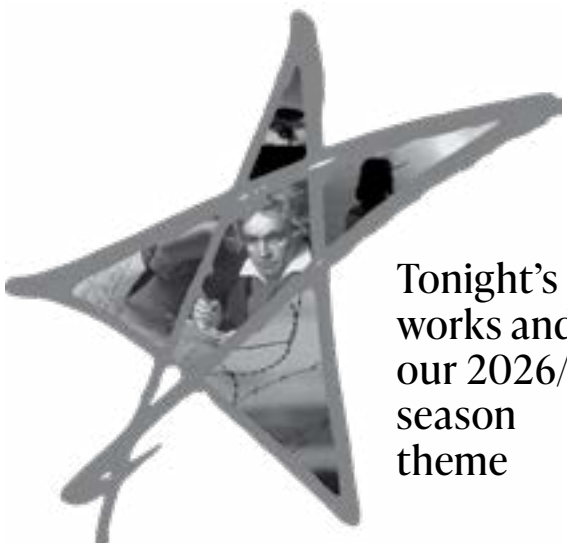
Kian has performed with many leading ensembles including the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Munich Philharmonic, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He is also a frequent guest at prominent festivals such as Verbier, Rheingau, Dvořák Prague, Bregenz, Gstaad Menuhin, Grafenegg and Salzburg, among others.

In 2017 Kian signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon, releasing his acclaimed debut album *Home* the following year. Featuring works by Schubert, Schumann and Reza Vali, it was hailed by *Gramophone* as 'sublime'. He went on to record Dvořák's Cello Concerto with the Staatskapelle Berlin and Daniel Barenboim in 2020, and released a Schumann album with Camerata Salzburg, featuring the Cello Concerto and Lieder transcriptions, in 2024. His 2021 album *Cello Unlimited*, a solo exploration of the cello's expressive range and cinematic power, earned him the Innovative Listening Experience Award at the 2022 Opus Klassik Awards.

Born in Bregenz, Austria, to a family of Persian musicians, Kian began playing the cello at the age of four, and was only 12 years old when he joined Ivan Monighetti's class at the Basel Music Academy. In 2014 he was the recipient of a scholarship from the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation, before completing further studies at the Kronberg Academy in Germany and the International Music Academy in Liechtenstein.

Kian plays the 1694 'London, ex-Boccherini' cello by Antonio Stradivari, kindly loaned to him by a generous sponsor through the Beares International Violin Society.

In Search of Purpose



Tonight's works and our 2026/27 season theme

At a moment of deep personal crisis in 1802, Ludwig van Beethoven confronted his hearing loss and questioned whether he could go on. In music, he found a way forward – and in doing so, transformed it into a powerful vehicle for human expression and resilience. From this journey, our 2026/27 season takes its title: 'In Search of Purpose'.

Throughout the season we'll trace Beethoven's path from despair to hope in his Fifth Symphony and a cycle of his piano concertos, and explore his ongoing legacy. And we hear from composers finding their purpose in the face of conflict, grief, oppression, and life's biggest questions.

Tonight's programme explores purpose in love and longing. Dvořák's Cello Concerto weaves together warmth, yearning and grief, partly shaped by personal loss and homesickness during the composer's years in America. Dvořák suggests that purpose is not always found in certainty or resolution, but through the act of feeling itself, and the emotional connection it creates.

Check out the full season:
lpo.org.uk/purpose

Jesús Herrera on Purpose

Our Artistic Director on why he chose this season's theme, and why context matters



'While it's true that many of the iconic works we are so fortunate to perform were written decades or often centuries ago, they all emerged from artists who were driven to express something fundamentally human.

This means the inspiration within these compositions can reflect experiences just as close to anyone in today's audience, regardless of their previous exposure to an orchestra.

As custodians of this incredible legacy, I believe it is a beautiful duty not just to present this repertoire

because it is fantastic, but to be as generous as we can in how we provide that context. Exploring themes that amplify the depth of the music and connect listeners to its essence is a challenge, in my opinion, undoubtedly worth taking on.'

