

# TONIGHT'S CONCERT

## LSO FUTURES

Sunday 7 April 2024 7-9.35pm

Barbican

**Péter Eötvös** Per Luciano Berio (UK premiere)

**Christian Drew** Aquarium Drifter (world premiere, LSO Panufnik commission)

**Unsuik Chin** SPIRA

**Donghoon Shin** Nachtergebung (Cello Concerto) (UK premiere)

*Interval*

**Stef Conner** Hateful Grace (world premiere, LSO Panufnik commission)

**Béla Bartók** Concerto for Orchestra

**François-Xavier Roth** conductor

**Rebecca Gilliver** cello

**London Symphony Orchestra**

The LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme is generously supported  
by **Lady Hamlyn** and **The Helen Hamlyn Trust**

**HT** THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST

# Welcome



Tonight's concert, LSO Futures, is our annual celebration of music of our time, conducted by François-Xavier Roth, LSO Principal Guest Conductor. We presented the first LSO Futures concert in 2013, and over a decade later we continue to celebrate the work of early-career composers from the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme, and reflect our long-standing commitment to the music of today, in this now annual event.

Our sincere thanks to Lady Hamlyn and The Helen Hamlyn Trust for supporting this concert alongside their incredible loyalty to the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme, which, since it began in 2005, has provided opportunities for the creativity of many early-career composers to flourish.

Tonight's concert opens with the premiere of an LSO Panufnik commission, *Aquarium Drifter*, by Christian Drew, who is one of three composers in this concert to have come through the Panufnik Composers Scheme (2020/21). Unsuk Chin's glimmering *SPIRA* follows, a virtuosic

concerto for orchestra, known for its magnificent complexity of writing.

Before the interval, we hear Donghoon Shin's Cello Concerto *Nachtergebung*, inspired by the work of Austrian poet Georg Trakl. Shin is also an alumnus of the Panufnik Composers Scheme (2016/17), and we are delighted to be giving the UK premiere of this work this evening, and thrilled that our very own Rebecca Gilliver, Principal Cello, is soloist for tonight's performance.

The third composer from the Panufnik Composers Scheme this evening is Stef Conner. The world premiere of her piece *Hateful Grace*, commissioned through the Scheme, opens the second half of this concert. Closing tonight's performance is Béla Bartók's seminal work, *Concerto for Orchestra*, a textbook piece of orchestral writing from the 1940s, which still feels fresh and new.

I hope you enjoy the concert and that you will be able to join us again soon. In the week ahead, Sir Antonio Pappano, Chief Conductor Designate, returns to the Barbican for two performances of Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé*, in its complete ballet form, for which we are joined by Tenebrae, to provide the wordless chorus. In Thursday's concert, this piece is paired with the UK premiere of Wynton Marsalis' Trumpet Concerto, performed by Alison Balsom. We hope to see you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn McDowell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'K' and 'M'.

**Dame Kathryn McDowell** DBE DL  
Managing Director

# Coming Up

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Wednesday 10 April 7pm  
Barbican

## HALF SIX FIX DAPHNIS AND CHLOË

Begin your evening with the gauzy, sensuous soundscape of Ravel's pastoral ballet, as Sir Antonio Pappano introduces and conducts *Daphnis and Chloë*.

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Thursday 11 April 1pm  
LSO St Luke's

## BBC RADIO 3 LUNCHTIME CONCERT BERTRAND CHAMAYOU & FRIENDS

The music of friends ... and infinitely more. Life becomes art as Bertrand Chamayou, Tabea Zimmermann and Fleur Barron explore the chamber music of Brahms, Joachim and the Schumanns.

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Thursday 11 April 7pm  
Barbican

## BEWITCHING RHYTHMS – MARSALIS AND RAVEL

The gauzy soundscape of Ravel's pastoral ballet meets a sparkling concerto by Wynton Marsalis, celebrating all the trumpet is capable of.

[iso.co.uk/whatson](http://iso.co.uk/whatson)

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Please switch off all phones.  
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# Our Schemes for Composers

Through our world-leading programme of participatory and inclusive music projects, LSO Discovery, we run three artist development schemes for emerging and early-career composers.



## PANUFNIK COMPOSERS SCHEME

The Scheme gives six composers each year the opportunity to write for a symphony orchestra. Across twelve months they are encouraged to experiment with ideas, guided by Colin Matthews, with support from Christian Mason and aided by LSO musicians and staff.

Participants develop a three-minute piece through the Scheme, which is workshopped by the full Orchestra and François-Xavier Roth to gain further feedback and development ideas. Two composers each year are then commissioned to compose a five- and ten-minute piece to be performed in our Barbican concert season.

Generously supported by Lady Hamlyn and The Helen Hamlyn Trust.



