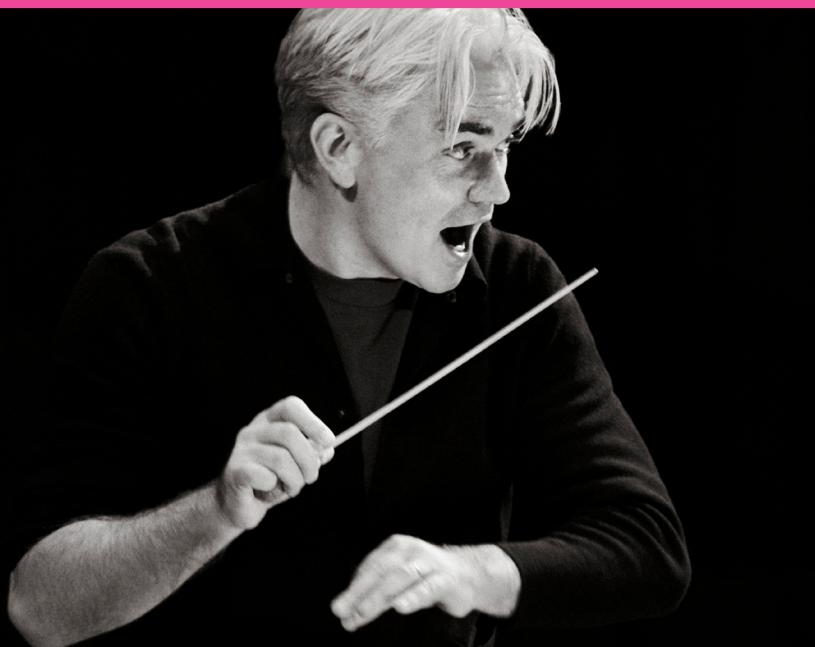




Free concert
programme

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 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
Wednesday 4 February 2026 | 7.30pm

Bohemian Rhapsodies

Bacewicz

Overture* (6')

Martinů

Violin Concerto No. 2 (28')

Interval (20')

Lutosławski

Symphony No. 4* (22')

Janáček

Taras Bulba (23')

Edward Gardner

conductor

Generously supported by Aud Jebsen

Josef Špaček

violin

*Supported by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute



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

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**SOUTHBANK
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ENGLAND**

Tonight in 2 minutes

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

The vibe

Bohemian Rhapsodies

Four 20th-century musical works by four different composers from Central Europe: expect bold colours, rich rhythms, and a sense of freedom after turmoil.

Who's on stage?



Edward Gardner - conductor

Ed is the LPO's 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. From 2007-15 he was the Principal Conductor of English National Opera, and he always brings a strong sense of drama and storytelling to his LPO concerts.



Josef Špaček - violin

This is Czech violin star Josef's first ever performance with the LPO, which always brings a special buzz to the concert! A former Leader of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Josef is known for his warm, singing sound and his expressive style.

He'll join the stage for the second piece this evening: Martinů's Violin Concerto No. 2.



The Orchestra

Tonight there are over 90 LPO musicians on stage. All at the very top of their game, they've studied and practised for years to perfect their craft. Our musicians represent over 14 different nationalities, and many enjoy busy solo, chamber and teaching careers alongside their orchestral work.

Turn to page 6 to see the full list of tonight's musicians.

What to expect

Take your seats...

The Orchestra tune up their instruments, then the conductor, Ed, enters the stage. Once the applause dies down, sit back and enjoy the music ...



6 min

Grażyna Bacewicz Overture

An overture is a short opening piece, and this one is punchy and full of fight. Written in wartime Poland, it sounds like courage in musical form.

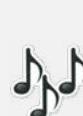


28 min

Bohuslav Martinů Violin Concerto No. 2 with soloist Josef Špaček

A concerto is a showpiece for a solo instrument accompanied by the orchestra. Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů wrote this one while in exile in the US: a lyrical, cinematic work shaped by homesickness and hope.

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



Interval 20 min

22 min

Witold Lutosławski Symphony No. 4

An intense, unpredictable orchestral journey – mysterious at first, then increasingly urgent, before opening out into a bright, clear ending.



