



**Free concert  
programme**

# London Philharmonic★ Orchestra



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



**SOUTHBANK  
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RESIDENT

# London Philharmonic Orchestra

**Principal Conductor** Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jepsen

**Principal Guest Conductor** Karina Canellakis supported by Richard Buxton

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

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

**Leader** Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

## Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Friday 3 October 2025 | 7.30pm

# Mahler's Fourth

## Hans Abrahamsen

let me tell you (30')

*Interval (20')*

## Mahler

Symphony No. 4 (55')

## Edward Gardner

conductor

Generously supported by Aud Jepsen

## Jennifer France

soprano

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This concert is being recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on Monday 3 November 2025 at 7.30pm. It will remain available for 30 days after that on BBC Sounds.

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The timings shown are not precise and are given only as a guide.  
Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

# Welcome to tonight's concert

It's a pleasure to welcome you to tonight's concert with LPO Principal Conductor Edward Gardner. This evening brings together two works that, though written over a century apart, share a spirit of clarity and wonder. Hans Abrahamsen's 2013 song-cycle *let me tell you* was ranked by *The Guardian's* critics as the finest musical work of the 21st century, and tonight we'll hear it brought to life by the wonderful soprano Jennifer France. After the interval, we journey into the luminous world of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, a piece that continues to speak directly to audiences with its moments of poignancy and childlike joy. Tonight's concert is being recorded by BBC Radio 3 for broadcast on Monday 3 November at 7.30pm – it'll be available to listen for 30 days.

Later this month sees two unmissable concerts with our Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis, followed by the chance to catch star guest conductors Kahchun Wong and Mark Elder, before Ed returns on 5 November for a programme of Brahms and Tchaikovsky. Do pick up a 2025/26 brochure in the foyer this evening, or browse the full season at [lpo.org.uk](https://lpo.org.uk).

We hope you enjoy your evening with us!  
With best wishes,



**David Burke**  
Chief Executive

**Jesús Herrera**  
Artistic Director

## 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](mailto: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.

## 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 LPO survey about your experience?

Your feedback is invaluable to us and will help to shape our future plans. Just scan the QR code to begin the survey. Thank you!