## SOUNDHUB

Soundhub is a composer-led resource, responding directly to the needs of those using it: a supportive framework for artists to try out new ideas, develop existing work and benefit from peer-to-peer networking and support. Four composers each year undertake a project with a small group of LSO players. These projects do not necessarily need to result in a finished product; the focus is on demonstrating learning and development through the creative process.

Generously supported by Susie Thomson.



### **JERWOOD COMPOSER+**

LSO Jerwood Composer+ supports early-career composers in programming, planning and delivering artistic projects over a 15-month placement. Two composers each year gain valuable knowledge and practical experience to develop their own opportunities and careers. Mentored by LSO staff they are encouraged to develop skills from planning to marketing and fundraising. They also have access to composition workshops and mentoring to develop their artistic practice.

Generously supported by Jerwood Foundation.

**JERWOOD**  
FOUNDATION

## **Find Out More**

For more information on the ways we support early-career composers, and to register for updates when applications open, visit:

**[iso.co.uk/emergingartists](https://iso.co.uk/emergingartists)**

LSO Discovery enriches lives through the transformative power of music, with a year-round programme of opportunities for performers creators and listeners of all ages.

**[iso.co.uk/discovery](https://iso.co.uk/discovery)**

# Aquarium Drifter

## Christian Drew

- 1 **Freedive Gigue Lente**
- 2 **Rocococeanarium**
- 3 **Subtropicali Antiquarium**
- 4 **Sunset Over the Super Sewer**



2020-23



10 minutes

Programme note by  
**Tim Rutherford-Johnson**

*Aquarium Drifter* began life under a very different title. As *Double Chorus*, it was Christian Drew's three-minute creation for the 2020/21 LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme workshops: a diptych of sleazy harmonies and timbres and floridly ornamented melody. Invited to further develop his ideas, he adapted the three-minute miniature into the first of four short movements of a longer piece, which took the title of *Aquarium Drifter*.

Reflecting on the musical qualities of the original *Double Chorus*, Drew was inspired to pursue more deeply its destabilised, floating soundworld. This led him to the idea of aquariums, or 'aquarium-adjacent things', as he puts it. Specifically, these include woozy, lounge-style jazz; the muffled (perhaps even submerged) sounds of a Hawaiian guitar; the sun setting over the Thames Tideway construction site in Bermondsey, south London; and the watery, reverb-heavy doowop of the band The Flamingos.

At the same time, working with the LSO pulled Drew in another direction, towards the sounds of the existing Classical and Baroque repertoire. This is music 'that the LSO play incredibly well and are extremely knowledgeable about', he says, but which, in its formal

principles of poise and balance, sits some distance away from the heady sounds of hotel lobby pianos and slack-key guitars on the beach.

The surrealistic juxtaposition is reflected in the Hunter S Thompson-meets-Henry Purcell portmanteaus of Drew's movement titles: 'Freedive Gigue Lente', 'Rocococeanarium', 'Subtropicali Antiquarium' and 'Sunset Over the Super Sewer'. The second of these in particular – a mix of wobbly continuo and conga/tom-tom obbligato – exemplifies the unique mix. The third includes the first violins divided to create a six-part 'slide guitar' effect; Baroque ornaments and suspensions in the flutes, oboes and trumpets; and – pushing the genre boundaries still further – a passage towards the end of the movement marked 'becoming renaissance EDM', with electronic dance music-like piano chords and a thumping bass drum.

For his final movement, Drew takes an off-kilter romantic turn, with dreamy string chords suspended beneath a mellifluous marimba solo. When it is joined later by vibraphone, harp and celeste, this quartet leaves the rest of the orchestra behind – although the music stops abruptly here, it is with the sense that these four could continue, swaying slightly in the current, for ever.

# Christian Drew

b 1994 (United Kingdom)



Composer profile by  
**Tim Rutherford-  
Johnson**

'Noodling' isn't a word normally associated with serious artistic creation. But it is one that the British composer Christian Drew happily embraces: 'A lot of composing is just noodling for me,' he says, 'and noodling is something I aspire to musically'. To be clear, he does not mean this in a negative sense, but rather in the sense of deliberate and productive meandering. What French philosopher Guy Debord might have called a *derive*, and what the Canadian composer Martin Arnold (whose music Drew greatly admires) calls an aesthetic of 'slack': a kind of intuitive linear thinking that doesn't worry much about destinations or rules but is content to follow its impulses to their natural end.

Drew's teachers at the University of Southampton and at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama have included Laurence Crane, Michael Finnissy and Matthew Shlomowitz: three very different composers, but all of them engaged with sidelong or eccentric takes on the English and American experimental traditions. His own music draws

influences from medieval, Baroque and Classical repertoires, as well as indie rock, ambient and folk. These influences rarely result in direct quotation; more often, Drew aims to recreate an associated feeling, filtered through the glitches of memory and influences of the subconscious. His *Parlour Music* (2021) for harp, for example, has been described as 'Baroque harpsichord music on acid', while *Shoegaze Medieval* (2019), for four instruments and electronics, distorts a 14th-century song by Solage into a haze of dreamlike noise.