23 min

Leoš Janáček Taras Bulba

An epic Cossack saga of love and betrayal, crowned by organ and brass blazing in triumph.

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

After the final piece, we applaud the Orchestra. The conductor will acknowledge the Leader (chief First Violin), Pieter, and might highlight other players for particular appreciation and applause, with several rounds of bows bringing the evening to a celebratory close.

Want to read more? Turn to page 9 for a deeper dive into this evening's pieces.

Welcome

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

We're the UK's largest centre for the arts and one of the nation's top five visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. As a charity, we bring millions of people together by opening up the unique art spaces that we care for.

The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward Gallery, National Poetry Library and Arts Council Collection. We're one of London's favourite meeting spots, with lots of free events and places to relax, eat and shop next to the Thames.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you need any information or help, please ask a member of staff. You can also email hello@southbankcentre.co.uk or write to us at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX.

Subscribers to our email updates are the first to hear about new events, offers and competitions. Just head to our website to sign up.

Printed with the planet in mind

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LPO news

New on the LPO Label: Vladimir Jurowski conducts Mahler 9

Released last month on the LPO Label, Mahler's Symphony No. 9 marks conductor Vladimir Jurowski's fifth Mahler release with the Orchestra. Recorded live in concert at the Royal Festival Hall in 2022, it captures Jurowski's deeply personal interpretation of the composer's farewell to life. Critics praised the live performance for its insight and emotional intensity, with *Bachtrack* describing it as 'a Mahler Nine to die for' and *The Arts Desk* calling it 'a performance to make the heart beat faster'.



The album is available on all major streaming platforms, or to purchase on CD or as a download from our online store at lpo.ochre.store

On tour this spring

Later this month, the LPO tours to Germany, Vienna and Luxembourg with Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis and violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, following their Royal Festival Hall concert on Wednesday 18 February. Next month, the Orchestra travel to Athens and Budapest with conductor Paavo Järvi and pianist Alexandre Kantorow, before Edward Gardner leads two concerts at Dresden's Kulturpalast with violinist Nicola Benedetti and cellist Jan Vogler at the end of May.

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook or TikTok for all the latest behind-the-scenes content from our tours!

Glyndebourne 2026

Since 1964, we've been Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, spending our summers in the heart of the Sussex countryside. Another summer of world-class opera awaits this year, when we'll perform in Puccini's *Tosca* – its first staging at Glyndebourne – as well as a new production of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, both under conductor Robin Ticciati. We're also looking forward to performing in revivals of Britten's *Billy Budd* under Nicholas Carter, and Rossini's comedy *Il turco in Italia* under Vincenzo Milletari.

The 2026 Festival runs from 21 May–31 August, and booking opens from 8 March at glyndebourne.com

London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

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

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

Soundtrack to key moments

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

Sharing the wonder worldwide

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

Our conductors

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

Next generations

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

Pieter Schoeman

Leader

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

Today's young instrumentalists are the orchestra members of the future, and we have a number of opportunities to support their progression. Our LPO Junior Artists programme leads the way in creating pathways into the profession for young artists from under-represented communities, and our LPO Young Composers and Foyle Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. We also recently launched the LPO Conducting Fellowship, supporting the development of 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 Thorvaldsdóttir, 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 Kahchun Wong. Our lineup of soloists this season includes violinists Anne-Sophie Mutter, Alina Ibragimova, James Ehnes and Hiromi; cellist Nicolas Altstaedt; 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.

