



Press Release

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Event listings: available to view [here](#)

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From 10 to 100: Southbank Centre and its Resident Orchestras celebrate 5 birthdays with its Classical Music Autumn/Winter 2025/26 programme



L-R: Sean Shibe © Manchester Collective; Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Isata Kanneh-Mason & Tai Murray © Chineke! Orchestra, and Alisa Weilerstein © Marco Borggreve

The **Southbank Centre** and its family of six Resident Orchestras – **Aurora Orchestra**, **Chineke! Orchestra**, **London Philharmonic Orchestra**, **London Sinfonietta**, **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** and **Philharmonia Orchestra** – today announce the **Classical Music Autumn/Winter 2025/26** programme.

The new season delivers for all audiences the very best of classical music. Debut artists, world premiere performances and inventive site-specific programming alongside well-loved masterpieces, Resident Orchestra anniversaries and world-class artists fill the programme. Key highlights can be found below with the full event listings and details available [here](#).

Commenting on the launch of the Classical Music Autumn/Winter 2025/26 programme, **Southbank Centre Head of Classical Music Toks Dada** said: “*Southbank Centre continues to provide audiences with an unrivalled opportunity to experience live, the full range of classical music. At the same time, we continue to support the creative vision of world-class musicians. With our Resident Artists, we are investing in a major multi-year commissioning project, and utilising the uniqueness of the expansive Southbank Centre site to bring new perspectives to major works of the classical music canon. As the largest year-round presenter of orchestral music in the UK, this year we celebrate key anniversaries with our Resident Orchestras spanning 10 to 100 years celebrating the orchestral tradition in various forms.*

We continue to draw new and curious audiences to classical music. Our ‘Alternative Experiences’ continue to create new ways to experience classical music. Presented as part of a double-bill alongside concerts in our established programming strands, these events spill out of the concert hall inviting audiences to join artists for specially staged performances that take inspiration from lively corners of classical music history and contemporary culture.”

Southbank Centre Artistic Director Mark Ball added, “*This season once again demonstrates that at Southbank Centre our approach to classical music reinforces our role as an engine of creativity and our commitment to democratising music. It both celebrates the canon and shapes the future of the form, exciting audiences that are familiar concert-goers, whilst supporting artists to create thrilling ways to make music and engage new audiences.”*

OPENING WEEKEND

The four-day Opening Weekend for Autumn/Winter 2025/26 showcases the creative programming and unmissable moments that audiences have come to expect from Southbank Centre’s Classical Music programme.

- Celebrating their **80th anniversary**, the **Philharmonia Orchestra** open the season under Principal Conductor **Santtu-Matias Rouvali** with a world premiere performance of *Si el oxígeno fuera verde* by 2025 GRAMMY Winner and Philharmonia 2025/26 Composer-in-Residence **Gabriela Ortiz** and Saint-Saëns’ Symphony No.3 (25 Sept, Royal Festival Hall). 2025 GRAMMY Winner and Philharmonia 2025/26 Featured Artist **Vikingur Ólafsson** joins the orchestra to perform Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No.3.
- One of the most versatile and outstanding ensembles of the moment, the **Attacca Quartet** make their Southbank Centre debut (25 Sept, Queen Elizabeth Hall) with music by Dowland, Philip Glass and Arvo Pärt.
- **BBC Concert Orchestra** appears in the Opening Weekend for the first time to present a special edition of *Friday Night is Music Night* (26 Sept, RFH) conducted by **Karen Ni Bhroin**. Audiences can enjoy music from TV period dramas including *Bridgerton*, *Downton Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice* and more.
- Returning Resident Artists **Manchester Collective** perform John Adams’ *Shaker Loops* (26 Sept, QEH) as part of a programme that also includes music by **Dobrinka Tabakova** and **Kaija Saariaho**. New Resident Artists for 2025/26: cellist **Alisa Weilerstein** and guitarist **Sean Shibe** present the first performances of their residencies on 27 September. Weilerstein performs *FRAGMENTS* (Purcell Room, 3pm & 6pm) while Shibe showcases the diverse sound world of the guitar across two programmes (QEH & QEH Foyer, from 8pm).
- **London Philharmonic Orchestra** and Principal Conductor **Edward Gardner** (27 Sept, RFH) together with **Yefim Bronfman** perform Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No.5 in a concert that opens with the orchestra’s new Composer-in-Residence **George Benjamin’s** *Ringed by the flat horizon*.
- **Aurora Orchestra** continue their **20th anniversary** celebrations with *Meet the Instruments*, a newly-created live concert for families, adapted from songs and stories (28 Sept, QEH).
- **Boris Giltburg** performs an evening concert of all of Rachmaninov’s Preludes (28 Sept, QEH).
- The weekend closes with **Chineke!** continuing their **10th anniversary** celebrations with a performance by **Chineke! Junior Orchestra** in the afternoon, followed by an evening concert from

Chineke! Orchestra featuring **Tai Murray**, **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** and **Isata Kanneh-Mason** performing Beethoven's Triple Concerto (28 Sept, RFH).