Drew's music has been performed by the Plus Minus Ensemble, Apartment House, EXAUDI and others, and in 2020/21 he was a participant in the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme. In 2023 he collaborated with the Shout at Cancer laryngectomy choir and film-maker and sound designer Philip Clemo on the half-hour multimedia piece *Talk Within Talk Without*. Drew also performs in a number of bands and experimental projects on fretted instruments, accordion and voice.

# SPIRA – Concerto for Orchestra

Unsuk Chin



2019



19 minutes

Programme note by  
**Jo Kirkbride**

Just as Unsuk Chin does not tether her music to any particular culture or style, her scores occupy a space between the tangible and the elusive that is difficult to capture in words. It is iridescent but never unfocussed, precise but never blunt, and just as rooted in the natural world as it is in one of her own imagination. 'My music is a reflection of my dreams,' she says. 'I try to render into music the visions of immense light and of an incredible magnificence of colours that I see in all my dreams, a play of light and colours.'

*SPIRA* is a case in point, at once both tantalisingly abstract and intricately engineered. Composed as a showcase for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, with whom Chin enjoyed a decade-long association, *SPIRA* takes its inspiration from the spira mirabilis ('the marvellous spiral'), as seen in the curve of a nautilus shell or in the shape of spiral galaxies. For Chin, the unique mathematical properties of this logarithmic spiral sparked a fascination with the idea of layering and metamorphosis, 'with complex material evolving from simple germ motives in unexpected ways'.

All of the material in *SPIRA* is grown from a single, spiralling 'ur-cell', which is not a traditional thematic unit or leitmotif, but

rather the resonance formed by a pair of spatially separated, bowed vibraphones. These vibraphones provide the work with a single source of energy – and it is the interference patterns and moments of coalescence that unwind from this ur-cell that create the intricate patterns inspired by the spira mirabilis. A clarinet echo here, a whisper of strings there – each flicker of sound we hear grows out of this unfolding sonic spiral. It is an organic, additive approach to construction, and one which sees the music 'constantly changing in terms of density, colour, character and pulse, shifting between chaos and order, activity and repose'.

But Chin also extends this layering process to the orchestra too. Taking the idea of a concerto for orchestra as her blueprint, she breaks the orchestra down into smaller instrumental units to reveal otherwise concealed textures and sonorities, while allowing them to layer and coalesce at pivotal moments as a single 'super-orchestra'. As we journey through the work, so Chin takes us to the very heart of the orchestra and to the heart of the music, 'as if zooming in with a microscope to research the inner life of sound, on the molecular level, and uncover previously invisible structures'.



# Unsub Chin

b 1961 (South Korea)



Composer profile by  
**Jo Kirkbride**

There are musical chameleons and then there is Unsub Chin. 'In every piece, I try to do something new', she says. 'There's always a higher, more difficult mountain to climb.' Chin was born in South Korea but has lived in Germany since 1985, when she moved to Hamburg to study with György Ligeti. 'He was the harshest critic you could ever imagine ... he demanded complete originality.' She remembers the 'unconventionality' of his classes, where they studied anything but the mainstream, taking in jazz, literature and even natural sciences along the way.

As a result, Chin's music is extraordinarily wide-ranging. She has worked with Balinese gamelan, notably in *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* (1991-93) for solo soprano and ensemble, which marked her international breakthrough. And she is renowned for her work with electronics, including the award-winning *Xi* (1999) for ensemble,

and her concerto for violin and live electronics *Double Bind?* (2007). There is a distinct playfulness, too, as exhibited in her first (and to date only) opera, *Alice in Wonderland* (2007), which was named 'Premiere of the Year' by the internationally renowned *Opernwelt* magazine.

In 2017, she added the Sibelius Prize to her increasingly long list of accolades, following in the footsteps of luminaries such as Igor Stravinsky, Benjamin Britten, Olivier Messiaen, Witold Lutoslawski, Paul Hindemith, and even her former mentor, Ligeti. 'I couldn't believe it,' she says, 'but I don't judge the success of my career by prizes.' She prefers instead to measure her success by the quality of each and every piece that she writes, while acknowledging that this is not without its struggles: 'You can sit in front of the blank staff paper for weeks,' she says, and at the moment when you have just about had enough, 'the knot gets untied'.

