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2024/25 season at the
Southbank Centre

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London Philharmonic Orchestra

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Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis

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

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Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Wednesday 26 March 2025 | 6.30pm

Alina Ibragimova plays Prokofiev

Saariaho

Orion (22')

Prokofiev

Violin Concerto No. 1 (20')

Interval (20')

Nielsen

Symphony No. 5 (35')

Hannu Lintu

conductor

Alina Ibragimova

violin

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

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This concert is being recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on Wednesday 4 June 2025 at 7.30pm. It will remain available for 30 days after that on BBC Sounds.

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ENGLAND**

Welcome

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

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

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

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

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

LPO news

Exclusive access with LPO Friends

Earlier today, LPO Friends were treated to an exclusive behind-the-scenes experience, watching Hannu Lintu, Alina Ibragimova and the Orchestra in rehearsal for tonight's concert and enjoying a rare insight into the preparation and artistry that goes into each performance.

As well as exclusive access to a number of private rehearsals each season, LPO Friends membership puts you at the front of the queue for our Southbank Centre concert bookings, and offers invitations to other events and opportunities to meet LPO musicians throughout the year.

Our new 2025/26 concert season will be announced on Tuesday 22 April. LPO Friends receive our new season brochure ahead of the general public, and priority booking for Friends will open on Wednesday 23 April, with general booking from Tuesday 29 April.



LPO Friends membership starts from just £6 per month. Interested in finding out more? Scan the QR code or visit lpo.org.uk/friends

OrchLab: a peek behind the scenes

It was great to welcome a group of OrchLab participants to the Royal Festival Hall earlier today to watch our rehearsal for tonight's concert. Participants joined us from our two new OrchLab Community Partners for 2025, Brookside House – Shaftesbury and Bramley Hill Day Centre – Garwood Foundation. Before the rehearsal, the group met our OrchLab workshop leader John Webb to find out more about the music the Orchestra was rehearsing. There was also an opportunity to see the timpani up close, with a demonstration from our musicians followed by an opportunity to have a go at playing!

OrchLab is a project empowering disabled adults to experience the joy of making music through workshops, accessible technology, a bespoke website, training and events. OrchLab is run by the LPO in collaboration with Drake Music, experts in music, technology and disability.

orchlab.org



The paper used for all LPO brochures and concert programmes has been sourced from responsibly managed forests, certified in accordance with the FSC® (Forest Stewardship Council). It is also Carbon Balanced, meaning the carbon impact of its production is offset by the World Land Trust through the purchase and preservation of ecologically important forestry under imminent threat of clearance.

If you don't want to take your programme home, please make use of the recycling bins in the Royal Festival Hall foyers. Please also use these bins to recycle any plastic drinks glasses after the concert. Thank you.

On stage tonight

First Violins

Alice Ivy-Pemberton 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

Thomas Eisner

Chair supported by Ryze Power

Martin Höhmann

Yang Zhang

Elodie Chousmer-Howelles

Nilufar Alimaksumova

Amanda Smith

Rebecca Dinning

Will Hillman

Alice Hall

Ronald Long

Gabriela Opacka

Gabriel Bilbao

Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal

Chair supported by The Candide
Trust

Emma Oldfield Co-Principal

Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Nancy Elan

Nynke Hijlkema

Fiona Higham

Chair supported by David & Yi
Buckley

Marie-Anne Mairesse

Ashley Stevens

Sioni Williams

Vera Beumer

Sheila Law

José Nuno Cabrita Matias

Tayfun Bomboz

Anna Croad

Violas

Fiona Winning

Guest Principal

James Heron

Katharine Leek

Lucia Ortiz Saucó

Martin Wray

Chair supported by David & Bettina
Harden

Laura Vallejo

Stanislav Popov

Kate De Campos

Pamela Ferriman

Rachel Robson

Jenny Poyser

Jill Valentine

Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal

Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart
Roden

Wayne Kwon

David Dale

Sibylle Hentschel

Francis Bucknall

Marion Portelance

Helen Thomas

George Hoult

Jane Lindsay

Iain Ward

Double Basses

Sebastian Pennar* Principal

Hugh Kluger

Laura Murphy

Chair supported by Ian Ferguson
& Susan Tranter

Adam Wynter

Charlotte Kerbegian

Ben Havinden-Williams

Catherine Ricketts

Marianne Schofield

Flutes

Juliette Bausor Principal

Jack Welch

Sirius Chau

Stewart McIlwham*

Piccolos

Stewart McIlwham*

Principal

Sirius Chau

Alto Flute

Stewart McIlwham*

Oboes

Ian Hardwick* Principal

Alice Munday

Jack Tostevin-Hall

Sue Böhling*

Cor Anglais

Sue Böhling* Principal

Chair supported by Dr Barry
Grimaldi

Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont*

Principal

Chair supported by Sir Nigel
Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