Jesús's full interview appeared in the latest issue of the LPO magazine, Tune In. Read it online here:



Programme notes

Antonín Dvořák

1841–1904

Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104

1894–95

Kian Soltani cello

1 Allegro

2 Adagio ma non troppo

3 Allegro moderato



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

Few people are surprised today when a composer chooses to write a cello concerto. As the great examples by Dvořák, Elgar, Schumann, Walton and Shostakovich show, this noble, rich-toned, soulfully expressive and remarkably agile instrument makes a splendid concerto soloist. But when the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák wrote his Cello Concerto in 1894–95, even connoisseurs were surprised. When Johannes Brahms – composer of one of the greatest violin concertos in the repertoire – first saw Dvořák's score, he exclaimed, 'Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a cello concerto like this? If I had only known, I would have written one long ago!'

Actually there's no reason why Brahms should have known: in his and Dvořák's day the cello was rarely played well as a solo instrument. In fact the situation seems to have lasted for some time after Dvořák's death. As late as 1939, the famous *Manchester Guardian* critic Neville Cardus complained of 'the wasp-in-the-window effect which most times we have to put up with whenever a cellist gets to work.' But there is also the issue of balance. The cello may seem to have a powerful voice, but its lower notes in particular can easily be overwhelmed if the orchestral accompaniment is too rich and strong. Dvořák copes superbly with this potential problem. Though he uses a relatively large orchestra, the cello soloist rarely has to contend with anything like its full force. There are loud, impressive orchestral *tutti*s (passages with the full orchestra playing), but in these sections the cellist is mostly silent.

Programme notes

The result is that, given a reasonably strong player, every note of the cello part should be audible. That must have been one of the Concerto's features that so impressed Brahms.

Beyond that, Brahms can hardly fail to have been impressed by Dvořák's melodic writing. The Cello Concerto brims over with wonderful long tunes and characterful short motifs. Not all of these are initially identified with the cello. Like most concertos of the 'Classical' era of Mozart and Beethoven, Dvořák begins the first movement with a long passage for orchestra alone. There is a darkly memorable theme for low woodwind at the start then, after the first big climax, a glorious long tune for solo horn. So when the cello enters for the first time, it not only has to cope with Dvořák's technical assault course, it also has to establish a claim to these themes for itself.

In the slow movement, it is the cellist's powers as an instrumental singer that are tested to the full. The first theme is relaxed and reflective, with strong suggestions of folksong. But this is interrupted by a darker minor-key central section. Here there is a definite autobiographical element. While Dvořák was working on the Concerto, he heard that his sister-in-law, Josefina Kounicová, was seriously ill – in his youth Dvořák had been in love with her. Josefina was particularly fond of Dvořák's song 'Leave me alone' (Op. 82, No. 1), and in this slow movement he has the cello quote its melody just after the first stern entry of the trombones and tuba. This same melody reappears near the end of the finale – this time in response to the news of Josefina's death. The finale's opening march theme does return in triumph to end the Concerto, but that poignant reminiscence of lost love lingers in the memory – is this where the Concerto's heart truly lies?

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Interval – 20 minutes

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Programme notes

César Franck

1822–90

Symphony in D minor

1886–88

1 Lento – Allegro non troppo

2 Allegretto

3 Allegro non troppo



If César Franck was not exactly a late starter as a musician – entry into the conservatoire in his hometown of Liège came at the age of eight – he certainly arrived late to the condition of important composer. His father's campaign to build a profile for him as a child piano virtuoso having proved a failure, his career was set back for over two decades, during which he composed mainly undistinguished cantatas, oratorios and other sacred vocal pieces, and worked as an organist at various Parisian churches, ending up at Sainte-Clotilde from 1853. Some successes in the 1860s led to his appointment as professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 50, and from then his reputation grew quickly. He became a respected teacher of composition – effected mainly through his organ improvisation classes – and composed with increasing assurance and confidence.