# Nachtergebung (Surrender to the Night)

## Donghoon Shin

Rebecca Gilliver cello

- 1 **Verfall** (Decay)  
**Tranquillo e misterioso** –
- 2 **Trompeten**  
(Trumpets)  
**Feroce** –
- 3 **Winterdämmerung** (Winter Twilight)  
**Tranquil, mysterious and icy** –
- 4 **Die Nacht**  
(The Night)  
**Maestoso, colla parte** –
- 5 **Nachtergebung**  
(Surrender to the Night)



2021–22



20 minutes

Programme note by  
**Timmy Fisher**

The poems of Georg Trakl have proved rich source material for composers: Anton Webern, Paul Hindemith, Peter Maxwell Davies and Thea Musgrave have all been drawn to the Austrian expressionist's rich, macabre imagery. Donghoon Shin, who often looks to literature for inspiration, is the latest. In his cello concerto *Nachtergebung*, commissioned by the Karajan Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic, he takes one of Trakl's poems as the starting point for each of its five movements, crafting a succession of (primarily) night-time portraits. Like the poems, these sinister nocturnes are an expression of a more general foreboding – in Shin's words, 'a contemplation on the madness around the world, as the kind soul struggles with cruel reality'.

As with much of Shin's music, *Nachtergebung* is concise and crystalline. His palette is characteristically imaginative. In 'Verfall' (Decay), for example, he instructs the percussionist to bow crotales (small brass or bronze cymbals) positioned atop a timpani's drumhead, while at the same time pedaling that timpani. This conjures an otherworldly siren – presumably Trakl's blackbird, 'wailing in the denuded branches'. Other combinations produce similarly programmatic effects: in 'Trompeten' (Trumpets), sandpaper blocks and '*col legno battuto*' violins (struck with the wood of the bow)

hint at scuttering leaves. Ice-cold violin harmonics and wire-brushed cymbals in 'Winterdämmerung' (Winter Twilight) point upwards to 'black skies of metal', bringing Trakl's chilling vision of war to life. When Shin deploys the full weight of the orchestra the affect is equally potent. The manic 'Die Nacht', with its brassy fanfares and duelling percussion, feels intrusive, bursting at the seams, like the war-mongering horsemen that break the rural idyll of Trakl's poem (which, written in 1912, was eerily prescient of World War I). When a sustained tutti (all together) chord appears suddenly in the 'lullaby' finale, it's as if the orchestra is letting out a deep, despondent sign.

However, the main emotional weight is carried by the solo cello, which guides us through Shin's nightscape. Lyrical passages build to great climaxes, punctuated with furious stabs and screeching double stops, most affectingly in Winter Twilight, 'Winterdämmerung', the beating heart of the work. At its most expressive, *Nachtergebung* is reminiscent of Edward Elgar's grief-stricken Cello Concerto, and more than once the solo part hints – deliberately or not – at those famous opening chords. That was the last major orchestral work Elgar completed. Shin, a composer only just into his 40s, has much more yet to give. All the better for us.

# Donghoon Shin

b 1983 (South Korea)



Composer profile by  
**Timmy Fisher**

Donghoon Shin's musical trajectory was, as he admits, unlikely. Born in South Korea, he grew up listening to classical, jazz and pop, and played synthesizer in a rock 'n' roll band. But there was little access to avant-garde music. It was an encounter with György Ligeti's Piano Concerto that inspired a shift in that direction: he enrolled at the Seoul National University to study composition and was soon taken under the wing of Unsuk Chin, 'an important mentor' – and one of Ligeti's disciples. After moving to London in 2014 to study with Julian Anderson and Sir George Benjamin, Shin began accruing awards from bodies such as the Royal Philharmonic Society, and commissions from the London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic, among others.

Shin's music is colourful and controlled, every sound loaded with meaning. He tends to deal in melodic gestures rather than full-blown melody but, when he does let rip, his music has the emotional

charge of two of his great heroes: Gustav Mahler and Alban Berg. He is often inspired by literature: *Kafka's Dream* (2018–19) is an ode to writer Jorge Luis Borges ('Through [his] works I've learnt how to mix and juxtapose disparate things to create new meaning'); in *Upon His Ghostly Solitude* (2023) he took the cyclical concept of W B Yeats' poem *Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen* and applied it to the work's harmonic structure.

For a long time Shin avoided musical references to his heritage, not wanting to be confined as an 'Asian composer', though latterly he has dabbled in that direction, with concertos for the Chinese wind instrument, the sheng (*Anecdote*, 2018–19) and sheng with accordion (*Double Act*, 2022). More authentic glimpses of his Seoul childhood might be found in the jazz rhythms and harmonies that colour works such as *Songs and Games* (2018), a boogie-woogie daydream for solo piano. Close your eyes and you'll see the young Shin, dancing to his dad's record collection.



**INTERVAL – 20 MINUTES**

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# Nachtergebung

## Poetry by Georg Trakl

### DECAY

At nightfall, when the bells of peace are ringing,  
I follow the birds' astonishing migration,  
that in long rows, like groups of pious pilgrims,  
pass out of sight into fall's clear expanses.

Leisurely walking through the dusky garden  
I dream after their destinies, much brighter,  
and hardly feel the hour hand's advancing.  
Above the clouds I follow thus their journeys.