Thomas Watmough

Chair supported by Roger
Greenwood

Paul Richards*

Bethany Crouch

Bassoons

Jonathan Davies* Principal

Chair supported by Sir Simon
Robey

Helen Storey*

Chair supported by Friends of the
Orchestra

Lucy Gibson

Simon Estell*

Contrabassoon

Simon Estell* Principal

Horns

John Ryan* Principal

Annemarie Federle

Principal

Chair supported by Victoria
Robey CBE

Martin Hobbs

Elise Campbell

Gareth Mollison

Kristina Yumerska

Trumpets

Paul Beniston* Principal

Tom Nielsen Co-Principal

Anne McAnaney*

Chair supported in memory of
Peter Coe

David Hilton

Trombones

Mark Templeton* Principal

Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton

David Whitehouse

Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

Tuba

Lee Tsarmaklis* Principal

Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton

Timpani

Simon Carrington*

Principal

Chair supported by Victoria
Robey CBE

Feargus Brennan

Percussion

Andrew Barclay* Principal

Chair supported by Gill & Garf
Collins

Karen Hutt Co-Principal

Oliver Yates

Jeremy Cornes

Harps

Céline Saout Guest Principal

Rachel Wick

Piano/Celeste

Catherine Edwards

Organ

Richard Gowers

**Professor at a London
conservatoire*

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

Neil Westreich

London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Jason Bell

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

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

Soundtrack to key moments

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

Sharing the wonder worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. In 2023 we were the most successful orchestra worldwide on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, with over 1.1m followers across all platforms, and in spring 2024 we featured in a TV documentary series on Sky Arts: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', still available to watch via Now TV. During 2024/25 we're once again working with Marquee TV to broadcast selected live concerts to enjoy from your own living room.

Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included some of the greatest historic names like Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2021 Edward Gardner became our 13th Principal Conductor, and Vladimir Jurowski became Conductor Emeritus 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.

Next generations

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

Alice Ivy-Pemberton

Leader

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 disabilities and special educational needs.

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

2024/25 season

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner leads the Orchestra in an exciting 2024/25 season, with soloists including Joyce DiDonato, Leif Ove Andsnes, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Víkingur Ólafsson and Isabelle Faust, and works including Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*, Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* and Mahler's Eighth Symphony. Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis joins us for three concerts including Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, and Mozart with pianist Benjamin Grosvenor. We'll also welcome back Conductor Emeritus Vladimir Jurowski, as well as guest conductors including Mark Elder, Lidiya Yankovskaya, Robin Ticciati and Kevin John Edusei.

Throughout the season we'll explore the relationship between music and memory in our 'Moments Remembered' series, featuring works like Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony, Strauss's *Metamorphosen* and John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*. During the season there'll be the chance to hear brand new works by composers including Freya Waley-Cohen and David Sawer, as well as performances by renowned soloists violinist Gidon Kremer, sarod player Amjad Ali Khan, soprano Renée Fleming and many more. The season also features tours to Japan, the USA, China and across Europe, as well as a calendar bursting with performances and community events in our Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden residencies.



Alice Ivy-Pemberton joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra as Co-Leader in February 2023.

Praised by *The New York Times* for her 'sweet-toned playing', Alice has performed as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician to international acclaim. While growing up in New York City and studying with Nurit Pacht, Alice made a nationally televised Carnegie Hall debut aged ten, and was a finalist at the Menuhin International Competition at the age of 12.

Alice earned her Bachelors and Masters degrees at The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho as a fully-funded recipient of the Kovner Fellowship. During her studies she won Juilliard's Violin Concerto Competition, performed extensively with the New York Philharmonic and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and led orchestras under the baton of Barbara Hannigan, Xian Zhang and Matthias Pintscher. Upon graduating in 2022 she was awarded the Polisi Prize and a Benzaquen Career Advancement Grant in recognition of 'tremendous talent, promise, creativity, and potential to make a significant impact in the performing arts'.