RESIDENT ARTISTS

The Southbank Centre's annual *Artist Residencies* in Classical Music support some of the most forward-thinking and ambitious music-makers working today.

- **Alisa Weilerstein** begins her residency during the Opening Weekend performing the first two installments of *FRAGMENTS*, an ambitious six-part commissioning project (26 Sept, PR). Each 'fragment' sees Weilerstein perform one of Bach's Solo Cello Suites interwoven with newly commissioned music. This project is curated by Weilerstein and underscored with bespoke lighting, scenic architecture and costume design from a team of creatives. Installments three and four follow in Spring/Summer 2026. Also, in Autumn/Winter 2025/26, Weilerstein brings her collaborators **Stefan Jackiw** and **Inon Barnatan** to the Southbank Centre for a programme of piano trios by Rachmaninov, Ravel and Beethoven (30 Nov, QEH).
- **Sean Shibe** opens his residency together with **12 Ensemble** and **GBSR Duo** performing **Oliver Leith's** *Doom and the Dooms for electric guitar and ensemble*, written specially for this group of musicians and premiered in 2024 (27 Sept, QEH & QEH Foyer, double-bill). The piece evokes a fictional band performing their greatest hits with the electric guitarist as the frontman. Part two of the double-bill evening, sees Shibe showcase the full range of his instrument in a late-night programme that includes an arrangement of **Julia Wolfe's** *LAD* and **Steve Reich's** *Electric Counterpoint for electric guitar & tape*. Shibe returns to lead audiences through an exploration of guitar sound worlds, in a three-part programme featuring lute, classical guitar, and electric guitar across various spaces in the QEH building, with a programme that features **Thomas Adès'** *Forgotten Dances* (10 Jan, QEH building).
- Returning Resident Artists **Manchester Collective** begin their residency with *Shaker Loops* (26 Sept, QEH). The programme includes **John Adams' piece** of the same name accompanied by spoken word from **Christ Bryan** – poet-in-residence at Salford's iconic underground club The White Hotel – alongside music by **Dobrinka Tabakova** and **Kaija Saariaho**. Their second appearance in the Autumn/Winter programme, *Lights and Places*, is a programme for strings, flute, electric guitar and live electronics (9 Nov, PR). The concert is a radiant celebration of voices redefining Britain's contemporary music scene, featuring music by **Jocelyn Campbell**, **Alex Groves**, **Anna Meredith**, **Mathis Saunier** and **Errollyn Wallen**.

SYMPHONIC WORKS & COMPELLING CONCERTOS

The Southbank Centre is at the heart of classical music in the capital and the UK, thanks to its world-class family of Resident Orchestras working with the world's best soloists and conductors:

- **London Philharmonic Orchestra** together with Principal Guest Conductor **Karina Canellakis** perform L. Boulanger's *Faust et Hélène* with **Véronique Gens**, **Andrew Staples** and **Jean-Sébastien Bou** (22 Oct, RFH); Beethoven's Violin Concerto performed by **James Ehnes** and John Adams' *Harmonium for chorus & orchestra* conducted by Principal Conductor **Edward Gardner** (8 Nov, RFH); Prokofiev's *Romeo & Juliet Suites* conducted by **Elim Chan** (12 Nov, RFH); and Mahler's Symphony No.10 with Conductor Emeritus **Vladimir Jurowski** (24 Jan, RFH).
- **Philharmonia Orchestra** are joined by **Evgeny Kissin** to perform three piano concertos in one evening conducted by **Lawrence Foster** (17 Nov, RFH); Principal Guest Conductor **Marin Alsop** conducts Laura Karpman's one-act opera *Balls* (20 Nov, RFH) and Principal Conductor **Santtu-Matias Rouvali** and **Fazil Say** give the UK premiere of Say's piano concerto alongside Dvořák's Symphony No.8 (30 Nov, RFH).
- **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment**, celebrating its **40th anniversary**, is joined by **András Schiff** who directs a programme exploring the evolution of Haydn's musical personality that includes

Symphonies Nos. 39 and 102 as well as Keyboard Concerto No. 11 in which he features as the soloist on a fortepiano (27 Nov, QEH).