A soft whiff of decay makes me then tremble.  
The blackbird wails in the bare-faced branches.  
The crimson vine leaves sway on rusty treillage.

Meanwhile like death-dances of pallid children  
around dark brims of fountains decomposing,  
in autumn's wind blue asters bend and shiver.

Translation © Bertram Kottmann

### TRUMPETS

Under trimmed willows where brown children play,  
And leaves drift, trumpets sound. A church  
yard-shudder.  
Scarlet banners fall through the maple tree's  
mourning,  
Riders along rye fields, empty mills.

Or shepherds sing at night and stags step  
Into the circle of their fire, the ancient mourning  
of the wood;  
Dancing figures raise themselves before a  
black wall;  
Banners of scarlet, laughter, madness, trumpets.

Translation © Elisabeth Siekhaus, reprinted  
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### WINTER TWILIGHT

Darkish skies are metal-clad.  
In the evening crows are flying  
hunger-mad and nearly dying  
over parks, sallow and sad.

In the clouds a beam, death cold;  
and by Satan's curse are spinning  
those around and then are winning  
ground by earthing, seven-fold.

In the bad fruit, sweet and stale,  
noiselessly their beaks are mowing.  
Houses seeds of anguish sowing;  
Bright lights in the theatre hall.

Churches, bridges, hospital  
in the dusk – like gruesome visions.  
And the sails like blood-stained linens  
billow out on the canal.

Translation © Bertram Kottmann

### **THE NIGHT**

It is you I sing in the night storm,  
you wild and deeply fissured rock,  
you mountains towering up;  
you grey towers  
overflowing with infernal faces,  
fiery beasts,  
rough ferns, spruces,  
crystal flowers.  
Infinite agony,  
so that you strove for God,  
gentle spirit,  
sighing in the waterfall,  
in swaying pines.

The peoples' fires  
blaze golden all around.  
Over the edge of blackish cliffs,  
drunk with death,  
the blushing wind-bride falls,  
the blue wave  
of the glacier,  
and the bell in the valley  
peals loud and strong:  
flames, curses,  
and the dark  
games of lust;  
a petrified head  
storms heaven.

Translation © Bertram Kottmann

### **SURRENDER TO THE NIGHT**

Mother Superior, may your darkness cloak me  
all you mountains, cold and blue!  
Blood-like drips the darkish dew;  
starlit skies, a cross looms steeply.

Purple mouth and lies were broken  
in a cool and shabby room;  
Laughter, golden play there strewn,  
and a bell's last knells – a token.


Luna's cloud! And wild fruits falling  
blackish from the tree by night,  
space becomes a grave, a fright,  
and a dream our earthly wandering.

Translation © Bertram Kottmann

# Hateful Grace

Stef Conner

 2020–24

 5 minutes

Programme note by  
**Tim Rutherford-  
Johnson**

The composition of *Hateful Grace*, developed between 2020 and 2024 through the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme, coincided with an especially difficult time in Stef Conner's life. In 2020, her mother found that the cancer she had been living with for years was terminal, and Conner worked on her score at the same time as she was caring for her mother, negotiating grief, loss and the myriad challenges faced by the NHS and care system during the pandemic. Throughout this dark period, her coping mechanism was to seek ways to face her deepest fears and regrets, and in this process she found the 'surreal peace' that comes from knowing you are experiencing the worst life has to offer. By the end, she says, she was in this way able to find a sense of release.

The title of the work that emerged from all this trauma, *Hateful Grace*, is thus an inversion of the Christian concept of Divine Grace, in which the idea of breaking down reality into its most abject and horrifying components – in Conner's case, a nightmarish amalgam of the ancient and technologically advanced – became a way of confronting fear and emerging stronger.

Looking for something that resonated with the images in her mind, Conner turned for inspiration to death metal (also a meeting place of the pagan and industrial), and in particular the music of Swedish extreme metal group Meshuggah, who are known for their high speed polymetric rhythms and brutally staccato guitar sound. Distorted timbres, extreme low registers, irrational time signatures and switches between sludgy grooves and fast, jagged riffs thus all find their way into *Hateful Grace*, filtered, of course, through the possibilities of a symphony orchestra. One memorable image is the spidery ripple of *col legno* tapping (with the wooden part of the bow) that spreads across the string section at the beginning. Another is the resynthesis of a death metal vocal midway through the piece, in a combination of radiant spectral harmonies and grinding low register riffs. The piece ends in a state of what the composer calls 'ecstatic entropy': stickily descending scales and glissandos that express the psychedelic breakdown of reality and ego. At their peak, beauty and horror merge into one. A dark kind of grace indeed.

