

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

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## Press Release

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Press images: [HERE](#)

Event listings: [HERE](#)

## ‘Pedal power’: on-stage bicycles to generate energy for London Sinfonietta production at the Royal Festival Hall in music industry first



Caption: Laura Bowler (credit: Rob Clewey)

The Southbank Centre's Resident Orchestra, London Sinfonietta today announces a groundbreaking commission for pioneering composer **Laura Bowler** to bring awareness to the ongoing climate crisis. Music and movement will meet as never before with a production powered entirely by bicycles in an industry first. The world premiere will take place at the Royal Festival Hall on Friday 9 July.

Addressing one of the most pressing issues of our time, *Houses Slide*, commissioned by the London Sinfonietta for soprano and ensemble, describes one woman's intimate psychological journey to investigate her response to the climate emergency.

The concert presentation is directed by the award-winning theatre director **Katie Jane Mitchell OBE** whose minimalist approach will feature up to 16 bicycles powering the production alongside the musicians of the London Sinfonietta, conductor Sian Edwards and soloist Jessica Aszodi, who herself will perform from one of the bikes.

Bowler has collaborated on *Houses Slide* with **Ro Randall**, psychotherapist and founder of Carbon Conversations, an organisation which works with individuals to reduce their climate impact and cope with the personal effects of climate anxiety.

The creators of this one-of-a kind project seek to bring a collective voice to this universal cause. The brand-new libretto - created by playwright **Cordelia Lynn** - and audio playback for the score uses spoken and textual submissions from the public as part of a national call-out by the London Sinfonietta for creative responses to the climate crisis. All house and stage lights and amplification will also be powered by 'pedal power' for the duration of the work, meaning that the whole performance is off-grid.

Project participants were asked to respond to questions: Have you noticed any changes in the natural world over your lifetime? If so, what?; What are your feelings and emotions around climate change, if any?; Does climate change make you feel you should do or change something? If so, what?. In writing the libretto, the artistic team were keen to represent a range of viewpoints on both sides of this complex issue, and to hear from climate change deniers as well as avid eco-warriors.

The bicycle-powered system is provided by **Vivid Design Works**, a company which specialises in sustainable installations, bespoke set design and construction for film, TV, events and venues.

As the production comes together, the artistic team will explore how best to measure the carbon footprint of the project in its entirety from initial conception to the world premiere itself, including the impact of virtual meetings and the travel of audience members to the event, in order to spark an important conversation about the impact of live performance events.

The world premiere of *Houses Slide* on Friday 9 July (7.30pm) is part of *Summer Reunion*, the Southbank Centre's four-month reopening programme and features a composer-led discussion of the issues raised. Tickets go on sale on Wednesday 12 May. A brand new slate of classical music events for *Summer Reunion* is also released today - further information below.

**Laura Bowler, composer of *Houses Slide*, said:**

*"The climate crisis is the most urgent matter for the artistic community to address right now. The more ways we find to communicate the problem, the more likely people will become active in demanding governmental action and in turn global action. We can all positively change our lifestyles to decrease our carbon footprint, to reduce our waste, to reduce our negative impact on the planet, but we also need to demand those in power to act with more urgency. Houses Slide delves into the complexities at the heart of the climate crisis; climate psychology and climate grief. How can we change our minds and the minds of others? How can we effect change? We're also super excited to be challenging ourselves practically to reduce the carbon footprint of the performance through cycle power. Our incredible soprano, Jessica Aszodi, has agreed to the challenge of cycling whilst singing throughout the performance, as her character journeys through the different stages of climate awareness."*

**Andrew Burke, Chief Executive of London Sinfonietta, said:**

*"Commissioning and producing work that engages the issues in society today is an important role for any contemporary arts organisation. I'm proud the London Sinfonietta is making this work with and for Laura Bowler and Katie Mitchell – extraordinary artists who care so much about the future of our environment. Staging Houses Slide will be a journey into the unknown – and yet the London Sinfonietta is best placed to make that journey having made pioneering new work and public engagement programmes for the past 53 years."*

**Caro Russell, from Vivid Design Works, said:**

*“Colin Tonks from Electric Pedals collaborates with Vivid Design Works on many cycle-powered installations, and we are extremely excited to be putting the pedal power into this innovative new project.”*

