



**FORWARD PLANNER:** Tuesday 21 October 2025, 10am

**Listings diary:** [here](#)

**Images:** [here](#)

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## The Southbank Centre kicks off 75th year with a Classical Music Spring/Summer 2026 programme of orchestral excellence and interdisciplinary innovation



In 2026, the Southbank Centre's Classical Music Spring/Summer programme marks the **75th anniversary** of the visionary Festival of Britain with a programme that celebrates the enduring power and evolving spirit of classical music. Building on 75 years as one of the UK's foremost presenters of classical music, the programme unites the Centre's six Resident Orchestras for the **second year of *Multitudes*** — a festival that places orchestral music at the heart of a multi-arts experience and drew in 59% of new bookers to the classical music programme during its 2025 debut.

Audiences can expect bold reinterpretations, imaginative collaborations, and performances from some of the world's most visionary artists — alongside landmark large-scale orchestral concerts that showcase the grandeur and tradition of classical music at its finest. As the Southbank Centre continues to reimagine how the art form can be experienced, it celebrates both its rich heritage and its future.

**Toks Dada, the Southbank Centre's Head of Classical Music,** said: *"In our 75th year, we are building on the Southbank Centre's proud legacy as one of the UK's leading destinations for classical music. At the heart of this Spring/Summer programme are our outstanding Resident Orchestras and Resident Artists — exceptional musicians whose work continues to define and expand the possibilities of classical music. The work of our six Resident Orchestras, celebrates classical music at its most visceral, giving audiences the opportunity to experience its full emotive power. In addition to our unrivalled orchestral offer, and our Resident Orchestras featuring in the second iteration of our critically acclaimed Multitudes, our Resident Artists bring bold vision and creative flair to the programme. Collectively, they are commissioning new work into the body of classical music and drawing on musical influences from beyond the art form; connecting audiences with the music at its most dynamic and curious."*

**Mark Ball, the Southbank Centre's Artistic Director,** said: "As we mark our 75th anniversary, that captures the spirit of what an arts centre of the future can be, the Southbank Centre continues to look firmly to the future with a classical music programme where the great classical canon is re-imagined through thrilling encounters with dance, circus, visual art, technology and new, boundary-pushing ideas. The Spring/Summer 2026 programme embodies the creative experimentation and collaboration that have come to define the Southbank Centre and continue to make it one of the most exciting and dynamic cultural spaces in the world today."

**Highlights include:**

- **The return of *Multitudes*** (16 Apr – 1 May) – the Southbank Centre's multi-arts festival powered by orchestral music, presented in collaboration with its **six Resident Orchestras: Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra.**
  - ***The Rite by Heart*** sees **Aurora Orchestra** perform Stravinsky's revolutionary work entirely from memory, accompanied by a dramatised introduction that brings the words of the composer and his collaborators to life. Directed by Nicholas Collon, this staged production received critical acclaim in its 2023 Proms debut.
  - The worlds of heavy metal and orchestral music collide in a truly head-banging show from the **Philharmonia Orchestra, *Forged in Sound: Heavy Metal Orchestrated***, fusing heavy metal's industrial sound with classical music including Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* from *Die Walküre*.
  - Alban Berg's devastating opera ***Wozzeck*** thrums with drama, intrigue and searing music in a semi-staged version from the **London Philharmonic Orchestra.**
  - In addition, **Resident Artist Manchester Collective** joins forces with dance-theatre company **Thick & Tight**, plus electronic music artist **CHAINES**, for a defiant live performance with Saariaho's fragile yet fierce *Sept Papillons* at its heart.
- The Southbank Centre's **Artist Residencies** spotlight visionary artistry and fresh collaborations:
  - Cellist **Alisa Weilerstein** continues her multi-year project *FRAGMENTS*, presenting two further instalments that blend solo cello, new composition and theatrical staging, in addition to appearing with Resident Orchestra **Philharmonia Orchestra** to perform the London premiere of a new work by Philharmonia Orchestra Featured Composer and GRAMMY-award winning **Gabriela Ortiz.**
  - Guitarist **Sean Shibe** returns for two folk-inspired programmes that weave traditional influences into contemporary sound worlds including with Scottish fiddler and composer **Aidan O'Rourke**, and appears in collaboration with Resident Orchestra **Philharmonia Orchestra.** For the fourth year of the Southbank Centre's creative partnership with the **Royal Academy of Music, *Future Artists***, Shibe mentors a cohort of emerging artists, supporting the next generation of musical talent.
  - Two Resident Artists join forces for the first time as **Manchester Collective** appears with **Sean Shibe** for an atmospheric nautically-themed one-off show including the world premiere of a new work by **Ben Nobuto**, co-commissioned by the Southbank Centre and Manchester Collective; the Collective then later performs the London premiere of a new work by **Southbank Centre Associate Artist Cassie Kinoshi**, reflecting her distinctive voice at the intersection of classical and jazz music.
- Performances by leading international artists, including **Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Iveta Apkalna, Martha Argerich, Dong Hyek Lim, Arod Quartet, Danel Quartet, Behzod Abduraimov, Idrisi Ensemble, Miloš Karadaglić, Andreas Ottensamer, James McVinnie, Fazıl Say, United Strings of Europe, Tamsin Waley-Cohen, and Cordelia Williams.**