# Stef Conner

b 1983 (United Kingdom)



Composer profile by  
**Tim Rutherford-  
Johnson**

Stef Conner says that she is 'passionate about bringing ancient languages alive through music'. In her career as both a composer and a singer, she not only straddles the concert hall and the folk club, but also touches the disciplines of archaeology, ancient history and linguistics. Whether for voices or instruments, all her work begins with a text. Often it is one in a language whose remoteness is as important as the meaning of the words themselves; as a result, she has set words from Mesopotamia, Old English poetry, the Chinese romantic poet Xu Zhimo, and even Latin inscriptions on Hadrian's Wall. Having chosen a text, she proceeds by deconstructing its sound and structure, reaching for that level of abstraction where there is an emotional connection, whether or not the words can be understood. Often there is an incompleteness at the heart of her inspirations: words to songs whose music is long lost to time. And it is in drawing

together those tattered threads that Conner's music exists.

A graduate of York University, where she also completed her PhD in composition and now lectures, Conner has performed with the Northumbrian folk group The Unthanks, and with Sequentia Ensemble for Medieval Music; she has also collaborated with Kathryn Tickell and The Darkening. In 2014 she recorded *The Flood* with Andy Lowings, an album of new compositions setting ancient Babylonian and Sumerian texts for soprano and a reconstruction of the 4,500-year-old *Gold Lyre of Ur*; and in 2020 she released her debut solo record, *Riddle Songs*, featuring new settings of tenth-century Old English riddles. From 2014 to 2015 she was the first composer-in-residence of the homeless charity Streetwise Opera, and in 2020/21 she was a participant in the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme.

# Concerto for Orchestra

Béla Bartók

- 1 **Introduzione:**  
**Andante non troppo – Allegro vivace**
- 2 **Scherzo ‘Gioco delle coppie’:**  
**Allegretto scherzando**
- 3 **Elegia: Andante non troppo**
- 4 **Intermezzo interrotto:**  
**Allegretto**
- 5 **Finale:**  
**Pesante-Presto**



1943–44



40 minutes



Programme note by  
**Wendy Thompson**

Composer profile by  
**Andrew Mellor**

The *Concerto for Orchestra* was among Béla Bartók's last works. During the late 1930s, he had produced some of his finest and most characteristic pieces, but such an outpouring of energy had sapped his strength, and meanwhile the political situation in Europe began to deteriorate rapidly. After Hitler's annexation of Austria in 1938, Bartók began to consider emigrating, but felt unable to leave his ailing mother. Only after her death in December 1939 could he begin to make plans, helped by a successful concert tour of the US in the spring of 1940. He and his second wife Ditta (also a concert pianist) finally left Hungary for New York in October that year.

Bartók's American agent had held out the prospect of a rosy future for him in the US; but his high hopes were soon disappointed. Bartók was unwell, his finances were precarious, and the first US concerts he gave in partnership with his wife were coolly received. From November 1941, when he last appeared as a concerto soloist, his public appearances as a pianist were increasingly rare. His compositional efforts, too, seemed to have dried up: in the spring of 1942 he wrote despairingly to his publisher: 'I really don't know if and when I will be able to do some composing work. Artistic creative work generally is the result of an outflow of strength,

high-spiritedness, joy of life, etc – all these conditions are sadly missing with me at present.'

In the spring of 1943, Bartók accepted a visiting appointment at Harvard to present a lecture series on Hungarian folk music. After giving only three lectures he collapsed and was rushed to hospital. Two fellow Hungarian émigrés, the conductor Fritz Reiner and the violinist Jozsef Szigeti, were so concerned at his plight that they persuaded Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and director of the wealthy Koussevitzky Foundation, to offer Bartók \$1,000 for a new orchestral piece. Despite misgivings over his poor state of health, Bartók found the commission irresistible. He began work on the *Concerto for Orchestra* in mid-August 1943 while convalescing in the Adirondack Mountains, and finished it just two months later. Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave the premiere at Carnegie Hall, New York, on 1 December 1944.

The *Concerto for Orchestra* is in Bartók's favourite 'arch-form' – a symmetrical plan he adopted either for individual movements or sometimes for complete works. The first movement opens with a long, slow, atmospheric introduction which contains germs of material taken from the rest of the Concerto.



# Béla Bartók

1881 (Hungary) to 1945 (US)

The second movement is called 'Game of Pairs', referring to the way in which woodwind – bassoons, oboes, clarinets, flutes – and finally muted trumpets present a rather jaunty little tune sequentially in pairs. Their opening statements are followed by a chorale-like interlude on brass, before the short sections return.

Bartók described the central Elegy as a 'lugubrious death-song', and its passionate outbursts may sound like a cry from the heart of the stricken composer, lamenting both his exile and impending death. The lyrical string theme of the fourth movement was based on a Hungarian popular song by Zsigmond Vincze, 'You are lovely, you are beautiful, Hungary', but Bartók interrupts this nostalgic paean to his homeland with a brittle, savage burlesque of the march theme from Dmitri Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, 'Leningrad', which at the time was much played on American radio as a symbol of resistance to Nazi oppression. According to Peter Bartók, his father Béla found the 'crescendo theme' in the Seventh Symphony so ludicrous that he decided to make fun of it, turning it into a quickstep parody, and then getting the brass to blow raspberries at it. But one of Bartók's last letters suggests that the quotation referred to Koussevitzky's known admiration for Shostakovich; and another theory suggests that the parodied tune is actually from Franz Lehár's operetta *The Merry Widow*.

