

London Philharmonic Orchestra

2023/24 concert season at the Southbank Centre

Free concert programme



**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**
RESIDENT

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jepsen

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis

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

Artistic Director Elena Dubinets **Chief Executive** David Burke

Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Friday 12 April 2024 | 7.30pm

The Planets

Dvořák

Cello Concerto (40')

Interval (20')

Holst

The Planets (48')

Edward Gardner conductor

Generously supported by Aud Jepsen

Nicolas Altstaedt

cello

London Youth Choir

Conductor: Matthew Quinn

The timings shown are not precise and are given only as a guide.

Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

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MARQUEE TV

Tonight's concert is being filmed for future broadcast on Marquee TV.

We would be grateful if audience noise during the performance could be kept to a minimum, and if audience members could kindly hold applause until the end of the work. Thank you for your co-operation.

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

RESIDENT



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Welcome

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

We're the largest arts centre in the UK and one of the nation's top visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. We're here to present great cultural experiences that bring people together, and open up the arts to everyone.

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.

Drinks

You are welcome to bring drinks from the venue's bars and cafés into the Royal Festival Hall to enjoy during tonight's concert. Please be considerate to fellow audience members by keeping noise during the concert to a minimum, and please take your glasses with you for recycling afterwards. Thank you.

Enjoyed tonight's concert?

Help us to share the wonder of the LPO by making a donation today. Use the QR code to donate via the LPO website, or visit lpo.org.uk/donate. Thank you.



LPO news

Tonight's concert on Marquee TV

We're delighted that a selection of concerts from our LPO 2023/24 Royal Festival Hall season are being filmed for broadcast on Marquee TV. This evening's concert is being filmed for broadcast on **Saturday 18 May 2024** at 7pm, and will remain available to watch free of charge for 48 hours without a Marquee TV subscription.

If you would like to subscribe for unlimited access to Marquee TV's extensive range of music, opera, theatre and dance productions, you can enjoy 50% off an annual subscription with code **50LPO**.

Visit discover.marquee.tv/50lpo to find out more or subscribe.

FUNharmonics Family Concert: Appalachian Spring – Sunday 5 May

Our FUNharmonics family concerts at the Royal Festival Hall are the perfect way to introduce the joy of classical music to the whole family! As well as the concert itself, there are lots of free musical activities in the foyer spaces all morning, so you can make a day of your visit.

Our next FUNharmonics concert, 'Appalachian Spring', is on **Sunday 5 May** at 12 noon. Join the London Philharmonic Orchestra for a lively concert of celebration, optimism and fabulous American music. Presenter Rachel Leach will tell the story from the stage, breaking down the music and keeping the young audience engaged and joining in.

This concert and activities are suitable for children aged 6+. Book now at lpo.org.uk/funharmonics

We'd love to hear from you

We hope you enjoy tonight's concert. Could you spare a few moments afterwards to complete a short survey about your experience? Your feedback is invaluable to us and will help to shape our future plans.

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



On stage tonight

First Violins

Pieter Schoeman* Leader
Chair supported by Neil Westreich
Alice Ivy-Pemberton
Co-Leader

Vesselin Gellev Sub-Leader
Kate Oswin

Chair supported by Eric Tomsett
Lasma Taimina
Chair supported by Irina Gofman &
Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave

Minn Majoe
Chair supported by Dr Alex & Maria
Chan

Martin Höhmann
Elizaveta Tyun
Yang Zhang

Katalin Varnagy
Chair supported by Sonja Drexler
Daniel Pukach

Alice Apreda Howell
Cassandra Hamilton
Eleanor Bartlett
Gabriela Opacka
Eve Kennedy

Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal
Molly Cockburn
Fiona Higham
Chair supported by David & Yi
Buckley

Nancy Elan
Joseph Maher
Nynke Hijlkema
Ashley Stevens
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Chair supported by Friends of the
Orchestra
Paula Clifton-Everest
Emma Purslow
Caroline Heard
Alison Strange
Emma Oldfield
Jessica Coleman

