

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

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## Press Release

For immediate release: 12 February 2020

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Press images [HERE](#)

## Beyond Beethoven 9

Thursday 16 April at 7.30pm & Saturday 18 April at 7.30pm

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Marin Alsop conducts over 450 musicians and singers in a performance of Beethoven's iconic choral symphony with youth at its heart as part of a major global project and *Beethoven 250* series at Southbank Centre

Poet Anthony Anaxagorou writes *O Human*, a new ode to 'joy' for the 21st century



Photos: Marin Alsop © Adriane White; Marin Alsop conducts National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and mass choirs in Bernstein's Mass at the Royal Festival Hall, April 2018 © Mark Allen; Anthony Anaxagorou, photographed in the National Poetry Library at Southbank Centre © Takis Zontiros/SC; members of NYO © Jason Alden

*Beethoven's message of unity, tolerance and joy is as relevant today as it was in 1824. His 9th Symphony was a revolutionary piece. Beethoven celebrated the essence of what it is to be human and what it is to be connected. We want to embrace this philosophy, throw the*

*doors wide open and say: everyone owns this piece, this idea, and together, we are much stronger'. Marin Alsop*

Southbank Centre Associate Artist, **Marin Alsop** conducts over 450 performers in a performance with youth at its heart, in a Southbank Centre partnership with Associate Orchestra, **National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain** [NYO] and a 300 person choir in the biggest performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony ever staged in the Royal Festival Hall.

The performance is part of global project ***All Together: A Global Ode to Joy***, the brainchild of Alsop, which will see Alsop conduct Beethoven's 9th Symphony with **eleven orchestras on six continents**, connecting people from South Africa to China, USA to Australia throughout 2020. The UK's contribution is a celebration of youth brilliance, and Beethoven's ability to speak directly to people of all backgrounds, a sharing of joy, seen through today's eyes and heard through today's sounds; going *Beyond Beethoven*.

Beethoven's 9th Symphony was born in London - commissioned by the Philharmonic Society of London. The music's potent humanistic call for unification and talismanic expression of the power of art to bring people together still resonates powerfully today (not least as the anthem of the European Union). *Beyond Beethoven 9* intersperses Beethoven's blazing, radical music with new compositions by 'personable polymath' [The Times] **Bill Barclay** (who also directs the Southbank Centre production) and a new jazz work by **Benjamin Burrell** (composer and musical director of the National Theatre's recent acclaimed production of *Small Island*).

TS Eliot prize-nominated British-born Cypriot poet, fiction writer, essayist, publisher and poetry educator, **Anthony Anaxagorou** has written *O Human*, in place of Schiller's famous *An die Freude* 'Ode to Joy' poem (sung as the climax to Beethoven's symphony) reflecting on what joy means to young people in the 21st century. Anaxagorou, who is also Artistic Director of Out-Spoken, a monthly poetry and music event held at London's Southbank Centre, led workshops in London secondary schools and with young refugees, asking participants what 'joy' meant to them. This resulted in almost 100 poems, which Anaxagorou has used to inform his new interpretation of Schiller's famous 1785 poem, commissioned by Southbank Centre. Anaxagorou comments:

*'Rewriting Ode to Joy has been a thrilling experience, particularly regarding its message of tolerance and plurality, and seeing how such proclamations are ever so pertinent today.'*

In keeping with Beethoven's central message of unification through art, *Beyond Beethoven 9* combines on stage professional musicians (just four singers and conductor Marin Alsop) with hundreds of amateur musicians and performers spanning seven decades and from diverse backgrounds.

The explosive youthful celebration of Beethoven's music is led by **all 164 members of NYO** taking part in performances on stage and in free music trails and breakout performances across Southbank Centre's open foyers, including blasts of mass brass on the Royal Festival Hall's Clore Ballroom (part of an extensive programme of free Southbank Centre events

which also include specially commissioned films, workshops and an interactive 'wall of joy', and a Women Conductors Masterclass, led by Marin Alsop). **Kynan Walker**, 17-year-old NYO leader comments:

*'I am thrilled to be playing Beethoven's 9th Symphony with NYO this April, conducted by Marin Alsop as part of her year-long worldwide celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. We are lucky enough to be the only youth orchestra in the world selected to take part! What has become apparent to me throughout my years of playing and, before then, listening to NYO is that we bring a spirited energy onto the stage, filled with a unique determination and dedication. What better way to celebrate the joyous music, poetic influence and societal impact of Beethoven's music than by sharing the stage with a conductor as inspiring as Marin Alsop, in a venue as prestigious as the Southbank Centre!'*

Following *Beyond Beethoven 9*, NYO will take elements of their performance of the symphony into schools across the country.

Several youth and children's choirs have been brought together especially for these performances, including young Welsh male voice choir **Only Boys Aloud**, Newham's **Lister Community School** choir and **Finchley Children's Music Group**. Beethoven was deaf by the time his 9th Symphony was first performed; **Kaos Signing Choir** will lead a section of the work performed by the full cast entirely in British Sign Language.

Southbank Centre's 60-strong **Beyond Beethoven Voicelab Project Choir**, directed by **Suzi Zumpe**, brings together experienced singers with those who are making a first foray into choral singing, or returning to a choir after a gap, in some cases, of many years. The **London Philharmonic Choir** and **The Bach Choir**, and soloists including soprano **Nadine Benjamin**, mezzo-soprano **Catriona Morison**, tenor **Oliver Johnston**, and bass-baritone **Simon Shibambu** complete the line-up of nearly 300 singers. Also participating are a number of Southbank Centre based youth groups, including jazz music education and artist development organisation, **Tomorrow's Warriors**, and music and dance performance group, **Kinetika Bloco**. Movement Direction is by **Natasha Khamjani**.