An avid chamber musician, Alice has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Anthony Marwood, Gil Shaham and members of the Belcea, Doric, Juilliard and Brentano string quartets, and performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Festival appearances include Music@Menlo, Moritzburg and Yellow Barn. Also a passionate advocate for new music and its social relevance, Alice created *Drowning Monuments*, a noted multimedia project on climate change that brought together five world premieres for solo violin.

Hannu Lintu

conductor



© Marco Borggreve

'Dynamic and sharp on the podium' (*Bachtrack*), and with a 'scrupulous ear for instrumental colour and blend' (*The Washington Post*), Hannu Lintu maintains his reputation as one of the world's finest conductors. This season, he continues his tenures as Music Director of the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon and Chief Conductor of the Finnish National Opera & Ballet, proving himself a master of both symphonic and operatic repertoire. These appointments followed a stream of successful concerts with the Gulbenkian Orchestra and breathtaking productions with the Finnish National Opera & Ballet. The 2023/24 season also saw his announcement as Artistic Partner of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Finland, from autumn 2025.

Hannu Lintu's most recent appearance with the LPO was in November 2022, when he conducted a concert at the Royal Festival Hall featuring works by Nielsen, Mahler, and Brett Dean's *Viola Concerto* with Lawrence Power, which was later released on the LPO Label as part of a compilation of Dean's works (LPO-0130).

Highlights of Hannu's 2024/25 season include his debut at the Bregenz Festival, conducting Enescu's *Oedipe*, and returns to the Chicago Symphony, BBC Symphony, Finnish Radio Symphony, St Louis Symphony and Oregon Symphony orchestras.

Symphonic highlights of recent years have seen Hannu Lintu conduct the New York Philharmonic (including an immediate re-invitation from the orchestra to perform at Bravo! Vail Festival), the Berlin Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra,

the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, alongside the likes of Gil Shaham, Kirill Gerstein, Daniil Trifonov and Sergei Babayan.

An expert in operatic as well as symphonic repertoire, Hannu Lintu's recent opera highlights have included Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Paris Opera, and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the the Bavarian State Opera as a guest conductor, as well as multiple productions at the Finnish National Opera & Ballet including a multi-season Wagner *Ring Cycle*, Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, a choreographed reimagining of Verdi's *Requiem*, and Puccini's *Turandot*, Strauss's *Salome* and Britten's *Billy Budd*.

Hannu Lintu has made several recordings for the Ondine, BIS, Naxos, Avie and Hyperion labels. His diverse discography comprises recordings of Magnus Lindberg's orchestral works; the complete Beethoven piano concertos with Stephen Hough, and Lutosławski's complete symphonies, all with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. His often-gilded work boasts two International Classical Music Awards and several nominations for Gramophone and Grammy Awards, for recording projects such as Bartók's *Violin Concertos* with Christian Tetzlaff, works by Sibelius featuring mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, Rautavaara's *Kaivos*, and the violin concertos of Sibelius and Thomas Adès with Augustin Hadelich and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Hannu Lintu studied cello and piano at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland, where he also later studied conducting with Jorma Panula. He participated in masterclasses with Myung-Whun Chung at L'Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy, and took First Prize at the Nordic Conducting Competition in Bergen in 1994.

Alina Ibragimova

violin



© Eva Vermandel

Performing music from the Baroque to new commissions on both modern and period instruments, Alina Ibragimova is recognised for the 'immediacy and honesty' (*The Guardian*) of her performances. She has appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra on several occasions, most recently in May 2023, when she performed Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto under Principal Conductor Edward Gardner at the Royal Festival Hall and Saffron Hall.

The 2024/25 season sees Alina perform with the Detroit Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony, Bamberg Symphony, WDR Symphony, Düsseldorf Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony and Swedish Chamber orchestras, working with conductors including Vladimir Jurowski, Anja Bihlmaier, Michael Sanderling, Iván Fischer and Krzysztof Urbński. She also continues her partnership with pianist Cédric Tiberghien for recital tours of the USA, the UK and Japan.

Over the last two seasons Alina has performed concertos with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg and Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, working with conductors including Robin Ticciati, Ryan Bancroft, Maxim Emelyanychev and Daniel Harding. She was also Artist-in-Residence with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, and toured Europe with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Basel Chamber Orchestra.