This season also sees tours to South Korea and across Europe, as well as a wide range of 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



On stage tonight

First Violins

Pieter Schoeman* Leader
Chair supported by Neil Westreich
Vesselin Gellev 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
Yang Zhang
Katalin Varnagy
Felix Pascoe
Martin Höhmann
Sylvain Vasseur
Nilufar Alimaksumova
Tom Aldren
Ronald Long
Eve Kennedy
Jamie Hutchinson
Camille Buitenhuis

Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal
Chair supported by The Candide Trust
Emma Oldfield Co-Principal
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews
Coco Inman
Kate Birchall
Ashley Stevens
Nancy Elan
Sophie Phillips
Chair supported by Friends of the Orchestra
Nynke Hilkema
Sioni Williams
Kate Cole
José Nuno Cabrita Matias
Sheila Law
Paula Clifton-Everest

Violas

Benjamin Roskams Guest Principal
Katharine Leek
Melissa Dattas
Lucia Ortiz Sauco
Martin Wray
Chair supported by David & Bettina Harden
James Heron

Michelle Bruil

Stanislav Popov
Jisu Song
Linda Kidwell
Toby Warr
Jill Valentine

Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal
Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden
Henry Shapard Co-Principal
Waynne Kwon
Chair supported by an anonymous donor
David Lale
Leo Melvin
Daniel Hammersley
Tom Roff
Helen Thomas
Iain Ward
Colin Alexander

Double Basses

Hugh Kluger Principal
Tom Walley
Chair supported by William & Alex de Winton
Laura Murphy
Chair supported by Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter
Charlotte Kerbegian
Adam Wynter
Sam Rice
Catherine Ricketts
Thea Sayer

Flutes

Juliette Bausor Principal
Chair supported by Malcolm & Alison Thwaites
Ellie Blamires
Stewart McIlwham*

Piccolo

Stewart McIlwham* Principal

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
Bethany Crouch
Paul Richards*

E-flat Clarinet

Bethany Crouch

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

Jonathan Davies* Principal
Chair supported by Sir Simon Robey
Helen Storey*
Simon Estell*

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

Annemarie Federle Principal
Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE
John Ryan* Principal
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

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
Jeremy Cornes

Harps

Tamara Young Guest Principal
Tomos Xerri

Piano

Catherine Edwards

Celeste/Organ

Richard Gowers

Assistant Conductor

Nefeli Chadouli

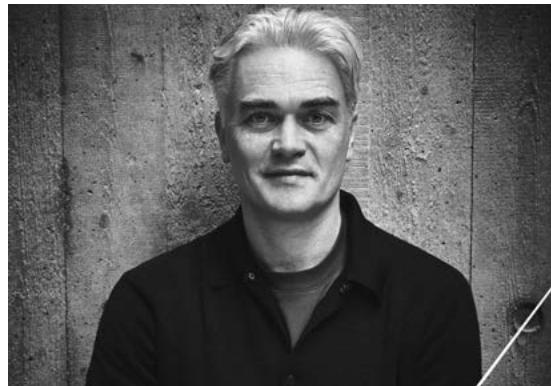
*Professor at a London conservatoire

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

Roger Greenwood
Ryze Power

Edward Gardner

Principal Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra



© 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 concert is the first of two LPO programmes this week spotlighting 20th-century Central European composers; other highlights this season include symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Brahms and Rachmaninov, and a semi-staged performance of Berg's opera *Wozzeck* to end the season. In October 2025 he and the Orchestra embarked on a tour to South Korea, and December saw a tour of major cities in Germany.

Edward opened his second season as Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet with *Rusalka* and concert performances of Kurtág's *Fin de partie*. Later this spring he will conduct *Don Carlos* and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. June 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 *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, and 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.

November 2025 saw the release on the LPO Label of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* conducted by Edward Gardner, recorded live at the 2022 BBC Proms. In September 2025, the label released his recording of Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra & Choir. This was Edward's 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 works by Berlioz, 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.

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.

Josef Špaček

violin



© Andrej Grlić

Praised for his remarkable range of colours, his confident and concentrated stage presence and his virtuosity and technical poise, as well as the beauty of his tone, Josef Špaček has emerged as one of the leading violinists of his generation. His performances of a wide range of repertoire demonstrate his 'astonishing articulation and athleticism' (*The Scotsman*) and 'a richness and piquancy of timbre' (*The Telegraph*).

Tonight's concert is Josef's debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Forthcoming highlights include debuts with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Petr Popelka, the NHK Symphony Orchestra under Jakub Hrůša, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra under Anja Bihlmaier, as well as returns to the Konzerthausorchester Berlin and the Bamberg Symphony, Hamburg Symphony, German Radio Philharmonic, Dutch Radio Philharmonic, Webern Symphony, Czech Philharmonic and George Enescu Philharmonic orchestras, and a recital at the Vienna Konzerthaus.

