

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

MULTITUDES
AN ELECTRIFYING
NEW ARTS FESTIVAL,
POWERED BY
ORCHESTRAL MUSIC
WED 23 APR – SAT 3 MAY
2025



WELCOME

Everyone is at this performance for a different reason. For some, you've come because of the music being played. Others might be a fan of the non-musical collaborators. Perhaps it's a special occasion, or just a catch-up with friends. Maybe you've been invited by someone and aren't entirely sure what you're about to witness...

While we're all here for a multitude of reasons, we're also all sharing the same communal experience: the same music, the same multi-sensory performance, receiving it in different ways, but sharing the moment.

What's certain is that you can't experience *Multitudes* at home. Over the course of this first edition of the festival, you'll experience dance, circus, performance art, physical theatre, art, film and more, with each collaboration powered by orchestral music, played by an incredible array of guest artists and created in partnership with our very own Resident Orchestras.

Thank you for being here to share this moment with us.

Mark Ball

Artistic Director, Southbank Centre

Southbank Centre is very grateful for Arts Council England and the National Lottery fund's support towards the inaugural *Multitudes* Festival.

INSIDE THIS PROGRAMME:

- P3 AN ALTERNATIVE GUIDE TO CONCERT ETIQUETTE
- P4 WED 23 APR DAPHNIS AND CHLOÉ
- P6 THU 24 & FRI 25 APR VEXATIONS
- P9 THU 24 APR OH TO BELIEVE IN ANOTHER WORLD
- P12 FRI 25 APR R.I.S.E.
- P16 SAT 26 APR SINGING ALL ABOUT LOVE
- P18 SAT 26 APR MAHLER 8
- P20 SAT 26 APR REFRACTIONS
- P22 SAT 26 APR DJ SINEMIS
- P24 SUN 27 APR SYMPHONY OF SHADOWS
- P28 MON 28 APR LEGACY
- P30 TUE 29 & WED 30 APR IN C
- P32 WED 30 APR CITY OF FLOATING SOUNDS
- P34 SAT 3 MAY CARNIVAL



CLASSICAL MUSIC

FINDING THE JOY

A few years ago, US comedian Kimberly Clark revealed on stage that she has a crush on conductor Gustavo Dudamel. She wanted to see him in the flesh, so took herself to a Los Angeles Philharmonic concert he was conducting.

‘Gustavo came out with that tuxedo on, looking good... But I couldn’t scream, you know? ... It’s like, you gotta have that repressed joy when you go to the orchestra, you know? And I think it’s a shame. I think they should have, like, a mosh pit. When the music starts getting good, you go down there, be like, “I see you flute section!” ... ’Cause the LA Philharmonic, that’s somebody’s favourite band, you know? It’s like... They just take all the joy away. You gotta have that repressed joy. You just gotta go “mmm, beautiful music”. That’s no fun.’

If you’ve been to a classical concert, you might recognise that concept of ‘repressed joy’, and as Clark says, it’s a shame – because on stage you’ve got people playing their hearts out, performing some incredibly emotionally intense music.

It hasn’t always been like this. Take this account of watching a concert in the Paris opera in the 1700s, from James Johnson’s *Listening in Paris*:

‘While most were in their places by the end of the first act, the continuous movement and low din of conversation never really stopped. Lackeys and young bachelors milled about in the crowded and often boisterous

parterre, the floor-level pit to which only men were admitted ... And lovers sought the dim heights of the third balcony – the paradise’.

Back then (and well into the 20th century), concerts were also much more wide-ranging – orchestras would perform single movements of symphonies (which would almost never happen today) interspersed with songs, movements from concertos, solo pieces and so on, with concerts often continuing into the small hours.

If the public liked something, they made it known there and then – they didn’t sit in silence until the end. Applauding and cheering until a movement was repeated was totally normal, for example, or (more unusually) audiences simply shouted out what music they wanted to hear, whether it was on the programme or not.

Nowadays it feels progressive to be allowed to bring in a glass of wine in a plastic cup, but back then, drinking to the music was normal, as was eating, or indeed bringing your dog with you.

We’re not necessarily saying you should bring your pets, talk throughout the show or request something entirely different to what’s on the bill... but recapturing just a little of that spirit, that immediate appreciation and joie de vivre, might not be a bad thing. Of course, show respect for those around you, but if you like something, show it, don’t fight back your emotions or sit on your hands. If you want to clap after a movement ends, do it; if you want to sit there and let the tears roll down your cheeks because something has moved you that much, then just let them flow. Express the joy; don’t repress it.



CIRCA x LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

DAPHNIS AND CHLOÉ

Daphnis and Chloé and *La Valse* are statements of life at its extremes – parallels, mirrors and opposites, with *Daphnis and Chloé* an expression of young love and *La Valse* a devastating picture of a civilisation in collapse. In this new collaboration, the movement and acrobatics of Circa embody the message and scale of the music, giving physical form to the battling elements of love and death.

MUSIC

Maurice Ravel
Daphnis and Chloé (50 mins)
La Valse (The Waltz) (12 mins)
No interval

Commissioned by the Southbank Centre and the London Philharmonic Orchestra

Circa acknowledges the assistance of the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body and the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

CREATIVE TEAM

London Philharmonic Orchestra
Edward Gardner conductor*
Circa
BBC Singers

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

I'm very excited about this show. It's powerful, detailed, bombastic and beautiful, often in quick succession. With Ravel you are carried along as if in a spell. It's really music for the senses.

Yaron Lifschitz
Circa's Artistic Director



SCAN THE QR CODE
TO ACCESS ADDITIONAL
CONTENT ABOUT THIS
PERFORMANCE

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Writer and broadcaster Andrew Mellor introduces Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* and *La Valse*:

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937) DAPHNIS AND CHLOÉ

In 1909, the Russian promoter Serge Diaghilev arrived in Paris with his dance troupe the Ballet Russes. Paris went mad for the company – for the strange sounds of the Russian music they brought with them, for the garish designs of the company's shows and for the contorted shapes created by its dancers. When Diaghilev had made enough money, he started commissioning composers to write new music for his company to dance to. High on the list was Maurice Ravel.

Ravel was to write a new ballet, *Daphnis and Chloé*. The composer was stoked to be joining an artistic team that included Pablo Picasso and the famed dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. But the project was not an easy one. Ravel and the choreographer Mikhel Fokine were charged with adapting a third-century Greek story for the ballet stage. But Fokine spoke no French, and Ravel's Russian consisted of no more than a handful of insults.

What Ravel produced was a gigantic, continuously played musical score for massed voices and huge orchestra (including wind machine) that was difficult to dance to despite its clear rhythms. At least it contained everything good associated with Ravel: ravishing orchestration, impressionistic colours and a meeting of sensual passion with clipped, disciplined formality. Ravel apparently spent an entire year on the final dance sequence alone.

That final sequence was one of the principal reasons Fokine and his dancers had such trouble with the music. It's constructed with the irregular pattern of five beats to each bar (think of the theme to *Mission Impossible*) – a feature Diaghilev's dancers couldn't get their heads around. Ravel's solution was to suggest they chant the five syllables of their impresario's name – 'Ser-gei Dia-ghi-lev' – as they danced. They just about managed it at the first performance on 8 June 1912.

Ravel's music tells the story of Daphnis and Chloé's courtship. The two are raised by forest shepherds and fall in love when Daphnis plays for Chloé on his pipes. In Part I, the two enjoy their first kiss. Pirates then arrive and abduct Chloé. Part II takes us into the pirate's

camp for a 'War Dance'. Pan's spectacular rescue of Chloé then conjures an earthquake. In Part III the lovers are united. The music opens with one of Ravel's most remarkable passages of music: a sensual, heat-drenched sunrise whose tension mirrors the couple's sexual desire. The pair are married and their friends celebrate with the final dance, a 'Bacchanal'.

LA VALSE

Ravel's generation witnessed everything from the carnage of the First World War to the emergence of pop music. Nostalgia colours much of Ravel's music but the composer was just as excited by the creative possibilities of the new world order – particularly jazz.

Ravel was also fascinated by a highly traditional form of dance music: the waltz. He wrote a series of waltzes in 1911 that probed the Viennese three-step dance with elegance and not without irony. When he came to write his next waltz-based work in 1919, the world had changed beyond recognition.

La Valse should have been a salute to the world of Viennese waltz-king Johann Strauss II. Instead, it became a bitter elegy for a Europe destroyed by its own arrogance. In the year Ravel started writing, food was rationed in Vienna and a flu epidemic was crippling its people.

The music presents a moving image of waltzing couples, but the picture soon turns sour. The waltz-rhythm begins to feel forced, is infected by dark, cancerous harmonies before eventually collapsing into a spiralling vortex. This waltz destroys everything in its path – and, eventually, itself.

Andrew Mellor © 2025



MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ x IGOR LEVIT

VEXATIONS

During lockdown, celebrated pianist Igor Levit countered the uncertainties of the time with an online performance of Satie's *Vexations*, the consistency of the music proving cathartic and enabling an emotional journey. Now, he partners with the legendary conceptual artist Marina Abramović, whose career has focused on endurance and on pushing her body to the extreme, to explore the psychological and physical implications of performing this music to a live audience.

MUSIC

Eric Satie
Vexations

16 Hours +

With an introduction to Satie's *Vexations* from Marina Abramovic at 10am

CREATIVE TEAM

Igor Levit piano and co-devisor

Marina Abramović director and co-devisor

David Amar set design

Urs Schönebaum lighting design

Commissioned by the Southbank Centre

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Writer Chris Gemmell introduces
Eric Satie's Vexations:

ERIC SATIE (1866–1925)

Ever since the rediscovery of *Vexations* in the mid-twentieth century there has been a cloud of mystery and fascination around this single page of music. In the early 1890s eccentric composer Erik Satie was in his late 20s, working as the house pianist at the legendary cabaret club Le Chat Noir (The Black Cat) in the Montmartre district of Paris. During these years he wrote his best-known pieces for the piano, including the ever-popular set of *Trois Gymnopédies*.

There are all sorts of theories about what inspired Satie to also write *Vexations* around this time, ranging from his frustration and heartbreak following a brief relationship with artist Suzanne Valadon, to ridiculing the lengthy operas of Richard Wagner, which were at the height of their popularity. The original copy appears to be a private sketch lacking in some detail; it does not specify what instrument it was written for or what volume it should be played at. Satie's instructions scrawled in the top corner translate as: 'In order to play the motif 840 times in succession, it would be advisable to prepare oneself beforehand, and in the deepest silence, by serious immobilities.' If repeating the piece 840 times wasn't enough of a challenge, the guidance given for the speed is 'very slow'. Satie was no stranger to writing perplexing performance directions, with examples from other pieces including 'open the head', and 'light as an egg'.

Vexations went forgotten for half a century, until experimental music pioneer John Cage rediscovered it while researching the composer. It found new relevance in the countercultures of 1960s New York, and some 70 years after it was written the first ever public performance of *Vexations* was staged by Cage

Satie was no stranger to writing perplexing performance directions, with examples from other pieces including 'open the head', and 'light as an egg'.

WORLD
PREMIERE
PERFORMANCE

at the Pocket Theatre. Putting in shifts of 20 minutes at the piano, the self-named Pocket Theatre Relay Team completed the 840 repetitions in 18 hours and 40 minutes. It is reported that only one audience member stayed for the full performance, and another cheered 'encore' upon its completion!

Among the musicians (or athletes, perhaps) in the Relay Team was a 21-year-old John Cale, who would go on to found legendary avant-garde rock group The Velvet Underground the following year. In the audience that day was artist Andy Warhol, most famous now for his pop art paintings. In the years directly following this performance, Warhol went on to produce some of his earliest films, *Sleep* and *Empire*. It is easy to see the similarities between *Vexations* and these films; clocking in at over 5 and 8 hours respectively, neither have any narrative or dialogue, instead focussing on the experience of passing time.