CONTEMPORARY EDIT

Contemporary Edit champions boundary-pushing work by 21st century artists and composers alongside major voices of the 20th century. In addition to performances from the **Attacca Quartet**, **Manchester Collective**, **Sean Shibe**, **Alisa Weilerstein**, and the **BBC Concert Orchestra**, the programme includes:

- 2025 RPS Award winners **Paraorchestra** returning with their new production *Dance Like Nobody's Watching* (4 Oct, QEH). Conductor **Charles Hazlewood** and mezzo-soprano **Bethan Langford** transport the audience back to Vienna, 1918 and into Schoenberg's 'Society for Private Musical Performance'. The concert includes a chamber arrangement of Schoenberg's *5 Orchestral Pieces*, Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and a selection of waltzes by J Strauss II.
- **London Sinfonietta** and **George Benjamin** celebrating **Boulez' 100th anniversary** including a performance of *...explosante-fixe...* (5 Oct, QEH).
- New music-theatre/opera group **Belfast Ensemble** returning, led by their director **Conor Mitchell** (Southbank Centre Associate Artist (2024-27)) to perform the UK debut of the concert version of his new chamber opera *Dublin Jack* (9 Oct, PR). This explosive queer opera is inspired by the life and writings of notorious 19th-century Irish sex worker Jack Saul.
- **Michael Barenboim** making his solo debut, and together with **Gilbert Nuono** presenting an evening of violin, viola and live electronics (12 Oct, PR). The concert includes music by composers from across the Levant, continuing the work of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. Many of the composers featured in the programme were inspired or directly taught by Boulez whose music also appears on the programme.
- **The Multi-Story Orchestra** presenting *STUCK*, a bold new musical blending musical styles from grime to gospel and orchestral and choral (23 Oct, QEH). *STUCK* has been created by **The Multi-Story Young Creatives** with songwriter **Gabrielle Chudi** and composer **Yshani Perinpanayagam**, with the script by Peckham playwright **Montel Douglas**.
- A rare opportunity to experience French composer Gérard Grisey's stunningly dark and disorientating *Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil*, presented by the **London Sinfonietta** (28 Nov, QEH).
- Piano and percussion duo **GBSR Duo** together with **Sam Wilson** and **Joseph Havlat** present *Stockhausen vs Aphex Twin: an evening inspired by musical connections and the well-documented disagreement between the two artists* (31 Jan, PR & QEHF, double-bill).

KEYBOARD MUSIC AND CHAMBER MUSIC

The keyboard continues to be a core part of the Classical Music programme following highly acclaimed performances in 2024/25 by former Southbank Centre Resident Artist Víkingur Ólafsson and Yuja Wang, Jean Rondeau and Pavel Kolesnikov. In addition to the performance by **Boris Giltburg** in the Opening Weekend, highlights include:

- **Benjamin Grosvenor** performing a solo piano programme of music by Chopin, Ravel and Mussorgsky (24 Oct, QEH).
- **Tiffany Poon** following her sold out debut last season returns with a recital including music by Alkan, Debussy and Ravel (9 Nov, QEH).
- **Mahan Esfahani's** harpsichord recital with works by Byrd, Dowland, Gibbons and Bull (3 Dec, QEH).
- Organist, composer and producer **Claire M Singer** together with **London Contemporary Orchestra** presenting an evening of music by Singer. Known for her experimental approach to the organ, her work draws inspiration from the dramatic landscape of her native Scotland (7 Dec, QEH).
- **Daniel Hyde's** organ recital which includes the world premiere of a new work by **Errollyn Wallen**, commissioned by The Organ Club, alongside music by Bach and Duruflé (27 Jan, RFH).

- **Alexandra Dariescu** presenting 'A Child's Dream' where the pianist shares her personal musical journey, from some of the very first pieces she played as a child to significant milestones (29 Jan, QEH). The programme includes music by well-loved composers alongside music neglected throughout history.

Meanwhile, Chamber Music concerts continue to be a catalyst for exciting collaborations. In addition to the **Attacca Quartet**, and **Alisa Weilerstein's** concert with **Stefan Jackiw** and **Inon Barnatan**, highlights include:

- **Stephen Hough** with the **Viano Quartet** performing Piano Quintets by **Stephen Hough** and Dvořák after performing Mozart's String Quartet in B flat, K.458 (Hunt) (9 Oct, QEH).
- **ZRI** performing a new arrangement of Schubert's String Quintet in C for violin, cello, clarinet, santouri and accordion (5 Dec, PR & QEHF, double-bill). Reimagined to sound as radical as when it was first written and bursting with gypsy and Hungarian themes, the evening continues into the night with 'Cellar Sessions'. This sees the ensemble recreate the atmosphere of their namesake 'Zum Roten Igel' tavern where Schubert and many others experienced bands performing folk music.
- **Raphael Wallfisch** and **Simon Callaghan** presenting a programme which explores the cello and piano music of composers written in the first half of the twentieth century who were either living in exile from their homeland, or were silenced by the barbaric laws of the Third Reich (18 Jan, PR).