Recent highlights include highly successful debuts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Jakub Hrůša, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under Nathalie Stutzmann, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig under Andrew Manze and the Orchestre National de Lille under Jan-Willem de Vriend; concerts with Sinfonia Varsovia and Marta Gardolińska in Warsaw and Brussels; and a concerto and recital tour in China; as well as returns to the Dresden Philharmonic under Kahchun Wong, the Bern Symphony Orchestra under Anna Sułkowska-Migoń and the Macao Orchestra under Lio Kuokman, plus a residency with the Residentie Orchestra in The Hague with Anja Bihlmaier and Jun Märkl. Josef also returned to the Verbier Festival for

a performance of the Barber Concerto with the Verbier Festival Junior Orchestra under James Gaffigan and chamber music concerts with, among others, Yunchan Lim, Kian Soltani, Pablo Ferrández, Lucas Debargue, Edgar Moreau, Lars Anders Tomter and Blythe Teh Engstroem.

Josef enjoys giving recitals and playing chamber music, and is a regular guest at festivals and in concert halls throughout Europe, Asia and the USA. June 2024 saw the first edition of his own chamber music festival, the Troja Festival, in Prague. With cellist Timotheos Gavriilidis-Petrin and pianist George Xiaoyuan Fu, Josef forms the Trio Zimbalist. The trio regularly tour in the US and Europe, and their first CD release – featuring piano trios by Weinberg, Auerbach and Dvořák – received high accolades from the international press, including *Gramophone Magazine's Editor's Choice* in March 2024.

Just released on the Supraphon label is a recording of Josef performing Martinů's two Violin Concertos with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra under Petr Popelka, coupled with Stravinsky's *Divertimento* with pianist Miroslav Sekera. Previous recordings for the label include Martinů's Concerto for Violin, Piano & Orchestra, Violin Sonata No. 3 and *Five Short Pieces* with Miroslav Sekera and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra; an album with cellist Tomáš Janník featuring works by Janáček, Martinů, Schulhoff and Klein; his highly praised recording of the violin concertos of Dvořák and Janáček, coupled with Suk's *Fantasy*, with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra under Jiří Bělohlávek; and a recital disc of works by Smetana, Janáček and Prokofiev, again with pianist Miroslav Sekera.

Josef Špaček studied with Itzhak Perlman at The Juilliard School, with Ida Kavafian and Jaime Laredo at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and with Jaroslav Foltýn at the Prague Conservatoire. He was laureate of the International Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, and has won top prizes at many other competitions. He served as concertmaster of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the youngest in its history, until the end of the 2019/20 season, and has since devoted himself exclusively to his solo career.

Josef performs on the ca. 1732 'LeBrun Bouthillard' Guarneri del Gesù violin, generously on loan from an anonymous sponsor.

Josef lives in Prague with his wife and their three children. In his spare time he enjoys cycling.

Programme notes

Introduction

by tonight's programme note writer, *Gavin Plumley*

The First World War brought devastation to millions. Yet the subsequent collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire ensured that various nation states in Central and Eastern Europe were finally able to claim their independence from the Habsburgs. Heralded by great surges in cultural endeavour, marked by movements such as Young Poland and Skamander, the Sokol clubs of the Czech lands and the Hungarian journal *Nyugat*,

independence also fostered the careers of composers Bartók, Janáček and Szymanowski, as well as their less celebrated compatriots.

Tonight's programme, together with next Saturday's Royal Festival Hall concert (see page 12), forms a mini-series titled *Phoenix Lands*, placing this repertoire – and the mythologies and folk music that inspired it – centre stage.

Grażyna Bacewicz 1909–69

Overture 1943



Grażyna Bacewicz was a protean figure in 20th-century Polish culture. Coming of age in the late 1920s, she was not only a composer and a violinist, but also an accomplished writer. She grew up and began her musical studies in Łódź, before training in Warsaw and, eventually, with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Bacewicz then decided to return to her homeland to work as concertmaster of the Polish Radio Orchestra, just two months before the outbreak of the Second World War.

