



SOUTHBANK CENTRE

MULTITUDES

WOZZECK: WRETCHES LIKE US

Saturday 25 April 2026, 7.30pm | Royal Festival Hall

Welcome to *Multitudes*, our multi-arts festival powered by orchestral music. We're bringing together some of the world's finest classical music ensembles – including our six Resident Orchestras – for collaborations with an incredible range of artists from different art forms. Together, we're creating a new way for you to encounter the enduring power of classical music, with unique, adventurous, boundary-breaking concerts. It's a musical experience like no other!

Mark Ball, Artistic Director, Southbank Centre

Commissioned by the Southbank Centre and the London Philharmonic Orchestra

Alban Berg's devastating opera first stunned audiences at its premiere in 1925, and has lost none of its power to shock and move us. The tale of *Wozzeck* – a man downtrodden by society, exploited and tormented – remains as relevant today as ever, and the music as compelling.

In this collaboration, the London Philharmonic Orchestra joins forces with acclaimed film-maker and video artist Ilya Shagalov, who accompanies the searing music with an atmospheric and expressive photo-film inspired by British social realist dramas. Reimagining *Wozzeck* for the modern day, Shagalov translates the story through the lens of a migrant worker, whose life is shaped by the pressures to survive and the casual cruelties of a fractured modern society.

Shagalov is celebrated for his innovative approach to visual storytelling, and has collaborated with leading directors, musicians and performance companies across the globe. His work seamlessly blends technology and human emotion, often exploring themes of memory, identity and resilience.

In this one-off concert staging, Shagalov's captivating visuals meet the mastery of the LPO, with Principal Conductor Edward Gardner conducting a cast of world-class dramatic singers. The resulting collaboration captures the urgency of this landmark of 20th-century music.

This concert is generously supported by a syndicate of LPO donors.

Run time (approx.): 1 hour and 40 minutes, with no interval

MUSIC

Alban Berg

Wozzeck – opera in 3 acts (semi-staged performance in German with English surtitles)

90'

CREATIVE TEAM

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Edward Gardner *conductor*

Ilya Shagalov *video artist*

Nina Guseva *visual co-creator*

Stéphane Degout *baritone, Wozzeck*

(Role supported by Malcolm Herring)

Annette Dasch *soprano, Marie*

Peter Hoare *tenor, Captain*

Brindley Sherratt *bass, Doctor*

(Role supported by Fiona Espenhahn)

Christopher Ventris *tenor, Drum Major*

Eirik Grøtvedt *tenor, Andres*

Kitty Whately *mezzo-soprano, Margret*

Adrian Thompson *tenor, The Fool*

Callum Thorpe *bass, 1st Apprentice*

Dominic Sedgwick *baritone, 2nd Apprentice*

London Voices (**Ben Parry** – director)

Tiffin Boys' Choir (**James Day** – director)

Aage Richard Meyer *assistant conductor*

Nicholas Ansdell-Evans *music staff*

Gerhard Gall *German coach*

Jan Robotycki *deputy stage manager*

Andrew Kingsmill *surtitles operator*

Kenneth Chalmers *surtitles translation*



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ALBAN BERG (1885–1935)