Violas

Philip Nolte Guest Principal
Lucia Ortiz Sauco
Benedetto Pollani
Martin Wray
Laura Vallejo
James Heron
Rachel Robson

Daniel Cornford
Jisu Song
Toby Warr
Katharine Leek
Jill Valentine

Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal
Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart
Roden

Henry Shapard
David Lane
Hee Yeon Cho
Francis Bucknall
Pedro Silva
Sibylle Hentschel
Iain Ward
Helen Thomas
Julia Morneweg

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal
Hugh Kluger
George Peniston
Lowri Estell
Simon Oliver
Catherine Ricketts
Michael Fuller
Sam Rice

Flutes

Juliette Bausor Principal
Frederico Paixão
Stewart McIlwham*
Katherine Bicknell

Piccolos

Stewart McIlwham*
Principal
Katherine Bicknell

Alto Flute

Stewart McIlwham*

Oboes

Ian Hardwick* Principal
Alice Munday
Emily Cockbill

Cor Anglais

Sue Böhling* Principal
Chair supported by Dr Barry Grimaldi

Bass Oboe

Adrian Rowlands

Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont*
Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel
Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton
Thomas Watmough
Chair supported by Roger
Greenwood
James Maltby

Bass Clarinet

Paul Richards* Principal

Bassoons

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

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

John Ryan* Principal
Annemarie Federle Principal
Chair supported by Victoria
Robey CBE
Martin Hobbs
Mark Vines Co-Principal
Gareth Mollison
Jason Koczur
Duncan Fuller

Trumpets

Paul Beniston* Principal
Tom Nielsen Co-Principal
Anne McAnaney*
Tom Watts
Joe Skypala

Trombones

Mark Templeton* Principal
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton
Merin Rhyd

Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

Euphonium

David Whitehouse

Tuba

Lee Tsarmaklis* Principal

Timpani

Simon Carrington*
Principal
Chair supported by Victoria
Robey CBE
William Lockhart

Percussion

Andrew Barclay* Principal
Chair supported by Gill & Garf
Collins
Alex Neal
Karen Hutt
Chair supported by Mr B C Fairhall
James Bower

Harps

Sue Blair Guest Principal
Tamara Young

Celeste

Katherine Tinker

Organ

Richard Gowers

Assistant Conductor

Luis Castillo-Briceño

**Professor at a London
conservatoire*

The LPO also
acknowledges
the following chair
supporter whose
player is not present at
this concert:

Ryze Power

London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Mark Allan

Uniquely groundbreaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been celebrated as one of the world's great orchestras since Sir Thomas Beecham founded it in 1932. With every performance we aim to bring wonder to the modern world and cement our position as a leading orchestra for the 21st century.

Our home is here at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, where we're at the beating heart of London's cultural life. You'll also find us at our resident venues in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden, and on tour throughout the UK and internationally, performing to sell-out audiences worldwide. Each summer we're resident at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, combining the magic of opera with Glyndebourne's glorious setting in the Sussex countryside.

Sharing the wonder

You'll find us online, on streaming platforms, on social media and through our broadcast partnership with Marquee TV. During the pandemic period we launched 'LPOnline': over 100 videos of performances, insights and introductions to playlists, which led to us being named runner-up in the Digital Classical Music Awards 2020. During 2023/24 we're once again working with Marquee TV to broadcast selected live concerts, so you can share or relive the wonder from your own living room.

Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included some of the greatest historic names like Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2021 Edward Gardner became our 13th Principal Conductor, taking the Orchestra into its tenth decade. Vladimir Jurowski became Conductor Emeritus in recognition of his impact as Principal Conductor from 2007–21. Karina Canellakis is our current Principal Guest Conductor and Tania León our Composer-in-Residence.

Soundtrack to key moments

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

We also release live, studio and archive recordings on our own label, and are one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month.

Pieter Schoeman

Leader

Next generations

There's nothing we love more than seeing the joy of children and families enjoying their first musical moments, and we're passionate about equipping schools and teachers through schools' concerts, resources and training. Reflecting our values of collaboration and inclusivity, our OrchLab and Open Sound Ensemble projects offer music-making opportunities for adults and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Our LPO Junior Artists programme is leading the way in creating pathways into the profession for young artists from under-represented communities, and our LPO Young Composers and Foyle Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. We also recently launched the LPO Conducting Fellowship, supporting the development of outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds currently under-represented in the profession.