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# On stage tonight

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## First Violins

Pieter Schoeman\* Leader

Chair supported by Neil Westreich

Alice Ivy-Pemberton

Co-Leader

Vesselin Gellev Sub-Leader

Lasma Taimina

Chair supported by Irina Gofman &

Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave

Thomas Eisner

Chair supported by Ryze Power

Martin Höhmann

Yang Zhang

Katalin Varnagy

Aria Trigas

Rasa Zukauskaitė

Amanda Smith

Nilufar Alimaksumova

Alison Strange

Jamie Hutchinson

Daniel Pukach

Alice Aprea Howell

## Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal

Chair supported by The Candide

Trust

Emma Oldfield Co-Principal

Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Coco Inman

Nancy Elan

Kate Birchall

Nynke Hijlkema

Fiona Higham

Joseph Maher

Ashley Stevens

Marie-Anne Mairesse

Sophie Phillips

Chair supported by Friends of the

Orchestra

Jessica Coleman

Sarah Thornett

## Violas

Fiona Winning

Guest Principal

Carys Barnes

Katharine Leek

Lucia Ortiz Sauco

Benedetto Pollani

Laura Vallejo

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina

Harden

Michelle Bruil

James Heron

Alistair Scahill

Kate De Campos

Pamela Ferriman

## Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal

Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart

Roden

Henry Shapard Co-Principal

Wayne Kwon

Chair supported by an anonymous

donor

David Lale

Leo Melvin

Hee Yeon Cho

Sibylle Hentschel

Sue Sutherley

Tom Roff

Helen Thomas

## Double Basses

Kevin Rundell\* Principal

Sebastian Pennar\*

Co-Principal

Hugh Kluger

George Peniston

Tom Walley

Chair supported by William & Alex

de Winton

Laura Murphy

Chair supported by Ian Ferguson

& Susan Tranter

Charlotte Kerbegian

Lowri Estell

## Flutes

Juliette Bausor Principal

Chair supported by Malcolm &

Alison Thwaites

Daniel Shao

Maria Filipova

Stewart McIlwham\*

## Piccolos

Stewart McIlwham\*

Principal

Juliette Bausor

Daniel Shao

Maria Filipova

## Oboes

Ian Hardwick\* Principal

Alice Munday

Chair supported by David & Yi

Buckley

Sue Böhling\*

## Cor Anglais

Sue Böhling\* Principal

Chair supported by Dr Barry Grimaldi

## Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont\*

Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel

Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

Thomas Watmough

Paul Richards\*

## E-flat Clarinet

Thomas Watmough Principal

Chair supported by Roger

Greenwood

## Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards\* Principal

## Bassoons

Jonathan Davies\* Principal

Chair supported by Sir Simon Robey

Helen Storey\*

Dominic Morgan

## Contrabassoon

Dominic Morgan

## Horns

John Ryan\* Principal

Annemarie Federle

Principal

Chair supported by Victoria

Robey CBE

Martin Hobbs

Mark Vines Co-Principal

Gareth Mollison

## Trumpets

Paul Beniston\* Principal

Chair supported by the Williams

family in memory of Grenville

Williams

Tom Nielsen\* Principal

Anne McAneney\*

## Trombones

Mark Templeton\* Principal

Chair supported by William & Alex

de Winton

David Whitehouse

## Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

## Timpani

Simon Carrington\*

Principal

Chair supported by Victoria

Robey CBE

## Percussion

Andrew Barclay\* Principal

Chair supported by Gill & Garf

Collins

Karen Hutt Co-Principal

Feargus Brennan

Jeremy Cornes

## Harp

Doriene Marselje

## Celeste

Catherine Edwards

## Assistant Conductor

Nefeli Chadouli

## Surtitles

Damien Kennedy

*\*Professor at a London  
conservatoire*

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

Dr Alex & Maria Chan  
Eric Tomsett



# London Philharmonic Orchestra

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© Jason Bell

Uniquely groundbreaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been celebrated as one of the world's great orchestras since Sir Thomas Beecham founded it in 1932. Our mission is to share wonder with the modern world through the power of orchestral music, which we accomplish through live performances, online, and an extensive education and community programme, cementing our position as a leading orchestra for the 21st century.

Our home is at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, where we're at the beating heart of London's cultural life. You'll also find us at our resident venues in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden, and on tour worldwide. In 2024 we celebrated 60 years as Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, combining the magic of opera with Glyndebourne's glorious setting in the Sussex countryside.

## Soundtrack to key moments

Everyone will have heard the Grammy-nominated London Philharmonic Orchestra, whether it's playing the world's National Anthems for every medal ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, our iconic recording with Pavarotti that made *Nessun Dorma* a global football anthem, or closing the flotilla at The Queen's Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant. And you'll almost certainly have heard us on the soundtracks for major films including *The Lord of the Rings*.

## Sharing the wonder worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. In 2023 we were the most successful orchestra worldwide on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, and in 2024 we featured in a TV documentary series on Sky Arts: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', which was nominated for a 2025 BAFTA. During 2025/26 we're once again working with Marquee TV to broadcast selected live concerts to enjoy at home.

## Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included some of the greatest historic names like Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2021 Edward Gardner became our 13th Principal Conductor, and Vladimir Jurowski became Conductor Emeritus. Karina Canellakis is our current Principal Guest Conductor, and Sir George Benjamin our Composer-in-Residence.

## Next generations

We're committed to nurturing the next generation of musicians and music-lovers: we love seeing the joy of children and families experiencing their first musical moments, and we're passionate about inspiring schools and teachers through dedicated concerts, workshops, resources and training. Reflecting our values of

## Pieter Schoeman

### Leader

collaboration and inclusivity, our OrchLab and Open Sound Ensemble projects offer music-making opportunities for adults and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

Today's young instrumentalists are the orchestra members of the future, and we have a number of opportunities to support their progression. Our LPO Junior Artists programme leads the way in creating pathways into the profession for young artists from under-represented communities, and our LPO Young Composers and Foyle Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. We also recently launched the LPO Conducting Fellowship, supporting the development of two outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds under-represented in the profession.