In recital, Alina regularly performs at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Berlin's Pierre Boulez Saal, Salzburg's Mozarteum, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie and London's London's Wigmore Hall and Royal Albert Hall, where in 2015 she performed Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin at the BBC Proms. Alina is a founding member of the Chiaroscuro Quartet – one of the most sought-after period ensembles.

Alina's discography ranges from Bach Concertos with Arcangelo through to Prokofiev Sonatas with Steven Osborne. Her 2020 recording of Shostakovich's Violin Concertos won a Gramophone Award, while her 2021 recording of Paganini's *24 Caprices* topped the classical album charts on its release. Her most recent recording is Telemann's *Fantasias* for solo violin.

Born in Russia in 1985, Alina attended the Moscow Gnesin School, the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal College of Music, studying with Natasha Boyarsky, Gordan Nikolitch and Christian Tetzlaff. An alumna of the BBC New Generation Artists Scheme, her many accolades include two Royal Philharmonic Society Awards, and an MBE in the 2016 New Year Honours List.

Alina performs on a c.1775 Anselmo Bellosio violin, kindly provided by Georg von Opel.

Programme notes

Kaija Saariaho

1952–2023

Orion

2002

1 Memento mori

2 Winter Sky

3 Hunter



Kaija Saariaho was inspired by her Finnish forbear Jean Sibelius's interest in self-developing textures and by French Impressionism's idea of music as an axis of transforming colours. Studying at the summer school in Darmstadt in 1980, Saariaho made the leap from Impressionism to Spectralism – in which the scientific or acoustic properties of a sound, rather than its pitch or rhythm, become the building blocks of a piece of music.

Saariaho often used those techniques to reflect on the idea of light and its absence, a resonant theme for anyone hailing from a Nordic country where natural light

can be either stubbornly persistent or absent altogether, depending on the season. In 2002, Saariaho completed the large symphonic work *Orion* to a commission from The Cleveland Orchestra in the USA, who first performed it on 23 January 2003. The title refers to the hunter Orion, the mortal son of Neptune, who in Greek mythology is transformed by Zeus into a radiant constellation.

Orion reveals Saariaho's interest in vast open vistas, in clarity despite the absence of light, and in the idea of an aural canvas as a musical counterpart to a painted one. But it also introduces tangible, human characteristics often absent in the late composer's music, and represents her one foray into what one critic has described as 'cosmic minimalism'.

The first movement can be heard as a funeral march whose pulsating yet strangely intangible rhythmic fields conjure some sense of the immensity of the solar system. The music becomes furious, using ever-shorter note durations, until it burns out. The second movement is static: an image of a lucid (and perhaps electromagnetically-charged) night sky against which solo instruments trace ambivalent melodies bearing Saariaho's stylistic fingerprints.

The third movement is an image of Orion the earthly hunter, and sets the orchestra's strings and brass in chase. As the speed increases, the music's volume and density decrease. The movement spirals up towards the firmament until it's vaporised into a single tingling triangle – the hot gas of a star, perhaps.

Programme notes

Serge Prokofiev

1891–1953

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major, Op. 19

1915–17

Alina Ibragimova violin

1 Andantino

2 Scherzo: Vivacissimo

3 Moderato



© Archive Pics/Alamy Stock Photo

In August 1914, Russia became embroiled in the First World War. Serge Prokofiev remained productive, but the following year moved to the relative safety of a small village in the Caucasus, where he met a girl named Nina Meshcherskaya. The 24-year-old Prokofiev fell for Nina and she for him, only for their blossoming relationship to be abruptly halted by her parents. At around the same time, Prokofiev wrote a wistful melody that he planned for a 'concertino' for violin and orchestra.

Prokofiev rarely let global events curb his creativity and by the following year, his concertino was on the backburner while he raced to finish his opera *The Gambler*. Rather than withering away, the concertino was only incubated by the hiatus. When the composer eventually returned to it, he felt sure it should take the form of a full concerto. After the February Revolution of 1917, Prokofiev returned to the score and worked on it as he travelled by steamboat down the Volga and Kama rivers. He duly finished it, but the October Revolution meant it was shelved once more.

Six years later, in Paris where Prokofiev now lived, the Concerto was ready for performance. The audience at the premiere on 18 October 1923 was star-studded. Stravinsky was present to conduct his own Octet for Winds – the work, and the composer, that had attracted the crowds. That made for a lukewarm response to Prokofiev's piece, which was dismissed by the critic George Auric as 'old-fashioned' and 'Mendelssohnian'.

