

2026/27
season at
Brighton
Dome

London
Philharmonic
Orchestra

Concert
programme

The power of listening

Brighton
Dome

The power of listening

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

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

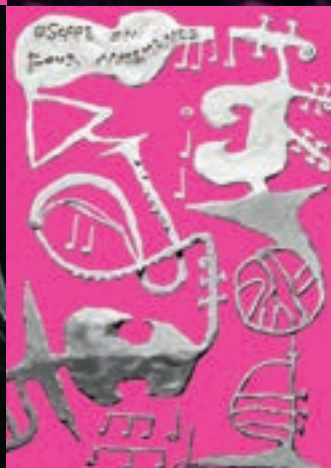
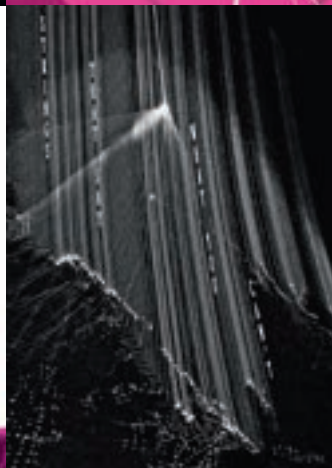
You can see how varied their visual interpretations of the music were from the artworks on this page and on the programme cover.

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

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



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



London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jepsen

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis supported by Richard Buxton

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

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

Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

Brighton Dome Concert Hall

Saturday 7 November 2026 | 7.30pm

My Homeland

Dvořák

My Homeland (9 mins)

Price

Violin Concerto No. 1 (25 mins)

Interval (20 min)

Still

Symphony No. 4 (26 mins)

Kellen Gray

conductor

Elena Urioste

violin

Free pre-concert performance | 6.45pm

Join us for a special free performance in the foyer, given by talented young musicians from Create Music, part of Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival and the Hub Lead Organisation for the Sussex Music Hub.

Approximate finish time: 9.10pm

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

Contents

- 2 Welcome
- 3 Tonight in 2 minutes
- 4 About us
- 6 On stage tonight
- 7 Kellen Gray
- 8 Elena Urioste
- 9 Programme notes
- 13 Next concerts
- 14 Thank you
- 16 LPO administration



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Welcome to Brighton Dome

LPO news

Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival with Create Music is a creative charity made up of three historic contemporary live arts venues, a music education service across the region, and the biggest curated cross-arts festival in England.

Located on the Royal Pavilion Estate, Brighton Dome's venues have a rich history spanning over 200 years. Now an extraordinary space for artists and audiences to enjoy, Brighton Dome presents a year-round programme of music, comedy, theatre, dance, literature, conferences, and events across three venues – the Concert Hall, Corn Exchange and Studio Theatre.

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Inside the Music: our new Sky Arts TV series this autumn

Our 2024 Sky Arts TV series, 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', was nominated for a BAFTA, recognising its compelling storytelling and rare behind-the-scenes insight into orchestral life.

Following this success, Sky Arts have commissioned a second series, which will air weekly from next Tuesday. 'Inside the Music with the London Philharmonic Orchestra' explores five different symphonies performed by the LPO, with conductors Edward Gardner, Karina Canellakis and Paavo Järvi guiding viewers through each work. Combining performance footage and insights from musicians, the series reveals how these masterpieces are built.

'Inside the Music' begins on Tuesday 10 November at 8pm, with new episodes weekly. Sky Arts is free to view on Freeview channel 36. Sky and NOW Entertainment Members can catch up on demand.

Tonight's programme cover

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

#thepoweroflistening

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Prefer a paper-free option?

Scan here for a PDF version of the programme.



Tonight in 2 minutes

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

The vibe

My Homeland

What does it mean to make music that speaks of home? Tonight we'll hear Dvořák's affectionate portrait of his Czech homeland, alongside two American composers whose music draws on the rich traditions of Black America. Florence Price's lyrical Violin Concerto and William Grant Still's powerful Fourth Symphony reveal a distinctive musical identity, shaped by heritage, resilience and the search for recognition.

