

TONIGHT'S CONCERT

Barbara Hannigan

Thursday 20 March 2025
Barbican

7pm

Golfam Khayam

Je ne suis pas une fable à conter

Joseph Haydn

Symphony No 39

Claude Vivier

Orion

Interval

Claude Debussy

Syrinx for solo flute

Jean Sibelius

Luonnotar

Béla Bartók

The Miraculous Mandarin – Suite

Barbara Hannigan conductor & soprano

Gareth Davies flute

London Symphony Orchestra

Concert recorded for future broadcast by **Marquee TV**

MARQUEE TV

Welcome



A special welcome to this evening's performance conducted by Barbara Hannigan, LSO Associate Artist. Tonight's performance is the last of her three concerts with the LSO at the Barbican this March, and it aptly reflects her artistry as a curator as well as a conductor.

The concert begins with Golfam Khayam's *Je ne suis pas une fable à conter* (I am not a tale to be told), which received its UK premiere yesterday evening at a Half Six Fix performance. Barbara Hannigan then continues her celebration of Joseph Haydn with his Symphony No 39. Barbara Hannigan and the Orchestra have developed a special affinity with the composer's music in recent seasons and we are pleased to see this continue in tonight's programme. Before the interval, we hear *Orion* by Claude Vivier, a Canadian composer of the 20th century whose work is not as well known as it should be, but whose important musical legacy Barbara Hannigan does much to promote.

Claude Debussy's evocative piece for solo flute, *Syrinx*, opens the second half with LSO Principal Flute Gareth Davies as soloist. Following on from her performance of Britten's song cycle *Les illuminations* last week, Barbara Hannigan is soloist for Jean Sibelius' *Luonnotar*, before closing with the vibrant Suite from Béla Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin*. This concert is being recorded for future broadcast on Marquee TV.

I hope you enjoy tonight's concert, and that you will be able to join us again soon. This Sunday, Sir Antonio Pappano, LSO Chief Conductor, conducts Ludwig van Beethoven's 'Choral' Symphony to mark 200 years since its UK premiere in March 1825, which was commissioned by the Philharmonic Society of London, in a concert that includes Sir Michael Tippett's powerful oratorio *A Child of Our Time*.

Looking towards April, we welcome back Gianandrea Noseda, LSO Principal Guest Conductor, for four concerts exploring the symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev. Nicola Benedetti joins as soloist for James MacMillan's Second Violin Concerto and Alice Sara Ott performs Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 1. Also joining us is Lisa Batiashvili, as soloist for Alfred Schnittke's Violin Concerto No 1, in the first of her LSO Artist Portrait concerts at the Barbican. We look forward to seeing you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn McDowell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dame Kathryn McDowell DBE DL
Managing Director

Coming Up

Thursday 3 April
Barbican

7pm

MacMillan and Shostakovich 12

Gianandrea Noseda conducts a revolutionary Shostakovich symphony alongside a James MacMillan Concerto written for violinist Nicola Benedetti.

Wednesday 9 April
Barbican

6.30pm

Half Six Fix: Schubert and Prokofiev

Schubert's cheerfully bustling *Die Zauberharfe* Overture is performed alongside Prokofiev's inventive and energetic Second Symphony, in an hour-long concert presented and conducted by Gianandrea Noseda.

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Contents

The Programme

- 4 Je ne suis pas une fable à conter
- 5 Golfam Khayam
- 6 Je ne suis pas une fable à conter: Text & Translation
- 8 Symphony No 39
- 9 Joseph Haydn
- 10 Orion
- 11 Claude Vivier
- 14 Syrinx for solo flute
- 15 Claude Debussy
- 16 Luonnotar
- 17 Jean Sibelius
- 18 Luonnotar: Text & Translation
- 20 The Miraculous Mandarin – Suite
- 21 Béla Bartók

The Performers

- 22 Barbara Hannigan
- 23 Gareth Davies
- 24 London Symphony Orchestra

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Je ne suis pas une fable à conter

Golfam Khayam

Barbara Hannigan
soprano & conductor

 2023

 10 minutes

Programme note by
Golfam Khayam

The piece *Je ne suis pas une fable à conter* (I am not a tale to be told) is a lamentation of lost souls. It is based on a poem published in 1955 by Ahmad Shamlou, a contemporary Iranian poet and one of the most iconic cultural figures in Iran. His poems are beyond time and space, as if speaking to you, me and us, from nowhere land.

