

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Press Release

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Press images: available to download [HERE](#)

The Southbank Centre announces the line-up for *Multitudes*, featuring a landmark concert of the music at the heart of Lee Alexander McQueen's fashion legacy



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The Southbank Centre today announces the full line-up for the return of *Multitudes*, its multi-arts festival powered by orchestral music, running from 16-30 April 2026 as part of the centre's 75th anniversary year.

A centrepiece of the festival's programme is ***Un-natural Harmony: Sounds of Lee Alexander McQueen*** (29–30 April), a major new collaboration between the **London Contemporary Orchestra**, **Robert Ames**, and **John Gosling**, McQueen's longtime music director and collaborator. The multi-arts concert is a reimagining of the music which inspired Lee Alexander McQueen's most iconic fashion runways in a live orchestral setting.

Bringing to life the soundworld that defined McQueen's theatrical, subversive runway shows, the performance reworks their rich, textural music through a live score, by co-creative directors John Gosling and Robert Ames. Under the direction of **Elayce Ismail**, the concert features a new film by **Douglas Hart** and **Eddie Whelan**, and a live performance choreographed by the critically acclaimed **Holly Blakey**.

The concert draws together an eclectic and emotionally charged repertoire spanning centuries and genres, reflecting Gosling and McQueen's collaboratively bold and fearless approach to music as a narrative force. From **Purcell's** lyrical *Dido and Aeneas* and **Handel's** Sarabande to the stillness of **Mozart's** *II. Adagio: Piano Concerto No.23*, ***Un-natural Harmony: Sounds of Lee Alexander McQueen*** weaves together an evening of music that moves between beauty and brutality, restraint and excess. These canonical works are set against contemporary popular music that featured prominently in McQueen's runways, including **The Rolling Stones' *Paint It, Black*** and the last track of the designer's final runway, *Plato Atlantis* – **Lady Gaga's *Bad Romance***.

Launched in 2025 to critical and audience acclaim, **Multitudes** reimagines the orchestral music experience by fusing it with fashion, dance, film, circus and visual art. The multi-arts festival features all six of the Southbank Centre's six Resident Orchestras – **Aurora Orchestra**, **Chineke! Orchestra**, the **London Philharmonic Orchestra**, the **London Sinfonietta**, the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment**, and the **Philharmonia Orchestra** – alongside a stellar lineup of world-class musicians, musical ensembles, dancers, visual artists and filmmakers.

Having attracted 59% new bookers to the Southbank Centre's classical music programme in its debut year, **Multitudes** looks to the future of classical music through bold, interdisciplinary work that expands the possibilities of the orchestral experience while celebrating its scale, power and emotional depth. The festival sits within the Southbank Centre's visionary Spring/Summer classical season, building on its 75-year history as one of the UK's foremost presenters of classical music.

The 2026 programme includes:

- **Aurora Orchestra** performs Stravinsky's radical *The Rite of Spring* entirely from memory in *The Rite by Heart* (16 Apr) with a dramatised production illuminating the process of the work's creation.
- **Philharmonia Orchestra** pushes musical boundaries in *Forged in Sound: Heavy Metal Orchestrated* (22 Apr) as rock and heavy metal collide with the unmistakable intensity of live orchestral music, with repertoire including Wagner's iconic *Ride of the Valkyries*.
- Step into a world of soaring soundscapes as the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** (22 Apr) perform works by Vaughan Williams, using the Southbank Centre's pioneering Concrete Voids sound system to turn the Queen Elizabeth Hall into a three-dimensional instrument, with immersive visuals from light art pioneers Squidsoup.
- A super-sized **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** combines huge symphonic scale with mesmerising animations and live action from visual theatre makers **1927 Studios** in a truly immersive performance of Messiaen's *Turangalila: Infinite Love* (23 Apr).
- The **London Philharmonic Orchestra** presents Alban Berg's devastating opera *Wozzeck: Wretches Like Us* (25 Apr) in a semi-staged production brimming with drama and intrigue, with filmed and staged elements in collaboration with video artist and director **Ilya Shagalov**.
- **BBC Concert Orchestra** and visual artist **Mat Collishaw** bring to life an immersive interpretation of Franz Liszt's apocalyptic Dante Symphony, inspired by Dante's infamous vision of hell, in *Inferno*. Featuring a new work from composer **Fiona Brice** and rapper and multi-disciplinary artist **TaliaBle** (29 Apr).
- **Resident Artist Manchester Collective** collaborates with queer dance-theatre company **Thick & Tight** and electronic music artist **CHAINES (Cee Haines)** for *Papillons* (30 Apr), centred on Kaija Saariaho's delicate yet intense *Sept Papillons* for solo cello.
- **Circa** presents astonishing floor-based circus interpretations of Bach's *The Art of Fugue*, performed by the virtuosic **Australian Brandenburg Orchestra** across three performances (24–25 Apr).