MORE FROM THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE'S RESIDENT ORCHESTRAS

Aurora Orchestra

Aurora Orchestra's family concert 'Meet the Instruments' (28 Sept) is a newly-created live concert, adapted from songs and stories from the unit of the same name on [Aurora Classroom](#), Aurora's digital learning platform for teachers. 'Meet the Instruments' introduces children to the elements of music through engaging videos and lessons featuring Aurora's players and presenters. In celebration of Aurora Orchestra's 20th anniversary, Aurora Classroom will be free from this term for all schools across England. Aurora has also announced the launch of its 'Life-Changing Music Campaign', a new match-funding campaign that will aim to raise £500,000 across its anniversary.

Chineke! Orchestra

Chineke! Orchestra continues celebrating a decade of championing change in classical music. There's an all-star line up as Tai Murray, Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Isata Kanneh-Mason join the orchestra to play Beethoven's Triple Concerto (28 Sept, RFH). All three musicians, alumni of the orchestra, come together for the first time bringing their extraordinary talent to this mighty piece. And in a follow-up to January's hugely popular celebration concert, Chineke! again plays a programme of music made entirely of works commissioned by the ensemble in the last ten years as well a brand new piece by Liverpool born composer, Nneka Cummins (29 Nov, QEH). Chineke! marks a first time collaboration with Royal Philharmonic Society Instrumentalist winner, sitarist and composer Jasdeep Singh Degun (30 Jan, QEH).

London Philharmonic Orchestra

The LPO's 2025/26 season theme, *Harmony with Nature*, explores humanity's bond with the natural world and issues a call to protect it -- through the power of music that confronts, celebrates, and inspires. The season includes Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony, and works by Sibelius, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Dvořák; masterpieces of an era that saw nature as a mirror of human emotion. Closer to our own time, voices as diverse as Anna Thorvaldsdottir, John Luther Adams, Duke Ellington and Terence Blanchard (whose powerful meditation on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina receives its UK premiere), have all found an unquenchable source of creative energy in the processes of nature. For their youngest audience members, LPO presents a themed FUNharmonics concert featuring the music of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, a vivid musical fable about courage and the responsibility to protect even the most feared creatures (17 Jan, RFH).

London Sinfonietta

London Sinfonietta's Autumn/Winter 2025/26 programme involves exciting cross-form collaborations. The orchestra elevates emerging talent through commissions and premieres, whilst continuing to inspire young people and local communities through their participation in creating and performing new music. Marius Neset collaborates with London Sinfonietta (20 Nov QEH) as part of the London Jazz Festival. Neset has spent the last two decades reimagining the sound palette of contemporary jazz. Known for his ecstatic compositional style. In this concert, his relentless improvisations are accompanied by the pulse and precision of the London Sinfonietta.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment celebrates its 40th anniversary throughout the 2025/26 season together with many of its Principal Artists and closest collaborators. They open the season with John Butt directing Handel's oratorio *Solomon* (12 Oct, QEH), with soprano Nardus Williams playing three soprano roles (Solomon's Queen, First Harlot and the Queen of Sheba) and Helen Charlston in the Solomon role – both of which maintain the authenticity of the casting in the first performances. The OAE Tots performance (18 Jan, RFH), invites pre-school children and their families to get up close with the orchestral musicians of the OAE on the stage of the Royal Festival Hall in an interactive concert inspired by the rhythms and melodies of 18th-century music.

Philharmonia Orchestra

In 2025/26 the Philharmonia celebrates its 80th birthday with the launch of Philharmonia Social. To mark the anniversary, there are opportunities to experience the orchestra in the concert hall and beyond. These include 80 free tickets for first-timers at all their London season concerts; 80 live and VR pop-ups around the UK; recruiting 80 volunteers to provide a warm welcome to Philharmonia events; and working with 80 schools to introduce thousands of children to live orchestral music. Beyond the concerts in the opening months of the season as outlined above, Santtu-Matias Rouvali returns in November to conduct Sibelius, Lindberg and Shostakovich, with trombonist Christian Lindberg playing his own concerto *Golden Eagle* (2 Nov, RFH). Ortiz, Ólafsson and Alsop all return throughout the season. Other highlights of the first half of the season include a collaboration with visual artists Gilbert & George (5 Oct, RFH); Strauss' *Four Last Songs* (premiered by the Philharmonia in 1950) with Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha (6 Nov, RFH).

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying 11 acres along the river and its 4 venues anchor 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. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. 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 six Resident Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra). www.southbankcentre.co.uk/