

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Alisa Weilerstein: Fragments 1 Wonder

Saturday 27 September 2025, 3pm | Purcell Room

We are proud to be a place where people come together to discover and connect with the wonder of classical music. Throughout the year, we provide unrivalled opportunities to encounter, live in person, the full range of music, and a variety of different ways for you to experience it.

Some of the world's most exciting artists, including our Resident Orchestras and Resident Artists, join us to shine a light on this incredible art form. Welcome to Classical Music: Autumn/Winter 2025/26.

Toks Dada, Head of Classical Music, Southbank Centre

Performer

Alisa Weilerstein *cello*

Creative team

Alisa Weilerstein *project creator*

Elkhanah Pulitzer *director*

Seth Reiser *scenic & lighting designer*

Molly Irelan *costume design*

Heather Sterling *original hair and make-up design*

Hanako Yamaguchi *artistic producer/adviser*

Featured FRAGMENTS composers

Today's performance weaves together 16 short pieces from works by Allison Loggins-Hull, Gili Schwarzman, Joan Tower, Johann Sebastian Bach, Reinaldo Moya and Chen Yi.

With the exception of JS Bach's Suite No.1 in G for solo cello, BWV.1007, all of the music in this programme has been commissioned by Alisa Weilerstein and *FRAGMENTS*.

Further information on the composers and their works will be provided at the conclusion of the performance.

Across the full six-part *FRAGMENTS* series, 28 composers in total are featured: Alan Fletcher, Allison Loggins-Hull, Ana Sokolović, Andy Akiho, Carlos Simon, Caroline Shaw, Courtney Bryan, Daniel Kidane, Gabriel Kahane, Gabriela Lena Frank, Gabriella Smith, Gerard McBurney, Gili Schwarzman, Gity Razaz, Jeffrey Mumford, Jessie Montgomery, Joan Tower, JS Bach, Joseph Hallman, Mathilde Wantenaar, Matthias Pintscher, Missy Mazzoli, Osvaldo Golijov, Paul Wiancko, Reinaldo Moya, Tania León, Thomas Larcher, Chen Yi.

Leadership support for *FRAGMENTS* is generously provided by Joan and Irwin Jacobs. Patron support for *FRAGMENTS* is provided by Judy and Tony Evnin, Clara Wu Tsai and Paul Sekhri. *FRAGMENTS* has been made possible with commissioning support from The San Diego Symphony, Spoleto Festival, UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures, Carnegie Hall, Celebrity Series of Boston, The Royal Conservatory of Music for the 21C Festival, and Washington Performing Arts. Additional support is provided by the Alphadyne Foundation, the Musicians Advocacy Fund, the Steinsieck Foundation, the Cheswatyr Foundation and Mid Atlantic Arts. *FRAGMENTS* was supported by New Music USA's Organization Fund in 2024-25. Special thanks to Martha Gilmer for her leadership and counsel, and to Celebrity Series of Boston, San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Aspen Music Festival and School for their continued support and in-kind contributions.

*This performance lasts approximately 1 hour.
There is no interval.*

In Alisa Weilerstein's groundbreaking performance series *FRAGMENTS*, new music by some of the most compelling composers of our time meets the timeless beauty of Bach's Six Suites for Solo Cello. Underscored with bespoke lighting, scenic architecture and costume design, each of the six *FRAGMENTS* performances embodies its own striking identity that transforms the Bach Cello suites in turn.

In *FRAGMENTS 1 – Wonder*, individual movements from Bach's First Suite are integrated with selected new commissions to explore a wholly original sonic landscape. With no pause, no programme, Weilerstein invites the audience to simply immerse themselves in the dramatic power of live performance.