Bartók was not entirely happy with the Finale, and rewrote the ending after the first performances. It opens with a horn fanfare, which heralds a brilliant passage on the strings, inflected by the syncopated rhythms and inwardly-curling melodies of Central European folk music. The strings really get their chance to shine in this vivacious movement.

Béla Bartók was one of a handful of early-20th-century composers who recognised how indigenous folk music might fuel avant-garde concert music. He was born in an area, now in Romania, rich in peasant culture, but was soon set on a path of intense musical training in the Western classical tradition.

Bartók was initially taught the piano by his mother. The family moved to Pressburg (now Bratislava) and in 1899 Béla enrolled at what is now the Liszt Academy in Budapest, where he would eventually become piano professor.

By the 1910s, Bartók had become increasingly interested in collecting and transcribing folk tunes and dances from Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Yugoslavia, Turkey and North Africa. He did so, with rare dedication, for decades. These melodies and rhythms lit the fire of inspiration within Bartók, who started to conceive music that fused their characteristic elements with the highly developed musical language of the day. His works united these two contrasting worlds with rare conviction and universality of feeling, via music of striking power and focus.

By the 1940s, Bartók was a well-known figure, not least as a performing pianist, but he was forced to emigrate to America at the outbreak of the World War II. He struggled in the US, securing a professorship but few commissions or performing engagements, until he was thrown a creative lifeline by a fellow émigré. At the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conductor Serge Koussevitzky commissioned a string of Bartók's late masterpieces, including the signature *Concerto for Orchestra*. Bartók died in New York less than a month after the war had ended.

# François-Xavier Roth

## Principal Guest Conductor



François-Xavier Roth is one of today's most imaginative conductors and programmers. He is Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, General Music Director of the City of Cologne and founder of Les Siècles. A born communicator, he is a charismatic and persuasive advocate for classical music of every description.

In Cologne, where he has directed both the Gürzenich Orchestra and the Opera since 2015, his programming is notable for its breadth and depth, including new commissions alongside Baroque and Romantic music. For Cologne Opera he has led new productions of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* and *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan and Isolde* and *The Flying Dutchman*, and Strauss' *Salome*.

His sense of musical exploration led him in 2003 to found Les Siècles, which performs contrasting programmes on modern and period instruments, often within the same concert. Together they have toured Europe, China and Japan, appearing at the Berlin Musikfest, BBC Proms, Edinburgh and Enescu festivals. Les Siècles are currently

celebrating their 20th anniversary with a series of European tours.

Roth is a champion of new music and has premiered works by Georg-Friedrich Haas and Hèctor Parra, and collaborated with composers such as Pierre Boulez, Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann, Helmut Lachenmann and Philippe Manoury. He has a leading role in the LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme, mentoring emerging composers.

Engagement with new audiences is an essential part of Roth's work, whether speaking from the podium or working with young people and amateurs. With the Festival Berlioz and Les Siècles, he founded the Jeune Orchestre Européen Hector Berlioz. In Cologne he has initiated a community orchestra, and his Ohrenauf! youth programme was recipient of a Junge Ohren Produktion Award. His television series *Presto!* attracted weekly audiences of over three million in France.

Roth's prolific award-winning discography includes the complete tone poems of Richard Strauss, Stravinsky ballets, Ravel and Berlioz cycles, Bruckner, Mahler and Schumann symphonies, and albums commemorating Debussy's centenary. He was awarded the German Record Critics' Honorary Prize 2020, the youngest conductor ever to receive it. For his achievements as musician, conductor, music director and teacher, François-Xavier Roth was made a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur. Roth was joint winner of the Donatella Flick LSO Conducting Competition in 2000, and has worked with the Orchestra every year since.

# Rebecca Gilliver

## cello, Principal Cello



Stepping up from her usual spot as Principal Cello of the LSO, tonight's soloist is Dorset cellist Rebecca Gilliver, who has been a member of the LSO since 2002. She studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal Northern College of Music, where her teachers included William Pleeth, Melissa Phelps, Moray Welsh (a past LSO Principal Cello) and Ralph Kirshbaum. She spent summers studying in America, where her tutors included Bernard Greenhouse, David Geringas and Claude Franck, among others. Rebecca completed her formal studies in Basel with Thomas Demenga, studying mostly contemporary music.

Rebecca's interest in contemporary music began by accident at college, when she was asked to jump into the contemporary music group Ixion as a last minute replacement for a tour to Norway. Challenged and excited by the possibilities of new music, Rebecca has been a fan ever since, working as a guest with the London Sinfonietta, and playing many premieres as soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player. She is delighted to have been invited to give the UK premiere of Donghoon Shin's fascinating and challenging score.

