

2026/27
season at the
Southbank
Centre

London
Philharmonic
Orchestra

Free concert
programme

The power of listening



SOUTHBANK
CENTRE
RESIDENT

London ★ Philharmonic Orchestra

The power of listening

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall Saturday 26 September 2026

Unfortunately, tenor **Allan Clayton** is indisposed and has had to withdraw from tonight's performance. We are very grateful to **Paul Appleby**, who has agreed to step in at short notice.



© Jonathan Tichler

Paul Appleby tenor

Admired for his interpretive depth and vocal expressivity, American tenor Paul Appleby's recent European concert appearances include Stravinsky's *Ædipus Rex* with both the Munich Philharmonic under Santtu-Matias Rouvali and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra under Petr Popelka; Stravinsky's *Les Noces* with the Orchestre de Paris under Esa-Pekka Salonen; and Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* with both the Gulbenkian Orchestra under Hannu Lintu and the Prague Symphony Orchestra under Tomáš Netopil for Prague Spring Music Festival.

This season he revisits both Britten's *War Requiem* with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop, and *La Damnation de Faust* with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra under Antony Hermus. Performances in North America include Beethoven's *Christus am Ölberge* with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Manfred Honeck, and Haydn's *Nelson Mass* with the Saint Louis Symphony under Carlos Miguel Prieto.

Paul's operatic repertoire spans from the core Mozart roles of Tamino (*The Magic Flute*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) and Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), through Debussy's Pelléas, Stravinsky's Tom Rakewell and Wagner's David, to the creation of major roles in John Adams's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Girls of the Golden West*. He has appeared at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Dutch National Opera, Opéra national de Lyon, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Norwegian Opera & Ballet and La Monnaie/De Munt, and his regular appearances on the Metropolitan Opera stage include as David (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) under Sir Antonio Pappano, Grimoaldo (*Rodelinda*) under Harry Bicket, Pelléas under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*) under James Levine.

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.

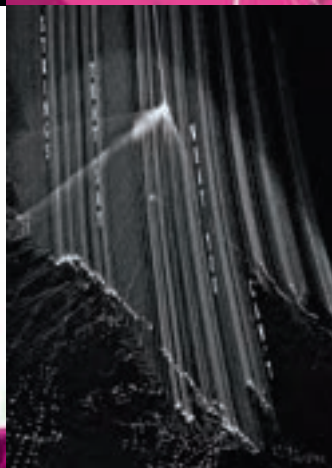
You can see how varied their visual interpretations of the music were from the artworks on this page and on the programme cover.

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 Jebsen

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
Saturday 26 September 2026 | 7.00pm

Edward Gardner conducts Britten's War Requiem

Britten

War Requiem (85 min)

Edward Gardner

conductor

Generously supported by Aud Jebsen

Natalya Romaniw

soprano

Allan Clayton

tenor

Benjamin Appl

baritone

London Philharmonic Choir

Chorus Director: Madeleine Venner

London Symphony Chorus

Chorus Director: Mariana Rosas

Tiffin Boys' Choir and Girls' Choir

Director: James Day

Sung in English and Latin, with projected English surtitles.

There is no interval in tonight's performance.

Approximate finish time: 8.30pm.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is grateful for the generous support of Fiona Espenhahn and Malcolm Herring, and the donations from this concert's syndicate of supporters.

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Tonight's concert is being filmed for possible future broadcast. We would be grateful if audience noise during the performance could be kept to a minimum, and if audience members could kindly hold applause until the end of the work. Thank you.

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Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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

Welcome

Welcome to the opening concert of our new 2026/27 season. Tonight, Edward Gardner conducts Britten's *War Requiem* – a moving, deeply human work that reminds us all of what is at stake in times of war. We're delighted to be joined by the London Philharmonic Choir, the London Symphony Chorus and Tiffin Boys' and Girls' Choirs, alongside our three outstanding soloists: soprano Natalya Romaniw, tenor Allan Clayton and baritone Benjamin Appl.

Tonight's concert opens a season titled *In Search of Purpose*, exploring the human spirit's resilience and quest for meaning. It's a theme inspired by Beethoven's triumph over despair and the ways later composers have used music as a vessel to confront life's big questions – turn to page 13 to read more.

We hope you enjoy tonight's performance and that it will be the first of many occasions we share with you this season. Do pick up a 2026/27 brochure in the foyer, or explore the full season at lpo.org.uk

With best wishes,



David Burke
Chief Executive

Jesús Herrera
Artistic Director

Tonight's programme cover

Artwork by Royal College of Art student Yunqi Peng (MPhil/PhD Communication): '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



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

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.

Printed with the planet in mind

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Tonight in 2 minutes

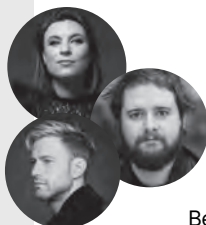
New to classical? Short on time? Your quick guide to tonight's concert.

Who's on stage?



The conductor

Edward Gardner is our Principal Conductor and works closely with the Orchestra all year round, so our musicians know him well and enjoy a special connection and rapport with him. One of the leading British conductors of his generation, Ed is highly regarded for his work in opera as well as with orchestras.



The solo singers

Natalya Romanov, Allan Clayton & Benjamin Appl

Three guest singers join us tonight: The soprano, Natalya, sings in the Latin Requiem Mass sections, while the tenor and baritone, Allan and Benjamin, give voice to the soldiers in Wilfred Owen's moving poetry.