Who's on stage?



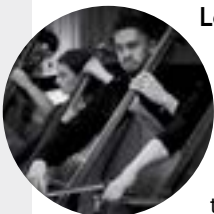
Kellen Gray: conductor

Kellen is tonight's guest conductor – and this is his first ever performance with the LPO. Kellen is a passionate champion of Black American composers, and drawing on his own musical roots in the American South, he brings a personal connection to this programme's exploration of how music reflects heritage, identity and home.



Elena Urioste: violin

American violinist Elena is tonight's guest soloist for Florence Price's Violin Concerto No. 1. As well as an acclaimed violinist, Elena is a qualified yoga teacher and is passionate about exploring how movement and mindfulness can support musicians' wellbeing.



London Philharmonic Orchestra

Tonight there are over 60 London Philharmonic Orchestra musicians on stage. Our talented members represent over 14 different nationalities, and many of them enjoy busy solo, chamber and teaching careers alongside their orchestral roles.

Turn to page 6 for tonight's player list.

What to expect

Take your seats...

The players tune up their instruments, then the conductor, Kellen, will come on stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...



9 mins

Antonin Dvořák **My Homeland**

A short piece to open tonight's concert. Rich in Czech folk-inspired melodies, *My Homeland* captures Dvořák's deep affection for his native land.



25 mins

Florence Price **Violin Concerto No. 1** *with soloist Elena Urioste*

A concerto is a showpiece for a solo instrument accompanied by an orchestra. Composed in 1939, Florence Price's Violin Concerto No. 1 blends lyrical melodies and lively rhythms, drawing on the rich musical traditions of Black America while showcasing the violin's expressive range.

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

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

Interval 20 min



26 mins

William Grant Still **Symphony No. 4**

Composed in 1947, William Grant Still's Fourth Symphony draws on the rhythms and sounds of Black America, blending jazz-inspired energy, bluesy melodies and the sweep of the orchestra. Subtitled 'Autochthonous', meaning indigenous or originating in a place, it celebrates the cultural roots of America in music that is bold, distinctive and full of life.

At the end of the concert, we applaud the performers. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Vesselin, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause. You're welcome to take photos during the applause!

Want to read more? Turn to page 9 for a deeper dive into tonight's works.

About us: London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

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

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

Life's big moments

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

Connecting worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. We're the most followed UK orchestra on Instagram, the most followed orchestra globally on TikTok, and the third most followed globally across all social platforms. Our 2024 Sky Arts documentary series, 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', was nominated for a 2025 BAFTA, and a second series, 'Inside the Music', will air from 10 November 2026.

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

Vesselin Gellev

Tonight's Leader

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

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

2026/27 season

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

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

The season also sees tours to China, Spain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the Canary Islands, as well as performances and community events in our Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden residencies.



Bulgarian-born violinist Vesselin Gellev has been Sub-Leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 2007.

Praised by *The New York Times* for his 'warmth and virtuosic brilliance', Vesselin has been a featured soloist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, New Haven Symphony Orchestra and Juilliard Orchestra, among others. He won First Prize at the Concert Artists Guild Competition in New York as a member of the Antares Quartet, and has recorded several albums and toured worldwide as Concertmaster of Kristjan Järvi's Grammy-nominated Absolute Ensemble.

Prior to joining the LPO, Vesselin was Leader of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra in the USA and the Spoleto Festival Orchestra in Italy. He has performed as Guest Leader with numerous orchestras in the UK and abroad, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Bern Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid at Teatro Real, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and the Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Vesselin received Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School, New York, as a student of Robert Mann. He has served on the violin and chamber music faculties of Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, and the Eleazar de Carvalho Music Festival in Fortaleza, Brazil.

lpo.org.uk



On stage tonight

First Violins

Vesselin Gellev Leader
Lasma Taimina
Chair supported by Irina Gofman &
Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave
Minn Majoe
Chair supported by Dr Alex & Maria
Chan
Alison Strange
Camille Buitenhuis
Izzy Howard
Tayfun Bomboz
Ji Yun Zhang
Gabriel Bilbao
Gavin Davies
Simon-Philippe Allard