In early December of 2020, during yet another of what seemed to be endless lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I started scribbling ideas down on paper, anticipating a time when we would be able to reconvene with one another in the concert hall. I knew I wanted to create a visceral, emotional and personal concert experience that would embrace the world we live in without sacrificing the intellectual aesthetic qualities that make our art form – concert music – such a singular mode of human expression and communication. I also was searching for a way to strip away our own natural instincts to categorise and contextualise everything we hear and see. I thought, what would our experience of music be like if we could be given the chance to simply listen first?

The entire *FRAGMENTS* project integrates all of Bach's cello suites with 27 new commissions in original multi-sensory productions, to make six programmes, each an hour long for solo cello. Every programme, or *FRAGMENT*, is played without pauses and the programme details are distributed after the performance.

The composers who have been commissioned to write for *FRAGMENTS* are diverse with respect to compositional approach, race, gender, age, nationality and ethnic background. There is also an even mix of well-known voices and young composers or composers whose work has heretofore not been adequately appreciated by the wider public. I asked all the composers to write multi-movement pieces for solo cello and to kindly grant me permission to insert the movements at different points throughout the programme. That being said,

FRAGMENTS is not a project about people who write music but rather about the music they write. The context and narrative in the sense that we are used to in our art form are far less important than listening to how these disparate voices interact with one another and create an entirely original, unified whole.

Although *FRAGMENTS* began as a flickering of thoughts and images, it has become something much greater. The remarkable group of artists with whom I am collaborating on this project and their joyful and thoughtful enthusiasm has been nothing short of inspirational to me. At its core, *FRAGMENTS* is about deep connection; links between disparate compositional voices, between concert music and theatre, and most importantly, between audience and performer. I invite you to embark upon this adventure with us.

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Director's note

FRAGMENTS suggests various stages in life, emotional landscapes, drifts into memory, structural interplay between musical colours and their associative powers, and much more. Music by 27 living composers woven with Bach's cello suites merge old and new to create infinite possibilities. This approach

of combining unique voices into a tapestry is what lies at the heart of this multi-year project. The ability to hear each voice while also seeing how it connects and responds to others is what shifts *FRAGMENTS* from a series of distinct solo works to one of musical voices in community, creating a continuum from the past to our present moment to effect new meaning.

The design of *FRAGMENTS* elevates the senses to provide an opportunity to go deeper into the music. Each *FRAGMENT* is framed within a unique installation born of an emotional and architectural response to the musical arc Alisa curates and performs. The lighting within each *FRAGMENT* amplifies the music, while the scenic elements frame Weilerstein to awaken a new space within the familiar hall. The overall effect is that Weilerstein in performance and the hall itself take on an enlivened hue enhancing our overall experience and exciting our senses towards deeper listening to her extraordinary playing.

This invitation to embark on a musical journey of old and new is intentionally without hierarchy or narrative. History, biography, a sense of place and timeline fall away to celebrate the primacy of varying musical voices in dialogue. Sound paints on our soul a picture that conveys human truths beyond words, and our aim with each *FRAGMENT* is to illuminate and embrace the music Weilerstein performs towards more profound connection.

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Find out more

- ▶ Alisa Weilerstein
- ▶ Elkhana P Pulitzer
- ▶ Seth Reiser
- ▶ Molly Irelan
- ▶ Hanako Yamaguchi
- ▶ southbankcentre.co.uk



Details of the full programme will be revealed via this QR code immediately after the performance. Tap to view on your phone.

QR code instructions for print programmes:

- Ensure your smartphone is connected to wifi or roaming data services
- Select the camera function
- Hold camera over the image and click the link that appears. It will direct you to a webpage.

You might also like...

Michael Barenboim: Boulez & Electronics

Sunday 12 October 2025, 3pm | Purcell Room

The ever-creative violinist pays a centenary tribute to the genius of Pierre Boulez and his legacy in a programme highlighting the magic of live electronics.

Manchester Collective: Lights and Places

Sunday 9 November 2025, 6pm | Purcell Room

Immerse yourself in a kaleidoscope of sounds and cross-genre experimentation at this radiant celebration of voices from the UK's contemporary music scene.