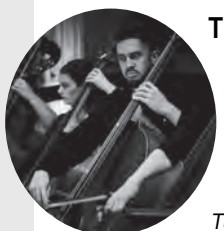


The choirs

**London Philharmonic Choir
London Symphony Chorus
Tiffin Boys' Choir and Girls' Choir**

The London Philharmonic Choir performs regularly with the Orchestra, and tonight they're joined by two guest choirs for extra power and impact. Both adult choirs are made up of amateurs who sing alongside their day jobs, but share a commitment to the highest professional standards. The young voices of the Tiffin Choirs – singing from high up in the balcony at the back of the Hall – add a powerful sense of innocence and hope to Britten's music.

Turn to pages 10–12 for tonight's chorus lists.



The orchestra

Tonight there are over 100 London Philharmonic Orchestra musicians on stage. Many of our talented members 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, Ed, and the solo singers enter the stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...



85 min

Benjamin Britten War Requiem

Tonight's concert features just one work, written for orchestra, choirs and three solo singers. At nearly an hour and a half long and with no interval to break the spell, it's a chance to settle in and experience an extraordinary musical journey.

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



The composer of tonight's work, **Benjamin Britten (1913–76)**, was one of Britain's greatest composers, and a lifelong pacifist. He wrote his *War Requiem* for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962, built beside the ruins of the medieval cathedral, which had been

destroyed during the Second World War. Rather than celebrating victory, the work mourns the devastating human cost of conflict and looks towards reconciliation.

The choirs sing the words of the traditional Requiem Mass – prayers for the dead that have been sung for centuries. Interwoven with them are settings of poems by First World War soldier Wilfred Owen, sung by the soloists, bringing an intensely human perspective. A separate children's choir, accompanied by organ, seems to float above it all.

At the end of the performance, we applaud the performers. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Pieter, and the soloists and choirs, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause. Several rounds of bows will bring the evening to a celebratory close.

Want to read more? Turn to page 14 for a deeper dive into Britten's *War Requiem*.

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 here 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 conducts 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 Ealovega

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

Chamber Orchestra

Pieter Schoeman* *first violin*
Leader

Chair supported by Neil Westreich

Tania Mazzetti *second violin*
Principal

Chair supported by The Candide Trust

Benjamin Roskams *viola*

Guest Principal

Kristina Blaumane *cello*
Principal

Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden

David Stark *double bass*

Guest Principal

Juliette Bausor *flute*
Principal

Chair supported by Malcolm & Alison Thwaites

Ian Hardwick *oboe* Principal

Benjamin Mellefont *clarinet*
Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

Paul Boyes *bassoon*

Guest Principal

John Ryan *horn* Principal

William Lockhart *percussion*

Guest Principal

Céline Saout *harp*

Guest Principal

First Violins

Alice Ivy-Pemberton

Co-Leader

Chair supported by the Hodson family

Vesselin Gelliev 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

Thomas Eisner

Megan Yang

Cassandra Hamilton

Martin Höhmann

Chair supported by Hans-Wilhelm & Evelyn Jenckel

Katalin Varnagy

Yang Zhang

George Lawson

Nilufar Alimaksumova

Grace Lee

Ricky Gore

Second Violins

Emma Oldfield Principal

Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Chair supported by anonymous donors

Coco Inman

Kate Birchall

Nancy Elan

Nynke Hijlkema

Marie-Anne Mairesse

Joseph Maher

Sophie Phillips

Ashley Stevens

Sioni Williams

Alison Strange

Paula Clifton-Everest

Violas

Samuel Burstin

Guest Principal

James Heron

Benedetto Pollani

Laura Vallejo

Katharine Leek

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden

Jisu Song

Shiry Rashkovsky

Jenny Poyser

Charles Cross

Chris Beckett

Cellos

Henry Shapard Principal

Wayne Kwon

Chair supported by an anonymous donor

David Lae

Francis Bucknall

Heeyeon Cho

Auriol Evans

Leo Melvin

Sue Sutherley

Helen Thomas

Double Basses

Philip Nelson Guest Principal

George Peniston

Tom Walley

Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton

Laura Murphy

Chair supported by Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter

Lowri Estell

Yijia Cui

Sam Rice

Flutes

Fiona Kelly Guest Principal

Hannah Grayson

Stewart McIlwham*

Piccolo

Stewart McIlwham* Principal

Chair supported by The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

Oboes

Daniel Finney Guest Principal

Jack Tostevin-Hall

Cor Anglais

Helen Vigurs

Clarinets

Thomas Watmough Principal

Chair supported by Roger Greenwood

Emily Crook

Paul Richards*

E-flat Clarinet

Emily Crook

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

Will Kidner Guest Principal

Helen Storey*

Chair supported by Louise Worthington

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

Annemarie Federle Principal

Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE

Martin Hobbs

Mark Vines Co-Principal

Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra

Jonathan Quaintrell-Evans

Duncan Fuller

Will Scotland

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

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

Karen Hutt Co-Principal

Chair supported by Joe Topley & Tracey Countryman

Oliver Yates

Feergus Brennan

Francesca Lombardelli

Oliver Butterworth

Piano

Catherine Edwards

Organ

Richard Gowers

Chamber Organ

Alex Hamilton

**Professor at a London conservatoire*

Assistant Conductor

Shira Samuels-Shragg

Surtitles

Damien Kennedy

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

David & Yi Buckley
Dr Barry Grimaldi
Sir Simon Robey

Edward Gardner

Principal Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

'A conducting force to be reckoned with' (*The New York Times*), leading British conductor Edward Gardner is now in his sixth season as Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and his third as Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet. He also serves as Honorary Conductor of Norway's Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, after an outstanding nine years as its Chief Conductor.