### **Chamber Music — intimate tableaux of traditional repertoire**

*Chamber Music* at the Southbank Centre brings audiences close to the alchemy of small ensembles, where duos, quartets, and quintets spark off one another in intimate, emotionally rich performances. Groundbreaking collectives like **Idrīsī Ensemble** explore cultural intersections and forgotten voices, while celebrated quartets and soloists, including the **Arod and Danel Quartets**, **United Strings of Europe**, violinist **Tamsin Waley-Cohen** and pianist **Cordelia Williams** combine technical mastery with inventive programming. In another special collaboration, guitarist **Miloš Karadaglić** performs with clarinetist **Andreas Ottensamer** charting journeys through time and musical tradition, weaving works that span the Renaissance to the 20th century. These concerts traverse centuries and traditions, conjuring worlds of tenderness, delight, and wonder, proving that in the smallest formations, classical music can feel boundless.

### **Contemporary Edit — showcasing boundary-pushing new music and innovation**

The *Contemporary Edit* showcases artists redefining classical music for today, connecting historic masterpieces with visionary new works, imaginative collaborations and inventive presentations. Tradition meets innovation as sitarist **Jasdeep Singh Degun** opens the series with spellbinding music for sitar and strings featuring a quintet of players from the **London Philharmonic Orchestra**. The **Philharmonia Orchestra** and **London Sinfonietta** champion trailblazing composers and new works in the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary year, while multi-year commissioning projects like Resident Artist **Alisa Weilerstein's** *FRAGMENTS* interweave contemporary voices with timeless classics. Resident Artist **Sean Shibe** charts new waters through sea shanties with fellow Resident Artist **Manchester Collective**, and elsewhere a folk-inspired collaboration with fiddler **Aidan O'Rourke**. **United Strings of Europe** spotlights **Jasmin Kent Rodgman's** reflective *send back the echo* in an exploration of the intersection of music, deafness and isolation. From bold reinterpretations of operas and symphonies to experimental ensembles at the cutting-edge of the art form, the *Contemporary Edit* celebrates the evolving story of classical music and its capacity to surprise, challenge, and inspire.

### **Keyboard Music — welcoming the greatest in piano and organ performance**

Virtuosity meets imagination in the Southbank Centre's *Keyboard Music*, featuring rising star **Behzod Abduraimov** and acclaimed pianist **Pierre-Laurent Aimard**, each offering fresh interpretations of repertoire from Bach and Brahms to Stravinsky. **Fazil Say** performs his own works alongside Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, while legendary pianist **Martha Argerich** appears with her protégé **Dong Hyek Lim**, who has established himself as a pianist of remarkable brilliance. Organists **Iveta Apkalna** and former Resident Artist **James McVinnie** complete the series with powerful choral repertoire with the **State Choir Latvia** and an all-Bach programme, respectively. Across the series, each recital transforms familiar works into vivid, unforgettable experiences, showcasing the piano and organ at their most expressive and daring.

### **Alternative Experiences — shifting perceptions of the classical experience**

Bold, unexpected, and boundary-pushing, *Alternative Experiences* invite audiences to rethink what a classical concert can be. At the centre of this is **Multitudes**, the Southbank Centre's multi-arts festival powered by orchestral music, where tradition meets daring innovation. **Aurora Orchestra** perform *The Rite of Spring* entirely from memory in a critically acclaimed staged and dramatised production, while cross-art form collaboration between **BBC Concert Orchestra** and visual artist **Mat Collishaw** conjures the hellscape of *Dante's Inferno*. Beyond *Multitudes*, **Aurora Orchestra** returns to perform Mozart's mighty *Jupiter Symphony*, this time inviting the audience on-stage for an utterly thrilling concert experience. These performances transform familiar works and spaces into revelatory encounters, offering audiences classical music in its most imaginative, dynamic form.

## **CLICK LINKS BELOW TO VIEW MONTHLY CONCERT LISTINGS:**

### **[FEBRUARY 2026](#)**

February sees **Esa-Pekka Salonen** conduct the **Philharmonia Orchestra** for the UK premiere of **John Adams'** new piano concerto with **Víkingur Ólafsson**. The **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** explores

Mozart's last symphonies, while the **London Sinfonietta** brings the music of **Tōru Takemitsu** to life with audio-visual spectacle.