Second Violins

Emma Oldfield Co-Principal
Fiona Higham
Kate Birchall
Joseph Maher
Samyuktha Rajagopal
Olivia Ziani
Anna Croad
Harry Kerr
Matthew Bain
Emma Martin

Violas

Scott Dickinson
Guest Principal
Benedetto Pollani
Martin Wray
Chair supported by David & Bettina
Harden
Kevin Saw
Charles Cross
Julia Kornig
Mariya Sotirova
Hannah Roberts

Cellos

Bozidar Vukotic
Guest Principal
Heeyeon Cho
Tom Roff
Rasmus Støier Andersen
Marion Portelance
Louise Dearsley
Emily Isaac

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal
George Peniston
Tom Walley
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton
Lowri Estell
David Brown

Flutes

Ian Mullin Guest Principal
Camilla Marchant
Stewart McIlwham*

Piccolo

Stewart McIlwham*
Principal
Chair supported by The Thompson
Family Charitable Trust

Oboes

John Roberts
Guest Principal
Jack Tostevin-Hall

Cor Anglais

Sarah Harper

Clarinets

Thomas Watmough
Principal
Chair supported by Roger
Greenwood
James Maltby

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

Paul Boyes Guest Principal
Stuart Russell

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

John Ryan* Principal
Alec Ross
Mark Vines Co-Principal
Chair supported by Friends of the
Orchestra
Oliver Johnson
Will Scotland

Trumpets

Tom Nielsen* Principal
Tom Watts
Imogen Timmins

Trombones

David Whitehouse Principal
Sam Cox

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

Karen Hutt Principal
Chair supported by Joe Topley &
Tracey Countryman
Jeremy Cornes
Francesca Lombardelli

Harp

Rosanna Rolton Principal

Celeste

Fionnuala Ward

** Professor at a London
conservatoire*

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

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Sir Simon Robey
Bianca & Stuart Roden
Malcolm & Alison Thwaites
Eric Tomsett
Jenny Watson CBE
Neil Westreich
The Williams family in memory
of Grenville Williams
Louise Worthington

Kellen Gray

conductor

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American conductor Kellen Gray has earned a reputation as a versatile and imaginative artist, celebrated for his diverse array of traditional and experimental programming, thrilling performances and provocative multimedia concert experience curation. He is one of the foremost experts and interpreters of the music of African-diasporic composers, for whom he is a passionate advocate and champion.

Born and raised in Rock Hill, South Carolina, Kellen's early professional life took him on a diverse path ranging from orchestral violinist to beekeeper, before he turned his full-time attention to conducting. Since September 2024, he has served as Conductor & Artistic Director of the Lafayette Symphony Orchestra (Indiana, USA), where he leads dynamic artistic programming and community enrichment activities for the city of Lafayette. This follows from an impactful position as Associate Artist of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (2023/24): a newly created role that saw him conduct, curate and present programmes across the RSNO's season.

Tonight is Kellen's debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In the UK he has previously worked with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC Philharmonic, as well as the RSNO. Other recent and forthcoming guest conducting highlights include engagements with such leading American orchestras as the Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Houston Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Opera, amongst others.

Kellen credits the many folk music styles of the south-eastern United States as his earliest and most impactful musical influences, and his repertoire interests have been fuelled by the engaged pursuit of that same spirit of cultural authenticity. This has led to a particular mastery not only of works that incorporate American folk idioms, but also in-depth explorations of folk-inspired European composers such as Bartók, de Falla and Vaughan Williams, among others.

A passionate champion for African-diasporic composers, Kellen was the Founder & Curator of Charleston Symphony's 'Project Aurora': a programming and performance initiative aiming to illustrate the importance of African American arts and culture as equally valuable to its European equivalent. Additionally, he serves as Assistant Editor & Conductor Liaison for the African Diaspora Music Project, after extensive research at The Center for Black Music Research (CBMR) at Columbia College Chicago.