As well as tonight's performance of Britten's *War Requiem*, Edward's highlights with the London Philharmonic Orchestra this season include Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*, a semi-staged concert presentation of *Lessons in Love and Violence* by Composer-in-Residence Sir George Benjamin, and world premieres by Mark Simpson and Judith Weir. He also leads the Orchestra on tours to China, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands.

Elsewhere this season, he launches his first complete Wagner *Ring* Cycle with a new production of *Das Rheingold* at the Norwegian Opera; makes his San Diego Symphony and Detroit Symphony debuts; and conducts a new production of Britten's *Death in Venice* at the Bavarian State Opera.

Edward has previously led distinguished orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Danish National Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony and Staatskapelle Berlin. He enjoys longstanding relationships with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, where he was formerly Principal Guest

Conductor, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which he has conducted at the First and Last Nights of the BBC Proms.

A major figure in the opera world, Edward previously served as Music Director of English National Opera, and has led productions at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne Festival, Opéra National de Paris, Bavarian State Opera, and La Scala.

Edward's extensive and wide-ranging discography features multiple Grammy nominees, International Classical Music Award nominees and Gramophone Award winners, including Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra – winner of a 2023 Gramophone Award – and Britten's *Peter Grimes* with the Bergen Philharmonic, named *Gramophone's* 2021 Recording of the Year.

Other recordings on the LPO Label include Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, as well as the composer's Piano Concerto and Symphony No. 2; Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*; Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*; Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony* and *Metamorphosen*; and works by Bartók, Rachmaninov, Dvořák, Schumann, Britten, Brett Dean and Tania León. In 2024, he and the Orchestra featured in a BAFTA-nominated Sky Arts TV series: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', and a second series, 'Inside the Music', will be broadcast this autumn.

The founder of Manchester's Hallé Youth Orchestra, Edward maintains close relationships with The Juilliard School and London's Royal Academy of Music, where he is the inaugural Sir Charles Mackerras Conducting Chair. His accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society's Conductor of the Year Award, an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, the Sibelius Prize, and an OBE for Services to Music.

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

Natalya Romaniw

soprano



© Frances Marshall

This season, Welsh-Ukrainian soprano Natalya Romaniw returns to London's Royal Ballet and Opera as Gutrune in *Götterdämmerung* and Giorgetta in *Il tabarro*. She also makes debuts at the Metropolitan Opera, the Semperoper Dresden and Oper Leipzig as Tosca, and returns as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* in concert with the Kansas City Symphony.

Natalya is a frequent presence at the Royal Ballet and Opera, where she has sung Tosca and Sieglinde, and created the role of Helena in Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Festen*. She has also sung Tosca at Dutch National Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Oper Frankfurt, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera and Scottish Opera, as well as the title role of *Jenůfa* (Opéra de Rouen); Giorgetta in *Il tabarro* and Angelica in *Suor Angelica* (Welsh National Opera); Helena in *Festen* (Finnish National Opera); Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Houston Grand Opera); and the title roles of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *The Bartered Bride* and *Rusalka*, and Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* (Garsington Opera).

Her concert performances include Britten's *War Requiem* (Theatro Municipal de São Paulo); Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* (London Symphony Orchestra); Verdi's *Requiem* (Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra); Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14 (National Polish Radio Orchestra); Verdi's *Requiem*, Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (Hallé Orchestra); Mahler's Symphony No. 8 and Strauss's *Four Last Songs* (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra); and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra). She made her LPO debut in 2015, when she sang the role of Woglinde in a concert of excerpts from *Das Rheingold* at the Royal Festival Hall under Vladimir Jurowski.

Allan Clayton

tenor



© Sim Canetty-Clarke

The flexibility and consistency of Allan Clayton's vocal range, combined with a magnetic stage presence, have led to international acclaim in music from Baroque to contemporary. His impact was most recently recognised with an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera for the 2025 world premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Festen* at the Royal Opera House, under the baton of Edward Gardner.

Allan garnered huge praise as the lead role in Brett Dean's opera *Hamlet*, which received its world premiere at the 2017 Glyndebourne Festival with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski, and won a 2019 Gramophone Award. In 2018 he sang Froh in a concert performance of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* with the Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski at Royal Festival Hall, and in 2019 he made his role debut as Faust in Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust* at Glyndebourne under Robin Ticciati, again with the LPO. Last year the LPO Label released Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* under Edward Gardner with Allan in the title role, recorded at the 2022 BBC Proms.

In demand for leading roles at prominent opera houses around the world, this season Allan makes his title-role debut in Mozart's *Idomeneo* at the Paris Opera, returns to the Metropolitan Opera for Janáček's *Jenůfa*, and sings in Britten's *Death in Venice* at the Bavarian State Opera. Last season he made role debuts as King Charles VII in Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* with the Netherlands Opera, and Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* at Glyndebourne. He is widely regarded as the definitive interpreter of the title role of *Peter Grimes*, following performances at the Teatro Real Madrid, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera and Paris Opera.

Benjamin Appl

baritone

© David Ruano



Benjamin Appl is praised for a voice that 'belongs to the last of the old great masters of song', with 'an almost infinite range of colours' (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*). A former BBC New Generation Artist, Wigmore Hall Emerging Artist and ECHO Rising Star, he was named *Gramophone's* Young Artist of the Year in 2016. Having studied in both Munich and London, he was mentored by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, whom he describes as 'an invaluable and hugely formative influence.'