### 2025/26 season

This season's theme, *Harmony with Nature*, explores humanity's bond with the natural world through works by Beethoven, Sibelius, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Dvořák; masterpieces of an era that saw nature as a mirror of human emotion. Closer to our own time, we'll hear from composers as diverse as Duke Ellington, John Luther Adams and Anna Thorvaldsdottir, who have all found a source of creative energy in the processes of nature.

Highlights with Principal Conductor Edward Gardner include symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Brahms and Rachmaninov; a pair of concerts spotlighting 20th-century Central European composers; an evening dedicated to Elgar; and a performance of Berg's *Wozzeck* to end the season. We'll also welcome back Karina Canellakis and Vladimir Jurowski, as well as guest conductors including Robin Ticciati, Kirill Karabits, Mark Elder and Elim Chan. Our lineup of soloists this season includes violinists Anne-Sophie Mutter, Alina Ibragimova, James Ehnes and Himari; cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason; and pianists Yefim Bronfman, Alexandre Kantorow and Tomoko Mukaiyama. The season features nine world and UK premieres, including Tan Dun's choral 'Ode to Peace' *Nine*, and *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* by jazz icon Terence Blanchard.

We're also looking forward to tours to South Korea and across Europe, as well as another season bursting with performances and community events in our Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden residencies.



© Benjamin 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.

Pieter has performed worldwide as a soloist and recitalist in such famous halls as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw,

Moscow's Rachmaninoff Hall, Capella Hall in St Petersburg, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, and the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. He has also appeared as Guest Leader with many prestigious orchestras across the world. As a chamber musician, he regularly appears at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall. His chamber music partners have included Anne-Sophie Mutter, Veronika Eberle, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Boris Garlitsky, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Martin Helmchen and Julia Fischer.

Pieter has performed numerous times as a soloist with the LPO. Highlights have included an appearance as both conductor and soloist in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, the Brahms Double Concerto with Kristina Blaumane, Florence Price's Violin Concerto No. 2, and the Britten Double Concerto with Alexander Zemtsov, which was released on the LPO Label to great critical acclaim.

Pieter's chair in the LPO is generously supported by Neil Westreich.

### New video series: 'Humans of the Orchestra'

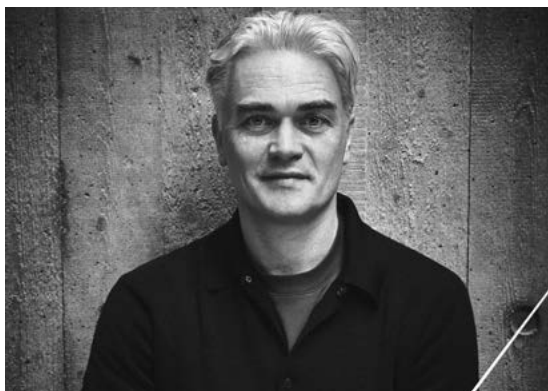
Scan the QR code to watch our interview with Pieter



# Edward Gardner

Principal Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra

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© Jason Bell

Edward Gardner has been Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 2021. He is also Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet and Honorary Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, following his tenure as Chief Conductor from 2015–24.

This season's highlights with the LPO include symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Brahms and Rachmaninov; 'Phoenix Lands': a pair of concerts spotlighting 20th-century Central European composers; an evening dedicated to Elgar; and a concert performance of Berg's opera *Wozzeck* to end the season. They will also give five concerts in South Korea and a tour of major cities in Germany.

Edward opens his second season as Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet with *Rusalka* and concert performances of Kurtág's *Fin de partie*. In spring 2026 he will conduct *Don Carlos* and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. June 2026 sees concert performances of Wagner's *The Ring Without Words*, and next season the opera house will begin its journey towards a complete *Ring Cycle* in the 2028/29 season.

In demand as a guest conductor, this season Edward returns to orchestras in the USA including the Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Dallas Symphony and National Symphony orchestras, and makes his debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. In Europe he conducts the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. In Tokyo he makes his debut with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra.