Wozzeck

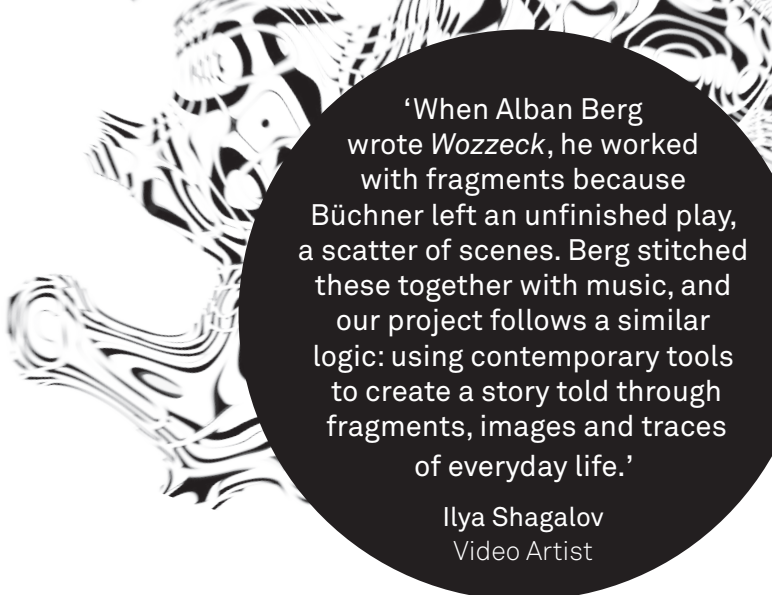
Music and words by Alban Berg

Garish, violent, restless – what is it about Berg's mesmerising music for *Wozzeck* that so unsettles us? There are moments of tenderness, tranquillity and uneasy beauty. But the drama and music move at breakneck pace, in search of resolution, or a release. It is a river in full spate, with rapids, eddies, undercurrents and still pools.

It is music written in a predominantly atonal style: literally, without tonality. In other words, severed from the key signatures and harmonies that western art music had used for centuries. Imagine hovering over the middle C on a keyboard, your hand wandering upwards, playing every note, black and white. There are only 12 notes before you reach another C. But what riches those 12 notes provide! Sure, Mozart doesn't sound like Mahler, or Vivaldi like Wagner, but their music comes from the same set of accepted musical patterns and punctuation. Tonal music would always gravitate back toward the tonic (the doh of doh-re-mi). However adventurous the journey, music would always return to a settled place. Tension would eventually give way to resolution. There were hierarchies and expectations. Consonance – a settled foundation, would usually follow dissonance, the jarring 'scrunch' of clashing pitches that didn't 'belong' together, or next to each other.

Composers like Wagner and Mahler stretched the rules of harmony to breaking point. Schoenberg, Berg's teacher, rewrote them. He argued no note should take precedence over another. If the art of composition is simply the ordering of sound, he chose to organise it in a new way, unfettered by conventions of consonance and dissonance. *Wozzeck* was started in 1914, three years after Berg completed formal studies with Schoenberg, and it premiered in Berlin in 1925. In literature and art, new languages were also being developed. James Joyce, an almost exact contemporary of Berg, jumbled conventional grammar and syntax in *Ulysses* (1922). The young ee cummings' first poetry collection was published in 1923. The fractured planes of Cubism, the grotesquery and bitter satire of the Dadaists – the artistic expression of The Great War and its aftermath seethed with radicalism, mixed with the remnants of old artistic epochs. Edgard Varèse's *Amérique*, a gigantic, dissonant orchestral score inspired by the cacophony of New York, premiered the year after *Wozzeck*. Meanwhile, in Europe, Sibelius completed his hyper-compressed final symphony (that most traditional orchestral form) in 1924, opening with an ascending C major scale. Elgar had produced his elegiac Cello Concerto in 1919, then fallen largely silent.

How should we listen to Berg's atonality? Do not expect neat arias and choruses. He doesn't stop for such operatic niceties. But there is a clear structure, and a surprising one at that: Berg shapes his new musical language into old forms – a suite of Baroque dances,



'When Alban Berg wrote *Wozzeck*, he worked with fragments because Büchner left an unfinished play, a scatter of scenes. Berg stitched these together with music, and our project follows a similar logic: using contemporary tools to create a story told through fragments, images and traces of everyday life.'

Ilya Shagalov
Video Artist

a symphony, a fugue (a form beloved of Bach, and Beethoven). Can we hear all this without a score in front of us, and does it matter? No. We can latch on to familiar fragments of lullabies, drinking songs and military marches, echoes of waltzes and folk ditties. We can marvel at how a huge orchestra adds colour and cohesion to the drama. As so often, what is coming from the orchestra tells as much – if not more – than words ever could. Some passages are as chillingly visceral as any horror soundtrack written since. And we cannot help but be moved by the sheer lyrical aptness on display in Berg's sharply etched characters. Poor distracted Wozzeck is constantly being interrupted, belittled, barely given the time to complete full sentences. The arrogance of the Drum Major, the laconic drawl of Marie's friend Margret, the pseudo-scientific nonsense spouted by the cruel doctor – these are all beautifully captured in their song.