Franck's background as an organist, plus the fact that he was not part of the Parisian mainstream which centred on the Opéra, meant that his creative activities were focused largely on orchestral and chamber music – this was at a time when such 'Germanic' genres were not greatly regarded in France. His development of them in works such as his one and only Symphony, the *Variations symphoniques* for piano and orchestra, the Piano Quintet, String Quartet and Violin Sonata, as well as the legacy he handed to pupils such as D'Indy, Chausson, Vierne and Dukas, formed his greatest contribution to French music.

This Symphony was almost the last of these works, composed between 1886 and 1888, and premiered at the Concerts du Conservatoire in February 1889. It was not particularly well received at first: the composer

Programme notes

Charles Gounod cruelly characterised it as ‘the affirmation of incompetence pushed to dogmatic lengths’ (but then, Parisian musicians and critics have often seemed to revel in spectacular rudeness to each other). Perhaps there was a feeling that Franck was trying to write a more conventionally Germanic symphony à la Brahms or Dvořák, in which case we could indeed say he had failed. But despite surface appearances, Franck was coming from a different direction. This was in any case a time when ‘classical’ tightness of form was yielding in importance to thematic distinctiveness and quality; Franck’s music often has a freewheeling quality that doubtless has roots in organ improvisation. But he was also a master – perhaps *the* master – of cyclical form, the process of creating unity by constantly redeveloping thematic ideas to show them in changing aspects across the course of a piece, and indeed across the separate movements of a multi-movement work. He had showed an interest in it even as a young man, but perhaps gathered its full potential from the thematic transformations put into practice by Liszt, almost as if they were characters in a drama, in his tone-poems of the 1840s and ‘50s, and subsequently adopted in the *leitmotifs* of Wagner’s operas.

So it is that the dark, sombre opening of Franck’s Symphony contains thematic seeds that will recur at key points later in the work, including the three-note figure that emerges with Wagnerian portentousness at the very beginning, and so closely resembles the theme Beethoven put at the heart of his last string quartet, where he associated it with the question ‘must it be?’. (One would think that Franck cannot have been unaware of this connection, though it is interesting that the composer Robin Holloway recently said that he had at first failed to notice his own quotation of the same motif in one of his own pieces.)

More themes soon follow on, but it is the initial one that reappears, re-energised, in the dramatic faster section that follows. This slow-fast progression is repeated exactly before the music sails on into sunnier uplands where more new themes emerge, blossoming into a bright and broadly syncopated major-key melody. From here the music expires, reducing to fragments of this last theme interrupted by strange pauses. The central development section makes rugged contrapuntal use of the themes we have already heard, and the moment of recapitulation comes with a *fortissimo* statement by full orchestra of the opening three-note cell.

The second movement is neither slow nor fast, neither quite a scherzo nor wholly a minuet. There are hints of Schumannesque poetry here and there among its gentle melodies, but it is the rhythm set up by harp and *pizzicato* strings before the solo cor anglais introduces the benign main tune that seems to be the guiding force here. Together with the music’s elusive sense of continuous variation, it brings to the movement a faint but pleasant reminiscence of the ‘pilgrim marches’ of Mendelssohn’s ‘Italian’ Symphony and Berlioz’s *Harold in Italy*.

‘A marvellous idea, a heavenly idea, a really angelic idea ...’

– Franck describing the second movement’s cor anglais melody in a letter to a friend

The finale is where Franck’s longer-range cyclic relationships come into play, and they are not hard to spot. After the movement has opened with a catchy and cheerfully syncopated melody and at least three further thematic cells have made their entrance, we hear again the cor anglais theme from the second movement. Later on it rises again in the full orchestra, and as the movement runs towards its conclusion, themes from the first movement begin to pile in too. Coming as thick as they do, they could sound chaotic, but Franck’s handling of them is so shrewdly judged that none sounds surplus to requirements, and all contribute to a conclusion that is both convincing and satisfying.

Programme note © Lindsay Kemp

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