An acclaimed opera conductor, in spring 2025 Edward was re-invited to London's Royal Opera House to conduct the world premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Festen*, having made his Covent Garden debut with *Káťa Kabanová*. In June 2025 he returned to the Bavarian State Opera for *Rusalka*, following his debut with *Peter Grimes* in 2022 and Verdi's *Otello* in 2023. Music Director of English National Opera for eight years (2007–15), he has also built a strong relationship with New York's Metropolitan Opera, with productions of *The Damnation of Faust*, *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Werther*. Elsewhere, he has conducted at La Scala, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera and the Opéra National de Paris.

Edward Gardner has recorded extensively with the Bergen Philharmonic on the Chandos label, including most recently *Salome*, as well as a Grammy-nominated Janáček *Glagolitic Mass*. Other recent critically acclaimed releases include *Der fliegende Holländer* with Lise Davidsen, Gerald Finley and the Norwegian National Opera for Decca. Last month, the LPO Label released Edward's recording of Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra & Choir. This was his third Tippett release on the label, following *The Midsummer Marriage* – which won a 2023 Gramophone Award – and the Second Symphony and Piano Concerto with Steven Osborne in 2024. He has also released on the label Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*, and works by Rachmaninov, Dvořák, Schumann and Britten. In 2024 he and the LPO featured in a Sky Arts series: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', which was nominated for a BAFTA and is still available to watch on NOW TV.

A passionate supporter of young talent, Edward founded the Hallé Youth Orchestra in 2002 and regularly conducts the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. He has a close relationship with the Juilliard School of Music, and with the Royal Academy of Music.

Born in Gloucester in 1974, Edward was educated at the University of Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music, and gained early recognition as Assistant Conductor of the Hallé and Music Director of Glyndebourne Touring Opera. His many accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor of the Year Award (2008), an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera (2009) and an OBE for Services to Music in The Queen's Birthday Honours (2012).

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

# Jennifer France

## soprano

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© Pablo Strong Photography

A previous Emerging Artist at Scottish Opera, British soprano Jennifer France was winner of the 2018 Critics' Circle Emerging Talent Award. She made her LPO debut in 2021 as Bella in Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* at the Royal Festival Hall under Edward Gardner. This performance was recorded and released on the LPO Label, and went on to win a Gramophone Award. Jennifer most recently returned to the Orchestra on 26 April 2025 for Mahler's Symphony No. 8, again at the Royal Festival Hall under Gardner. In 2023 she appeared at the BBC Proms with the Orchestra and Gardner in Ligeti's *Requiem*.

2025/26 sees Jennifer sing Tytania in Peter Hall's production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Glyndebourne's autumn season. She also returns to the Royal Opera House to sing First Niece in Deborah Warner's production of *Peter Grimes*, and to Garsington to sing Cecily Cardew in Gerald Barry's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. On the concert stage, she sings Ligeti's *Requiem* under Esa-Pekka Salonen with both the Orchestre de Paris and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. She will also celebrate New Year's concerts with Nil Venditti and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Last season's highlights included Jennifer's debut at the Opéra National de Paris, singing Beatrice in Pascal Dusapin's *Il Viaggio, Dante* under Kent Nagano, and her role debut as the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Opera Holland Park. She also joined Jaime Martín and the Spanish National Orchestra for the Spanish premiere of Brett Dean's *In spe contra spem*, and returned to the London Sinfonietta singing James MacMillan's *Love Bade me Welcome*.

Other recent performances include Jennifer's return to the role of Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Garsington Opera and Opera North, and her role debut as Mary in Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life* for English National Opera. Concert highlights include performances with the Bergen Philharmonic and Sir Mark Elder, the Hallé Orchestra and Matthew Hamilton, the world premiere of Brett Dean's *In This Brief Moment* with the CBSO and Nicholas Collon, and *Carmina Burana* with the CBSO in Kazuki Yamada's inaugural concert as Chief Conductor.

Jennifer's operatic roles include the title role in *The Cunning Little Vixen* for Opera Holland Park; Alice in Gerald Barry's *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, First Niece in *Peter Grimes* and George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence* for the Royal Opera House; La Princesse in Philip Glass's *Orphée* for ENO; the title role in *Semele* at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe; Ophelia in Dean's *Hamlet* for Glyndebourne On Tour; Marzelline in *Fidelio*, Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* and La Princesse Elsbeth in Offenbach's *Fantasio* for Garsington Opera; Le Feu/Le Rossignol in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* in concert with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and *Lessons in Love and Violence* for Dutch National Opera. Other notable house debuts include Zerbinetta at the Bavarian State Opera and the Dutch Touring Opera, where she was nominated for a Schaunard Award, and Beatrice in the world premiere of Pascal Dusapin's *Il Viaggio, Dante* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival.