Continued overleaf

Programme notes

True, the Concerto contained a fair amount of Mendelssohn-derived cheek and charm. It could certainly have appeared to signal a softening, following Prokofiev's acerbic piano concertos and monstrous *Scythian Suite*. Was that theme, born of the composer's 1915 romance, responsible? Perhaps. A more straightforward explanation is found in the instrument itself. Prokofiev was new to the violin as a solo vehicle, and clearly found it more suited to lyricism than fissile percussiveness.

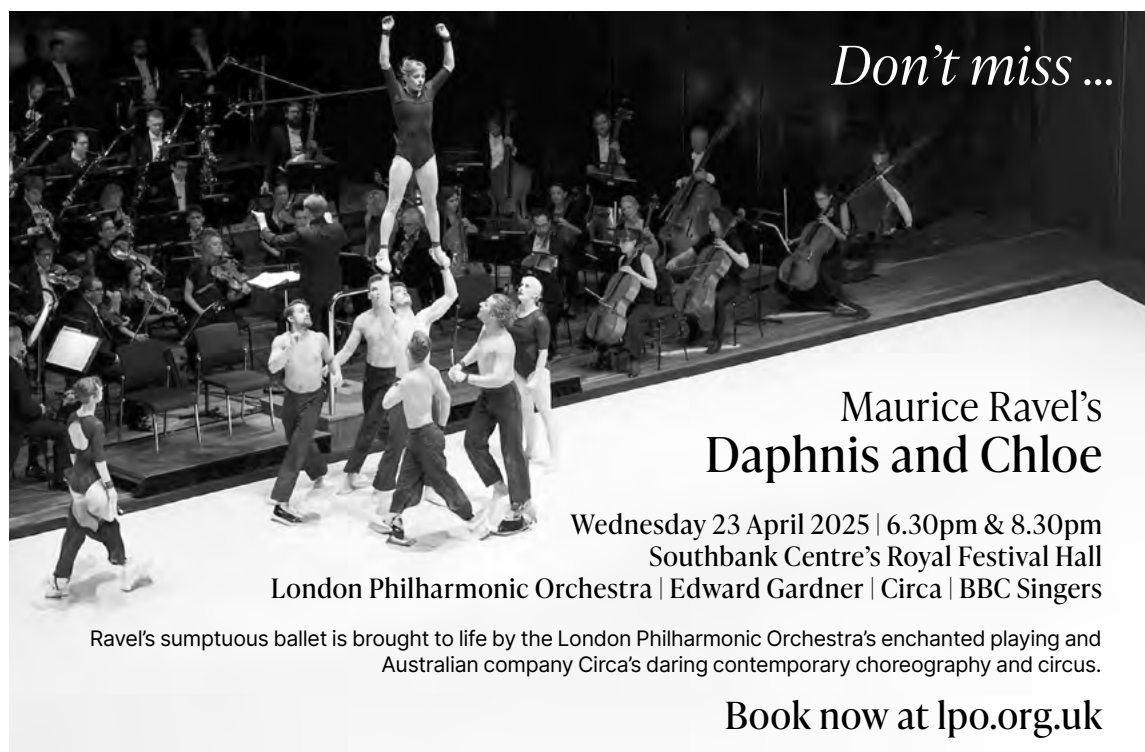
The Concerto's outer movements are more Romantic in footing than the more edgy, provocative *Scherzo* in the middle. But the composer's mischievous side is never far away. The violinist who made the work famous, Joseph Szigeti, claimed he was drawn to its 'mixture of fairytale naiveté and daring savagery.' Prokofiev said the

Concerto's opening gesture perfectly encapsulated his belief in lyricism. This opening melody, played *sognando* ('as if in a dream'), is the wistful theme born in the Caucasus.

Soaring and rhapsodic, this theme returns at the movement's close, orchestrated with a sprinkling of magic as a flute carries it home with support from the solo violin and a harp. The music demands considerable virtuosity in between, as does the wild and fiendishly difficult *Scherzo* movement driven by restless patterns. Lyricism returns in the Concerto's finale, whose energy soon abates to make way for a return of the work's opening melody. This time, it breaks free of any harmonic and rhythmic troubles, soaring upwards with rapture and serenity via a series of trills.

Interval – 20 minutes

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



Don't miss ...