Benjamin appears regularly at major festivals and venues worldwide including Ravinia, Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Elbphilharmonie and Carnegie Hall. Recent orchestral partners include the Royal Concertgebouw, Oslo Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony and Philadelphia orchestras, the Staatskapelle Dresden, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, with whom he was Artist-in-Residence for the 2024/25 season.

Highlights on the opera stage include Papageno (*The Magic Flute*) at Hamburg State Opera and Opéra Rouen; his role and house debut as Harlequin (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) at the Gran Teatre del Liceu Barcelona; and his house and role debut at the Teatro Real Madrid as Mercutio (*Roméo et Juliette*).

Benjamin's recordings span from Bach and Schubert to Hans Sommer and Sibelius. Recent solo releases for Alpha Classics include *Lines of Life* and *For Dieter* (2025) and *The Christmas Album* (2024), as well as the award-winning *Heimat* (2017) for Sony Classics.

Benjamin made his LPO concert debut in 2019, when he sang the role of Aeneas in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* under Sir Roger Norrington at the Royal Festival Hall.



Our next concert with the London Philharmonic Choir

Fauré's Requiem

Saturday 27 February 2027

7.30pm

Royal Festival Hall

**Celebrating the Choir's 80th anniversary
with a brand new work commissioned
especially for the occasion, performed
alongside Fauré's much-loved choral
masterpiece.**

Judith Weir *Respire, Inspire (world premiere)*

Fauré *Requiem*

Vaughan Williams *Dona Nobis Pacem*

Edward Gardner conductor

Louise Alder soprano

Gerald Finley bass-baritone

London Philharmonic Choir

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London Philharmonic Choir

Patron HRH Princess Alexandra **President** Sir Mark Elder **Chorus Director Emeritus** Neville Creed
Chorus Director Madeleine Venner **Associate Chorus Director** Victoria Longdon **Accompanist** Jonathan Beatty
Chair Alex Marshall **Choir Manager** Natasha Sofa

Founded in 1947 as the chorus for the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Choir is widely regarded as one of Britain's finest choirs. For the last seven decades the Choir has performed under leading conductors, consistently meeting with critical acclaim and recording regularly for television and radio.

Enjoying a close relationship with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Choir frequently joins it for concerts in the UK and abroad. Recent concerts with LPO Principal Conductor Edward Gardner have included Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater*, John Adams's *Harmonium*, Rachmaninov's *The Bells* and Mahler's Symphony No. 8. Other highlights have included Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* and the UK premiere of James MacMillan's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Choir's President, Sir Mark Elder; Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli* with Vladimir Jurowski; Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13 with Andrey Boreyko; and the UK premiere of Tan Dun's *Choral Concerto: Nine* under the composer, alongside Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

The Choir appears annually at the BBC Proms, where performances have included works by John Luther Adams, Beethoven, Busoni, Elgar, Ligeti, Orff, Vaughan Williams and Verdi, not forgetting the greatly enjoyable *Doctor Who* Proms. In 2024 for the first time, the Choir took part in the 'Films in Concert' series at the Royal Albert Hall, performing the score for *Amadeus*.

A well-travelled choir, it has visited several European countries as well as further afield. The Choir was delighted to travel to the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, in December 2017 to perform Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Choir prides itself on its inclusive culture, achieving first-class performances from its members, who are volunteers from all walks of life.

lpc.org.uk



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Sopranos

Ade Amusa
 Annette Argent
 Chris Banks
 Tessa Bartley
 Hilary Bates
 Holly Beckmyer
 Sarah Bindon
 Amy Brewster
 Valerie Britton
 Charlotte Cantrell
 Paula Chessell
 Jenni Cresswell
 Lucy Day
 Shehara de Soysa
 Sarah Deane-Cutler
 Rachel Gibbon
 Monica Griesemer
 Olivia Haslam
 Sasha Holland
 Penny Huang
 Ashley Jordan
 Joy Lee
 Sarah Leffler
 Ilona Lynch
 Janey Maxwell
 Amanda May
 Hannah McNaboe
 Sally Morgan
 Mariana Nina
 Elizabeth Ortiz
 Linda Park
 Marie Power
 Courtney Reed
 Elizabeth Reynard
 Nicole Rochman
 Lucia Ruiz Vila
 Francesca Simon
 Susan Thomas
 Rachel Topham
 Isabella von Holstein
 Sarah Walker
 Rebecca White
 Susannah Witriol

Altos

Sally Brien
 Jenny Burdett
 Andrei Caracoti
 Lara Carim
 Cannis Chan
 Noel Chow
 Liz Cole
 Jill Creighton
 Pat Dixon
 Olga Duke
 Andrea Easey
 Pauline Finney
 Betha Hanson-Jones
 Mia Hobson
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 Natasha Sofa
 Annette Strzedulla
 Erica Tomlinson
 Catherine Travers
 Susi Underwood
 Jenny Watson
 Rachelle Wood

Tenors

Tim Appleby
 Alexander Best
 Christopher Beynon
 James Clarke
 Ollie Clarke
 Gary Cupido
 Robert Geary
 Alan Glover

Philippe Gosset
 Peter Goves
 Iain Handyside
 Stephen Hodges
 James Hopper
 Alex Marshall
 Daisy Rushton
 Chris Stuart
 Don Tallon
 Daniel Tighe
 Claudio Tonini
 Tony Valsamidis
 Mikolaj Walczak
 Emre Yavuz