A prolific concert artist, Jennifer has sung Gerald Barry's *The Eternal Recurrence* and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Britten Sinfonia; Elgar's *Une voix dans le désert* with the Hallé; Handel arias with the Academy of Ancient Music; *Dixit Dominus* at the International Handel Festival Karlsruhe; Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with the Philharmonia Orchestra as well as with the LPO; and Mozart's *Requiem* with the London Mozart Players. She made her BBC Proms debut in 2017 and her Salzburg Festival debut in 2019, singing Dusapin's *Medeamaterial* with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

Winner of the Song Prize at the 2014 Kathleen Ferrier Awards and the 2014 Leonard Ingrams Award from Garsington Opera, Jennifer France's recordings include Barry's *The Eternal Recurrence* and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (Signum); Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence* (Nimbus & Opus Arte); Jommelli's *Il Vologeso* (Signum); Debussy Songs – Vol. 3 & 4 with Malcolm Martineau (Hyperion); and Elgar's *Une voix dans le désert* (Hallé).



# Programme notes

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Hans Abrahamsen

born 1952

let me tell you

2013

Jennifer France soprano

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## *Part I*

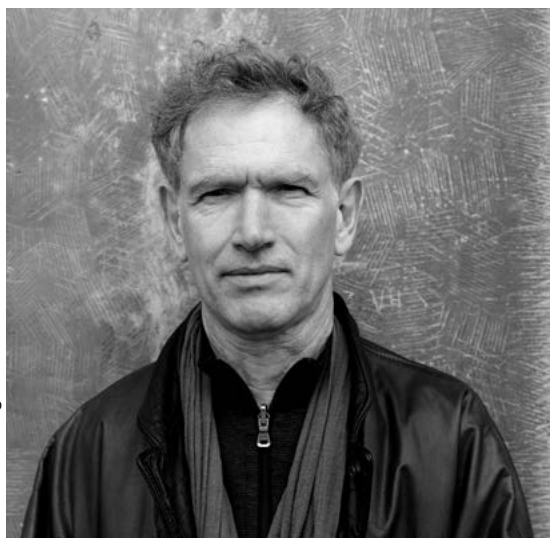
1. *Let me tell you how it was*
2. *O but memory is not one but many*
3. *There was a time, I remember*

## *Part II*

4. *Let me tell you how it is*
5. *Now I do not mind*

## *Part III*

6. *I know you are there*
7. *I will go out now*



© Lars Skaaning

Emerging in the 1970s as part of the so-called 'New Simplicity' movement in Northern Europe, Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen quickly established a distinctive voice that blends clarity and restraint with deep emotional resonance. His works often explore themes of nature, silence and memory, drawing listeners into atmospheres that feel both fragile and luminous. After a long period of creative silence in the 1990s, Abrahamsen reemerged with acclaimed works such as *Schnee* (2008), a cycle of canons evoking snow's fleeting patterns, and tonight's work, the song-cycle *let me tell you* (2013), which has been widely praised as a contemporary masterpiece. In 2019, it was ranked by music critics at *The Guardian* as the finest work of the 21st century.

*let me tell you* was conceived for the soprano Barbara Hannigan, who gave the world premiere on 20 December 2013 with the Berlin Philharmonic under Andris Nelsons. The work is based on Paul Griffiths's 2008 novel of the same name, in which Ophelia –

## Programme notes

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Shakespeare's tragic heroine from *Hamlet* – tells her own story, using only the 483 words Shakespeare originally gave her. Of the result, Griffiths writes:

*'let me tell you* is a half-hour dramatic monologue, voiced by a character who requires us to hear her. That character is not quite the Ophelia of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. She has the same words, her entire text being made up from words Ophelia speaks in the play, but she uses these words in different ways, and certainly to express herself differently.