This season

The centrepiece of our 2023/24 season is our spring 2024 festival *The Music in You*. Reflecting our adventurous spirit, the festival embraces all kinds of expression – dance, music theatre, and audience participation. We'll collaborate with artists from across the creative spectrum, and give premieres by composers including Tania León, Julian Joseph, Daniel Kidane, Victoria Vita Polevá, Luís Tinoco and John Williams.

Rising stars making their debuts with us in 2023/24 include conductors Tianyi Lu, Oksana Lyniv, Jonathon Heyward and Natalia Ponomarchuk, accordionist João Barradas and organist Anna Lapwood. We also present the long-awaited conclusion of Conductor Emeritus Vladimir Jurowski's Wagner *Ring Cycle*, *Götterdämmerung*, and, as well as our titled conductors Edward Gardner and Karina Canellakis, we welcome back classical stars including Anne-Sophie Mutter, Robin Ticciati, Christian Tetzlaff and Danielle de Niese.



© Benjamin Ealovega

Pieter Schoeman was appointed Leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2008, having previously been Co-Leader since 2002. He is also a Professor of Violin at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance.

Pieter has performed worldwide as a soloist and recitalist in such famous halls as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Moscow's Rachmaninov Hall, Capella Hall in St Petersburg, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles and the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. As a chamber musician he regularly appears at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall. His chamber music partners have included Anne-Sophie Mutter, Veronika Eberle, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Boris Garlitsky, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Martin Helmchen and Julia Fischer.

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

Pieter has appeared as Guest Leader with the BBC, Barcelona, Bordeaux, Lyon and Baltimore symphony orchestras; the Rotterdam and BBC Philharmonic orchestras; and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

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

lpo.org.uk



Edward Gardner

Principal Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Photographer London

Edward Gardner has been Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since September 2021. He is also Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic, a position he will relinquish at the end of the 2023/24 season. From August 2024 he will undertake the Music Directorship of the Norwegian Opera and Ballet, having been their Artistic Advisor since February 2022.

This season Edward conducts the LPO in ten concerts at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. In October 2023 he toured with the Orchestra to South Korea and Taiwan, and this season will also take them to major European cities including Paris, Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Bruges. As part of the LPO's cross-arts festival 'The Music in You' in March 2024, Edward conducted concerts including Haydn's *The Creation*; a reinvention of Szymanowski's ballet *Harnasie* in collaboration with choreographer Wayne McGregor; Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*; and Mozart's *Mass in C minor*. Other highlights with the Orchestra this season include Holst's *The Planets* and Stravinsky's *Petrushka*.

Edward opened the Bergen Philharmonic season in September with Mahler's Symphony No. 1. He completes his tenure as Chief Conductor at the closing of next summer's Bergen International Festival, conducting Mahler's Symphony No. 8. The orchestra will be joined by several choirs, including the Edvard Grieg Kor, of which Edward is the Principal Conductor.

As Artistic Advisor of the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, this season Edward will conduct a triple-bill of Schumann's *Frauen-Liebe und Leben*, Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Zemlinsky's *A Florentine Tragedy*. Future plans with the company include a Wagner *Ring Cycle* commencing in spring 2026.

In demand as a guest conductor, recent seasons have seen Edward make debuts with the Cleveland Symphony, Staatskapelle Berlin, Bavarian Radio Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia, San Francisco Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony and Vienna Symphony orchestras; while returns have included engagements with the Chicago Symphony, Montreal Symphony and Philharmonia orchestras, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and the Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala di Milano. He also continued his longstanding collaboration with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, where he was Principal Guest Conductor from 2010–16, and with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, whom he has conducted at both the First and Last Nights of the BBC Proms.