I had the honour of receiving a commission from Barbara Hannigan to write a piece for her, in which she both sings and conducts the orchestra. We first met when Barbara participated in an event to support Persian culture and, as a result, I contacted her to thank her, and she quickly found a way for us to make music together. She asked me to write a piece for her using a Persian text, and after looking at various possibilities, we agreed wholeheartedly on Shamlou's powerful words. This particular poem has also been the narrator for so many silent voices seeking light through dark times.

This work was premiered with Iceland Symphony Orchestra in 2023, and has received

further performances with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

Je ne suis pas une fable à conter includes musical cells and phrases in a controlled improvisation which gives liberty to the instrumentalists and soloist. It creates an active drone with ornamentations and moveable contours as a Persian 'carpet' upon which the soloist can perform freely. Vocal and instrumental gestures from Persian music are embedded into the piece, which are rooted in this tradition. This also includes *maqam* (modal contours) from the regional music of the provinces, as mourning gestures, and typical modal phrases which are rooted in vocal practice, all being reframed in an orchestra. The text was translated into French, and some phrases are sung in Farsi. The final section is a gradual march towards the light, where the soprano finally sings, 'Man dardé moshtarekam, Maraa faryaad kon.' This translates as 'I am the common pain, cry me out!'

Golfam Khayam

b 1983 (Iran)



Collaborators

Anne-Sophie Mutter,
Isabel Villanueva

Key events

1983: Born in Tehran

2016: Signs with
German label
ECM Records

2022: Receives
Arvo Pärt Centre
scholarship

Listen to

Night Triptych
on New Focus
Recordings

Golfam Khayam is an Iranian composer and improviser. Her music is described by *Al Jazeera* as 'innovative art', and as 'a perfect testament to the universality of music'. Her captivating and personal musical language, which reflects Middle Eastern and Persian musical heritage into contemporary music, has brought attention to her music worldwide. Khayam has received commissions by widely recognised musicians (Barbara Hannigan, Anne-Sophie Mutter), orchestras (Iceland Symphony orchestra, Orchestre de la Radio France), ensembles (ICE ensemble, Klangwerkstatt Berlin), and festivals (Opera America, Festival Aix-en Provence, Venice Biennale Musica, among others).

Khayam was born 1983 and grew up in Tehran, Iran, in a family of artists. She has undertaken research on technique adaptations from Persian regional ethnic instruments and vocal gestures, reflected in her publication *Tradition and Synthesis*, which includes findings on ornamentations and the creation process.

Khayam is the winner of numerous competitions, scholarships and prizes. She was named as the selected composer at the International Music Council's Rostrum of Composers in the 'Windows on the World' category in 2016. She also won the Arvo Pärt Centre's Composition Scholarships Prize. She received the HES-SO Full Fellowship Award in Switzerland for the research project *New Vocabulary*, shedding light on the cross-culture and systematic compositional strategies of Persian and contemporary Western music.

Khayam gives workshops worldwide on the subject of building bridges between East and West. She holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati, and continued her studies in Specialised Music Performance at the HES-SO. She is currently Associate Professor at Tehran University of Art.