**Maurice Ravel's
Daphnis and Chloe**

Wednesday 23 April 2025 | 6.30pm & 8.30pm
Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall
London Philharmonic Orchestra | Edward Gardner | Circa | BBC Singers

Ravel's sumptuous ballet is brought to life by the London Philharmonic Orchestra's enchanted playing and Australian company Circa's daring contemporary choreography and circus.

Book now at lpo.org.uk

Photo © Laura Manariti

Programme notes

Carl Nielsen

1865–1931

Symphony No. 5, Op. 50

1921

1 Tempo giusto – Adagio

2 Allegro – Presto – Andante un poco tranquillo – Allegro



© Ian Dagnall Computing/Alamy Stock Photo

The solo violinist's journey through Prokofiev's Concerto could be said to crystallize the central, fertile conflict of the composer's musical personality: unbounded lyricism versus destructive, forceful cynicism. A different but comparable dichotomy is heard in the music of Carl Nielsen, in which rhythmic energy often finds itself pitted against forces suffocating and overwhelming. Nielsen set out to write music that would give his homeland a locally distinctive but internationally relevant musical voice. The composer was raised poor in Denmark, his formative musical experiences provided by his father's travelling wedding band (in which he played the fiddle) and the local barracks band (in which he played the bugle).

As the 20th century loomed, Nielsen considered how he could move Danish music away from what he called the 'gravy and grease' of the German musical tradition. He began to imagine a new sort of music that would fuse perceptions of the high and low in art. Nielsen's symphonies – bursting with vitality and humour – had an energising effect. In the first three, musical energy is given free rein. In the fourth and fifth, written during and after the First World War, that energy is set up against violently destructive forces.

Nielsen's life remained unsettled at the dawn of the 1920s. He had resigned his conducting position at the Royal Danish Theatre and remained separated from his wife and children. He found refuge at a friend's summerhouse in Humlebæk, 40km north of Copenhagen. It was here, in the spring of 1921, that Nielsen completed the first movement of his Symphony No. 5. On 24 January 1922, the score was given its first

Programme notes

performance by the Royal Danish Orchestra under Nielsen's baton.

Nielsen had become increasingly interested in the idea of a symphonic struggle for victory along quasi-Beethovenian lines. He was also eager to increase the structural sophistication of his symphonic thinking: to address his bugbear that 'in the old symphonic form you have usually said most of what you had on your mind in the first *Allegro*.' When asked by the newspaper *Politiken* why his new symphony didn't carry a title, he responded by describing the titles of the score's three predecessors as 'just different names for the only thing that music can actually give expression to: the resting forces in opposition to the active ones.' He also likened the new symphony to a boulder being rolled to the top of a hill and then kicked down the other side – a reference to this particular symphony's harbouring of musical energy and its two-movement structure.

The most obvious symphonic struggle is in the Symphony's first movement. Things start calmly enough: the two-note pattern in the violas that launches the work continues more or less for 67 bars – soil from which themes in the wind instruments, delicate but ominous, emerge like weeds. Eventually the clouds part and an innocent, tumbling gesture on a pastoral oboe ushers in a major-key *Adagio* passage.

This deceptively warm music can't conceal poisonous manoeuvres. Two flutes become possessed by a niggling motif that frets on adjacent notes and begins to infect the entire orchestra, leading to an extraordinary confrontation in which Nielsen instructs the snare drummer to 'improvise freely with all possible fantasy' against the surging ensemble. As the movement ends, a clarinet is left to lick its wounds in a desolate cadenza. The snare drum continues to taunt it offstage.

From these smouldering ashes, the second movement launches with a torrent of explosive energy. But after working itself into a new mania, the music suffers a near-catastrophic power failure. The clarinet experiences another manic episode and the horns hijack a jaunty string theme and corrupt it. The whole orchestra retreats, shattered by the fight. A flute is left to drop gradually down to earth like a floating leaf. After a period of introspection, the movement rediscovers its fissile energy, circles for a while in a holding pattern (horns stuck on the now-familiar two-note up-down pattern) and then bursts out into light and warmth in the key of E flat. But Nielsen doesn't end with the traditional full-stop. Not only does the new key bear no harmonic

relation to the Symphony's starting point, it abruptly disappears, as if the music is continuing somewhere we can't hear it.

Programme notes by Andrew Mellor © 2025



Video: A step-by-step journey through Nielsen's Fifth Symphony with musicologist Dr Christopher Tarrant. Click or scan the QR code to watch.