Laura Mvula, singer and composer, said: "It's been really exciting for me to approach An Evening with an Immigrant as a composer responding to Inua's beautiful poetry, it's a collaboration and process that really resonates with me. In An Evening with an Immigrant, Inua has managed to

voice so many stories in his unique, poignant and critically important style. It's a pleasure to create music that both deepens and highlights the show's incisive, urgent and bold words."

Mark Ball, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, said: "Multitudes reflects the Southbank Centre's belief that classical music is a living art form, shaped by new exchange between artists and collaboration across artistic disciplines. It excites younger audiences and first time attenders, bringing them into an encounter with the full force of classical music via diverse artistic touchpoints. As we celebrate our 75th anniversary, the festival looks forward – drawing on the depth of the classical canon while opening it up to new ways of experiencing live performance. Multitudes invites audiences to encounter orchestral music afresh, and situates its place within the Southbank Centre as a forward-looking, evolving art form, deeply connected to a wider culture around it."

Tickets for the full *Multitudes* programme will go on sale to Southbank Centre Members on **Wednesday 26 January** and the general public on **Friday 28 January**.

www.southbankcentre.co.uk/multitudes

- ENDS -

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Press images: available to download [HERE](#)

This press release is available in a range of accessible formats. To receive one, or for further information, please contact: press@southbankcentre.co.uk

MULTITUDES LISTINGS:

For further info and pricing: www.southbankcentre.co.uk/multitudes

THE RITE BY HEART | RESIDENT ORCHESTRA

Thursday 16 April 2026, 7.30pm Royal Festival Hall.

Aurora Orchestra performs Stravinsky's revolutionary *The Rite of Spring* entirely from memory, under the direction of Nicholas Collon. This memorised musical exploration of Stravinsky's riotous score is performed in a dramatised production illuminating the process of the work's creation.

Stravinsky: *The Rite of Spring* (with introduction in first half)

AN EVENING WITH AN IMMIGRANT | RESIDENT ORCHESTRA

Sunday 26 April, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Be swept up by poet and playwright Inua Ellams' powerful and widely acclaimed solo show telling his story of leaving Nigeria for England aged 12, performed with the live world premiere of a specially commissioned, rich and expansive orchestral score by Laura Mvula. Produced by Fuel in collaboration with Chineke! Orchestra and supported by Choose Love.

FORGED IN SOUND: HEAVY METAL ORCHESTRATED | RESIDENT ORCHESTRA

Wednesday 22 April 2026, 7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall.

The 100-strong Philharmonia Orchestra brings its powerful sound to some of the biggest pieces of orchestral music ever composed and full throttle orchestral versions of rock and heavy metal anthems. Principal Conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali taps into his past as a rock drummer for a performance that brings together two extraordinary musical forms.