Music Director of English National Opera for eight years (2007–15), Edward has also built a strong relationship with New York's Metropolitan Opera, where he has conducted productions of *The Damnation of Faust*, *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Werther*. In London he made his Royal Opera House debut in 2019 in a new production of *Káťa Kabanová*, followed by *Werther* a season later. Elsewhere, he has conducted at the Bavarian State Opera, La Scala, Chicago Lyric Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Opéra National de Paris, and this season he will conduct a double-bill of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Poulenc's *La voix humaine* at Teatro di San Carlo.

A passionate supporter of young talent, Edward founded the Hallé Youth Orchestra in 2002 and regularly conducts the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. He has a close relationship with The Juilliard School of Music and with the Royal Academy of Music, which appointed him its inaugural Sir Charles Mackerras Conducting Chair in 2014.

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

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

Nicolas Altstaedt

cello



© Marco Borggreve

German-French cellist Nicolas Altstaedt is one of today's most sought-after and versatile artists. As a soloist, conductor and artistic director, he performs repertoire spanning from early music to contemporary, playing on both period and modern instruments.

Nicolas Altstaedt has appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra on several occasions, most recently in November 2023, when he performed Dvořák's Concerto at the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie under Edward Gardner. Tomorrow evening (13 April), he and the Orchestra will reprise the Concerto at Saffron Hall, again under Gardner.

Other highlights of the 2023/24 season include tours with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées with Philippe Herreweghe, and Arcangelo with Jonathan Cohen. Nicolas also makes debuts with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and National Arts Centre Orchestra Ottawa.

Since his highly acclaimed debut with the Vienna Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel at the Lucerne Festival, Nicolas's notable residencies and collaborations have included with the Budapest Festival Orchestra and Iván Fischer; the Southwest German Radio Symphony Orchestra and Teodor Currentzis; the Helsinki Festival with Esa-Pekka Salonen; the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin with Robin Ticciati; the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra with Lahav Shani; the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich; the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra with Philippe Herreweghe; the Munich Philharmonic with Krzysztof Urbanski; the European Union Youth Orchestra with Vasily Petrenko;

all the BBC orchestras, including with John Storgårds; the Orchestre National de France with Cristian Măcelaru; the NHK and Yomiuri Nippon (with Kazuki Yamada) symphony orchestras; Washington's National Symphony Orchestra; and the Sydney and New Zealand symphony orchestras.

Nicolas Altstaedt regularly performs on period instruments with ensembles such as Il Giardino Armonico with Giovanni Antonini, B'Rock with René Jacobs, La Cetra with Andrea Marcon, the Academy of Ancient Music, and the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. As a conductor, he has forged close partnerships with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Munich Chamber Orchestra and Les Violons du Roy.

Joint appearances with composers such as Thomas Adès, Jörg Widmann, Thomas Larcher, Fazıl Say and Sofia Gubaidulina have consolidated Nicolas's reputation as an outstanding interpreter of contemporary music. Wolfgang Rihm, Sebastian Fagerlund and Helena Winkelman have recently written concertos and other works for him. A new concerto by Hungarian composer Márton Illés was premiered by Nicolas in December 2023, and last month the cellist gave the premiere of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Cello Concerto No. 2, *Labyrinths of Life*. In October 2024 Nicolas will give the world premiere of Liza Lim's new cello concerto *A Sutured World* with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Edward Gardner.

As a chamber musician, Nicolas Altstaedt's partners include Janine Jansen, Vilde Frang, Pekka Kuusisto, Lawrence Power, Antoine Tamestit, Alexander Lonquich, Mao Fujita, Jean Rondeau, Thomas Dunford, and the Èbène and Belcea quartets. He performs at the Salzburg Mozart and Summer festivals, Verbier Festival, BBC Proms, Lucerne Festival, Prague Spring Festival and Musikfest Bremen.

From 2014–21 Nicolas Altstaedt was Artistic Director of the Haydn Philharmonie at the Ésterházy Palace (succeeding Ádám Fischer), including touring with the orchestra to Japan and China. In 2012 he succeeded Gidon Kremer as Artistic Director of the Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival, and his most recent recording in partnership with the festival garnered the *BBC Music Magazine* 2020 Chamber Award and the *Gramophone Classical Music* 2020 Chamber Award.