It is opera appropriate for its time. There are no fantasies of gods or princesses here. Just the despair and rage of a cuckolded conscript, tossed around like societal flotsam and jetsam. It is Büchner's startling set of theatrical fragments from the 1830s coalescing into an opera first performed on the brink of the Great Depression, and just after the peak of the Weimar Republic's hyperinflation that prompted such misery and poisonous political upheaval.

At *Wozzeck*'s American premiere (1931), two young composers sat next to each other. One was George Gershwin, writer of Broadway hits and the 'concert hall jazz' of *Rhapsody in Blue*. The second may be less familiar. Elliott Carter, who died in 2012 aged 103, took Berg and Schoenberg's principles and distilled them into glittering, thrilling atonal scores. Each subsequently wrote a single opera, albeit seven decades apart – Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, and Carter's 21st-century tragicomedy *What Next?* Their operas and their music – how they chose to organise those 12 notes – is indicative of the multitude of styles, the invention and contrasts in art music over the last hundred years. It is a plurality and richness unthinkable without pioneers like Alban Berg and an opera like *Wozzeck*.

WOZZECK: SYNOPSIS

ACT I

The soldier Wozzeck shaves the Captain, who tells Wozzeck he has no morals as he has an illegitimate child. While cutting firewood with his soldier companion Andres, Wozzeck has disturbing visions.

Marie, mother of Wozzeck's child, watches a military parade with her gossipy friend Margret. She admires the Drum Major. She sings her child to sleep. Wozzeck returns, frightening Marie with his visions and ignoring his son.

Wozzeck earns money by allowing the Doctor to experiment on him. The Doctor rejoices in his patient's symptoms of insanity and anticipates future renown from this research. That evening, Marie admires the Drum Major in the street. She resists his advances. But not for long.

ACT II

Marie's earrings, a gift from the Drum Major, make Wozzeck suspicious. When alone, Marie is remorseful. The Captain and the Doctor mock the passing Wozzeck with insinuations about Marie's infidelity.

Wozzeck confronts Marie who tells him she would rather be killed by him than suffer his abuse.

Later, in a beer garden, Wozzeck sees Marie dancing with the Drum Major. Wozzeck is approached by the Fool, who says he can smell blood. At barracks, Wozzeck has nightmares about seeing Marie with another. When the Drum Major enters, bragging about his conquest, the two men fight, and Wozzeck is knocked over.

ACT III

A fearful Marie reads from the Bible. Later, she and Wozzeck walk by a pond. Marie is frightened by his behaviour and tries to escape, but Wozzeck pulls out a knife and kills her.

A drunk Wozzeck dances with Margret at a tavern. She notices blood on his arm, which he cannot explain away. He returns to Marie's body to throw the murder weapon into the pond. Anxious that he has not thrown it far enough, he wades in and drowns.

Wozzeck's infant son plays with a group of children. A child enters to announce Marie is dead. He does not understand, and while the others go off, he stays, alone, playing and singing.

Synopsis © Dan Whitfield, 2026

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LONDON VOICES

SOPRANO

Ann De Renais
Cressida Sharp
Daisy Bevan
Eloise Irving
Ildiko Allen
Jenni Harper
Sophie Taylor Denton
Tara Bungard

ALTO

Catherine Backhouse
Freya Jacklin
Juliet Schiemann
Lufuno Nduo
Melanie Marshall
Melanie Sanders
Rebekah Jones
Tamsin Dalley

TENOR

Garth Bardsley
Jack Harberd
Henry Moss
Pablo Strong
Peter Harris
Philip Sheffield
Philippe Durrant
Zahid Siddiqui

BARITONE

Benjamin Bevan
Christian Goursaud
Edward Ballard
James Quilligan
Lawrence White
Mark Saberton
Peter Edge
Sam Poppleton

BASS

Chris Foster
David Stuart
John Evanson
Julian Godlee
Oliver Hunt
Ronald Nairne
Russell Matthews
Thomas Colwell

TIFFIN BOYS' CHOIR

Shreyank Tonpe
Gabriel Ma

Lucas Chan
Jonathan Windt

Toshiro Bertoli *soloist*
George Chilton

Joshua Rozario
Kent Wong

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

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Principal Conductor Edward Gardner (supported by Aud Jebsen)