Repertoire includes Wagner: *Ride of the Valkyries* from *Die Walküre*; Mahler: *Adagietto* from *Symphony No.5*; Vivaldi: *Violin Concerto in G minor, Op.8 No.2 (Summer)*; Sibelius: *Finlandia*; Mosolov: *Zavod (The Iron Foundry), Op.19*

TURANGALÎLA

Thursday 23 April 2026, 7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall.

A super-sized Royal Philharmonic Orchestra turns the volume up to 11 for this performance of Messiaen's symphony with animations and live action from 1927 Studios. Featuring pianist Steven Osborne, Cécile Lartigau playing ondes Martenot, with Vasily Petrenko conducting.

Messiaen: *Turangalila-symphonie*

ART OF FUGUE

Friday 24 - Saturday 25 April, 3pm (25th only) and 7.45pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall.

The spirited performances of The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra meets Circa's gravity-defying acrobatics, bringing new form to Bach's *The Art of Fugue*.

Bach: *The Art of Fugue*

WOZZECK - WRETCHES LIKE US | RESIDENT ORCHESTRA

Saturday 25 April 2026, 7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall.

Berg's devastating opera thrums with drama, intrigue and searing music in this semi-staged version from the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Ilya Shagalov, conducted by Edward Gardner and with baritone Stéphane Degout.

Berg: *Wozzeck*

ECHOES OF HILL AND HORIZON | RESIDENT ORCHESTRA

Wednesday 22 April, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Step into a world of soaring, immersive soundscapes as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment perform works by Vaughan Williams in surround sound, using the Southbank Centre's pioneering Concrete Voids sound system to turn the Queen Elizabeth Hall into a three-dimensional instrument, with immersive visuals from light art pioneers Squidsoup.

Repertoire includes Williams: *Fantasia on a Theme*; Tallis: *The Lark Ascending*

INFERNO

Wednesday 29 April 2026, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Liszt's Dante Symphony is performed by the BBC Concert Orchestra alongside a film by visual artist Mat Collishaw, which mixes historic depictions of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and modern-day visions of corruption and collapse. Also featuring new work from composer Fiona Brice and rapper and multi-disciplinary artist TaliaBle.

Liszt: *Dante Symphony*

PAPILLONS | RESIDENT ARTIST

Thursday 30 April 2026, 7.45pm, Purcell Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Manchester Collective joins with queer dance-theatre company Thick & Tight and electronic music artist CHAINES (Cee Haines). At the heart of the performance is Saariaho's solo cello work *Sept papillons (Seven Butterflies)*, performed this evening by Laura van der Heijden.

Saariaho: *Sept Papillons for cello*

CHAINES (Cee Haines): *New work (world premiere)*

SYMPOESIA | RESIDENT ORCHESTRA

Thursday 30 April, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Poets including Out-Spoken's Joelle Taylor and Anthony Anaxagorou are joined by the London Sinfonietta in a performance that weaves together poetry and music. Featuring a brand-new commission alongside notable modern works, this is an evening of urgent storytelling and virtuosic performance.

UN-NATURAL HARMONY: SOUNDS OF LEE ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

Thursday 30 April, 7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall.

A spectacular collaboration between the London Contemporary Orchestra led by Robert Ames and John Gosling, McQueen's longtime music director and collaborator. The LCO performs an eclectic score inspired by McQueen's musical influences and, under the direction of Elayce Ismail, the concert features a new film by Douglas Hart and Eddie Whelan, and a live performance choreographed by Holly Blakey.

Repertoire includes Purcell: *Dido and Aeneas*; Glass: *Morning Passages (The Hours)*; Williams: *Theme from Schindler's List*; Handel: *Sarbande HWV 437*; Penderecki: *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*; Mozart: *Piano Concerto No. 23 in A, K.488: II. Adagio*; Rolling Stones: *Paint it Black*; Lady Gaga: *Bad Romance*

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

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 Nicola Benedetti and Lisa Batiashvili and pianist Bruce Liu.



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