*Beyond Beethoven 9* follows in the footsteps of Southbank Centre/Marin Alsop's award-winning mass participation performance of Britten's *War Requiem* in 2015 and reunites Alsop, Southbank Centre and the National Youth Orchestra following their collaboration on Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* in 2018. **Gillian Moore, Southbank Centre Director of Music** comments:

*'The Royal Festival Hall has seen over 100 performances of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, but none as large, diverse and all embracing as this. And it's apt that this project has 'joy' at its heart; our previous mass participation projects have been utterly thrilling, not just for audiences but for performers as well, many of who were entirely new to classical music.'*

*Beethoven's masterwork is an impassioned plea for a humanitarian coming together and never has this call for unity been more important. By bringing newcomers together with professional and experienced musicians and composers, creating new words to reflect their*

*lives and by allowing every voice to be heard, as individuals and collectively, we hope that Beyond Beethoven 9 gives a powerful message of hope and joy.'*

**Sarah Alexander, Chief Executive and Artistic Director of NYO** adds:

*'This throwing open of the Royal Festival Hall is not just to make a huge sound, but to make a huge statement: music brings people together, and what better showcase of the joy that can be in togetherness than more than 450 musicians on the concert platform sharing music and perspectives in different ways.'*

*Beyond Beethoven 9 is part of All Together: A Global Ode to Joy, a major international mass participation project which will see Alsop lead creative projects and performances of Beethoven's 9th Symphony with eleven orchestras on six continents, including Carnegie Hall, New York and Baltimore, USA; Auckland and Wellington New Zealand; Beijing, China; Sydney, Australia; Johannesburg and Durban, South Africa. More information about All Together: A Global Ode to Joy [here](#).*

**Southbank Centre's Beethoven 250 season** celebrates the 250th anniversary of the birth of Beethoven in concerts and events throughout 2020. Full details of forthcoming Spring Beethoven 250 events [here](#), with further autumn 2020 concerts to be announced shortly.

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**Listings:**

**BEYOND BEETHOVEN 9**

*Thursday 16 April & Saturday 18 April 2020, 7.30pm, Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, £15 - £25*

**National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain; Marin Alsop conductor; Nadine Benjamin soprano  
Catriona Morison mezzo-soprano; Oliver Johnston tenor; Simon Shibambu bass-baritone; The  
Bach Choir; London Philharmonic Choir; Finchley Children's Music Group; Only Boys Aloud;  
Kaos Signing Choir; Voicelab; Tomorrow's Warriors; Kinetika Bloco; Bill Barclay director; Suzi  
Zumpe choral director; Anthony Anaxagorou libretto**

Beethoven: *Symphony No.9* (Choral) (with three new commissions interspersed before and between the movements of the original work)

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/134302-beyond-beethoven-9-2020>

**FREE EVENTS**

**NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA SESSIONS**

*Thursday 16th April, 5pm-6.30pm, Royal Festival Hall, Clore Ballroom*

Members of the National Youth Orchestra perform new ensemble compositions inspired by Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

### **WALL OF JOY**

*Thursday 16 April, 5pm-7.30pm / Saturday 18 April, 12noon-7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall, Level 2 Foyers*

Add your contribution to a public wall of joy and share the small actions you take to inspire joy for yourself and others.

### **UNCOVERING CLASSICS: BEETHOVEN 9**

*Thursday 16 April & Saturday 18 April, 6.30-7.00pm, Royal Festival Hall, Clore Ballroom*

A short film with students from Dunraven secondary school and artists as they explore the key themes in Beethoven's 9th symphony, and discover what the piece means for them today. The screening on the 16th is preceded by a short introduction from the team behind the film.

### **COME AND PLAY: BEETHOVEN**

*Saturday 18 April, 11.30am-1pm, Royal Festival Hall Clore Ballroom*

Members of NYO lead a session for teenage musicians playing at Grade 4-8 or above exploring and learning to play elements of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, with top tips from NYO teenage musicians about playing in an orchestra, culminating in an informal public sharing.

### **ONLY BOYS ALOUD**

*Saturday 18 April, 1.30-2.30pm, Royal Festival Hall Clore Ballroom*

Performance and workshop led by member of Only Boys Aloud, and their leader Tim Rhys-Evans.

### **NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA MUSIC TRAIL**

*Saturday 18 April, Across Southbank Centre, 2.45pm-4.15pm*

Explore the Royal Festival Hall building guided by NYO young promoters, with groups from the NYO popping up in unexpected spaces with new compositions inspired by Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

### **A NEW ODE TO JOY: BIG SING AND SIGN**

*Saturday 18 April, 4.30-5.45pm, Royal Festival Hall Clore Ballroom*

This inclusive workshop invites everyone to take part in a mass chorus and learn to sing and sign Anthony Anaxagorou's *O Human*. Alongside learning to sing some of the ode, participants will also learn to sign in British Sign Language parts of the text. Suitable for all levels of vocal ability and experience.

### **BEYOND BEETHOVEN: A REVOLUTION IN MUSIC**

*Saturday 18 April, 6pm-6.45pm, Royal Festival Hall Clore Ballroom*

A panel of Beethoven enthusiasts and experts explore Beethoven's impact on the music we hear today.

Plus

### **MARIN ALSOP: WOMEN CONDUCTORS MASTERCLASS**

*Friday 17 April, 3pm-6pm, Royal Festival Hall*

As part of Southbank Centre's *Women in Music* programme, Marin Alsop leads a masterclass for women conductors (RFH, 17 Apr at 3pm), offering expert coaching and guidance to five aspiring women conductors as they conduct Southbank Sinfonia and musicians from the BBC Concert Orchestra in a variety of repertoire.

### **About Southbank Centre**

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre and one of the UK's top five visitor attractions, occupying a 17 acre site 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. 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).