Basses

John Bandy
 Jonathon Bird
 Peter Blamire
 Marcus Daniels
 Myrddin Edwards
 Aloysius Fekete
 Paul Fincham
 Ian Fletcher
 Gary Freer
 Ian Frost
 Luke Hagerty
 Alan Hardwick
 Christopher Harvey
 David Hodgson
 Rylan Holey
 Michael Jenkins
 John Luff
 Maurice MacSweeney
 Anthony McDonald
 Max Mitchell
 John D Morris
 Tu Nguyen
 Johannes Pieters
 Matthew Prudham
 John Salmon
 Joshua Schrijnen
 Alex Thomas
 Geoff Walker
 Oliver Walsh
 Alex Walton-Keefe
 Sam Watson

London Symphony Chorus

President Sir Simon Rattle OM CBE **Patrons** Sir Simon Russell Beale CBE | Howard Goodall CBE
Chair Chris Straw **Chorus Director** Mariana Rosas **Chorus Director Emeritus** Simon Halsey CBE
Associate Chorus Director Jack Apperley **Assistant Chorus Directors** Hilary Campbell | Daniel Mahoney
Chorus Accompanist Benjamin Frost **Vocal Coaches** Norbert Meyn | Anita Morrison | Rebecca Outram

The London Symphony Chorus was founded in 1966 to complement the work of the London Symphony Orchestra. The LSC has performed with many leading orchestras: frequently with the LSO, and also with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic and, more recently, with Les Siècles, the SWR Symphony Orchestra and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela.

Last season's concerts included Puccini's *Suor Angelica*, Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 (Kaddish), Vaughan Williams's *Dona Nobis Pacem* and *Flos campi*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* under Sir Antonio Pappano; Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* under Manfred Honeck; Mahler's Symphony No. 2 under Michael Tilson Thomas; 'Symphonic Gospel' under Dr André J Thomas; Mahler's Symphony No. 3 under Gustavo Dudamel; and a concert celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Chorus under Music Director Mariana Rosas. In April 2025 the LSC joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra & Choir for Mahler's Symphony No. 8 under Edward Gardner at the Royal Festival Hall.

The LSC tours extensively in Europe. Recent tours have included Paris, Baden-Baden and Luxembourg under Sir Simon Rattle with the LSO; Monte Carlo and Aix-en-Provence under Kazuki Yamada with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo; and Stuttgart, Berlin, Freiburg, Dortmund and Hamburg under Teodor Currentzis with the SWR Symphony Orchestra. With the LSO, the LSC performed music by Mahler and Bernstein in *Maestro*, the 2023 Oscar-nominated biopic of Leonard Bernstein, starring Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin as music advisor.

The LSC is an independent charity run by its members and it engages actively in the musical life of London and further afield. In addition to seeking new members and audiences, it also commissions and performs new works. The LSC is an international ensemble, with members from over 25 countries.

Sopranos

Shona Barnes-McCallum
Georgie Bateman
Franziska Bräumer
Laura Catala-Ubassy
Alana Clark
Alice Dee
Lucy Feldman
Dandy Freeman
Isobel Hammond
Cora Hardy
Sophie Hill
Sally Ho
Kuan Hon
Debbie Jones
Lotte Jones
Alice Jones
Luca Kocsmarszky
Jane Morley
Maggie Owen
Alison Ryan
Deborah Staunton
Lizzie Webb
Eleri Williams
Rachel Wilson

Altos

Kate Aitchison
June Brawner
Jo Buchan
Gina Broderick
Sheila Cobourne
Linda Evans
Amanda Freshwater
Julia Gervais
Edda Henry
Carolyn Jarvis
Cristina Jerney
Jill Jones
Anna Korbel
Liz McCaw
Jane Muir
Helen Palmer
Susannah Priede
Ellie Saipe
Ali St-Denis
Karen Taylor-Paul
Linda Thomas

Tenors

Erik Azzopardi
Philipp Boeing
Thomas Bracewell
Oliver Burrows
James David
Ethem Demir
Colin Dunn
Tim Lloyd
Perseus O'Brien
Diego Richardson Nishikuni
Chris Riley
Chris Straw
Robert Ward
Leonard Wong

Basses

Gavin Buchan
Greg Callus
Andy Chan
Steve Chevis
Harry Clarke
Damian Day
Robert Garbolinski
John Graham
Owen Hanmer
Robert Hare
J-C Higgins
Anthony Howick
Hector Macandrew
Rob Sanders Hewett
Matthew Smith
Richard Tannenbaum
Dan Tarbuck
Philip Townley
Pawel Wysocki

Tiffin Boys' Choir and Girls' Choir

Director James Day

Since their foundation in 1957, the Tiffin Choirs have worked extensively with the world's greatest conductors, performed for the world's finest musical institutions and recorded with the world's leading musical ensembles. They are renowned for the breadth of their work, which spans symphonic, opera, choral and film music. This has recently included singing at the BBC Proms, with the Royal Ballet and Opera, English National Opera, Opera Holland Park, and the London Philharmonic, London Symphony, Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic orchestras. The Choirs regularly record at Abbey Road Studios and perform at the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and the Barbican.

Recent collaborations with the LPO include Berg's *Wozzeck* and Mahler's Symphony No. 8 under Edward Gardner, and John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls* under Vladimir Jurowski. Other symphonic and opera highlights include televised performances of Britten's *War Requiem* and Puccini's *Suor Angelica* at the BBC Proms with the LSO under Sir Antonio Pappano; several performances of Mahler's Symphonies Nos. 3 and 8 with the RPO under Vasily Petrenko, the LSO under Michael Tilson Thomas and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra under Gustavo Dudamel; Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 (Kaddish) with the LSO under Sir Antonio Pappano; Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* at the Royal Ballet and Opera; *La bohème* with English National Opera; and *Musical With Changing Parts* with the Philip Glass Ensemble.