London Youth Choirs

Honorary Patrons Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood CBE | Suzi Digby OBE | Gareth Malone OBE
Sir Andrew Parmley | Dame Janet Ritterman | Patrick Russell | John Rutter CBE
Chair Dame Deirdre Hutton **Artistic Director** Rachel Staunton **Executive Director** Nina Camilleri

London Youth Choirs (LYC) is a family of choirs for all young Londoners. Since its foundation in 2012 LYC's citywide vision has always promised two things: musical excellence and social change. LYC works constantly to remove barriers to access to ensure that everyone can take part, starting with free auditions for all.

At its heart, LYC is a family of ten choirs with a membership of over 450 young people from 31 London boroughs. Spanning from age 7–23, members are able to stay with LYC as they journey through their formative years. The choirs are split according to location, age group and experience levels:

Tottenham

- LYC North East: mixed voices, school years 3–6

Bermondsey

- LYC South East: mixed voices, school years 3–6

Streatham

- LYC South West: mixed voices, school years 3–6

Ealing

- LYC West: mixed voices, school years 3–6

Central London

- LYC Junior Boys: school years 3–6
- LYC Junior Girls: school years 3–6
- LYC Cambiata Boys: school years 7–11
- LYC Cambiata Girls: school years 7–11
- London Youth Choir: mixed choir for school year 10 to age 23
- LYC Chamber Choir: mixed choir for school year 12 to age 23

Performing in this evening's concert are the Sopranos and Altos from London Youth Choir, LYC's senior mixed voice choir for young people in school year 11 to age 23. Working across a wide-ranging repertoire encompassing many styles, cultures and languages, London Youth Choir members also receive separate musicianship classes to improve their score-reading, listening and ensemble skills, and enjoy performance opportunities from recording sessions to arena concerts.

londonyouthchoirs.com



London Youth Choir (Upper Voices)

Claudia Acker	Matilda Levine
Jola Ajose	Catherine Macmillan
Ellisse Alexander	Jamie Marini Howells
Yasmin Alloway	Emma Mas Sala
Frances Andrews	Rose Mathias-Legg
Elizabeth Anghenica	Anjali McElwaine
Anita Aryan	Edoe Melamed
Natasha Bage	Saffron Nayar
Rachael Best-Babayaju	Tia Nicholson
Sophie Bisson	Siobhan O'Callaghan
Elicia Branch	Scarlett Peacock
Sofia Britto	Lulu Pelzer
Niamh Brown	Hannah Pigott
Isabella Clawson-Maila	Talitha Poulson
Orla Conway-Anthony	Innes Quoirin
Emily Cozens	Eleanor Reston
Nina Davidson-Crimes	Orla Rodgers
Blanca Davison De Agapito	Lucie Saggi
Octavia De Heinrich	Julia Sanchez-Tighe
Carla Dieu	Noa Soto Turrión
Martha Dowland	Mary Sullivan Wells
Shaiann Dunbar	Amy Swift
Chloe Eatock-Taylor	Elizabeth Tambe Green
Eleanor Elias	Evie Thomson
Ishita Ghosh	Mary Tilbury
Laura Gordon-Smith	Rosa Tripp Rule
Tia Rose Green	Maya Valecha
Honor Griffiths	Megan Walton
Tirion Griffiths-Keith	Charlotte Watkins
Isabelle Hill	Jenny Weakley
Elizabeth Kallumpuram	Lucy Webb
Iman Sophia Khelifi	Grace Wexler
Darcy Lamb	Arwen Withey-Harrison

Programme notes

Antonín Dvořák

1841–1904

Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104

1895

Nicolas Altstaedt cello

1 Allegro

2 Adagio ma non troppo

3 Allegro moderato



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

Few people are surprised today when a composer chooses to write a cello concerto. As the great examples by Dvořák, Elgar, Schumann, Walton and Shostakovich show, this noble, rich-toned, soulfully expressive and remarkably agile instrument makes a splendid concerto soloist. But when the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák wrote his Cello Concerto in 1894–95, even connoisseurs were surprised. When Johannes Brahms – composer of one of the greatest violin concertos in the repertoire – first saw Dvořák's score, he exclaimed, 'Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a cello concerto like this? If I had only known, I would have written one long ago!'