While Igor Levit has already performed the work to an online audience, today marks his first performance of it to a live audience, and of course, director Marina Abramović is no stranger to feats of endurance. As

one of the world's leading conceptual artists, she has been challenging audiences across the world with her durational artworks for over 50 years. The two previously collaborated on *Goldberg*, in which the audience were prepared for a performance of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations* by waiting for 30 minutes in absolute silence (with their phones literally locked away) before the first note was played.

So much about *Vexations* goes unanswered; we'll never know what inspired Satie to write such unconventional instructions, what he was so 'vexed' by, or if he even intended for it to be performed. What we can be sure of is that a performance in all its repetitions will be different for everyone who experiences it. Dick Higgins, American artist and composer, summed up his encounter with the piece: 'The music first becomes so familiar that it seems extremely offensive and objectionable. But after that the mind slowly becomes incapable of taking further offence, and a very strange, euphoric acceptance and enjoyment begin to set in...'

Chris Gemmell © 2025

SCAN THE QR CODE TO
ACCESS ADDITIONAL
CONTENT ABOUT THIS
PERFORMANCE

IGOR LEVIT INTERVIEW

We spoke to pianist Igor Levit about *Vexations* and his collaboration with Marina Ibramović.

You've performed *Vexations* before, online, during the pandemic. Prior to that performance you said 'there will be devastation, there will joy, there will be literal pain... Maybe I won't make it. It's just about surviving', but you were also talked about it as a 'retreat of silence and humility'. Which was it? Or was it both?

As far as I remember it was overall mostly a great deal of fun. So, it was challenging, yes. It did challenge my patience. It was not painful, I was not in a delirium. I was not hallucinating. I was actually really having fun. And then there were one or two moments when I felt annoyed because I thought 'why am I doing all this work and the pile of music does not get smaller!' All in all it was really a great treat.

Given that this is such a massive feat of endurance, what made you want to do it again?

Marina and my desire for fun-infused joy-infused self destruction! Seriously I just love these things, and always thought after the stream that the day will come to do it in front of a live audience.

How does a work of such a length work out practically – do you have any breaks at all?

Whenever I need to go to the loo I go to the loo but that's it, that's the only break. I'll have some water. I will find some ways to find things to think about. But that's really all.

How do you think having a live audience will change the nature of your performance?

I don't know because I haven't done it! So it's an experiment for the audience and for me. I'm very curious. But I don't know, no clue. It's a question for afterwards!

I know you've worked together before, but how did the collaboration with Marina Ibramović come about for *Vexations*, what made her right for the project?

First of all I have a trusting relationship with her, she's a dear friend. One of her most famous works is the workshop she did with people

'THERE WILL BE DEVASTATION, THERE WILL BE JOY, THERE WILL BE LITERAL PAIN... MAYBE I WON'T MAKE IT. IT'S JUST ABOUT SURVIVING'

when they were counting rice grains. And it was about slowing down your systems, slowing down your brain, forgetting time, just focussing on this one thing. And I thought; the musical equivalent of that is *Vexations*. One of her main strengths, as an artist and as a thinker, has been around how to focus the mind. So she and I thought that this piece is the perfect vessel for this, and she felt like the most perfect companion for such insanity.

How do you prepare for a performance like this? Will you have had a complete run through?

None. None whatsoever. I will just sit on the chair and start playing. I have no more to say about it. How am I supposed to? There's nothing to practice, nothing to play. I just go there and do it.

And how do you suggest the audience prepares? Or should they not?

Audiences should come to it in the same way. Take a breath all together and see where it all leads.

THU 24 APR 2025, 7.30PM | ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE x PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

OH TO BELIEVE IN ANOTHER WORLD

Artist William Kentridge's work often deals with issues of power and repression, making him the perfect collaborator for tonight's performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No.10. Shostakovich had a troubled relationship with authority, and with Stalin in particular, often producing music which subtly, or not, subverted Stalin's preference for nationalistic art. In Kentridge's film he imagines a fictional museum of Stalin, with the film carefully matching the tone and rhythm of the music, a delicate stitching-together of two art forms to produce a new whole.

MUSIC

Leonard Bernstein
Chichester Psalms (20 mins)

Interval (20 mins)

Dmitri Shostakovich
Symphony No.10 (60 mins)

CREATIVE TEAM

Philharmonia Orchestra
Marin Alsop conductor
William Kentridge artist
Philharmonia Chorus

The Clore Ballroom, Level 2, Royal Festival Hall at 9.30pm:
Post-show talk with Southbank Centre Artistic Director Mark Ball
and conductor Marin Alsop. Free.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Writer and broadcaster Andrew Mellor introduces us to tonight's music by Leonard Bernstein and Dmitri Shostakovich:

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–90) CHICHESTER PSALMS

- I Psalm 108:2, – Psalm 100
- II Psalm 2 Psalm 2: 1-4
- III Psalm 131 – Psalm 133: 1

Two things made Leonard Bernstein a household name in America: composing the musical *West Side Story* in 1957 and leading the New York Philharmonic as the orchestra's Music Director – back when its concerts were broadcast to the nation.

In 1965, Bernstein was on a break from the Philharmonic in order to write a new musical. But the

project fell through. Without much to do, Bernstein tried his hand at writing experimental music in the European style. But it didn't feel right. Then a letter landed on Bernstein's doormat all the way from a sleepy city on England's south coast. It was from the Dean of Chichester Cathedral, Walter Hussey, who enquired very politely whether Bernstein would mind awfully writing a piece of choral music for the Cathedral's festival. Bernstein jumped at the chance.

In three parts, for choir and orchestra, the composer's *Chichester Psalms* sets three complete Psalms of David and snippets of three more. The words are in their original Hebrew, the music hanging off the natural stresses and rhythms of the language. The texts reflect on man's closeness to God with joy and thoughtfulness.

While the music is rhythmically complex and exuberant, it uses traditional keys and harmonies – a rejection, on Bernstein's part, of the experimentation with atonal music (music that ignores conventional harmonies) that had gone before. Bernstein described the music as 'popular in feeling' with 'an old-fashioned sweetness along with its more violent moments.' It was the only piece of music he managed to complete during his time away from the New York Philharmonic.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–75) SYMPHONY NO.10

- I Moderato (at a moderate speed)
- II Allegro (fast and lively)
- III Allegretto (moderately fast)
- IV Andante – Allegro (Walking pace –fast and lively)

Dmitri Shostakovich's life and music were defined by his complicated relationship with the Soviet

authorities. Under the rule of Prime Minister Stalin, composers were supposed to write music that chimed with the dictator's view of the world.

Shostakovich experienced two major run-ins with Stalin. The first came in 1936, when Stalin attended a performance of the composer's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and was enraged. Soviet music was supposed to be uplifting, ego-inflating and easily understandable – not complex and satirical. The next came in 1948, when Stalin had expected Shostakovich's new Symphony No.9 to be a hymn of praise directed at him, following victory over the Nazis. Instead, the composer delivered an introverted work that Stalin took as a direct insult. It was banned.

In 1953, Stalin died. Immediately, the situation for artists was easier. Within months, Shostakovich started work on his next symphony, the Tenth. Some of the music existed already. The pianist Tatyana Nikoleava has suggested some of it was written in 1951 and withheld until Stalin died. That chimes with Shostakovich's own admission that the Tenth Symphony was 'all about Stalin and the Stalin years.'

Certainly, the Symphony can be heard as a depiction of life in a suppressed society. The violinist David

Oistrakh talked about the music's inner conflicts, its dramatic effect and even its use of intense beauty to point up the ironic tragedy of Soviet life. John Mangum, CEO of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, has described it as '48 minutes of tragedy, despair, terror and violence and two minutes of triumph'.

Shostakovich asserts his own individualism in the work by spelling out his own personal musical initials in music: D-S-C-H (according to the German notation system, the notes D, E flat, C and B). He also musically encodes his love for a student, Elmira Nazirova (listen out for the solo horn calls representing her in the third movement*). If Shostakovich and Nazirova peek out now and then, Stalin is ever-present. Shostakovich described his second movement as a portrait of the dictator. Its music is that of unrelenting fear and violence – wild, furious and unpredictable.

Andrew Mellor © 2025

* Movements are sections that make up a longer piece, like chapters of a book. Typically symphonies have four movements, each contrasted through devices such as mood and speed. Generally today audiences don't applaud between movements, and instead it's a moment for performers and audience to catch their breath, but this hasn't always been the case. Find out more on Page 3.

'Political uncertainty, philosophical uncertainty, the uncertainty of images is much closer to how the world is. That's something we've very much learned the hard way through the 20th century; there are so many failures of grand ideas.'

William Kentridge



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE



POST-SHOW
EVENT

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE INTERVIEW

Artist William Kentridge introduces his film, *Oh To Believe in Another World*.

There are already 80 musicians in the orchestra. There is the shine of the brass. The excitement of watching the relationship between the conductor and the musicians. Behind this, to put a film.

The key task in making the film *Oh To Believe in Another World* to accompany Shostakovich's Symphony No.10, is to find something that does not turn the symphony into film music – a series of images and narratives that overwhelm the music itself; nor to have something that disappears, that runs simply as a series of anodyne backdrops. But the story of Shostakovich and his complicated relationship to the state in the Soviet Union, from its early days just after the 1917 revolution, all the way through to Stalin's death in 1953, provides the material for thinking visually about the trajectory that Shostakovich had to follow, from the early days of the Soviet Union to the writing of the symphony.

This is a retrospective look at the four decades of the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s, from the perspective of 1953 when Stalin died and the first performance of the symphony was presented. In the 1920s there was the death of Lenin; in the 1930s the suicide of poet and playwright Mayakovsky; in the 1940s, the assassination of the revolutionary Trotsky; in the 1950s the death of Stalin – and here we are, almost 70 years later. The report that remains of these decades is in the music of Shostakovich, the one who against expectation got away, and survived.

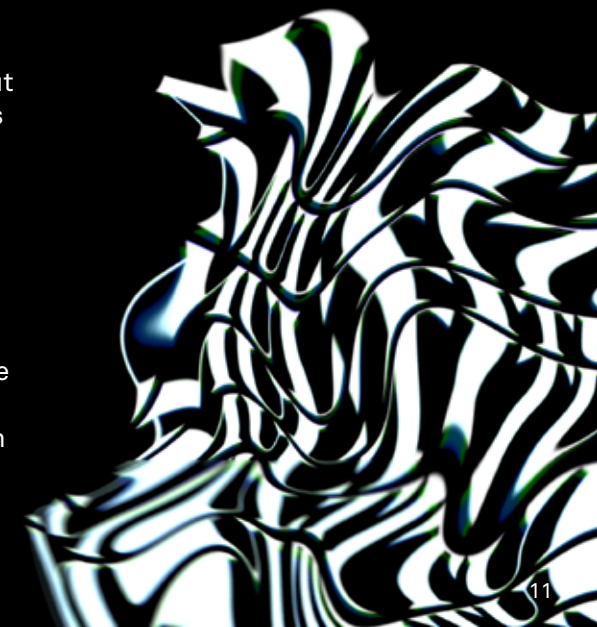
'THE TASK OF THE PROJECT IS TO TRY TO SHOW WITHIN THE FILM SOME OF THE AMBIGUITIES SHOSTAKOVICH HAD TO NEGOTIATE, NOT JUST IN THIS SYMPHONY, BUT IN ALL THE WORK THAT HE MADE.'