Kellen's discography to date comprises two celebrated releases – *African American Voices* and *African American Voices II*, made with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra – showcasing music by Margaret Bonds, William Dawson, William Grant Still, Coleridge Taylor Perkinson, Florence Price and George Walker. Both records have met with the highest critical acclaim, including receiving an elusive 5-star review from the prestigious *Diapason* magazine.

Kellen's appointment as Associate Artist of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra – the first position of its kind for the orchestra – marked an unprecedented but organic development following his highly successful tenure as the orchestra's Assistant Conductor (2021–23). Previous positions in his formative years as a conductor included successful tenures with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra (Associate Conductor, 2018–23), Chicago Sinfonietta (Conducting Fellow & Assistant Conductor, 2016–18) and Valdosta Symphony Orchestra (Assistant Conductor, 2014–16).

Elena Urioste

violin

© Frances Marshall



Elena Urioste brings virtuosity, expressive freedom and a distinctive warmth to her work as a violinist. A natural collaborator with a wide-ranging curiosity, she moves easily between the concerto stage, chamber music and projects that draw connections between repertoire, people and ideas. Alongside performing, she is a passionate advocate for musicians' wellbeing, exploring the relationship between music, movement and mindfulness through her work as a teacher and yoga practitioner.

As a concerto soloist, Elena has appeared with major orchestras across the United States, including the Philadelphia, Cleveland and Minnesota orchestras, the New York, Los Angeles and Buffalo Philharmonics, and the Boston Pops, Chicago, Boston, Dallas, San Francisco and Detroit symphony orchestras. In the UK, as well as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, she has worked with the Hallé, Philharmonia Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and all the BBC orchestras. Last season she returned to the Baltimore Symphony and the Orchestra of Opera North, and made debuts with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra. This season she makes her debut with the Oregon Symphony, and records concertos by Sir Charles Stanford with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Equally at home in recital, Elena has performed at Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, The Glasshouse in Gateshead and the Bayerischer Rundfunk Munich. She performs frequently alongside pianist Tom Poster, with whom she has built one of today's most distinctive violin-and-piano partnerships.

Chamber music lies at the heart of Elena's artistic identity. She collaborates with artists such as Mitsuko Uchida, Hilary Hahn, Steven Isserlis, James Ehnes, Kim Kashkashian and members of the Guarneri Quartet. With Tom Poster, she founded Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, Wigmore Hall's Associate Ensemble, whose inventive programming combines established masterpieces with overlooked repertoire and new commissions. This season the group takes up residency at Elena's alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music.

Elena's wide-ranging discography reflects the same spirit of exploration. Recent recordings with Tom Poster include *Le Temps retrouvé* (2026) and the BBC Music Magazine Award-winning *Jukebox Album* (2021). In 2026, Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective released two albums, of music by Enescu and piano quartets by Brahms and Pejačević. Elena has also recorded Max Richter's *The New Four Seasons: Vivaldi Recomposed* on period instruments, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Violin Concerto with Chineke! Orchestra.

Alongside her performing career, Elena is a passionate advocate for musicians' physical and mental wellbeing. A qualified yoga teacher, she co-founded Intermission, an initiative that integrates music, movement and mindfulness to support healthier, more sustainable music-making. In 2026 she joined the violin faculty of the Royal Academy of Music, where her teaching reflects the same holistic philosophy that underpins her performing career.

A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School, Elena's mentors and teachers have included Joseph Silverstein, David Cerone, Ida Kavafian, Pamela Frank, Claude Frank, Choong-Jin Chang, Soovin Kim and Ferenc Rados. She has won prizes at both the Sphinx and Sion International Violin Competitions, and is a recipient of the inaugural Sphinx Medal of Excellence. In 2026 she was awarded an honorary degree from the Royal Academy of Music. She previously won the Royal Philharmonic Society's 2020 Inspiration Award and its 2021 Enterprise Fund Trailblazer Grant, for her #UriPosteJukeBox project with Tom Poster. She took the lead role acting in the 2015 independent film *But Not for Me*, winning the Brooklyn Film Festival's Audience Choice and Best Original Score.