'She tells us of things to which there is little or no reference in the play, such as the nature of memory, or "a time ... when we had no music", or an explosive experience of love. And where Shakespeare's Ophelia descends into madness and watery death, the protagonist of *let me tell you* comes to a different conclusion.

'The words with which she has to recount her story – Ophelia's words – are barely adequate to her, but she has to make them serve, and she does. Her utterance is at once constrained and resolute, fragile and decisive, and its nature is realized at the opening by an adaptation of a technique used by Monteverdi, of rebounding on one note. What was an ornament four hundred years ago becomes for her the means by which she can be at once hesitant and assertive.

'Her entry into the piece comes early, but only after she has been summoned into a magical soundscape of piccolos, violin harmonics and celeste. The music – and this is true of the whole work – is at once familiar and strange, for the language of traditional tonality is present but fractured into new configurations. A high degree of consonance is coupled with harmonic states and progressions we have not heard before; the sense of a recognisable key comes only fleetingly; and melody here casts back to an ancient time of folk song – rather as Ophelia does in her derangement, or as Gertrude does in speaking of Ophelia's drowning, when, drifting down the stream, she "chanted snatches of old tunes".

'There is familiarity and strangeness, too, in the rhythm. Generally the pulse is clear – it is picked out at the start in oscillating octaves from the celeste, passing later to other instruments – but the position of the strong beat is ambiguous. Time here simultaneously ticks and floats.

'Such music, beginning right away, not only prepares the protagonist's world but also foreshadows a crucial melodic element, to be associated with her words "Let me tell you". These words come three times in the piece, defining its three parts, the first recollective, the second set in the present, the third carrying a promise of what will happen in the future.

'Having stated the inadequacy of words, the protagonist goes on, in two further songs, to wonder about the reliability of memory before she comes to a specific recollection – "in limping time", as the score has it – of that time without music. This makes her ponder on how music shifts and changes time, and we recognise that this music is doing so. It achieves that at the opening of the second part by replaying and altering the opening of the first, to make a short introduction to the climactic fifth song, which plunges into the delirium of love.

'The last part has an even shorter introduction, again going back to the beginning and taking it further, before arriving at the slow finale, marked *adagissimo*. Now microtonal tunings fold into the texture and, being derived from natural harmonics, begin to reroot the music in a glistening new world of resonance. We are in the snow, in a white landscape where the erasure of detail and contour is the renewal of possibility.

'Ophelia is one of those imaginary figures whose existence goes on beyond the work that gave them birth. She has appeared in paintings and in novels, including the one, also called *let me tell you*, that was the source for this piece. Now she speaks again through a performer on stage, in a mode that is intimate and demands attention. Her words come back to her transformed, and she has gained, as she herself might say, "the powers of music".

*Programme note © Paul Griffiths*

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Interval – 20 minutes

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

# Programme notes

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Gustav Mahler

1860–1911

Symphony No. 4 in G major

1900

Jennifer France soprano

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1. *Bedächtig. Nicht eilen* [Deliberate. Don't hurry] – *Recht gemächlich* [Very leisurely]

2. *In gemächlicher Bewegung. Ohne Hast* [At a leisurely pace. Without haste]

3. *Ruhevoll* [Restful]

4. *Sehr behaglich* [Very cosy]

When Gustav Mahler began work on his Fourth Symphony in 1899, he was thinking in terms of a 'humoresque' – a light, cheerful work, in strong contrast to the hugely ambitious Second and Third Symphonies. But it seems the muse had other ideas. 'To my astonishment', he wrote to a friend, 'it became plain to me that I had entered a totally different realm ... This time it is a forest with all its mysteries and its horrors which forces my hand and weaves itself into my work.' This may surprise some listeners. At first sight the Fourth appears Mahler's happiest and least complicated symphony: an idyllic picture of infant happiness, culminating in a child's vision of Heaven. But Mahler knew only too well that childhood has its darker side. There is cruelty in the text Mahler sets in his finale, *Das himmlische Leben* ('Heavenly Life'): 'We lead a patient, guiltless, darling lambkin to death', the child tells us contentedly; 'Saint Luke is slaying the oxen.' Earlier we glimpse 'the butcher Herod', responsible for the Massacre of the Innocents in the Biblical Christmas story. What are characters like these doing in Heaven?