Je ne suis pas une fable à conter

Text & Translation

Original Text

*Je ne suis pas une fable à conter
Pas une chanson à chanter
Pas une voix à écouter
Ni quelque chose qu'on peut voir
Ou quelque chose à savoir
L'arbre parle à la forêt
L'étoile parle aux cieux
Et moi, c'est à toi que je parle
Dans le plus sombre
des cimetières*

Pour les morts de cette année

*Je ne suis pas une fable à conter
Pas une chanson à chanter
L'étoile parle aux cieux
Et moi, c'est à toi que je parle*

Farsi phrases used in the text

*Ghéséh nistam ké bégooyee
Man dardé moshtarékam,
marA faryAd kon*

Translated Text

I am not a tale to be told
Not a song to be sung
Not a sound to be heard
Or something that you can see
Or something that you can know
Tree speaks to the wood
Star to the sky
And I speak to you
In the darkest of graveyards

For the dead of this year

I am not a tale to be told
Not a song to be sung
Star to the sky
And I speak to you

Translation

I'm not a tale to be told
I'm a shared pain, cry me out

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Symphony No 39 in G minor

Joseph Haydn

- 1 **Allegro assai**
- 2 **Andante**
- 3 **Menuet & Trio**
- 4 **Finale: Allegro di molto**



1765



16 minutes

Programme note
by **Kate Hopkins**

In 1761, Joseph Haydn became Vice-Kapellmeister (Assistant Director of Music) to the aristocratic Esterházy family. Prince Nikolaus – his employer from 1761 – was a great music lover who had his own excellent chamber orchestra. One of Haydn's principal duties was to write symphonies for it. These included No 39 in G minor, which is thought to have been composed between May and September 1765, shortly before the 33-year-old composer's promotion to Kapellmeister. The work is scored for modest forces, with no woodwind other than oboes, no percussion and no brass other than horns – although, unusually for the time, it requires four horns rather than two.

Symphony No 39 is often cited as the first in the series of *Sturm und Drang* symphonies that Haydn wrote between 1765 and 1773. *Sturm und Drang* (loosely translated as 'storm and stress') was an Austro-German literary and musical movement that flourished from the 1760s to the mid-1780s, focused on the portrayal of extreme emotions. The movement only acquired its title in the late 1770s, and many of its practitioners – including Haydn – never used it. Compositions in this style are characterised by abrupt changes of mood, tempo and dynamics. So volatile, indeed, is Haydn's Symphony No 39 that it is sometimes given the nickname *Tempesta di mare* (storm at sea).

The opening movement begins quietly, with a fidgety violin melody over rapidly pulsing lower-string accompaniment. The ensuing music – much of which evolves from this theme – features swift, chattering violin figuration, sudden changes in dynamics and dramatic pauses. Although the opening section includes some exuberant major-key episodes, the dominant mood is one of unease. Haydn scored the graceful Andante that follows for strings alone, with the textures largely reduced to just two lines. Dynamic contrasts – including striking echo effects – and theatrical silences persist, but here they are predominantly playful. Only in the hushed final bars does a sombre note creep in.

Wind instruments come to the fore in the stately Minuet, whose outer sections contain a melancholy melody for oboes and violins. Its central Trio is contrastingly genial and includes striking high writing for the horns. The tempestuous finale is characterised by cascading violin scales, stormy lower-string tremolandos, extreme dynamic contrasts and agitated string-wind dialogues. A distinctive recurring 'knocking' motif – three emphatic repeated chords – also features, and eventually brings the symphony to an emphatic conclusion.

Joseph Haydn

1732 to 1809 (Austria)



Contemporaries

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Key events

1761: Becomes an employee of the Esterházy family

1790: Moves to Vienna after Prince Nikolaus Esterházy's death

1791–92 and

1794–95: Makes two very successful trips to London

1798: Premiere of his oratorio *The Creation*

Listen to

Haydn: An Imaginary Orchestral Journey with Sir Simon Rattle
Isolive.co.uk

Composer profile by
Andrew Stewart

Most general histories of music emphasise Joseph Haydn's achievements as a composer of instrumental works, a pioneer of the string quartet genre and the so-called 'father of the symphony'. In short, he was one of the most versatile and influential composers of his age. After early training as a choirboy at Vienna's St Stephen's Cathedral and a period as a freelance musician, Haydn became Kapellmeister first to Count Morzin in Vienna and subsequently to the music-loving and wealthy Esterházy family at their magnificent but isolated estate at Eszterháza, the 'Hungarian Versailles'. Here he wrote a vast number of solo instrumental and chamber pieces, masses, motets, concertos and symphonies, besides at least two dozen stage works.