The Choirs have recorded most of the orchestral repertoire that includes children's choirs, with notable releases including Mahler's Symphony No. 8 under Klaus Tennstedt (EMI), which was nominated for a Grammy Award; an album with the Gabrieli Consort and Paul McCreesh; Handel's *Samson* with the Dunedin Consort and John Butt; and an appearance on Madonna's 2019 album, *Madame X*.

The Choirs' 60th anniversary concert in 2017 was broadcast on Classic FM, and in 2023 Tiffin became the first state school choir to broadcast Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3. They recorded for the soundtrack for *The Hobbit* and music for the BBC comedy drama *Fleabag*, appeared on set in the films *Philomena* and *Batman*, and performed in *Titanic Live!* with James Horner. They recently recorded the James Newton Howard soundtrack for *The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping*.

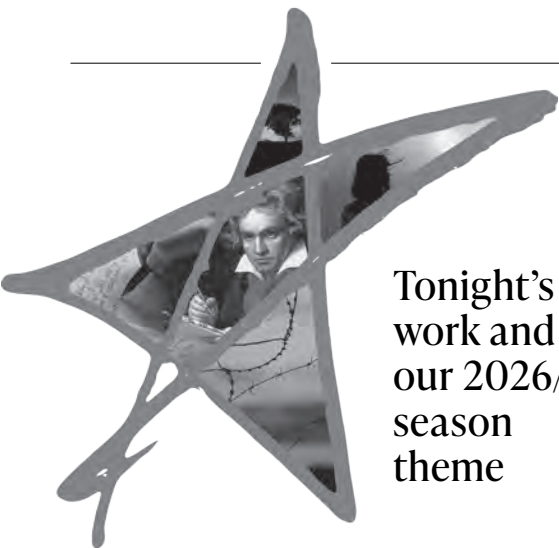
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James Day conductor

James Day is a highly regarded conductor and artistic director, widely recognised for creating exciting and extremely successful artistic and educational projects. Driven by a passion for bringing classical music to all, James ensures that future generations from all backgrounds have access to life-changing musical opportunities and experiences. In addition to his work with the Tiffin Choirs, he serves as the Chief Executive of the Pimlico Musical Foundation, a local charity providing quality musical education to its underserved community, and as the Artistic Director of the Barnes Music Festival. In 2023, he was awarded an LRAM from the Royal Academy of Music.

In Search of Purpose



Tonight's work 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 we open our season-long exploration of purpose with one of the 20th century's most powerful musical pleas for reconciliation. Composed as a bold statement of pacifism following the Second World War, Britten's *War Requiem* searches for purpose in compassion, confronting the devastation of conflict while imagining the possibility of peace. In a season exploring different paths towards purpose, this opening concert asks perhaps the most fundamental question of all – how can music help us respond to suffering with empathy, understanding and hope? It's a heartfelt invitation to begin our search together.

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

Benjamin Britten

1913–76

War Requiem

1962

Edward Gardner *conductor*

Natalya Romaniw *soprano*

Allan Clayton *tenor*

Benjamin Appl *baritone*

London Philharmonic Choir

London Symphony Chorus

Tiffin Boys' Choir and Girls' Choir (*conductor: James Day*)

1. Requiem aeternam

including text from Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'

2. Dies irae

including texts from Owen's 'But I was Looking at the Permanent Stars', 'The Next War', 'Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action' & 'Futility'

3. Offertorium

including text from Owen's 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young'

4. Sanctus

including text from Owen's 'The End'

5. Agnus Dei

including text from Owen's 'At a Calvary near the Ancre'

6. Libera me

including text from Owen's 'Strange Meeting'

Programme notes

Introduction

No work embodies Benjamin Britten's passionate pacifist convictions more movingly than his *War Requiem*, composed to mark the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962 – the old cathedral had been destroyed by German bombs in 1940.

The text of the Latin Mass for the Dead, sung by the chorus, is brilliantly interspersed with poems by the greatest of the First World War poets, Wilfred Owen, sung by tenor and baritone soloists. The result is a kind of dialogue between ancient expressions of faith and Owen's often despairing awareness of the horror of war. Sometimes the poems present an ironic, bitter critique of the seeming certainties expressed in the prayers and hymns of the Requiem. But at other times – and especially in the last two movements – Owen's words and those of the liturgy seem to edge closer, offering at least a glimmer of redemptive hope. This extraordinarily telling composite text is set to some of Britten's most memorable, directly expressive music: from the terrifying brass fanfares and desolate soprano solo of the *Dies irae* to the dazzling trumpets and ecstatically chanting chorus of the *Sanctus*; from the frozen despair of the Owen setting 'Strange Meeting' to the massed expression of yearning for redemption and peace in the final *In paradisum*.



Great music is rarely written to great texts. But Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* is a towering exception. Not only does it offer some of his most moving, directly accessible music: the fusion of the words of the Latin Mass for the Dead with the poetry of the First World War poet Wilfred Owen is in itself an achievement of genius. The idea came to Britten when he was asked to provide a work for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962 – the old cathedral had been almost entirely destroyed during the Luftwaffe air raids of 1940. Britten saw this as an opportunity to express his passionately held pacifist convictions with new force. He had often dwelt on religious themes in his works; indeed, one of his earliest major orchestral works was the *Sinfonia da Requiem* (coincidentally written in the year of the Coventry bombing), whose three movements take their titles from sections of the Requiem Mass. But in the *War Requiem* Wilfred Owen's poems act as an emotional counterweight to the Requiem text: sometimes offering an ironic, bitter commentary on it, at other times seeming to draw closer to the notion of religious consolation.