The film is set inside what appears to be an abandoned Soviet museum, which in fact is made of cardboard, on the table in my studio (at times there are fragments of the studio visible). Using a miniature camera, we move through the different halls of the museum, which also include a community theatre hall, a public swimming pool, a quarry at the side of the main halls of the museum. A corridor of vitrines holding stuffed historical figures. Intertitles in the film are from various sources, but the main source are the plays and poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky – who in the early years following the revolution was an enthusiastic supporter of the Soviet project. But as the years passed and the hopes of the revolution receded, he grew increasingly disillusioned. In 1930 he shot himself.

The central characters of the film are Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin; Shostakovich and his student Elmira Nazirova (about whom there are different theories regarding her relationship with Shostakovich and the 10th Symphony and whether her name is embedded

into some of the key signatures of the symphony); Mayakovsky and his lover Lily Brik. These characters appear as puppets, but are also performed by actors inside of puppets. The form is one of collage, and the larger proposition is that one needs to understand history as a form of collage. The artistic medium is a way of thinking about the historical events.

The task of the project is to try to show within the film some of the ambiguities Shostakovich had to negotiate, not just in this symphony, but in all the work that he made. We have to find a way to both acknowledge the independence of the music – that it exists now in the post-Soviet era (we can still feel the emotional journey of the symphony, independent of its historical moorings); but at the same time acknowledge the particular character of the era from which it comes.



GEORGE THE POET x CHINEKE! ORCHESTRA

R.I.S.E.

George the Poet, an artist whose work is often deeply political, collaborates with Chineke! Orchestra, Europe’s first professional orchestra made up of Black and ethnically diverse musicians. George the Poet brings his insight and poetry to the issue of the climate emergency, exploring it not just as an ecological issue but one of justice too, with Black communities disproportionately affected. A powerful artistic meeting, combining political and artistic interests.

MUSIC

Ayanna Witter Johnson
Open our eyes

Ayanna Witter Johnson
Song of the Prophets: Creation (1st mov’t)
Improvisation featuring George the Poet
Max Richter
Spring from Vivaldi Recomposed

Daniel Kidane
Song of the Prophets: Ruin (2nd mov’t)
Improvisation featuring George the Poet

Max Richter
Summer from Vivaldi Recomposed

Shirley J Thompson OBE
Songs of the Prophets: Recovery (3rd mov’t)
Improvisation featuring George the Poet

Max Richter
Autumn from Vivaldi Recomposed

Roderick Williams OBE
Song of the prophets: Redemption (4th mov’t)
Improvisation featuring George the Poet

Max Richter
Winter from Vivaldi Recomposed

Ayanna Witter Johnson
New Roots

No interval

Commissioned by the Southbank Centre and Chineke!

CREATIVE TEAM

Chineke! Orchestra
Enyi Okpara conductor
Laura Ayoub violin
Moses Olukayode talking drum
RENU tabla
Rapasa Nyatrapasa Otieno nyatiti
George the Poet



‘The show is a message to unite and make change. A message to reflect on your contribution as an individual. A message of hope. And a call to action that is never more resonant than when told through these two powerful art forms’.

Linton Stephens
Interim Deputy
Artistic Director, Chineke!

ABOUT THE MUSIC

AYANNA WITTER-JOHNSON OPEN OUR EYES

Open Our Eyes is a call for us to pause and reflect on our perceptions and beliefs about the world around us. This reflective song encourages us to become more attuned to the natural world, drawing musical inspiration from the natural rhythms of nature.

SONG OF THE PROPHETS: A REQUIEM FOR THE CLIMATE

Commissioned by Christian Aid and written by four Black British composers, *Song of the Prophets: A Requiem for the Climate* is a call to action in the fight against climate change.

‘Creation’ by Ayanna Witter-Johnson is the opening movement, bringing to life the imagery evoked in Genesis 1, Chapters 1–5 of the Bible. The initial string parts imitate the dark void, followed by unifying chords that make way for the emergence of a repeated riff that showcases the “light”. The conclusion of the piece illustrates how the light, once in place, reveals the foundation of the land that has just been formed.

‘Ruin’, written by Daniel Kidane, was developed around the words ‘catastrophe’, ‘destruction’, ‘disaster’ and ‘death’. It is the culmination of man’s impact on the natural world, resulting in the ruin of the once perfect creation. It calls us to confront the realities of climate change, depletion of natural resources, the erosion of habitats, the fight for survival, and the effect on human rights.

Inspired by the words ‘help, aid, elevate, lift, clean, clear’, ‘Recovery’ by Shirley J Thompson reflects on the recovery effort after the landslides in Kenya in November 2019, in which at least 132 people were killed. Recovery contemplates the Christian help and aid that was central to, ‘elevate, lift, clean, clear the devastations of the floods and landslides’. ‘Recovery’ also reflects on the stoicism of the many thousands of Kenyans affected by the disaster.

‘Redemption’ was composed by Roderick Williams: ‘Structure in music is important to me and in writing the finale to a project of such far-reaching ambition, I wanted my music to draw all the various strands together and provide a sense of cohesion to what might otherwise be a disparate experience. I also wanted to share writing for this project with my fellow composers (composition can be a lonely sport) and I was indebted to my colleagues when they each agreed to send me some of their material to be woven into the tapestry of ‘Redemption’. I had also been asked if I could write

a ‘flourish’ in C major and that immediately led me to think of an orchestral flourish from the past that fairly shouts of that key. So in “Redemption” I have borrowed from a composer long dead and also from my generous, living collaborators.’

MAX RICHTER (1966–) VIVALDI RECOMPOSED

Even if you think you don’t know them, there is every chance you’ve heard *The Four Seasons* at some point in your life. Written around 1720 by Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, this set of violin concertos has since featured in films, TV, radio jingles, hold music and even Olympic figure skating routines. From the chirruping of birds in ‘Spring’ to the icy winds of ‘Winter’, its ability to conjure up the sounds of the natural world has captivated audiences. By 2011, however, German-born British composer Max Richter had fallen out of love with *The Four Seasons*, feeling that it had been dulled by over-familiarity. Record label Deutsche Grammophon approached Richter that year to write and record a new piece as part of their *Recomposed* series, and he took the opportunity to breathe new life into Vivaldi’s most recognisable music.

Richter’s decision to ‘recompose’ *The Four Seasons* might seem like a modern idea, but this approach to composing music would not have been unfamiliar to Vivaldi. At the start of the 18th century, it was common for composers to rework music from their own back catalogue and music by other composers; Vivaldi himself reused a section from *The Four Seasons* as an instrumental break in one of his operas.

Equally at home writing for film, theatre and concert settings, Richter’s music is known for its emotive cinematic quality which captures the imagination. He describes his music as part of the post-minimalist aesthetic, drawing inspiration from the mesmerising loops of electronic dance music and minimalist music by composers such as Philip Glass and Steve Reich. In this reworking of *The Four Seasons*, Richter samples and splices the original, taking fragments of the 300-year-old music and reframing it in such a way that gives audiences a whole new perspective on a classic.

AYANNA WITTER-JOHNSON NEW ROOTS

New Roots is a contemplative song that explores our connection to the natural world. Vivid imagery signifies the growth of a new foundation and identity, reflecting both the resilience of the earth and our adaptability, as we reconnect with our roots – the earth’s roots.

Max Richter Programme Note © Chris Gemmell



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE



GEORGE THE POET INTERVIEW

‘there was no blueprint for what I do’

George the Poet talks to author Oluwaseun Olayiwola about grime, growth and guiding the next generation

Look at his journey, and you see that George the Poet – real name George Mpanga – could’ve easily landed with a different modifier for his stage name. Growing up in the early days of grime he could’ve easily been George the Rapper. Or George the Sociologist, given his studies at Cambridge, where he honed sociological techniques for examining the Black struggle.

But it’s as George the Poet that he has amassed honours and awards; all in a remarkably short time, with his poetry, motivated by articulating nuances of Black experience, garnering award nominations from the BRITs, MTV and the BBC.

In 2023, he curated the London Literature Festival at Southbank Centre, and now returns with *R.I.S.E.* This will be George’s first time collaborating with an orchestra, combining his spoken word with classical orchestration. ‘I never thought that was something that was out of our wheelhouse, even back in the days when I was a rapper. I always knew that to work with an orchestra would just expand the palate, and expand people’s imagination.’

George grew up in north-west London, where most of the homes were rented to low income-families, creating the conditions for rampant colourism between Caribbeans and Africans, difficult home environments that expressed itself as violence, but, also, the proximity of different musical traditions that fostered loose kinships locally and internationally. George’s parents were from Uganda, bringing with

them a love of music that would permeate his consciousness. The soundtrack of his home life was made up of grime, pan-African music, gospel, and hip-hop. Growing up, he admired artists like Ghetts, Rakim, Nas, and Big Daddy Kane. And while he began as a grime MC, it was an experience of performing when he was 16, that orchestrated his transition to poetry; ‘the music cut out and I delivered the song completely a capella’.

Alienated for not wanting to participate in violence in adolescence, enrolling at Cambridge opened up a different sort of alienation, being one of four Black students at the college. But this didn’t deter George, who became the King’s College Student Union Chairman, delivering his campaign speech in rhymed verse, and garnering a broad audience for his creative output.

Upon graduation, George signed a record deal with Island Records. It brought a boost to his career, going from experimentations with his a capella grime verses in small venues to TV appearances and headlining major shows. His craft swiftly developed, but that in itself created tensions between what his label knew could sell and what he thought had artistic merit.

Parting with the record deal wasn’t a decision that came lightly, though it illustrates the integrity by which George has tried to shape a career that doesn’t depend on extractive structures which he aims to critique. ‘There was no blueprint for what I do. All of my peers were rappers. If rap

didn’t pan out for them they might have moved into music management or studio management’, and so it’s of little surprise that George’s opting out of a record deal was a decision that left a number of friends and family baffled.

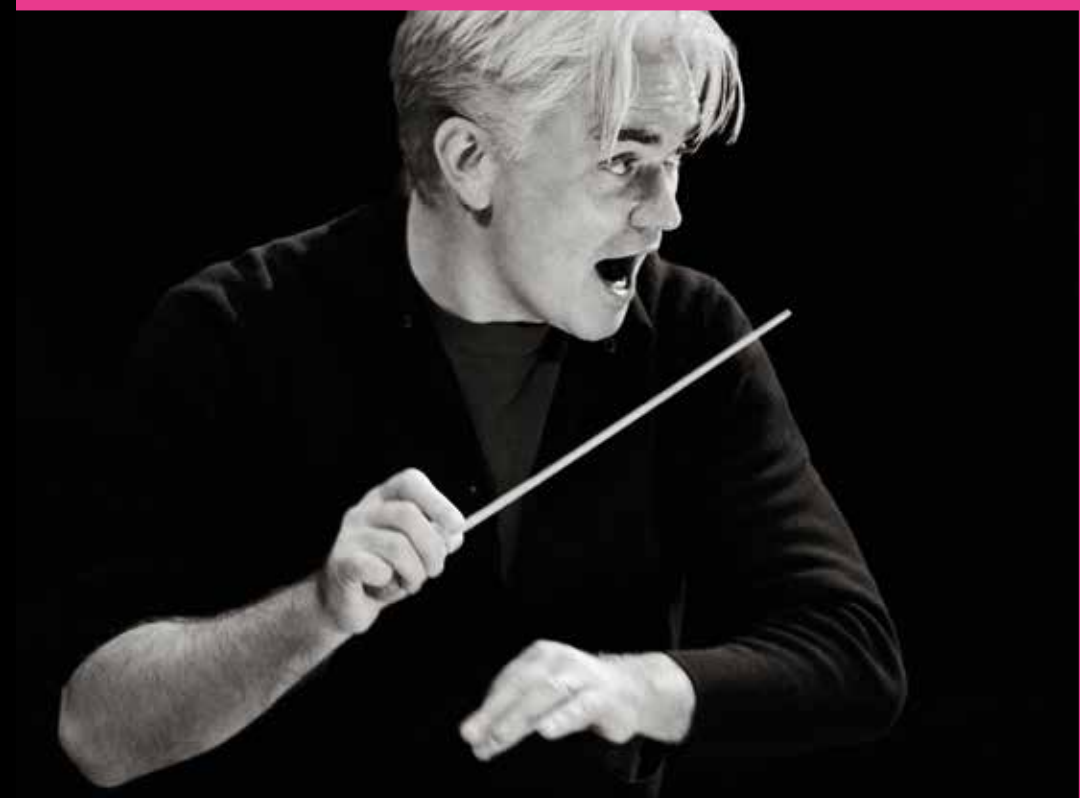
But then his entire career can be viewed as one crafted through a series of acceptances and refusals. Turning down Island Records was one thing, but at 28 he took the decision to turn down an MBE. ‘I knew I couldn’t accept the MBE,’ he writes in *Track Record*, ‘I wasn’t about to co-sign the whole idea of empire by attaching those words to my name’. Such decisions mean he’s no rookie to digital pile-ons, but through upswells of racial abuse for his personal choices George has persisted in his pursuit of an output and approach that encourages young artists to stay steadfast within their values. ‘Hopefully future creatives don’t have the same debates I used to have with my friends, who said it’s just not possible to be progressive and popular’.