Actually there's no reason why Brahms should have known: in his and Dvořák's day the cello was rarely played well as a solo instrument. In fact the situation seems to have lasted for some time after Dvořák's death. As late as 1939, the famous *Manchester Guardian* critic Neville Cardus complained of 'the wasp-in-the-window effect which most times we have to put up with whenever a cellist gets to work.' But there is also the issue of balance. The cello may seem to have a powerful voice, but its lower notes in particular can easily be overwhelmed if the orchestral accompaniment is too rich and strong. But Dvořák copes superbly with this potential problem. Though he uses a relatively large orchestra, the cello soloist rarely has to contend with anything like its full force. There are loud, impressive orchestral *tuttis*, but in these passages the cellist is

Programme notes

mostly silent. The result is that, given a reasonably strong player, every note of the cello part should be audible. That must have been one of the Concerto's features that so impressed Brahms.

Beyond that, Brahms can hardly fail to have been impressed by Dvořák's melodic writing. The Cello Concerto brims over with wonderful long tunes and characterful short motifs. Not all of these are initially identified with the cello. Like most concertos of the 'Classical' era of Mozart and Beethoven, Dvořák begins the first movement with a long passage for orchestra alone. There is a darkly memorable theme for low woodwind at the start then, after the first big climax, a glorious long tune for solo horn. So when the cello enters for the first time, it not only has to cope with Dvořák's technical assault course, it also has to establish a claim to these themes for itself.

In the slow movement, it is the cellist's powers as an instrumental singer that are tested to the full. The first theme is relaxed and reflective, with strong suggestions of folksong. But this is interrupted by a darker minor-key central section. Here there is a definite autobiographical element. While Dvořák was working on the Concerto, he heard that his sister-in-law, Josefina Kaunitzova, was seriously ill – in his youth Dvořák had been in love with her. Josefina was particularly fond of Dvořák's song 'Leave me alone' (Op. 82, No. 1), and in this slow movement he has the cello quote its melody just after the first stern entry of the trombones and tuba. This same melody re-appears near the end of the finale – this time in response to the news of Josefina's death. The finale's opening march theme does return in triumph to end the Concerto, but that poignant reminiscence of lost love lingers in the memory – is this where the Concerto's heart truly lies?

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Interval – 20 minutes

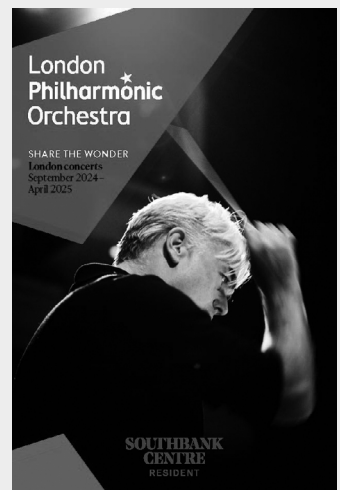
An announcement will be made five minutes before the end of the interval.

LPO 2024/25 season

Keep an eye out for details of our 2024/25 concert season, which we'll be announcing on Tuesday 16 April.

Did you know that Friends of the LPO enjoy priority booking for all our London concerts? LPO Friends receive our new season brochure ahead of the general public, and the priority booking period for Friends will open on Wednesday 17 April, before general booking opens on Tuesday 23 April.

To find out more about LPO Friends and the other benefits on offer, including exclusive invitations to rehearsals, special events and a dedicated private bar at our London concerts, scan the QR code or visit lpo.org.uk/friends



Programme notes

Gustav Holst

1874–1934

The Planets, Op. 32

1918

London Youth Choir

1 Mars, The Bringer of War

2 Venus, The Bringer of Peace

3 Mercury, The Winged Messenger

4 Jupiter, The Bringer of Jollity

5 Saturn, The Bringer of Old Age

6 Uranus, The Magician

7 Neptune, The Mystic

Gustav Holst wasn't your average English gent. He was a radical. At least, that's how he must have seemed to his friends and colleagues in Cheltenham and London around the turn of the last century. Holst's interest in Indian literature and religion led to an intense study of Sanskrit, which he used to translate hymns from the ancient collection known as the *Rigveda* before setting them to music. He was fascinated by transcendentalism and mysticism, holding the pursuit of material success to be the world's last bastion of evil. As a counterpoint to his teaching at London's most exclusive girls' school, he distributed outspoken left-wing newspapers on the capital's streets.