Elena performs on an Alessandro Gagliano violin, Naples c.1706, and a Nicolas Kittel bow, both generously loaned by Dr Charles E. King through the Stradivari Society of Chicago.

Programme notes

Antonin Dvořák

1841–1904

My Homeland

1882



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

This concert overture is part of the incidental music Dvořák wrote for the play *Josef Kajetán Tyl*, celebrating the life of the titular Czech playwright. Tyl wrote the words for the song 'Where Is My Home?' which was later to become – and remains – the Czech national anthem. The song/anthem, extolling the virtues of the 'Paradise on Earth' of roaring rivers, orchards, meadows and pinewoods – Bohemia's woods and fields – was already nearly half a century old and widely loved by the time Dvořák incorporated it as the second theme of his overture. It is instantly recognisable to Czechs who may cherish it for that alone.

However, the piece is elevated far beyond a mere patriotic *piece d'occasion* by Dvořák's skill in combining, contrasting and developing his material. The earnest, dramatic introduction hints at the shapes and rhythms of the melodies to come. The tentative opening unison ascent, for example, makes many reappearances, and when sped up is a key component of the fast section's skipping first theme, and the brass fanfare towards the end of the introduction traces the contours of the 'anthem.' Throughout, the characteristically vibrant writing for winds, and the rapid-fire interplay between the instrumental families, franks this as pure Dvořák.

Programme notes

Florence Price

1887–1953

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major

1939

Elena Urioste violin

1. Tempo moderato

2. Andante

3. Allegro



Florence Price certainly garnered recognition in her lifetime. She was part of a cultural set in her adoptive hometown of Chicago that also included poet and playwright Langston Hughes and singer Marian Anderson. There she became the first Black woman to have a symphony performed by a major US orchestra. However, her music's recent revival in fortunes came from the discovery of dozens of significant manuscripts found in the attic of her old summer home in Illinois when the property was being renovated in 2009.

Whilst she was alive, Price's music was performed, championed even, helping to raise the visibility of other Black creative artists at the height of racial segregation. But her substantial output largely fell into obscurity after her death, given how little was published. Thankfully the publishers Schirmer have now rectified that. In a 2018 article for *The New Yorker*, American critic and writer Alex Ross said caustically in reference to her pioneering achievements that 'she is mentioned more than she is heard'. Thankfully that, too, is also slowly being rebalanced.

This Concerto was part of that Illinois attic stash. It hasn't gone unnoticed that it was written in the same year as Samuel Barber's compact Violin Concerto (and indeed takes around the same time to perform). But age, nationality and duration apart, the similarities between the two works seem superficial, other than

Programme notes

both composers were sailing against the prevailing winds of modernism with a lyrical neo-Romantic musical language. The composer most immediately brought to mind here is Tchaikovsky (whose Violin Concerto, in the same key, also opens in similar sunny optimism, with a brief orchestral introduction, and an exploratory flourish from the soloist leading to an affable first theme). For Price, the main motif, which is to provide so much of the material for her first movement, comprises a rocking syncopation – short-long-short – and a contentedly burbling response; using only five different pitches and less than a bar and a half, how this motif worms its way into our affections! The second theme – introduced by the soloist some time later – has a hint of the blues about it, with a flattened third. Structurally the movement loosely holds true to the expected sonata form of a heroic Romantic concerto's first movement. But with frequent pauses and shifts in tempo, some idiomatic violin writing and translucent orchestration, it has the rhapsodic, almost improvisatory feel of a fantasy for violin and orchestra.

In the second movement, a wind chorale prefaces another bluesy melody, which feels like a synthesis of the first movement's two main themes. A slightly faster middle section has a folksong-like air. The brief finale is an energetic triple-time romp with skittering violin passagework adding to the sense of gleeful abandon.

There are no records of the piece being performed in Price's lifetime. It was published – and premiered – in 2018, some 65 years after her death.