‘I lay it all bare,’ he says, and indeed he does, whether that’s on his podcast, as a musician, as a speaker and performer, or, more recently, as a husband and father. In every arena George the Poet shows himself to be an artist whose powerful practice is capable of commingling the boundaries between the private and the political, all with that ear-capturingly warm baritone voice.

This is a shortened version of a longer article – read the full version by scanning the QR code.



London Philharmonic Orchestra



2025/26 concerts on sale now to LPO members
Southbank Centre members: 25 April
General sale: 29 April

**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**
RESIDENT

Just announced:
2025/26
London concerts



lpo.org.uk
southbankcentre.co.uk



MICKALENE THOMAS x THE MULTI-STORY ORCHESTRA

SINGING ALL ABOUT LOVE

Mickalene Thomas' portraits of Black women position them as both powerful and resilient. Her work finds a partner with the Peckham-based Multi-Story Orchestra, known for platforming the experiences and creativity of young Black people in the area. Their performance gives a fresh and surprising context to Thomas' work, and provides a stage for the talents and creativity of the orchestra's Young Creatives.

CREATIVE TEAM

Lewis Daniel composer
Abimaro Gunnell &
Multi-Story Orchestra Young Creatives songwriters
Patrick Davies, Donal Pywell, Marlon Hibbert &
Zara Judson-Kozdoj support musicians

Commissioned by the Southbank Centre

Presented by The Multi-Story Orchestra, *Singing All About Love* is a powerful exploration of music, community, and visual storytelling. In response to Mickalene Thomas' bold and dynamic artwork, Multi-Story Orchestra's Young Creatives weave together original compositions that reflect the rich patterns and themes in her work. This unique performance merges song, orchestration and installation to create a multi-sensory experience, celebrating love, identity and collective expression.

Performed alongside Thomas' artwork itself, the pieces unfold throughout the day, inviting audiences to engage with music in a fresh and immersive way. The Multi-Story Orchestra's signature approach – blurring boundaries between classical and contemporary music – amplifies voices and stories that deserve to be heard.

ABOUT MICKALENE

Mickalene Thomas is a renowned multidisciplinary artist celebrated for her vibrant, rhinestone-adorned portraits of Black women. Exploring themes of identity, race and gender, her work explores themes of Black female identity and its complexities within Western culture.

ABOUT THE MULTI-STORY ORCHESTRA

Since 2011, The Multi-Story Orchestra has been resident at Bold Tendencies in Peckham, South London. There, it has pioneered the integration of orchestral music into communities. Notable highlights include its first BBC Proms performance from a car park in 2016 and performances across the UK, from Gloucester to Portsmouth. The orchestra now regularly performs at the Southbank Centre and Fairfield Halls. In 2024, it won the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society Award for its moving performance piece *The Endz*. It is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation.

WORLD
PREMIERE
PERFORMANCE



'We're weaving music and community into the vibrant patterns of Mickalene Thomas' world – bringing her art to life through sound.'

Abimaro Gunnell
Songwriter



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE



TOM MORRIS x LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

MAHLER 8

Mahler’s overwhelming Eighth Symphony is a rite of passage for both performer and audience, thanks to its epic scale in terms of the number of performers, length and storytelling scope. This new interpretation of the piece leans into the Symphony’s maximalist sensibility. Director Tom Morris, conductor Edward Gardner and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, together with video artist Tal Rosner, have collaborated to create a performance that envelops the audience spatially and visually as well as aurally.

MUSIC

Gustav Mahler
Symphony No.8 (90 mins)
No interval

CREATIVE TEAM

London Philharmonic Orchestra
Edward Gardner conductor*
Tom Morris director
Tal Rosner video artist
Ben Ormerod lighting design
Oscar Simms associate director
Tim Claydon movement consultant
Gillian Moore musical dramaturgy

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

VIDEO TEAM

Arthur Skinner programmer
Dale Croft, Darren Culley additional animation
Kieth Ingram live action DoP
Sean Monroe camera assistant
Antonia Bain live action producer
Tristan Sturrock Faust
With thanks to Tali Oliver and Scottish Opera

Sarah Wegener soprano, Magna Peccatrix
Emma Bell soprano, Una Poenitentium, Gretchen
Jennifer France soprano, Mater Gloriosa
Christine Rice mezzo-soprano, Mulier Samaritana
Jennifer Johnston mezzo-soprano,
Maria Aegyptiaca
Andrew Staples tenor, Doctor Marianus
Tomasz Konieczny bass-baritone, Pater Ecstasticus
Derek Welton bass-baritone, Pater Profundus
London Philharmonic Choir
London Symphony Chorus
Tiffin Boys’ Choir

Concert generously supported by a syndicate of donors
Commissioned by the Southbank Centre and the London Philharmonic Orchestra

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Writer Joanna Wyld introduces tonight’s mammoth Symphony:

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860–1911)
SYMPHONY NO.8

The question of how to market classical music sometimes gets bogged down by a tension between the desire to encourage people to join in, and the sense that the artform ought somehow to be ‘above’ the hard sell. It was a dilemma felt by Gustav Mahler when he hired the promoter Emil Gutmann to publicise his Symphony No.8. Gutmann coined the nickname – that has stuck fast since – of ‘Symphony of a Thousand’. Mahler was unconvinced. And yet, Gutmann had succinctly described the huge scale of the piece, in which Mahler took the already massive forces of his earlier vocal symphonies and supersized them. Soon after he’d written this piece in a matter of weeks in 1906, Mahler told Sibelius that a symphony should be like the world – it should embrace everything. With the Eighth Symphony, Mahler sought to embrace not only the world but the heavens as well. Alongside this ambition was vulnerability: he sought the approval of his peers and public – and the woman he loved.

Mahler was, by now, a conducting star. But as a composer his brilliance was yet to be fully accepted, as his father-in-law, painter Emil Schindler said: ‘Mahler: great conductor, also composes – but it’s no good.’ Mahler went all out in this symphony to demonstrate otherwise, resulting in a grand collaboration between varied forces: huge orchestra, two choirs, eight soloists, children’s choir, offstage



‘I can’t tell you how beautiful Mahler’s symphony is. A wealth of ideas, an intensity of emotion, the most supernatural emotion.’

Anton Webern
Composer

WORLD
PREMIERE
PERFORMANCE

brass, organ, piano, harmonium, celeste, mandolin. The voices are balanced with the instruments in a completely new way. Previously they’d punctuated key moments in Mahler’s symphonies, but here they’re integral throughout. It wasn’t just the scale that was extraordinary but the concept: Mahler wanted to speak for all humankind, his choirs praying to the Holy Ghost in the first part, and becoming angelic choirs in the second, when the character Faust, from Goethe’s play, represents humanity’s need for redemption.

Gutmann’s marketing worked, creating a stir that filled Munich’s new concert hall on two back to back nights in 1910. Mahler conducted, and the rapturous audience included a who’s-who of artistic figures who recognised the mystery as well as the scale of the piece. Composer Anton Webern told fellow composer Arnold Schoenberg: ‘I can’t tell you how beautiful Mahler’s symphony is. A wealth of ideas, an intensity of emotion, the most supernatural emotion. In the second part, there is a stillness and tenderness. It is indescribable, so beautiful.’ Closer to home, things were less successful. By the time of the premiere, Mahler had discovered that his wife Alma – whom he adored but expected to serve his genius – was having an affair with architect Walter Gropius. Goethe’s plea to the ‘eternal feminine’ at the work’s end must have felt all too relevant.

The symphony opens with organ and the choir singing a hymn: ‘Veni, Creator Spiritus’ (Come, Holy Ghost). There is a gentler section asking the Spirit for grace, featuring seven of eight soloists. Threatening dissonances reflect humanity’s infirmity, followed by choral calls for the Spirit to ‘set light to our senses’, ‘infuse love into our hearts’ – and drive away our enemies. The first movement ends with a Gloria that starts with an orchestral fugue, building into a radiant hymn that recalls the opening.

So far, the symphony has resembled existing sacred works using voices. But with the second half, Mahler did something new, writing a scene change into the score, suggesting a theatrical, operatic vision. We awake as if from a dream amidst the mountain gorges of the last scene of Goethe’s *Faust*, the story in which the brilliant but dissatisfied scholar makes a deal with the Devil, exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. But what is the connection between the urgent medieval prayer for divine rescue and Mahler’s favourite dramatic text?

As the second part unfolds, the spiritual threads linking these texts become clear. Atmospheric orchestral sounds create a sense of spacious grandeur, with the voices describing scenery and creatures. Pater Ecstasticus sings of the eternal fire of bliss, then Pater Profundus describes the daunting obstacles on the journey. The angelic children’s choir and Doctor Marianus proclaim that Faust’s soul is saved, but still the drama is unresolved. Gretchen, Faust’s former love, makes a plea that she be allowed to conduct his soul into the higher realms, affirmed by a cast of penitent Biblical women: the woman of Samaria, Mary of Egypt, the woman caught in adultery (ouch). Intriguingly, the prayer is not made to God or the Creator Spiritus, but to the Mater Gloriosa – evoking the Virgin Mary but also Goethe’s more earthly ‘eternal feminine’.

As the dream fades, the prayerful chorus of part one returns to sing of the unattainable becoming real, and the textures expand towards a majestic ending, Mahler zooming out on the scene as though to show us the whole world; the whole universe.

© Joanna Wyld, 2025



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE

CLARK x MANCHESTER COLLECTIVE x MELANIE LANE REFRACTIONS

The music of composers including Bach and Ligeti rubs shoulders with the electronics of Clark in this new collaboration between him, Manchester Collective and choreographer Melanie Lane. A continuous immersive experience in which music combines with movement, *Refractions* moves seamlessly through time, genre and layers of emotions: explosive drama dissipates into moments of calm and disorder collapses into joyous rapture.