Prime Minister Winston Churchill visits the ruined Coventry Cathedral after its bombing by the German air force in November 1940

Programme notes

Britten also found a simple but highly effective way of stressing the difference between the worlds of the liturgy and Owen's poems. Chorus and soprano soloist, supported by a large orchestra, sing only the words of the Mass – as in the great, intensely dramatic Requiem by Verdi (echoed more than once in the course of Britten's setting). Owen's poetry, however, is sung by two male soloists, tenor and baritone, accompanied almost exclusively by a chamber orchestra of 12 players. Apart from these – as though in yet another world – is a children's choir, accompanied by organ or harmonium. Children's voices usually stand for innocence and purity in Britten's music, and in the *War Requiem* they mostly sing the words of the ancient hymns that punctuate the text of the Mass – in other words their music tends to have a more objective, even detached quality. The personal, anguished pleas for deliverance from death and judgement are left to the soprano and the chorus. However this contrast only serves to emphasise the urgency of the expression in the choral-orchestral and solo-chamber sections of the work. Ultimately, the interplay of these three kinds of music forms a ringing endorsement of the lines from Owen that Britten placed on the title page of the score:

'My subject is War, and the pity of War.
The poetry is in the pity ...
All a poet can do today is warn.'

The first movement, *Requiem aeternam* ('Eternal rest') presents these three different worlds in telling sequence. To the accompaniment of a sombre, dragging figure from the orchestra, chorus chant the basic prayer of the Requiem Mass ('Lord, grant them eternal rest') against slowly tolling bells. This builds to a huge climax, in which the bells (playing the 'uneasy' interval of the tritone) begin to sound more like alarm bells – lament becomes warning. As the climax fades, the children's voices enter to the words 'Te decet hymnus' ('It is seemly to praise you, O Lord'). There is something chilling about the cool detachment of this hymn after the pained intensity of the previous music. Chorus and orchestra return, but then comes a dramatic reversal: in the midst of the tolling, warning bell chimes, tenor and chamber orchestra surge in with Owen's coruscating 'What passing bells for these who die as cattle?' Finally it is left to chorus and bells to intone the words of the *Kyrie* – 'Lord have mercy' – in a *pianissimo*.

Other composers have used brass fanfares in settings of the central *Dies irae* ('Day of wrath') – not surprisingly in a text that features prominently the 'Last Trumpet' heralding the Day of Judgement.

But the quiet solo brass figures that open Britten's *Dies irae* are unmistakably distant martial bugles. As chorus and orchestra begin the long build-up, to a strangely jerky seven-beats-in-a-bar rhythm, the brass fanfares get louder and closer, eventually reaching an apocalyptic climax. As this quietens down, the chamber orchestra enters again, and the baritone offers a very different take on the fanfares: 'Bugles sang, saddening the evening air'. An icy soprano solo then tells how every last human crime is recorded in the Book of Judgement. Tenor and baritone burst in with a piece of music-hall-like bravado: 'Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death'. A beautiful fugue for women's voices begs Christ (God as a suffering human being) for mercy, but the baritone's response is Owen's terrifying depiction of the blasphemy inherent in war: 'Great gun towering toward Heaven, about to curse'. Soprano and chorus sing of the grief of humanity confronted with its own sinfulness ('Lacrimosa dies illa'). Then comes Owen's desperate lament for a slaughtered comrade: 'Move him into the sun'. Once again, chorus and bells end the movement in a numbed *pianissimo*: 'Merciful Lord Jesus, grant them rest'.

There is agitation in the boys' prayer at the beginning of the *Offertorium*, with its terrifying image of Hell as a ravaging lion's mouth. Then an almost jaunty choral-orchestral fugue lays claim to God's ancient promise to Abraham, father of the Jewish nation. Baritone, tenor and chamber orchestra continue with a retelling of the Biblical story of Abraham and his son Isaac; but Owen's poem ends with a horrific reversal: Abraham ignores the Angel's offer of a substitute sacrifice (soloists in parallel thirds against radiant C-major chords) and slays his son, 'And half the seed of Europe, one by one'. Owen thus anticipates the central horror of the Second World War – a point not lost on Britten. The eeriness of the following children's hymn, with its talk of 'sacrifices and prayers of praise', underlines this deeply uncomfortable irony, as does the final muted recapitulation of the choral-orchestral 'promise' fugue.

In the Roman rite, the *Sanctus* is the point at which the priest elevates the host and invokes God's presence in the consecrated bread and wine. The soprano sings these pivotal words to a hail of bell-sounds; then a huge *crescendo*, the chorus chanting freely, leads to a splendid climax topped with blazing trumpet calls. But again comes dramatic reversal, as the baritone sings one of Owen's most despairing poems: life will not renew the soldiers' corpses, suffering will go unhealed, inhuman crimes unatoned.

Programme notes

There is a glimmer of redemptive hope in the *Agnus Dei* ('Lamb of God'). Tenor and chamber orchestra, chorus and full orchestra unite musically for the first time in the *War Requiem* as Owen's poetry and the words of the Mass mirror one another. By the roadside stands a mutilated crucifix. Patriotism and institutional religion may mock the crucified Christ, but the soldiers 'who love the greater love / Lay down their life; they do not hate.' At the end, for the only time in the work, the tenor sings a line from the Requiem liturgy: 'grant us peace'.