Rebecca's wide-ranging career combines solo playing with chamber music, orchestral work and teaching. Early success in national and

international competitions led to critically acclaimed recitals at Wigmore Hall and New York's Carnegie Weill Hall. She has played extensively as a recitlist ever since, appearing in festivals such as Bath, Bergen and the Manchester International Cello Festival.

Rebecca has performed concertos with many of the UK's leading orchestras, including the LSO, Hallé and Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. She is in demand as a Guest Principal, having performed with most orchestras in the UK and many abroad, including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, New Sinfonietta Amsterdam and the World Orchestra for Peace.

As a chamber musician, she has performed and recorded with the Nash Ensemble, and for many years was a member of the innovative Scottish Ensemble. She has collaborated with artists such as Nikolaj Znaider, Sarah Chang and Barry Douglas, and has recorded for BBC Radio 3 with pianist Ian Brown. She is a regular participant in Prussia Cove's International Musicians Seminar (IMS) Open Chamber Music, where international musicians of the highest level gather together in Cornwall to study great chamber music works, side by side with the most talented students of the next generation.

Musical outreach is extremely important to Rebecca, and she works regularly with the LSO Discovery programme, particularly enjoying LSO Create, a group dedicated to exploring music with disabled and/or neurodiverse adults and their carers; as well as the Early Years hospital and toddler programmes. She has created her own local musical outreach programme, Worlds End Music, which puts on concerts by local professional musicians for both children and adults in Chelsfield, Kent.

# London Symphony Orchestra On Stage

## Leader

Benjamin Gimore

## First Violins

Sini Simonen  
Clare Duckworth  
Ginette Decuyper  
Maxine Kwok  
William Melvin  
Claire Parfitt  
Harriet Rayfield  
Iona Allen  
Gerald Gregory  
Izzy Howard  
Grace Lee  
Alexandra Lomeiko  
Lyrit Milgram  
Marco Norzi  
Bridget O'Donnell

## Second Violins

David Alberman  
Thomas Norris  
Miya Väisänen  
Matthew Gardner  
Naoko Keatley  
Alix Lagasse  
Iwona Muszynska  
Csilla Pogány  
Ingrid Butto  
Molly Cockburn  
Juan Gonzalez  
Hernandez  
Aleem Kandour  
Gordon Mackay  
Polina Makhina \*  
José Nuno Matias

## Violas

Eivind Ringstad  
Malcolm Johnston  
Anna Bastow  
Julia O'Riordan  
Robert Turner  
Mizuho Ueyama  
Ilona Bondar  
Lukas Bowen  
Theodore Chung  
May Dolan  
Philip Hall  
Annie May Page

## Cellos

Rebecca Gilliver  
Alastair Blayden  
Daniel Gardner  
Amanda Truelove  
Anna Beryl  
Morwenna Del Mar  
Ghislaine McMullin  
Desmond Neysmith  
Yunxiaotian Pan \*  
Jessie Ann Richardson  
Joanna Twaddle

## Double Basses

Rodrigo Moro Martín  
Patrick Laurence  
Joe Melvin  
Chaemun Im  
Josie Ellis  
Simon Oliver  
Evangeline Tang  
James Trowbridge

## Flutes

Gareth Davies  
Imogen Royce

## Piccolo

Sharon Williams

## Oboes

Olivier Stankiewicz  
Ruth Contractor

## Cor Anglais

Aurélien Laizé

## Clarinets

John Bradbury  
Chi-Yu Mo  
Andrew Harper

## Bass Clarinet

Kenny Keppel

## Bassoons

Rachel Gough  
Joost Bosdijk

## Contra Bassoon

Martin Field

## Horns

Diego Incertis Sánchez  
Jonathan Maloney  
Daniel Curzon  
Mark Alder Bennett  
Phillippa Koushk-Jalali  
Jonathan Durrant

## Trumpets

James Fountain  
Adam Wright  
Toby Street  
David Geoghegan

## Trombones

Peter Moore  
Jonathan Hollick

## Bass Trombones

Paul Milner  
Simon Minshall

## Tuba

Sasha Koushk-Jalali

## Timpani

Nigel Thomas

## Percussion

Neil Percy  
David Jackson  
Sam Walton  
Tom Edwards  
Jacob Brown

## Harp

Bryn Lewis  
Anneke Hodnett

## Piano

Elizabeth Burley

### \* Members of the LSO String Experience Scheme

Established in 1992, the Scheme enables young string players at the start of their professional careers to gain work experience by playing in rehearsals and concerts with the LSO. The musicians are treated as professional 'extras', and receive fees in line with LSO section players. Kindly supported by the Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust, the Idlewild Trust and The Thriplow Charitable Trust.