CREATIVE TEAM

Manchester Collective
Rakhi Singh creative direction, violin
Clark electronics
Melanie Lane choreography

Refractions is produced by Manchester Collective and is co-commissioned by the Southbank Centre and Bridgewater Hall with support from Jonathan and Ariella Green

'I'm always searching for the "third thing": the inexplicable magic when the right elements create far more than the sum of their parts'

Rakhi Singh
Manchester Collective



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE

We spoke to Rakhi Singh, Manchester Collective's Co-Artistic Director, about *Refractions*:

WHERE DID THIS PROJECT COME FROM? EACH INDIVIDUAL ARTIST LOOKS AMAZING BUT YOU WOULDN'T NORMALLY EXPECT TO SEE THEM ON THE SAME STAGE.

I've known Clark for a few years and started doing some remote recording for him during lockdown. Sometimes you meet people and just hit it off immediately. We would have lots of conversations about music – all types of music, not just classical. Because I was working with him, I ended up listening to much more of his work than I'd known before. Out of a professional relationship grew a friendship and a huge admiration for each other.

For me it was inevitable that we would work together. But in life, you have to wait for the right thing to land. Then this opening came up in *Multitudes* and I thought, 'This is it.' By that point I knew Clark's music well and I would hear many classical music influences, or mirrors, in his work. Even in the dance tracks I could hear shapes that you might find in Bach or Ligeti, for example, so all of the 'refractions' were already there. That's where the title stemmed from.

I knew there was a powerful musical experience there – I just had to carve it out. I dug further and, as Michaelangelo might say, the statue revealed itself. It became about rupture. What happens when we feel something we haven't felt before? It can be challenging – but it also brings a sense of discovery. This is what *Refractions* is all about: discovering new parts of ourselves through mirrors and reflections.

I'm honoured that Clark trusted me to play with his prolific, varied back catalogue. It was a joy to create a show with a dynamic and meaningful journey between his compositions and masterpieces of the classical canon.

Performing music is an incredibly physical thing for me. We feel the music flowing through our bodies when we reach that peak state of performance. So it felt like a natural evolution to work with dancers and form a team with choreographer Melanie Lane, who's worked with Clark many times in the past. Her work extends the physicality into another dimension.

HOW HAVE YOU STRUCTURED THE EVENING?

The piece is longform but split into four parts – scenes, you might say. I had this feeling of making a drama, working on the emotional narrative through the music I chose. Sometimes these pieces would complement each other, at other times I wanted to take a complete left turn, but I was very much considering the whole show. Which world do we start in? What do we go through? And where do we end up?

The way I put it together and identified the music actually started off with post-it notes! I find if it's a long form piece I need to be able to visualise the whole, and I could play around with different combinations. There are recordings of all the pieces so I also created an audio sketch on Ableton music software. For the bits where there aren't, I wrote joins. I'm always searching for the 'third thing': the inexplicable magic when the right elements create far more than the sum of their parts. Luckily, even in the early stages when I couldn't articulate it, our chief executive Linda Begbie trusted in me!

WILL THERE ALSO BE 'TECHNOBANGERS' RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH THE OLDER MUSIC?

Yeah, absolutely. That was the whole point. I love the tracks that make me want to dance as much as Clark's other music. What's brilliant too is that he writes for string orchestra, piano and string quartet. And I believe that they can live in the same space.

That sonic space between ancient instruments and synthesizers is incredibly fertile ground if you spend some time digging. Rather than translating the electronic material directly onto acoustic instruments, it's about finding the spirit of the track and asking myself, 'What do live bodies and players add to this?'

SOMEONE'S PROBABLY GOING TO BE READING SOME OF THIS JUST BEFORE IT STARTS. ANYTHING YOU WANT TO TELL THEM? JUST AS THE LIGHTS GO DOWN?

Surrender to the unknown! It's okay to not know what's going on. I had that experience recently watching a dance company. But I was also brought back at the moments that I needed to be brought back at. I was given just enough to not feel like it was completely abstract. That's the kind of experience I want to give people.



SINEMIS

Two free DJ sets from Sinemis, wrapping around Manchester Collective's 'Refractions', combining left-field electronics with techno-inflected contemporary classical. We spoke to Sinemis to find out a little more about her and her music.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOU AND YOUR WORK – WE UNDERSTAND THAT AS WELL AS BEING A DJ YOU'RE ALSO A PRODUCER, JOURNALIST AND ACADEMIC?

I started my career in music as a journalist and wrote for outlets like Billboard, Time Out, Dazed, the Ransom Note, DJ Mag, Red Bull Music Academy...During this time, I started DJ'ing as well and with the two DJ'ing projects, supported artists like Christian Löffler, the XX, Metronomy, Weval, Gidge, Digitalism and played at venues like Iklectik, Somerset House, Elektrowerkz and St Matthias Church. I have been making music under the aliases Villette for my dance music output, and later on as Sinemis for the more avantgarde and ambient releases. A few years after studying composition as a postgraduate student at Guildhall, I joined the electronic music department as a lecturer in 2024.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR MUSICAL INFLUENCES?

My influences are quite varied and sit at both the more experimental and avantgarde side of the spectrum as well as the more accessible. Clark is an artist I have admired for a long time so it's really exciting to be a part of the Multitudes festival where I'll get to warm up and close the night after his performance with the Manchester Collective and Melanie Lane. Artists like Rival Consoles, Jon Hopkins, Telefon Tel

Aviv, Plaid, Forest Swords, Boards of Canada, Deena Abdelwahed, Faten Kanaan, Alessandro Cortini, Caterina Barbieri, Helene Vogelsinger, Ben Frost, Eomac, Throwing Snow, Vivian Koch, JakoJako, Venus Ex Machina, Suzanne Ciani are just some of the names I aspire to and there are many more that I would not be able to fit in here. Naturally, I'm also a big fan of every artist on my label Injazero Records as well.

YOUR SET BOOKENDS MANCHESTER COLLECTIVE'S PERFORMANCE WITH CLARK, AND IS BILLED AS COMBINING

ELECTRONICS WITH CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL. CAN YOU TELL US A BIT MORE ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT?

For the past decade, many artists have found exciting ways to incorporate elements of contemporary classical music with electronics and the set will be featuring examples of these names like Kiasmos, Grandbrothers, Gidge, Kate Simko, Apparat, Brandt Brauer Frick, as well as people on the left end of electronic music like Floating Points, Max Cooper, Lusine, Lapalux, Sky Civilian, Luke Abbott, Nathan Fake, James Holden...



SOUTHBANK CENTRE

THIS IS CLASSICAL MUSIC

IN THE 21ST CENTURY

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025/26
BE THE FIRST TO BOOK

MEMBERS' PRESALE: FRI 25 APR
GENERAL SALE: TUE 29 APR



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

KIRILL SEREBRENNIKOV x ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA SYMPHONY OF SHADOWS

Shostakovich's devastatingly powerful Seventh Symphony follows a huge emotional arc, from catastrophe to release, speaking to the power of human resilience. In this new visual imagining of the Symphony conceived by art director Kirill Serebrennikov, he and visual artist Ilya Shagalov have devised a work in which music and visuals are in precise alignment, creating a cohesive new whole in which sound and vision are two halves of the same experience.

MUSIC

Jean Sibelius
Finlandia (8 mins)

Kurt Weill
Four Walt Whitman Songs (17 mins)
Interval (20 mins)

Dmitri Shostakovich
Symphony No.7 in C (Leningrad) (79 mins)

CREATIVE TEAM

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Vasily Petrenko conductor
Roderick Williams baritone
Kirill Serebrennikov art director
Ilya Shagalov video artist
Ruth Hansford surtitled

Commissioned by the Southbank Centre and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

This performance is funded in part by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., New York, NY

Part of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's *Lights in the Dark* series

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Jo Kirkbride, writer and CEO of Edinburgh's Dunard Centre, introduces the music you'll hear tonight.

When the world falls apart, it is often music that survives and music that saves us. Today's programme is a powerful tale of struggle and resistance in the face of unimaginable loss and the devastation of war. This music demonstrates the power that music has to shape worlds, to bind nations and even to influence peace.

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957) FINLANDIA

Tracing a journey from darkness to light, from oppression to liberation, *Finlandia* has become a symbol of hope and resistance for the Finnish people. When Finland finally gained independence from Russia in 1917, it became the people's de facto national anthem, and Sibelius was proud to acknowledge the part that he – and his music – had played in the journey. 'We fought 600 years for our freedom and I am part of the generation which achieved it. Freedom! My *Finlandia* is the story of this fight. It is the song of our battle, our hymn of victory.'

KURT WEILL (1900–50) FOUR WALT WHITMAN SONGS

- I Beat! Beat! Drums!
- II Oh Captain! My Captain!
- III Come Up from the Fields, Father
- IV Dirge for Two Veterans

Little more than a decade after Finland freed itself from Russian occupation, across Europe a very different kind of threat was emerging. By 1933, the Nazi Party had all but taken control of the political system, and the first concentration camps were established. Kurt Weill, then enjoying widespread success off the back of his *The Threepenny Opera*, quickly found himself the subject of deliberate targeting and persecution and subsequently



WORLD
PREMIERE
PERFORMANCE

'This project invites audiences to rediscover Shostakovich's masterpiece outside traditional historical narratives, exploring timeless questions about human ambition, creativity, and destruction.'

Ilya Shagalov
video artist

fled Germany for Paris, two years later moving to the United States. In the years that followed, Weill embedded himself in American society and turned his attention to music for the theatre, leading to a string of successful Broadway shows.

the Japanese launched an attack on Pearl Harbour, killing more than 2,400 US servicemen, Weill found himself moved to write a series of songs commemorating those lost by his new homeland – each of them composed to texts by the American poet Walt Whitman during the American Civil War. Together, the collection captures feelings of rage, disbelief, nostalgia and deep mourning, and is at once both an angry work of protest and a thoughtful, reflective response to the atrocities of war.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–75) SYMPHONY NO.7 IN C (LENINGRAD)

- I Allegretto (moderately fast)
- II Moderato (poco allegretto) (a little moderately fast)
- III Adagio (slowly)
- IV Allegro non troppo (fast but not overly so)

On 22 June 1941, German forces invaded Russia's capital, Leningrad. What followed would be one of the longest and most brutal sieges of the Second World War, lasting for almost two and a half years, killing more than a million of the city's inhabitants, and reducing the city to rubble. Composer Dmitri Shostakovich was there to witness it first-hand and the intensity of the siege around him inspired a burst of creativity unlike anything he had experienced before. 'Neither savage

raids, German planes, nor the grim atmosphere of the beleaguered city could hinder the flow', he later recalled. 'I worked with an inhuman intensity I have never before reached.'

'It's not about Leningrad under siege', he explained, 'it's about the Leningrad that Stalin destroyed and that Hitler merely finished off.' And yet, it is not a work of resignation and despair – it is one of extraordinary bravery and optimism. With its massive orchestra and barrage of percussion, the 'Leningrad' moves from invasion to victory, refusing to be cowed by totalitarianism.

Leningrad itself would have to wait until August 1942 to hear the Symphony first hand. The premiere was given in Kuibyshev in March 1942 by the Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre, after which a microfilm of the score was smuggled out of Russia and delivered to Tehran, from where it was shipped to the US. This covert operation allowed Henry Wood to conduct a performance at the Proms in London on the anniversary of Russia's invasion in June 1942. When it was finally performed in Leningrad a month later, loudspeakers were used to broadcast the performance both to the city's residents and to the German troops. Only 16 members of the original Leningrad Radio Orchestra had survived to take part, and eyewitness accounts speak of an orchestra of emaciated musicians, one of whom was said to have been rescued from the morgue where he had been mistakenly left for dead. That the performance was able to take place at all is an astonishing and moving tale of courage and resistance in the face of unimaginable terror.

© Jo Kirkbride, 2025



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE



ILYA SHAGALOV INTERVIEW

We spoke to video artist Ilya Shagalov about *Symphony of Shadows*.