### **MARCH 2026**

March brings musical grandeur and experimentation: **Kent Nagano** conducts **Mahler's Resurrection** with the **Philharmonia**, while **Chineke!** pairs the work of **Vaughan Williams** with **Jessie Montgomery's**. **Manchester Collective** joins **Sean Shibe** with *Sea Shanties*, part of the *Contemporary Edit's* cross-genre spirit. Pianist **Fazil Say** gives a bold solo recital, and the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** performs **Bach's St John Passion**. The month closes with **Tan Dun's Beethoven Nine** and a stirring *Verdi Requiem*.

### **APRIL 2026**

April centres on the return of **Multitudes**, the Southbank Centre's multi-arts festival powered by orchestral music. **Aurora Orchestra** performs *The Rite of Spring* from memory; the **Philharmonia** fuses **Wagner** with heavy metal; and the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** stages **Berg's Wozzeck**. Beyond the festival, **James McVinnie** performs **Bach** on piano and organ, and **Nicola Benedetti** joins the **Philharmonia** for **Elgar's Violin Concerto**.

### **MAY 2026**

May's programme celebrates collaboration and intimate performance. **Alisa Weilerstein** continues her *FRAGMENTS* series, interweaving **Bach** with new commissions, while the **United Strings of Europe** present *Send Back the Echo* featuring Deaf actor **Vilma Jackson**. **Sean Shibe** joins folk fiddler **Aidan O'Rourke** for *Lùban*, and **Pierre-Laurent Aimard** explores **Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier**.

### **JUNE 2026**

June brings a celebratory finale to the programme. **Sir Simon Rattle** conducts the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** in **Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique**, and the **London Sinfonietta** unveils **Christian Mason's Time Entwined**. **Aurora Orchestra** performs **Mozart's Jupiter by Heart** with audiences on stage, while **Iveta Apkalna** and the **State Choir Latvija** fill the Royal Festival Hall with organ and choral brilliance, closing the programme in soaring style.

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For further information, please contact: [press@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:press@southbankcentre.co.uk)

### **About the Southbank Centre**

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project – that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone – are still our guiding principles today. The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP), two resident organisations (Kinetika Bloco and Tomorrow's Warriors) and 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](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk)

### **About the Southbank Centre's Resident Orchestras**

#### **Aurora Orchestra**

Innovative and boundary breaking, Aurora Orchestra is best known for its Orchestral Theatre productions and signature memorised performance style. Its creative learning strand reaches thousands of young people each year, from immersive performances to school classrooms to its free digital platform Aurora Classroom. This spring, Aurora performs two canon works from memory: Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* with a theatrical introduction, and an intimate setting of Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony* with the audience on stage.

#### **Chineke! Orchestra**

Founded in 2015 by Chi-chi Nwanoku CBE, Chineke! Orchestra is Europe's first majority Black and ethnically diverse orchestra. Performing classical works alongside music by Black and ethnically diverse composers, the ensemble made its debut at the Southbank Centre in 2015 and became a Resident Orchestra in 2022. For Spring/Summer 2026, they're joined by two star violinists: Julián Gil Rodríguez, who also directs; and Njioma Chinyere Grevious, for Coleridge-Taylor's Violin Concerto.

### **London Philharmonic Orchestra**

The London Philharmonic Orchestra has been creating thrilling orchestral experiences at the Southbank Centre since the Royal Festival Hall's opening concert 75 years ago. This spring, the orchestra brings blockbuster moments like Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with Anne-Sophie Mutter, Beethoven's beloved Ninth Symphony, and Brahms' Double Concerto with LPO Principals, while continuing Harmony with Nature, a season that celebrates our planet and humanity's place in protecting it.

### **London Sinfonietta**

The London Sinfonietta is one of the world's leading contemporary music ensembles. Formed in 1968, it has commissioned over 470 works. Its musicians reimagine the contemporary repertoire they champion, and work with inspiring living composers and artists to create new music. They collaborate with young people, communities and the public in making projects involving film, theatre, dance and art, and their free-to-view digital channel reaches audiences around the world.

### **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment**

In 1986, a group of inquisitive musicians took a hard look at the orchestra and decided to start from scratch, throwing out the rule book. A single conductor? No way. Specialise in one era? Too restricting. Since then, the OAE has mesmerised and augmented the music world. Period-specific instruments have become just one element of its quest for authenticity, and its name stands for excellence, diversity and exploration.

### **Philharmonia Orchestra**

Celebrating their 80th birthday this year, the Philharmonia Orchestra continue to bring orchestral music of the very highest quality to the widest possible audience. Principal Conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali leads a series of spring concerts that range from Beethoven, Rachmaninov and Bruckner to UK premieres by John Adams, Gabriela Ortiz and Jonathan Dove. Pianist Víkingur Ólafsson is their Featured Artist, with guests including violinists Hilary Hahn and Lisa Batiashvili and pianist Bruce Liu.