**Gillian Moore CBE, Director of Music & Performing Arts, Southbank Centre, said:**

*“It’s a complete joy to be presenting live music to audiences again as the Royal Festival Hall comes back to life. Over four months, the venue will be brimming with an extraordinary array of artists who epitomise the very best of music-making today. Whether it’s Colin Currie Group with a three-performance marathon of Reich, Aurora Orchestra and Nicola Benedetti with Beethoven by heart or the London Sinfonietta’s unmissable world premiere of Houses Slide, this summer is all about music which bends genre, plays with format and stretches the boundaries of our imagination. Since its post-war inception in 1951, the Southbank Centre has been a nexus of contemporary art and culture and that spirit lives on in the artists that help usher in our much-anticipated reopening.”*

**Environmental charity, ClientEarth, said:**

*“We’ve been watching the Southbank Centre’s growing commitment to environmental sustainability over the past few years with interest and are delighted to throw our support behind this outstanding initiative from the London Sinfonietta. While the world faces many grave challenges, we must not lose sight of the ongoing climate emergency and the need to build a future where people and nature can thrive, together. We welcome all efforts by the UK arts and culture sector to use compelling storytelling to promote climate action.”*

The commission and performance of Laura Bowler’s *Houses Slide* has been generously supported by Cockayne - Grants for the Arts and the London Community Foundation, presented with the friendly support of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation. The London Sinfonietta is continually grateful to the Arts Council of England for its support. The ensemble and the Southbank Centre are grateful for support across this period from the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund. #HereForCulture

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## **New slate of classical music events for Summer Reunion also announced**

*Houses Slide* is part of a newly-announced slate of events for *Summer Reunion* that will showcase some of the UK’s most daring artists and ensembles in intimate concert settings. The unique staging for these stand-alone events will draw audiences into a series of unmissable musical encounters as they return to the Royal Festival Hall for the first time in over a year. Best-loved works from the late 20th century will be heard alongside an array of new music as the Southbank Centre platforms living composers whose voices are needed now more than ever before. Meanwhile, the Colin Currie Group returns for a marathon three performances of Steve Reich’s *Music for 18 Musicians*.

### **LPO Debut Sounds: Bunker Music (Wednesday 30 June, 7.30pm)**

LPO Composer-in-Residence Brett Dean conducts the world premieres of five pandemic-inspired works by LPO Young Composers for the 2021 edition of the orchestra’s talent-development programme. The works are performed by members of the Foyle Future Firsts development scheme

for aspiring orchestral players, as well as musicians from the LPO. The concert is the pinnacle of a year spent mentoring the LPO Young Composers in a series of seminars and workshops. To open the programme, members of the ensemble will perform another work inspired by a global pandemic - the final movement of Milhaud's Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet & Piano, written in 1918 lamenting the victims of a deadly outbreak of Spanish flu in Rio, where he lived at the time.

**James McVinnie: Bach, Glass & Muhly (Thursday 1 July, 7.30pm)**

The Royal Festival Hall's heavenly organ comes back to life under the stewardship of luminary musician James McVinnie who pairs Bach with Philip Glass, two composers inextricably linked through their drive for innovation, in this exclusive project for the Southbank Centre. One of the more free-spirited of Bach's set of 48 Preludes and Fugues is heard alongside various movements from *The Art of the Fugue*, his testament to the power of the multivoiced musical conversation, as well as two chorale preludes on 'Dies sind die Heiligen Zehen Gebot' and 'Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein'. The centre-piece to this stunning programme is two movements of Nico Muhly's *Patterns*. The sight of the solo organist in the cavernous, beautifully-lit Royal Festival Hall will serve as a fitting metaphor for the year that has passed.

**Colin Currie Group: Music for 18 Musicians (Saturday 3 July, 2pm / 5pm / 8pm)**

Steve Reich's preferred ensembles, The Colin Currie Group and Synergy Vocals return to the Royal Festival Hall to perform his landmark composition, *Music for 18 Musicians* in a three-performance marathon in one day. The work has become synonymous with the legendary composer's mesmeric, vibrating musical style, influenced as much by the artworks of Frank Stella and Gerhard Richter as by Bach, bebop and African drumming. Colin Currie's appearance marks the continuation of his role as one of the Southbank Centre's Associate Artists. After a year where audiences have been deprived of the thrill of live concert-going, this visual and aural spectacle is one to not be missed.