COULD YOU TELL US FIRST A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU, YOUR CAREER AND YOUR WORK?

In childhood, I studied piano. Though I struggled with the discipline of classical music and secretly wished to attend art school, the conflict shaped an enduring connection to music.

As a teenager, I attended a music festival, where I experienced the transformative power of video art integrated with music. It immediately inspired me – I knew that I wanted to create something equally expressive.

While studying theatre directing, Kirill Serebrennikov noticed my passion and offered me a formative opportunity on a production scored by Alexey Syumak. I learned to combine deep literary analysis with music, creating visual narratives beyond mere decoration, understanding that visual storytelling should extend meaning.

For me, visual imagery and music are inseparable. I believe that even abstract visuals can evoke profound emotional experiences. During live performances, synchronising with the orchestra and breathing as one collective organism becomes crucial for me.

DID YOU KNOW SYMPHONY NO.7 BEFORE YOU STARTED WORK ON THIS PROJECT? HOW DID SHOSTAKOVICH'S MUSIC INSPIRE YOU?

I knew Shostakovich's Symphony No.7 from school, presented then as a monument of patriotic resilience. The popular narrative of the Leningrad premiere during the blockade – with musicians weakened yet defiant – always struck me as profoundly troubling, even haunting. Where others saw heroism, I often perceived madness and tragic coercion.

Yet, beyond these historical connotations, Shostakovich's symphony overwhelms with its sheer intensity, emotional complexity, and raw power. For this project, I consciously moved away from traditional interpretations of war and siege. Together with Vasily, I aimed to reframe the symphony as a universal exploration of human ambition, strength, and vulnerability. Today, I hear in Shostakovich's music the struggle of a soul grappling with existential limits – both a celebration of humanity's ascent and a caution against its inherent destructiveness.

HOW IS THE VIDEO STRUCTURED, CAN YOU TELL AUDIENCES A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT THEY CAN EXPECT?

We've chosen a triptych structure – three screens emphasising symbolic significance and narrative fragmentation. Throughout the circle serves as a recurring visual motif, representing cyclicity, unity, and existential repetition.

I approached the four movements as distinct yet interconnected narratives:

I. *The Myth of Icarus*: a meditation on humanity's relentless quest for self-discovery and the catastrophic realization of our limitations.

II. *The Illusion of Harmony and Memory of Flight*: a reflective space of dreams and illusions, visualised abstractly through generative graphics, evoking the fragile peace after personal tragedy.

III. *The Depth of the Fall*: a confrontation with inner truths, past spirits, and transcendence, moving from external freedoms to inner liberation.

IV. *The Dichotomy of Progress*: a dramatic climax exploring humanity's complicated relationship with nature. Here, triumph and tragedy collide: humanity achieves unprecedented dominance, only to find itself atop the ruins of its own making. Who ultimately prevails – the creator or the destroyer?

Each movement adopts a distinctive visual language and technique, culminating in the final movement, which synthesises earlier themes, techniques, and aesthetics, offering audiences an immersive, transformative experience.

'I HEAR IN SHOSTAKOVICH'S MUSIC THE STRUGGLE OF A SOUL GRAPPLING WITH EXISTENTIAL LIMITS – BOTH A CELEBRATION OF HUMANITY'S ASCENT AND A CAUTION AGAINST ITS INHERENT DESTRUCTIVENESS.'



Book online at rpo.co.uk/lights

Lights in the Dark

Music of resistance, courage and hope



Conducted by Vasily Petrenko

Tue 20 May 2025, 7.30pm
Royal Albert Hall

Yunchan Lim
performs Chopin

Mussorgsky,
orch. Rimsky-Korsakov
Night on the Bare Mountain

Chopin
Piano Concerto No.2
with Yunchan Lim

Strauss
An Alpine Symphony

Sun 25 May 2025, 3pm
Royal Albert Hall

Maxim Vengerov
performs Sibelius

Strauss
Don Juan
Sibelius
Violin Concerto
with Maxim Vengerov
Stravinsky
The Firebird (Complete Ballet)

Wed 25 Jun 2025, 7.30pm
Southbank Centre's
Royal Festival Hall

Tchaikovsky's
Symphony No.4

Howell Lamia
Price
Piano Concerto in One Movement
with Jeneba Kanneh-Mason
Tchaikovsky Symphony No.4
This concert is generously supported by
The Tong Family



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

SOUTHBANK
CENTRE



Royal Albert Hall

PUNCH RECORDS x CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LEGACY

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), aims to be as relevant and connected to its home, the UK’s first global majority city, as possible. That comes to the fore in this collaboration with Birmingham-based music and arts agency Punch Records, which has been at the forefront of the city’s hip hop and grime scene for 25 years. Together they have fused the worlds of orchestral, hip-hop and grime music, creating meaningful connections between them. An adventure on the part of everyone involved, tonight’s performance is the end product of a free and open exchange of ideas and genuine curiosity about the genres represented.

Run Time: 1 hour 30 mins with no interval

Commissioned and produced by the CBSO and presented by the Southbank Centre.

CREATIVE TEAM

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Punch Records
Phil Meadows conductor
Big Dog Yogo
Brixx
C4
CreezOn
Dapz on the Map
Jaykae
Lady Leshurr
Mayhem
NODB
Pressure0121
RoxXxan
Saf One
Sox
T.Roadz
Trappy
Trilla

‘LEGACY charts the history of rap, grime, and RnB in Birmingham through interviews with the people that built the scene and make music within it.’

Tom Spurgin
CBSO

ABOUT LEGACY

LEGACY is a collaboration between the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and Punch Records, bringing together some of the best artists making music in the Midlands. The evening includes live performances by 15 of Birmingham’s leading music icons alongside the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra led by multi-award-winning conductor Phil Meadows. Tom Spurgin (CBSO) and Ammo Talwar MBE (Punch Records) spoke to us about the collaboration ahead of LEGACY.

‘Emma (CBSO CEO) and I were invited to the Birmingham premiere of LEGACY back in 2024, and we knew immediately that this was a project we needed to be involved in. We’d each been talking with Punch Records since we started our respective roles and knew that there would be a great opportunity for collaboration at some point, but hadn’t quite found it yet. LEGACY charts the history of rap, grime and R&B in Birmingham through interviews with the people that built the scene and make music within it. The stories and experiences are immense.

‘When the premiere finished, we went straight up to Ammo and Nikki from Punch Records and said “Let’s do this”. The CBSO and Punch Records have got so much in common: we’re determined to create incredible artwork; we showcase the best of Birmingham on a local, national, and international stage; and we’re both committed to supporting the next generation of young artists. LEGACY offered us a way to combine these by showcasing the pinnacle of music-making in Birmingham, both grime and orchestral.

‘Over the coming months, we worked closely with Phil Meadows (conductor and arranger) and Punch to design the concert experience and have been working to ensure that the heart of LEGACY – an homage to the founders of the scene and great West Midlands-based artists – is clear within our concert. Each artist’s work has been arranged for the CBSO by Phil and a group of talented young arrangers from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and has been workshopped with the full orchestra to ensure that we’re all doing each other justice. At the same time, the artists and CBSO got to see each other at work and build that bond and respect for their respective artistry.

‘The gig will be massive. It’s the biggest production we’ve organised in a long time, and I hope that CBSO and Punch fans enjoy what they see and hear. There have been sleepless nights to make this work from everyone involved but it’s going to be worth it.’

Tom Spurgin, Creative Director – Learning & Engagement (CBSO)

‘We are creating a landmark moment for the UK! One that bridges audiences and genres, uniting rap, grime and orchestral sounds in a way that truly represents modern day Britain. LEGACY will bring together 15 of the most influential 0121 artists in grime and rap, including Jaykae, Lady Leshurr and T.Roadz alongside the amazing City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and their 75 classically trained musicians – promising to be nothing short of extraordinary. It’s going to go off!!’

Ammo Talwar MBE, Founder & CEO (Punch Records)



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE

SASHA WALTZ & GUESTS x LONDON SINFONIETTA IN C

Sacha Waltz is renowned for her innate musicality as a choreographer, having tackled big symphonic works by Beethoven and Berlioz, and her movement, which has a strong element of improvisation (mirrored by Terry Riley's music in these performances), always beautifully reflecting and amplifying the music's intent. With movement perfectly aligned to the music and a strong visual element, tonight's collaboration with the London Sinfonietta is a perfect demonstration of the ambition of *Multitudes*.

MUSIC

Terry Riley
In C (60 mins)
No interval

CREATIVE TEAM

London Sinfonietta
Sasha Waltz & Guests

Supported by the Goethe-Institut London

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Author and journalist Olivia Giovetti introduces tonight's music:

TERRY RILEY (1935–) IN C

You might not immediately link John F Kennedy to the birth of minimalism. Nonetheless, that's where this story starts: In 1963, a 28-year-old Terry Riley was living in Paris. He received his master's in composition from the University of California, Berkeley, two years earlier, but was going through an artistic identity crisis, one he hoped to cure with some time in Europe, which he financed in part by playing piano in officers' clubs.

The clubs closed for an extended period of mourning that November, following Kennedy's assassination. Without a financial safety net, Riley returned with his family to San Francisco in early 1964. That November, just a few weeks shy of the anniversary of Kennedy's death, he premiered *In C*. It was a milestone work that defined Riley's musical identity and became both a cornerstone of what would become the minimalist school and a case study in chain reactions.

It's also a work embedded in the anxieties and revelations of the 1960s. 'I was never concerned with minimalism,' Riley later said of the piece. 'But I was very concerned with the psychedelic movement of the 60s as an opening towards consciousness.' *In C* provides its own kind of opening. Despite its historic weight, the music as written on the page seems scant, more like notes towards a work than the work itself. Across a single page – without any instrumentation, parts, or tempo markings – are 53 cells, musical motifs that often consist of just a handful of notes.

The work is ideally suited to an ensemble of 35 people or more, but can be adapted across size and scope.



'Our artistic work is a permanent search for empathy and humanity. It strives against all forms of discrimination, violence and ideology and stands up for the democratic values of an open and diverse society. This is what in particular the project In C, not only a political piece, but actually a democratic process in dance and music, stands for.'

Sasha Waltz

UK
PREMIERE
PERFORMANCES

The only hard-and-fast rule is that players must play these motifs in numeric order, but they can repeat and riff on them as they see fit. Underscoring all of this is a pianist who plays a heartbeat of steady C-natural notes. Given that the average runtime of *In C* is anywhere between 45 and 90 minutes, that can mean upwards of 15,000 equally-paced notes.

Contrast this with the freedom given to the other musicians moving through the 53 musical figures. Some are equally simple and rigid – a single quaver, sustained semibreves. Even the more complex figures mostly range between simple, tight intervals of seconds, thirds and fifths. The most complex and longest figure is number 35, two-thirds of the way through the work, which has a total of 25 notes, but still sounds like the fragment of a tune than a tune itself. Yet, while the overarching melody is minimal, the overarching effect is not. As players go at their own pace, the musical motifs become layered on top of one another, creating a dense tangle of sound; layers on layers of musical patterns.

Still, there is harmony in the chaos, guided by Riley's jazz club background. The real task he sets for

musicians is as much (if not more) about listening to one another as it is performing. 'Players repeat a figure ad lib until they decide to continue, but they must listen to one another to decide when their change will have the greatest impact,' Robert Carl writes in his book on *In C*. 'Thus, though the notes and rhythms are all predetermined, the piece creates its own oral tradition. Like rock, it emphasises a pulsating "groove" that propels the music forward.'