It was during the subsequent German occupation of Poland that she wrote her Overture, which was first heard at the 1945 Kraków Festival of Contemporary Music. Given the times in which it was written, it is an understandably charged piece, with martial blasts and rasps from the snare drum. Yet the music also has a neoclassical bearing, characteristic of many of Bacewicz's early works, as well as an unbridled, curtain-raising sense of joy.

Programme notes

Bohuslav Martinů
1890–1959

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, H. 293
1943

Josef Špaček *violin*

1. *Andante – Poco allegro*
2. *Andante moderato*
3. *Poco allegro*



Bohuslav Martinů's Second Violin Concerto, which is almost directly contemporaneous with Bacewicz's Overture, was long thought to have been the Czech composer's only such work. It was only after his death that an earlier violin concerto, dating to 1933, turned up. But where that composition had been written when Martinů was still resident in Europe, the Second dates to his exile in the United States.

He had long enjoyed the patronage of Serge Koussevitzky, who gave the 1927 premiere of his orchestral work *La Bagarre* in Boston. Koussevitzky likewise conducted an early performance of his 1932 Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra and provided the impetus for the completion of Martinů's First Symphony in 1942. It was as a result of hearing the Boston Symphony Orchestra play that wonderfully dramatic work that the violinist Mischa Elman requested a new concerto, as well as insisting on the inclusion of a cadenza.

The work was described by Martinů himself for the first performance in Boston on New Year's Eve in 1943:

'The idea for this Concerto presented itself to me with the following order – *Andante*, a broad lyric song of great intensity which leads to a *Poco allegro*, exploiting the technique and the virtuosity of the instrument, and has the aspect of a single-movement composition. [...] The second part is a sort of point of rest, a bridge progressing towards

Programme notes

the final *Poco allegro*. It is an *intermezzo moderato*, almost bucolic, accompanied by only a part of the orchestra and progressing *attacca* into the Finale, which is *Poco allegro*. This movement favours the technique of the violin, which is interrupted by broad and massive *tutti* passages.'

For three years, the original commissioner Elman had exclusive rights to the score, but after 1946 it became a favourite of many other leading violinists, not least Isaac Stern and Martinů's fellow national Josef Suk. Today, it is still one of the composer's most popular and widely recorded works.

Interval – 20 minutes

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

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Programme notes

Witold Lutosławski
1913–94

Symphony No. 4
1993

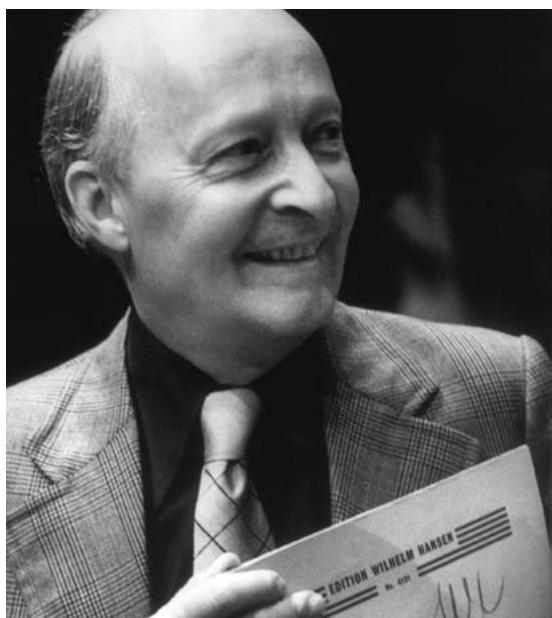
Witold Lutosławski began writing symphonies in 1941. Like Grażyna Bacewicz, who likewise turned to the genre in later life, Lutosławski had studied both in his hometown of Warsaw and in Paris with Boulanger. This two-centre education was to be apparent in his kaleidoscopic First Symphony, created against the backdrop of the Second World War and drawing on various influences, including Stravinsky and Prokofiev, Bartók and Debussy. Performed in Warsaw in 1948, it should have announced Lutosławski as Poland's foremost composer, though the Soviet authorities quickly denounced the work.