**Aurora Orchestra with Nicola Benedetti (Sunday 4 July, 3pm)**

Aurora's upcoming appearance at the Southbank Centre heralds London's summer return to orchestral music-making as Nicola Benedetti takes to the Royal Festival Hall stage for Beethoven's monumental *Violin Concerto*. Soloist and ensemble alike leave sheet music and stands behind to perform this iconic work from memory. This is paired with Richard Ayres' *Three Pieces about Ludwig van Beethoven, dreaming, hearing loss, and saying goodbye*, a work which draws autobiographical inspiration from its namesake who, like its composer, suffered with long-term hearing loss. The work was premiered behind closed doors last year at the BBC Proms, and will be heard by live audiences for the first time in this concert.

For further information on previously announced events at the Royal Festival Hall in *Summer Reunion*, please visit us [here](#).

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# ENDS #

For further press information please contact:  
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Join the Conversation:

@southbankcentre  
#SummerReunionSC

## **FURTHER EVENT INFORMATION**

### **About the Southbank Centre's Summer Reunion**

From 19 May - 30 August, the Southbank Centre presents *Summer Reunion*, a four-month season of art, culture and entertainment providing opportunities for people to reconnect and reunite across the site following the venue's year-long closure. On 30 April the popular weekly street food market returns, alongside riverside pop-ups; the Hayward Gallery welcomes visitors back on 19 May for two major exhibitions with social-distancing in place in line with government guidance; the Royal Festival Hall reopens on 28 May alongside the National Poetry Library; and the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room reopen later this summer. 15 consecutive weekends of free programming on the Riverside Stage Terrace platform diverse, home-grown talent, while free public art and poetry from the likes of Samson Kambalu, Ilke Gers and Linton Kwesi Johnson bring the outside spaces to life, alongside the popular Queen Elizabeth Hall Roof Garden. The reopening of the Southbank Centre and *Summer Reunion* programme is made possible thanks to the repayable loan from the government's Culture Recovery Fund.

### **Keeping audiences safe on site**

As we welcome visitors back, our number one priority is the safety, health and wellbeing of visitors and staff, so we have introduced a number of measures to help everyone feel confident. These include QR codes at entrances which link to NHS Test and Trace, reduced visitor numbers, social distancing, wearing face coverings, physically distanced seating, fresh air circulation measures and regular and thorough cleaning. We will continue to review and manage any risks and respond to any changes in government guidance. Full details of our Covid-secure measures can be found on the Southbank Centre website.

### **Accessibility**

The Southbank Centre has also introduced a range of new measures to make sure all audiences can be welcomed back to the site after a year of closure for its four-month *Summer Reunion* programme. This includes enhanced measures for those with access requirements to ensure continuous provision in and around the site. Alongside its work with leading organisation, Attitude is Everything, the Southbank Centre has created a new team of Visitor Contact Assistants who will be specialists in helping people with access requirements purchase tickets and handle queries via phone, email, live chat and SMS. A new wheelchair layout in the Royal Festival Hall has been conceived with clear views of the stage, in line with wider social-distancing plans; there will be a dedicated entrance for people who require level access and assistance attending events; access to accessible toilets will be available on all levels; and accessible bar service with pre orders via an app, as well as other ordering options for those without a mobile device, has been arranged.

### **About the Southbank Centre**

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain).

### **The Hayward Gallery new opening times:**

11am – 7pm, Wednesday – Saturday  
10am – 6pm, Sunday  
Closed Monday and Tuesday

### **About the London Sinfonietta**

The London Sinfonietta is one of the world's leading contemporary music ensembles. Formed in 1968, our commitment to making new music has seen us commission over 400 works and premiere many hundreds more. Resident at Southbank Centre and Artistic Associate at Kings Place, with a busy touring schedule across the UK and abroad, the London Sinfonietta's core 18 Principal Players are some of the finest musicians in the world. As well as our commitment to reaching new audiences with world-class performances of new music, and developing the talent of composers and musicians, the organisation holds a leading position in education work. The London Sinfonietta has also broken new ground by launching its own new digital Channel, featuring video programmes and podcasts about new music. We also created Steve Reich's Clapping Music App for iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch, a participatory rhythm game that has been downloaded over 500,000 times worldwide.



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