Once each musician reaches figure 53, Riley instructs them to stay on it until the entire ensemble arrives there. 'The group then makes a large crescendo and diminuendo a few times, and each player drops out as he or she wishes,' he writes, and we end as we begin with the heartbeat of the C notes on the piano. Yet suggesting that there is an end point of *In C* is a bit of a misnomer. Music, in Riley's view, is a continuum. It's not uncommon to still feel the resonance of those figures in the atmosphere, or in your own body as you leave the concert hall. When we listen to a performance of *In C*, we are simply tuning in to sounds that are, on some level, always there.

© Olivia Giovetti, 2025



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE

HUANG RUO x BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA

CITY OF FLOATING SOUNDS

A concert that gives you, the audience, a stake in the performance. As you walk towards the Royal Festival Hall, you'll help to make and play the music, with the sense of a symphony gathering pace as people audience members walk through the city, converging on the Southbank Centre. Arriving into the Royal Festival Hall, you'll then hear Huang Ruo's beautiful piece in full. A deconstruction and reconstruction of a symphony, using everyday technology that is in all of our hands, with audience members a fundamental part of the performance.

MUSIC

Advaith Jagannath
Gaia (5 mins)

Huang Ruo
City of Floating Sounds (45 mins)

Arvo Pärt
Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten
(6 mins)

Run time: 1 hour and 15 minutes with no interval
(approx)

CREATIVE TEAM

BBC Concert Orchestra
Ellie Slorach conductor
Josh Kopeček creative technologist
Lighting design based on original design
by Annie Guo and Huang Ruo

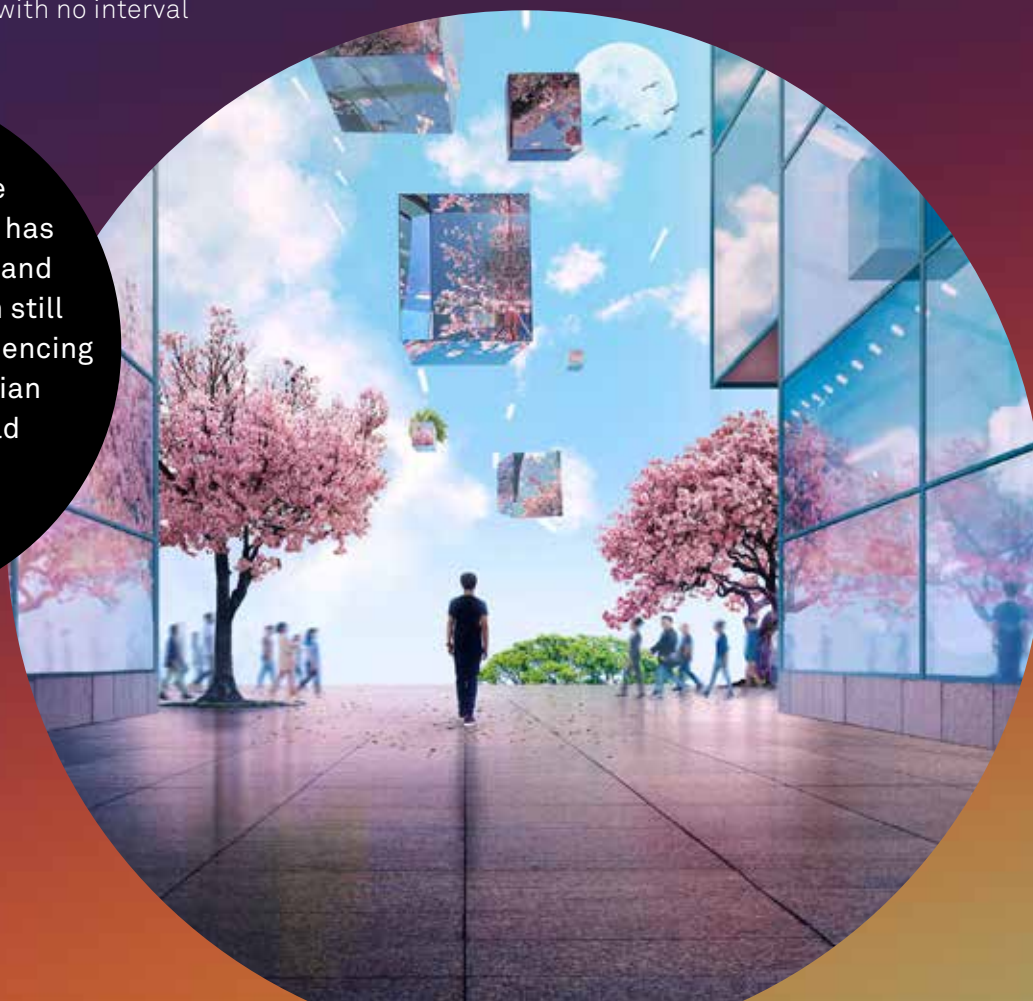
Presented by the Southbank Centre and BBC Concert Orchestra.

'It is a piece written for the people of the city. Everyone who has a phone can participate, and everyone who doesn't can still participate simply by experiencing it. That, to me, is a utopian vision of what our world should be.'

Huang Ruo
Composer



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE



ABOUT THE MUSIC

We introduce the music featured in tonight's performance.

ADVAITH JAGANNATH (2006 –) GAIA

Advaith Jagannath, BBC Young Composer 2023 winner, writes of his work, '*Gaia* is an orchestral journey inspired by the profound 'overview effect' described by Frank White in 1987. This phenomenon, experienced by astronauts, evokes a transformative sense of awe and unity when viewing Earth from space. The piece is a musical exploration of humanity's evolving relationship with our planet.

The journey begins with a solo horn introducing the main theme, which represents the relationship between humanity and Earth. Following this, the orchestra becomes restless and uneasy. Overlapping lines and dissonant harmonies evoke the political tensions and instability at the time of the Apollo space missions in the 1960s and early 1970s. Emerging from this turbulence, a solo trumpet reprises the main theme, leading to a powerful build-up. This culminates in another, majestic return of the main theme – but inverted to represent a newfound perspective on humanity and Earth, just like the astronauts who first saw Earth from space. The piece concludes delicately, reminding us of the fragility of our bond with the planet. Through subtle orchestral textures and gentle harmonies, *Gaia* leaves us with a sense of wonder and responsibility towards our shared home.'

HUANG RUO (1976 –) CITY OF FLOATING SOUNDS

City of Floating Sounds invites you to connect with your surroundings and others around you in new ways. Pushing the boundaries of classical music performance, *City of Floating Sounds* takes music out into the city. Guided by our bespoke mobile app, you'll make your way through the streets of London listening to fragments of Huang Ruo's meditative new work and experience a shifting soundscape as you take part in your journey through the city.

As you get closer to the Southbank Centre – and other audience members – the sound will expand,

revealing more parts of the work. An opportunity to explore the city in a new light – the path you take and who you meet on your journey can all change what you hear. On arrival at the Royal Festival Hall, enjoy *City of Floating Sounds* performed live by the BBC Concert Orchestra.

A message from composer Huang Ruo:

'*City of Floating Sounds* is a symphony, a public performance art, an interactive live installation, a relaxed walk in the city and a piece of music theatre involving and for the city and its people. This work breaks down barriers of performer and audience and brings awareness of the uncontrollable pacing of urbanisation and its consumption of nature.'

ARVO PÄRT (1935 –) CANTUS IN MEMORIAM BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Though the two never met, Estonian composer Arvo Pärt was deeply moved by the news of fellow composer Benjamin Britten's death in 1976, inspiring him to write *Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten*. In the 1960s, Pärt was writing music in the avant-garde styles of the mid-20th century, which rejected traditional ideas of harmony and melody. However, by the year of Britten's death he had not written any music in eight years due to a creative crisis, turning instead to spiritual reflection and the study of renaissance and medieval music.

Pärt emerged from this period with a whole new musical language which he termed tintinnabuli. Taking its name from the Latin for 'bell', it draws inspiration from the resonance of chiming bells and ancient choral music. In *Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten*, Pärt transforms the simplicity of a descending scale into a complex and profoundly moving expression of remembrance.

Pärt programme note © Chris Gemmell

FRANTIC ASSEMBLY x AURORA ORCHESTRA CARNIVAL

Frantic Assembly have pioneered and championed a unique take on theatre, expressing their work through movement and physicality. In this collaboration, they have worked with Aurora Orchestra to enable the musicians to express the physical language that Frantic Assembly have created. The musicians themselves become the physical theatre artists in the performance, their movement bringing Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* to life in an entirely new and unique way.

MUSIC

Saint-Saëns
The Carnival of the Animals (30 mins)

Richard Ayres
Dr Frompou's Anatomical Study
of an Orchestra (World premiere) (40 mins)
Run Time: 1 hour 10 minutes with no interval

CREATIVE TEAM

Chris Akrill actor/dancer
Naomi Frederick actor
Aurora Orchestra
Co-directed by **Jane Mitchell** and **Scott Graham**
Lighting design by **Simisola Majekodunmi**
Production design by **Jon Bausor**
Script by **Kate Wakeling**

An Aurora Orchestra/Southbank Centre co-production
developed in collaboration with Frantic Assembly.

Carnival is kindly supported by the Vaughan Williams
Foundation and Cockayne – Grants for the Arts: a donor
advised fund held at The London Community Foundation.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

*Writer and editor Clare Stevens introduces the music
in today's performances.*

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835–1921) THE CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS ZOOLOGICAL FANTASY FOR 2 PIANOS & ENSEMBLE (PERFORMED FROM MEMORY)

1. Introduction et Marche royale du lion
(Introduction and Royal March of the Lion)
2. Poules et Coqs (Hens and Roosters)
3. Hémiones (Wild Asses)
4. Tortues (Tortoises)
5. L'Éléphant (The Elephant)
6. Kangourous (Kangaroos)
7. Aquarium
8. Personnages à longues oreilles
(Characters with Long Ears)
9. Le Coucou au fond des bois
(The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Woods)
10. Volière (Aviary)
11. Pianistes (Pianists)
12. Fossiles (Fossils)
13. Le Cygne (The Swan)
14. Finale

RICHARD AYRES (1965 -) DR FROMPOU'S ANATOMICAL STUDY OF AN ORCHESTRA (WORLD PREMIERE)

Roll up! Roll up! Dr Frompou's musical menagerie is
coming to town, bringing you a performance the like of
which you won't have seen or heard before!

You may well recognise some of the music you are
about to hear, especially The Swan, the gorgeous
penultimate movement of *The Carnival of the Animals*
by Saint-Saëns, which features the cello. Although it
comes at the end of the suite, it was written first, to
celebrate the career of the composer's cellist friend

UK
PREMIERE
PERFORMANCES

'Roll up! Roll up!
Dr Frompou's musical
menagerie is coming to town,
bringing you a performance
the like of which you won't
have seen or
heard before!'

Charles-Joseph Lebouc as he reached retirement.
Saint-Saëns took this as a starting point for a sequence
of pieces that were designed to entertain audience and
performers alike at a private concert in Paris.

They are full of musical jokes, including references to
many well-known pieces by other composers. Stubby-
legged tortoises crawl along in a bizarrely stately
version of a rapid can-can by Offenbach, normally
performed by long-legged dancing girls. A double bass
represents an elephant lumbering around to a waltz
tune written by Hector Berlioz as a ballet for ethereal
fairies. But Saint-Saëns made fun of himself, too –
Fossils parodies his own very popular *Danse Macabre*.
It also looks back to his childhood enthusiasm for fossil-
hunting – brought up by his mother and great aunt after
the death of his father when he was only a few months
old, Saint-Saëns was not only a musical prodigy who
composed his first piano piece aged three and gave his
first public piano recital at ten, but a clever little boy
who was fascinated by science, maths and archaeology.