In fact Mahler wrote his fascinatingly ambiguous song-finale some time before he began work on the preceding three movements – so although it comes last, it is really the starting point for the whole Symphony. It was one of several settings of poems

from the classic German folk collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ('The Boy's Magic Horn') Mahler had composed in the 1890s. Yet in the Fourth Symphony the three purely orchestral movements prepare the way for the closing vision of the song-finale on every possible level: its themes, orchestral colours, tonal scheme, and most of all its masked emotional complexity.

The very opening of the Fourth Symphony is a foretaste of the finale. Woodwind and sleigh-bells set off at a slow jog-trot, then a languid rising violin phrase turns out to be the beginning of a disarmingly simple tune: Mahler in Mozartian peruke and frills. A warmly yearning second theme (cellos) soon subsides into the most childlike idea so far (solo oboe and bassoon). Soon another tune is introduced by four flutes in unison – panpipes, or perhaps whistling boys. After this the 'mysteries and horrors' rise to the surface, until horns, trumpets, bells and glittering high woodwind burst into a joyous medley of themes from earlier on. A dissonance, underlined by gong and bass drum, then trumpets sound out the fanfare rhythm Mahler later used to begin the sinister Funeral March in his Fifth Symphony. Suddenly the music stops, and the Mozartian theme starts again in mid-phrase, as though nothing had happened. All the main themes now return, leading to a brief, boisterous coda.

## Programme notes

The second movement, a Scherzo with two contrasting trio sections, proceeds at a leisurely pace (really fast music is rare in this Symphony). Mahler described the first theme as a portrait of 'Freund Hain' ('Friend Hain'), a Pied Piper-like figure from German folklore whose fiddle playing beguiles its hearers into the land of 'Beyond' – death in disguise? The beguiling but sinister fiddler is evoked by the orchestral leader playing a violin tuned a tone higher than normal, sounding both coarser and – literally – more highly strung. There are cosier moments, though the final shrill high *forte* leaves a faintly sulphurous aftertaste.

According to Mahler, the gorgeous string theme that opens the slow movement was inspired by 'a vision of a tombstone on which was carved an image of the departed, with folded arms, in eternal sleep' – an image half consoling, half achingly sad. A set of free

variations develops this ambiguity, culminating in a full orchestral outburst of pure joy in E major – the key in which the finale is to end. Then the slow movement slips back into peaceful sleep. Now the soprano soloist enters for the first time to open the finale. Mahler adds a note in the score: 'To be sung in a happy childlike manner: absolutely without parody!' At the mention of St Peter, the writing becomes hymn-like, then come the troubling images of slaughter. The singer seems unmoved by what she relates, but plaintive, animal-like cries from oboe and low horn create a momentary frisson. The movement makes its final turn to E major to the words, 'No music on earth can be compared to ours'. Then the child sings no more, and the music gradually fades until nothing is left but the deep bell-like tones of the harp.

*Programme note © Stephen Johnson*



The advertisement features a black and white collage of classical musicians. At the top left is the BBC Radio 3 logo. In the center, the text 'ADVENTURES IN CLASSICAL' is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the text, there are three images: a woman playing a stringed instrument (possibly a lute or viola da gamba) on the left, a man conducting on the right, and another man playing a stringed instrument (possibly a lute or viola da gamba) on the bottom right. At the bottom, the text 'Listen on' is followed by a small icon of a radio and the word 'SOUNDS'.

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**Wednesday 22 October 2025,  
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**L Boulanger** Faust et Hélène  
**Stravinsky** The Rite of Spring

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## Rachmaninov's Second Symphony

**Saturday 25 October 2025,  
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**Mozart** Overture, Idomeneo

**Mozart** Masonic Funeral Music,  
K477

**Mozart** Piano Concerto No. 25  
in C major, K503

**Rachmaninov** Symphony No. 2

**Karina Canellakis** conductor

**Paul Lewis** piano

## New World Symphony

**Wednesday 29 October 2025,  
7.30pm**

**Chinary Ung** Water Rings

**Sibelius** Violin Concerto

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