It would be another 20 years until Lutosławski returned to the genre, with much having changed in the meantime. Its creation seems to have been spurred in part by his experience of John Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, comprising 63 pages 'to be played, in whole or in part, in any sequence, involving 84 "types" of composition'. While Lutosławski never wholly imitated Cage's approach, he did embark on a series of works featuring 'aleatory counterpoint', in which elements of chance allow the players greater rhythmic freedom, witnessed in both the Second Symphony of 1965–67 and the dazzling Third of the early 1980s.

The Fourth Symphony, written for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and first performed by them under the composer's baton in 1993, was Lutosławski's last major work. It follows his established bipartite form, witnessed in both the Second and Third Symphonies, yet while the first part of the Symphony is similarly episodic, there is a now clearer goal in mind, recalling the musicologist Andrzej Chłopecki's description of how 'certain sound forms or objects initially appear as if accidentally', though these are the very elements that will 'become the basis for more elaborate forms'.

In the first threnody-like part of the Symphony, a sense of tension is maintained by a pulsing bass underpinning the eerily sustained strings and curling woodwind lines,

all of which expand as more voices enter the fray. Moments of collapse are marked by chance scuttlings and tumbling trumpet and piano, which become increasingly strident. If these elements can be seen to constitute the Symphony's exposition – tracing the outline of a traditional sonata form – the second part is both its development and recapitulation (with a coda). Throughout, the thematic material moves determinedly through sequential ideas, where three distinct metrical layers are constantly at play. The music becomes increasingly persistent, until culminating in a powerful, emotional unison. In the wake of this moment of truth, the music seems to dissipate, as if unable to tolerate the sense of honesty, until a brilliant coda comes to cap the Symphony.



Programme notes

Leoš Janáček

1854–1928

Taras Bulba

1915–18

1. The Death of Andrei

2. The Death of Ostap

3. The Prophecy and Death of Taras Bulba

Janáček was a committed Russophile. He saw Bohemia and his native Moravia as part of a wider Slavic tradition, in which their culture was distinct from their German and Austrian neighbours – and sometime suppressors. Consequently, Janáček frequently turned to figures such as Ostrovsky, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky for inspiration. He also named his children Olga and Vladimir. *Taras Bulba* forms part of his Russian scheme of works and is based on Gogol's romanticised novella concerning a Cossack warrior and his two sons. Ostap is the loyal one, while the other son, Andrei, falls in love with a Polish noblewoman, thereby betraying the cause. As a result, Taras executes Andrei and fights on against the Poles, though Ostap's grief over his brother's death proves too crippling and he falls in battle, before Taras is himself captured and killed, completing the brutal cycle.

Janáček began his tone-poem or 'rhapsody' in 1915, while his career was still in the doldrums. But he completed the score in 1918, by which time the belated Prague and Vienna premieres of his opera *Jenůfa* and a new publishing contract with Universal Edition had brought about a sea change. The subsequent declaration of Czech independence was another significant breakthrough for such a determinedly patriotic composer, as, indeed, was his meeting and subsequent friendship with Kamila Stösslová, though he clearly hungered for more from the relationship.

A romantic atmosphere is likewise present as *Taras Bulba* begins. 'The Death of Andrei' describes the younger son's love for the daughter of a Polish general,

in which Janáček employs a *cor anglais* and other 'vocal' solo lines, hinting at an *opera manqué* – an opera that was never realised. Notably, the lovers' music is set against a more driven, militaristic soundworld, which then comes to dominate the second movement: 'The Death of Ostap'. This culminates in the triumph of the Poles and their characteristic mazurka, yet the presence of Taras's trombone, strident in solo and baleful in chorus, presages the final 'Prophecy and Death of Taras Bulba'. While he is burned at the stake, the tenacious Cossack imagines the ultimate triumph of the orthodox faith, as an organ and bells blare forth.

Programme notes © Gavin Plumley

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