In another movement, Kangaroos spring from one piano
keyboard to another – but can you hear them pausing
between jumps to contemplate the vastness of the
Australian bush? The Characters with Long Ears seem
to be braying donkeys ... but could Saint-Saëns also
have been taking a pop at music critics? Most of the
music in these hugely inventive pieces showcases the
skilful playing for which French musicians were famous,
but if you've ever lived with a beginner you'll recognise
the stumbling stops and starts of the two Pianists
trying to practise their scales in movement 11.

The Carnival received its first performance on Shrove
Tuesday 1886, with the composer himself taking one of
the piano parts. A journalist of the time described it as
'an amusing symphonic buffoonery', adding that 'the
wild fantasy that reigns supreme cannot prevent the
maestro's imagination from breaking free in charming

and extremely delicate inspirations'. An example of
these is the exquisite evocation of an Aquarium, in
which rippling piano melodies represent the water,
shimmering and sparkling with the very unusual sounds
of a chromatic bell tree.

A sure-fire hit, you might think, from the opening
movement, in which growling lions parade in to the
sound of a regal fanfare, to the finale that draws all the
musical strands together in a cheerful conclusion. But
after two more performances for friends and colleagues
– including the renowned pianist and composer Franz
Liszt, who apparently enjoyed it – Saint-Saëns packed
away the music of all the movements except The Swan,
and refused to let anyone else play it. He was afraid it
would damage his reputation as a serious musician,
especially in Germany, where he had a flourishing career
as a pianist. It was not until a year after its composer's
death that the complete score of the Carnival appeared
in print, and public performances could take place.

Which leads us to the second piece of music in this
concert, a new work by Richard Ayres called
Dr Frompou's Anatomical Study of an Orchestra. It turns
out that the musicians who have brought to life Saint-
Saëns's magical animals are not free to go home after the
performance. They too have been locked away, switched
off and held captive by Dr Frompou so that he can
control them, force them to follow his instructions, and
investigate what it takes to create such skilful players.

But wait a moment ... for once, when he leaves his
laboratory, Dr Frompou has forgotten to switch off the
viola. Can the energy remaining in its vibrating lower
string loosen the crusty oxidation of evil that keeps
the other musicians captive and immobile? And if they
do find freedom, will they know what to do with it? Can
they experience true joy? Listen, and find out.

© Clare Stevens, 2025



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
ADDITIONAL CONTENT ABOUT
THIS PERFORMANCE

Enjoy your visit

The Southbank Centre is 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 write to us at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX, or email hello@southbankcentre.co.uk

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



SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Love what we do?

Why not support our work and get closer to the art?

You can support us year-round by joining our family of Members and supporters, with different levels of access to our artistic programme. You'll enjoy the first chance to book presale tickets, your own Members' Lounge and never pay booking fees.

Your support will help us to deliver life-changing participation projects and a programme of free events to help open up the arts to all.

Find out more at southbankcentre.co.uk/join

London Philharmonic Orchestra Junior Artists,
© Benjamin Ealovega



THANK YOU

Your continued and generous support enables us to keep doing what we're doing, bringing millions of people together by opening up the unique art spaces that we care for. In particular, we would like to thank:

Sponsors and Partners

Bloomberg Philanthropies
Edwardian Hotels
HB Reavis
Sea Containers
TCL
Van Cleef & Arpels

Corporate Members

Almacantar
Bloomberg
Christian Dior Couture
Imperial Health Charity
Mishcon de Reya
Sotheby's
5654 & Company

Grantmakers

Art Fund
Arts Council England Lottery Funded
The Baring Foundation
City Bridge Foundation
Cockayne Grants for the Arts
Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation (DBF)
Fluxus Art Projects
Garfield Weston Foundation
The Goethe-Institut London
Henry Moore Foundation
Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa)
The Italian Cultural Institute in London
The John S Cohen Foundation
The Karlsson Játiva Charitable Foundation
Korea Foundation
Kukje Art and Culture Foundation
Ministry of Culture, Taiwan (R.O.C.)
The Nicholas Berwin Charitable Trust
Philip and Irene Toll Gage Foundation
RC Foundation, Taiwan (R.O.C.)
The Rothschild Foundation
Samsung Foundation of Culture
T.S. Eliot Foundation
VIA Art Fund
Yang Won Sun Foundation

Patrons & Major Donors

Kate & Ajay Agarwal
anonymous art project
Nathalie Aureglia-Caruso
Laura Bailey
Marc & Lynne Benioff
Big Give Foundation
Michael Blank
Tom & Jo Bloxham
BLUM Los Angeles, Tokyo, New York
The Rory and Elizabeth Brooks Foundation
Simon Morris & Annalisa Burello
Max & Monique Burger and the TOY family
Burke Family Foundation
Piers D Butler

Sarah Cannon
Matt & Pia Cohler
Marie-Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre
Lady Alison Deighton
Maryam Eisler
Dr Paul Ettlinger
Bridgitt & Bruce Evans
Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation
The Form Foundation
Gagosian
Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin
Galerie Chantel Crousel
Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Gillian Jason Gallery
Glenstone Museum
Lydia & Manfred Gorvy
Alexander Graham
Professor Lynda Gratton & The Hon Sir Nigel Boardman

Lisa Honeyman & Baer Pettit
Pippa Hornby
Mike & Antonia Hussey
Mary & Daniel James
David & Clare Kershaw
Shareen Khattar Harrison
kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York
Wendy Lee
Lehmann Maupin
David Maclean
Tristin & Martin Mannion, Boston, MA
Marian Goodman Gallery
Liz & Luke Mayhew
Jane & David Metter
Misso Family
Rahul Moodgal
Pace Gallery
Marshall & Véronique Parke
Perrotin
The Roberts Institute of Arts
The Roger and Ingrid Pilkington Charitable Trust
Bianca & Stuart Roden
Corinne & Robert Rooney
Sir Paul & Lady Jill Ruddock CBE
Danielle Ryan
William Sargent & Sandhini Poddar
Eleanor & Francis Shen
David and Jennifer Sieff Charitable Trust
Sprüth Magers
Malek & Maria Sukkar
Thomas Dane Gallery
Tioc Foundation
Lara Veroner Gubitosi
Catherine Walsh
George Wells
White Cube
Yancey Richardson Gallery
Jenny Yeh, Winsing Arts Foundation
Anna & Michael Zaoui
David Zwirner Gallery

Artistic Director's Circle

Roger & Alison Heath
Dr Christopher & The Lady Juliet Tadgell
David Zwirner Gallery

Directors' Circle

Brian Abel
The Hon. David Bernstein
Karl Otto & Ingemo Bonnier
Richard Buxton
Sir Ronald & Lady Cohen
Jill Cramphorn
Stefan Cross
Adam Dustagheer
Sarah Elson
Jacqueline & Michael Gee
Dr Peter Guider
Malcolm Herring
Dr Patsy Hickman
Ralph & Yolande Kanza
Mr Karpukhovich & Mrs Litvintseva
Donovan Kelly & Ann Wood
Colin Kirkpatrick
Sybil Kretzmer
Steven Larcombe
Varda Lotan & Angus Braham
Robert McHenry & Sally Lloyd-Bostock
Mrs Kathrine Palmer
Ceinwen & Jonathan Rees
Roberta & Stephen Rosefield
Anand & Lena Saggar
Sue Sheridan OBE
Matthew Slotover & Emily King
Mark Smith & Geraldine Wong-Smith
Andrew Smith
Jo & Toby Thomson

And all those who wish to remain anonymous

Governors

Misan Harriman Chair
Luke Mayhew Deputy Chair
Kieron Boyle
Anaïs Hayes
Dame Vivian Hunt
Mike Hussey
Sir Roly Keating
Jerome Misso
Ndidi Okezie OBE
Sandy Ratray
Sir William Sargent
Libby Savill
Lynne Shamwana
Leigh Tavaziva

With thanks to all our Governors for their support of the classical music programme.

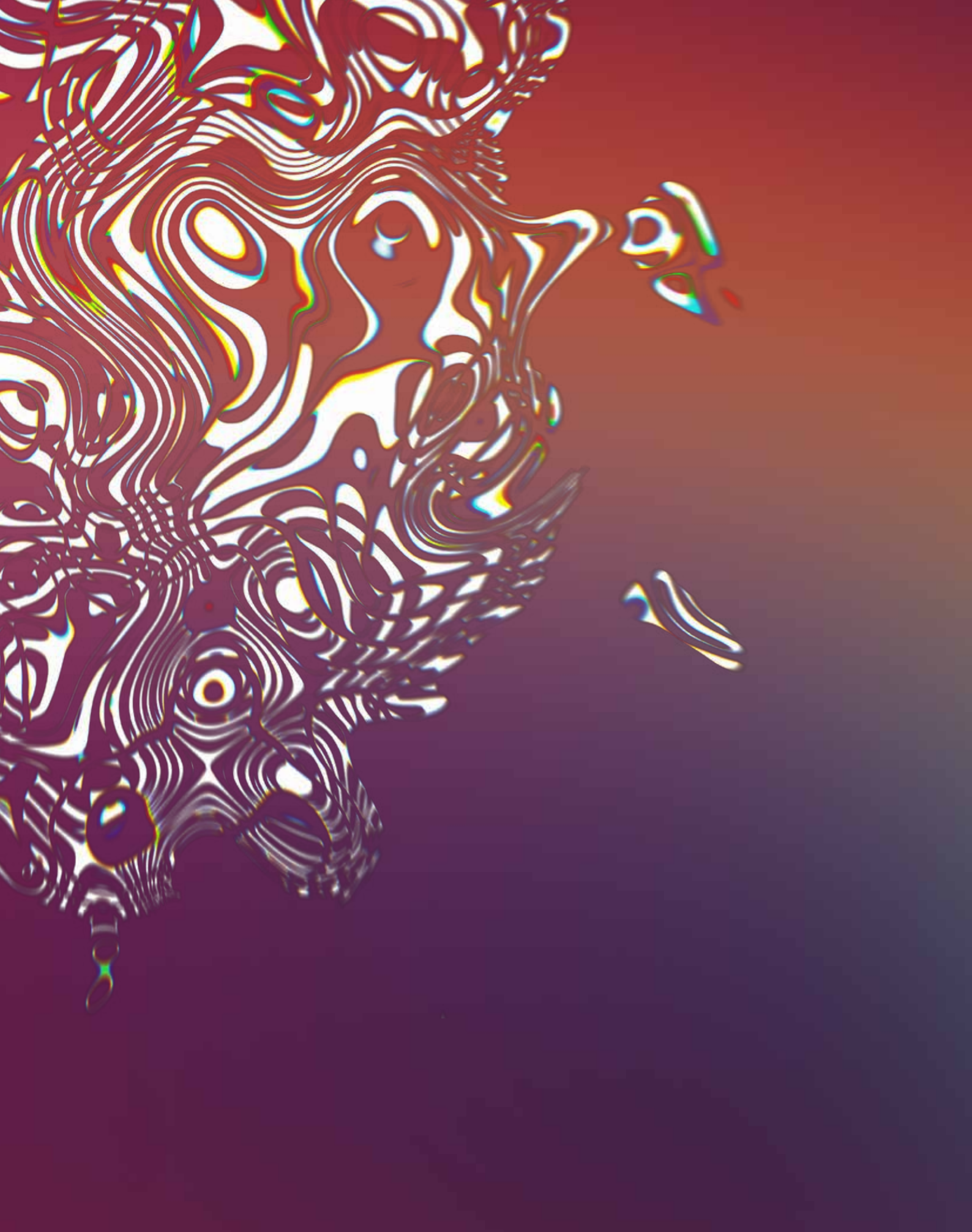


Image credits here...