Recommended recordings

by Laurie Watt

Saariaho: *Orion*

Orchestre de Paris | Christoph Eschenbach (Ondine, live)

Prokofiev: *Violin Concerto No. 1*

Janine Jansen (violin) | Oslo Philharmonic | Klaus Mäkelä (Decca)
or Lydia Mordkovitch (violin) | Royal Scottish National Orchestra | Neeme Järvi (Chandos)

Nielsen: *Symphony No. 5*

New York Philharmonic | Leonard Bernstein (Sony)

We'd love to hear from you

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Tan Dun's Water Concerto

Saturday 29 March 2025 | 7.30pm
Queen Elizabeth Hall (*Please note venue*)

Pärt Symphony No. 1 (Polyphonic)
Tan Dun Water Concerto
Lutosławski Symphony No. 3

Eva Ollikainen conductor
Colin Currie percussion

Concert generously supported by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute.

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Jurowski conducts Lyatoshynsky

Wednesday 2 April 2025 | 7.30pm
Royal Festival Hall

Prokofiev Selection from Semyon Kotko
Mussorgsky (arr. Denisov) Songs and Dances of Death
Lyatoshynsky Symphony No. 3

Vladimir Jurowski conductor
Matthew Rose bass

Tragedy to Triumph

Saturday 5 April 2025 | 7.30pm
Royal Festival Hall

Beethoven Coriolan Overture
R Schumann Violin Concerto
Schubert Symphony No. 9 (The Great)

Vladimir Jurowski conductor
Vilde Frang violin

In association with Arts for Dementia



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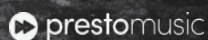
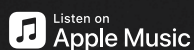
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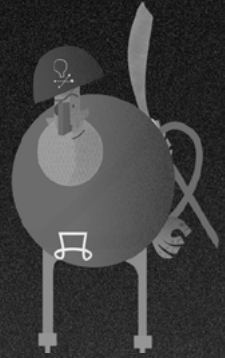
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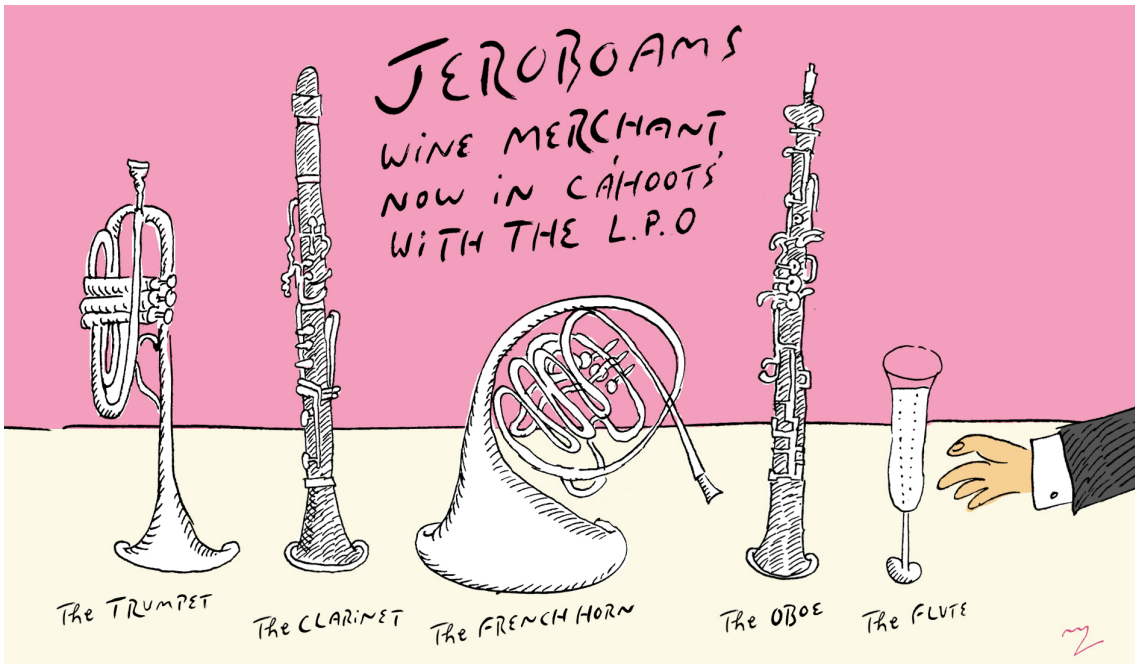
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