But the most telling juxtaposition of rite and poetry occurs in the final *Libera me* ('Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death'). The anguished chromatic choral writing builds to another huge climax, with the clearest echoes yet of Verdi's famous *Requiem*. Then comes Owen's greatest poem, left incomplete at his death only days before the end of the war. Here two dead ex-combatants meet in a bleak but unspecified underworld. Significantly, Britten removed the lines from Owen's poem that make it clear that this 'Strange Meeting' is happening in Hell – there has to be at least a possibility of redemption. And as the tenor and bass repeat the words 'Let us sleep now ...' children's choir, chorus and orchestra join the soloists and chamber orchestra in the final *In paradisum*, 'May Angels lead you to paradise', now clearly a prayer for the souls of Owen's two soldiers, and for millions like them. Then chorus and bells quietly intone the final prayer: 'Rest in peace. Amen.'

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

The *War Requiem* and the LPO

The world premiere of Britten's *War Requiem*, at Coventry Cathedral in May 1962, was given by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. The London Philharmonic Orchestra first performed the work in April 1964, when John Pritchard (then Principal Conductor) led performances at the Royal Festival Hall and Leeds Triennial Festival. The Orchestra performed the work once again at the Royal Festival Hall on 2 May 1976 under subsequent Principal Conductor Bernard Haitink, in a concert celebrating the Hall's 25th anniversary.

On 8 May 2005, the Orchestra performed the *War Requiem* under then-Principal Conductor and renowned peace activist Kurt Masur, in a Royal Festival Hall concert marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. This performance, featuring the London Philharmonic Choir, was released on CD on the LPO Label (LPO-0010 – see page 20).

Most recently, the Orchestra performed the work on 12 October 2013 under the baton of then-Principal Conductor (now Conductor Emeritus) Vladimir Jurowski, again at the Royal Festival Hall.

Video: Edward Gardner on Britten's *War Requiem*

Scan the QR code to watch the interview



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 will help to shape our future plans.

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



Farewell: Thomas Eisner

At tonight's concert, First Violinist Thomas Eisner will take his final bow as a member of the LPO, bringing to a close a remarkable 40-year career with the Orchestra. Fellow LPO violinist Martin Höhmann reflects on Tom's contribution to the Orchestra, his passion for music and, above all, his generosity as a colleague and friend.



'Having played in the First Violin section alongside Tom for the past 26 years and shared a desk with him on many occasions, I have been fortunate to experience first-hand the qualities that have made him such a valued colleague and friend.

Prior to joining the Orchestra in 1986, Tom held positions with the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra in Denmark, and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. The London Philharmonic Orchestra, however, with its distinct artistic focus under Principal Conductors such as Bernard Haitink, Sir George Solti, Klaus Tennstedt, and later Kurt Masur, and of course its long-standing relationship with Glyndebourne, was a natural fit for Tom. His dedication to the London Philharmonic Orchestra extended beyond the concert platform, including service as a Director on the Orchestra's Board during the 1990s and, more recently, on its Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee.

Tom's enthusiasm for music, and for the London Philharmonic Orchestra itself, has always been infectious. A passionate advocate for the great Germanic repertoire, and Wagner in particular,

he realised a long-held ambition in recent years by performing at the Bayreuth Festival, as well as the Bavarian State Opera. Yet his interests have never been confined to the music alone. Tom has always taken a keen interest in every aspect of the Orchestra's life, nurturing relationships across our wider family – from fellow musicians and staff to friends, supporters and benefactors.

Perhaps Tom's most valued quality has been his generosity towards others. Countless musicians new to the Orchestra have benefited from his warmth, support and encouragement. I will always be grateful to Tom and his wife, Jessica, for letting me stay in their home when I travelled from Germany for my trial, and for helping me feel immediately at home in both the UK and the Orchestra.

The Orchestra will not be quite the same without Tom's unfailing enthusiasm, friendship and love of music. We all wish him the very best for his next chapter and have little doubt that we will continue to see him around for many years to come.'

Martin Höhmann, September 2026

London Philharmonic Orchestra

The power of listening

Coming up this season

Lessons in Love and Violence

Wednesday 25 November 2026
Queen Elizabeth Hall

A one-off concert performance
of George Benjamin and
Martin Crimp's opera, conducted
by Edward Gardner.

Górecki's Third Symphony

Friday 19 February 2027
Royal Festival Hall

Andrey Boreyko conducts
Górecki's haunting 'Symphony
of Sorrowful Songs', alongside
Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5.

Renée Fleming & Dvořák's New World Symphony

Wednesday 10 March 2027
Royal Festival Hall

Kevin Puts's *The Brightness of
Light*, based on the letters of
artist Georgia O'Keeffe, paves
the way for Dvorak's great
musical letter from America.

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London Philharmonic Orchestra

Britten on the LPO Label



War Requiem
Kurt Masur conductor
Christine Brewer soprano
Anthony Dean Griffey tenor
Gerald Finley baritone
London Philharmonic Choir
Tiffin Boys' Choir

LPO-0010



Britten: Sinfonia da Requiem
Winter Words
The Prince of the Pagodas (selections)
Edward Gardner conductor
Nicky Spence tenor

LPO-0134



Double Concerto
Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge
Les Illuminations

Vladimir Jurowski conductor
Sally Matthews soprano
Pieter Schoeman violin
Alexander Zemtsov viola

LPO-0037



Britten: Our Hunting Fathers
Elgar: Introduction and Allegro; Enigma Variations
Bernard Haitink conductor
Heather Harper soprano

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Sound Futures donors

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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