We'd love to hear from you

We hope you enjoy tonight'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. Thank you!

Interval – 20 minutes

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

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Edward Gardner conducts Bartók:
The Miraculous Mandarin Suite
The Wooden Prince



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Programme notes

William Grant Still

1895–1978

Symphony No. 4 ('Autochthonous')

1947

1. Moderately

2. Slowly

3. With a graceful lilt

4. Slowly and reverently



What's in a name? In 1930, Dr William Grant Still titled his First Symphony 'Afro-American', with the clear intention of celebrating Black Americans through the Symphony's unifying feature – the twelve-bar blues, a musical genre he had earlier described as 'an expression of the hopes and yearnings of a lowly people, wanting a better life'.

'Autochthonous', the subtitle of tonight's work, the Fourth Symphony, finds – in American English – uses in psychology, pathology and geology (from the Greek 'sprung from the earth'), but is an adjective that implies 'native'. But, according to Still himself, it 'speaks of the fusion of musical cultures in North America'. The work's material owes an unmistakable debt to the modes, melodic shapes and rhythms of spirituals and jazz, but welds them into the structure of that pinnacle of abstract musical expression, the symphony.

The first movement obsesses over its distinctive opening bars – urgent, dynamic, gently syncopated and propelled by a constant chuntering bass. It is to flavour the Symphony throughout. In the second movement a yearning oboe reflects, according to the composer, 'American soft-heartedness, sympathy, benevolence and generosity'. A jaunty march dominates the light-hearted third movement, complete with wire brushes on side drum and a raucous brass outburst recalling the first movement, albeit in the manner of a swing band's horn section. The finale builds from a reverential chorale – the composer asks the strings to play 'as organ-like as possible' – to a rousing, resonant apotheosis permeated by memories of the Symphony's opening melody.

Programme notes

In a wide-ranging 2022 online article published on *San Francisco Classical Voice*, cultural historian Bill Doggett examined the context and contradictions of Still's life and legacy. In it he quotes the composer: 'For me, there is no white music or Black music. There is only music by individual men that is important if it attempts to dignify all men, not just a particular race.' Still also said: 'As I see it, the music of the American Negro has resulted from the union of the religious songs and the primitive songs of Africa.' In this, he echoes Dvořák's oft-quoted words from his short time as Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York: 'In the Negro melodies of America, I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music.'

On her publisher's website, Florence Price's Violin Concerto is clumsily catalogued under the topic 'Afro-Diasporic.' But a case can surely be made for her music and that of Still representing the cultural mix of America, their homeland. Their blending of Black music into the Western European concept of high art is as sincere and effective as Ives putting marching-band music and popular songs in the service of his poly-stylistic modernism, Gershwin and Bernstein embracing jazz, or Copland's inclusion of a Shaker melody as a

pitch-perfect summation of a ballet celebrating rural America. Or indeed, as Dvořák's adoption of popular native songs into his music is now seen as distinctively Czech.

The Black American composers faced mountainous obstructions that were unknown to Dvořák. Still won a competition to provide music for the 1939 New York World's Fair, but was unable to hear it in situ unless attending on a day specified as 'Negro Day'. Price fled the oppressive racial violence of her Arkansas hometown for Chicago, and once famously wrote to the conductor Serge Koussevitzky: 'I have two handicaps – those of sex and race', before asking 'to be judged on merit alone.' The obstacles to these two composers finding a much wider acceptance in their lifetimes are obvious: as America turns 250, the dangers of overlooking their considerable body of work in our own century are even more apparent. As Alex Ross wrote of the discovery of those Price manuscripts, 'that run-down house is a potent symbol of how a country can forget its cultural history.'

Programme notes © Dan Whitfield

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Alpesh Chauhan conducts Schumann

Saturday 6 March 2027

Mendelssohn Overture, Ruy Blas
Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto No. 2
R Schumann Symphony No. 3 (Rhenish)

Alpesh Chauhan conductor
Sophia Liu piano

Tchaikovsky's Fifth

Saturday 3 April 2027

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Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5

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