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis (supported by Richard Buxton)

Conductor Emeritus Vladimir Jurowski KBE

Patron HRH The Duke of Kent KG

Artistic Director Jesús Herrera

Chief Executive David Burke

Wozzeck is co-produced and commissioned by the Southbank Centre

VIOLIN I

Pieter Schoeman *Leader*
Chair supported by Neil Westreich

Alice Ivy-Pemberton

Co-Leader

Chair supported by the
Hodson family

Lasma Taimina

Chair supported by
Irina Gofman & Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave

Minn Majoe

Chair supported by
Dr Alex & Maria Chan

Megan Yang

Martin Höhmann

Katalin Varnagy

Yang Zhang

Nilufar Alimaksumova

Amanda Smith

Jamie Hutchinson

Alison Strange

Daniel Pukach

Beatriz Carbonell

Will Hillman

Camille Buitenhuis

VIOLIN II

Tania Mazzetti *Principal*

Chair supported by
The Candide Trust

Coco Inman

Kate Birchall

Ashley Stevens

Nynke Hijlkema

Sophie Phillips

Chair supported by
Friends of the Orchestra

Nancy Elan

Fiona Higham

Marie-Anne Mairesse

Sioni Williams

Kate Cole

Vera Beumer

Sheila Law

Pak Ho Hong

VIOLA

Nicholas Bootiman

Guest Principal

Lucia Ortiz Sauco

Guillaume Leroy

Benedetto Pollani

Katharine Leek

Laura Vallejo

Martin Wray

Chair supported by
David & Bettina Harden

James Heron

Kate De Campos

Jisu Song

Mark Gibbs

Terry Nettle

CELLO

Henry Shapard *Principal*

Wayne Kwon

Chair supported by an
anonymous donor

David Lale

Leo Melvin

Auriol Evans

Tom Roff

Helen Thomas

Iain Ward

Rasmus Støier Andersen

Deni Teo

DOUBLE BASS

Kevin Rundell *Principal*

Hugh Kluger

George Peniston

Laura Murphy

Chair supported by
Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter

Lowri Estell

Yijia Cui

Dominic Dudley

Tom Morgan

FLUTE

Juliette Bausor *Principal*

Chair supported by
Malcolm & Alison Thwaites

Hannah Grayson

Stewart McIlwham

Katherine Bicknell

PICCOLO

Stewart McIlwham *Principal*

Chair supported by
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

Juliette Bausor

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OBOE

Ian Hardwick *Principal*

Alice Munday

Chair supported by
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COR ANGLAIS

Helen Vigurs

CLARINET

Benjamin Mellefont *Principal*

Chair supported by Sir Nigel
Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton
Oliver Shermacher

E FLAT CLARINET

Thomas Watmough *Principal*

Chair supported by
Roger Greenwood
Emily Crook

BASS CLARINET

Paul Richards *Principal*

BASSOON

Benjamin Hudson

Guest Principal

Helen Storey

Lorna West

CONTRABASSOON

Simon Estell *Principal*

HORN

John Ryan *Principal*

Martin Hobbs

Mark Vines *Co-Principal*

Gareth Mollison

Will Scotland

TRUMPET

Paul Beniston *Principal*

Chair supported by the Williams family
in memory of Grenville Williams

Tom Nielsen *Principal*

Anne McAneney

David Hilton

TROMBONE

Mark Templeton *Principal*

Chair supported by
William & Alex de Winton

David Whitehouse

Andrew Cole

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
William Lockhart

PERCUSSION

Andrew Barclay *Principal*

Chair supported by
Gill & Garf Collins

Karen Hutt *Co-Principal*

Chair supported by
Joe Topley & Tracey Countryman

Oliver Yates

Sarah Mason

HARP

Rosanna Rolton *Guest Principal*

CELESTE

Catherine Edwards

PIANO

Clíodna Shanahan

TAVERN BAND

Violins: Kate Oswin

Chair supported by Eric Tomsett
Claudia Tarrant-Matthews

Clarinet: Kenny Keppel

Tuba: Archie McVicar

Guitar: Dan Thomas

Accordion: Ian Watson

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

Dr Barry Grimaldi

Sir Simon Robey

Bianca & Stuart Roden

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