The Planets marries that broad world-view with a more Edwardian penchant for order and discipline. Referring to the piece, Holst's daughter Imogen described her father's difficulty in conceiving large-scale musical structures, suggesting he looked to the planets of the solar system for some sort of ready-made structural framework. 'As a rule I study only things that suggest music to me', the composer himself commented; 'the character of each planet suggested lots to me.'

For the writer Paul Griffiths, Holst's planets are concerned not so much with astronomy as metaphysics. 'The world was being profoundly questioned on many fronts', Griffiths writes of the 1910s, the decade Holst was at work on the piece, suggesting the composer sensed not only the onset of catastrophic human destruction but also the musical upheavals of Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School, who declared conventional tonality and traditional harmony dead.

It's a strong argument. Holst's disgust at Earth's conflicts and contradictions led him to look beyond it, 'tracing the archetypal religious quest' according to theologian Karen Armstrong. But it is Holst's belief in humanity that shines through in *The Planets*: we're left not with pictures of planetary characteristics, but human ones.

The composer began work on *The Planets* in 1914, initially scoring the movements for piano duet and organ (for the mystical 'Neptune') to protect his writing hand from burgeoning arthritis. By 1916 each of the planets was constructed musically (Pluto was undiscovered at

Programme notes

the time); the following year Holst set about orchestrating the pieces with the help of two colleagues from school. On 29 September 1918 the piece was given its first performance at the Queen's Hall in London by the New Queen's Hall Orchestra, conducted by Adrian Boult.

'There is no programme music in them', Holst explained of his movements, 'if any guide to the music is required, the subtitle to each piece will be found sufficient, especially if it is used in a broad sense.' Still, Holst probably wouldn't have minded us exploring some of the rich and brilliant orchestral effects he employed. Immediately striking is his use of a five-in-a-bar rhythmic structure in the opening movement, 'Mars'. Sitting somewhere between Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and John Williams's score for *Star Wars*, this terrifying vision of war is hammered out over a repeating rhythmic pattern that eventually destroys itself.

The mood is turned on its head with the luminosity of 'Venus' – with high woodwinds, harps and celeste – and the nimble stream of flying tones that is Holst's vision of 'Mercury'. 'Jupiter' pits the striving of its famously broad theme against a more jovial variation on that same idea. 'Saturn' is more consistently weighty, built of a lugubrious solemnity from just two chords, and 'Uranus' is a box of musical tricks, kicking off with the blurring out of four orchestral chords that bounce onto the timpani and off in the direction of further variation.

In 'Neptune', the five-in-a-bar rhythm of the work's opening returns, but with a difference. The music feels its way into being until Holst conjures a breathtaking sonic effect: the sound of wordless, distant voices, emerging and then receding again. It's no accident that Holst arranged his planets in order of increasing distance from the Earth, and here we seem to teeter on the edge not only of the solar system but also of human comprehension. 'Unforgettable', said Imogen Holst, reflecting on her first hearing of the effect, 'the chorus of women's voices growing fainter and fainter in the distance, until the imagination knew no difference between sound and silence.'

Programme note © Andrew Mellor

Recommended recordings of tonight's works

by Laurie Watt

Dvořák: Cello Concerto

Mstislav Rostropovich | London Philharmonic Orchestra | Carlo Maria Giulini (Warner Classics)
or

Mstislav Rostropovich | Berlin Philharmonic
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Holst: The Planets

National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain | CBSO
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London Philharmonic Orchestra & Choir | Vladimir Jurowski (LPO Label LPO-0047, below)

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LPO-0047

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