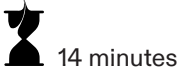
In June 1790, Haydn wrote stoically that 'I am forced to remain at home ... It is indeed sad always to be a slave, but Providence wills it thus.' He was by now tired of the routine of being a musician in service. He envied his young friend Mozart's apparent freedom in Vienna, but was resigned to remaining at Eszterháza Castle.

The death of Prince Nikolaus prompted unexpected and rapid changes in Haydn's circumstances. His son and heir, Prince Anton, cared little for what he regarded as the lavish and extravagant indulgence of music. He dismissed all but a few instrumentalists and retained the nominal services of Haydn, who became a free agent again and returned to Vienna. In old age, Haydn fashioned several of his greatest works: the oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, his six Op 76 String Quartets and his so-called 'London Symphonies' prominent among them.

Haydn was enticed to England by the impresario Johann Peter Salomon, attracting considerable newspaper coverage and enthusiastic audiences to hear his new works for London during two extended visits. Back in Vienna, Haydn, the son of a master wheelwright, was fêted by society and honoured by the imperial city's musical institutions.

Orion

Claude Vivier



Programme note
by **Tim Rutherford-
Johnson**

Towards the end of Claude Vivier's symbolical opera on death and the afterlife, *Kopernikus* (1978–79), a baritone sings to the main character, Agni: 'You will hear the music of Orion and the mystical seven sages.' Vivier himself fulfilled that prophecy in the title of his very next composition. Although it would wait three years for its premiere in 1982, under the baton of Charles Dutoit, *Orion* marked a significant moment in his still-developing career.

It was written to a commission from the Orchestra Symphonique de Montréal and the Canada Council, and Vivier's biographer, Bob Gilmore, suggests this prestigious context influenced some of the composer's stylistic choices. *Orion* is, he notes, unique in Vivier's output 'in giving the impression of wanting to please the large and musically fairly conservative audience for which it was first intended'. Nevertheless, it is a curious work, even for such a singular composer. Its working title was *Chant aux Étoiles*, but apart from a general atmosphere of interstellar awe and shimmer, its relation to either the mythical hunter or the night-time constellation is unclear.

Orion is structured as a theme and five variations. The theme is played at the start in four distinct phrases by the trumpet (symbolised by Vivier in his programme note, as it was

in *Kopernikus*, as 'the instrument of death') over a taut backdrop of strings and percussion. The first four variations (in the composer's words, 'first development', 'second development', 'meditation' and 'remembrance') successively expand and dissolve this theme in ways that look both backwards (to an early 20th century of, say, Stravinsky) and forwards (in the third variation, to the sonically mysterious spectralism of Vivier's French peers, Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail). Messiaen-like percussion, in the form of Balinese and Chinese gongs, crotales and vibraphone, is prominent, but so too are lush Wagnerian strings. Perhaps the most remarkable sound is a cry of 'hé-o' by a percussionist into the tam-tam, characterised by one critic as an intimate expression of humanity in the face of the 'unimaginable and inescapable forces' of the cosmos.

With the final variation, the fragmentary, skittishly ornamented theme is consolidated into a Mussorgsky-esque chorale for full orchestra. An 'eternal homecoming' was Vivier's cryptic description of his work's form, 'as in History, with a capital H, which always waits impatiently for the return of its redemptive saints and dictators'. If there is any comfort in that homecoming, it is brought to an abrupt end by one last 'hé-o' and a click from the woodblock, like the flick of a switch.

Claude Vivier

1948 (Canada) to 1983 (France)



Contemporaries

Tristan Murail,
G rard Grisey

Key events

1971–74: Studies in Paris and Utrecht, and in Cologne with Stockhausen

1976–77: Travels to the Middle East and Asia to study global music

1980: Premiere of his chamber opera *Koperkinus*

1981: Named Composer of the Year by the Canadian Music Centre

1982: Relocates to Paris

Listen to

Lonely Child

[youtube.com/iso](https://www.youtube.com/iso)

Programme note
by **Jo Buckley**

Few composers sit at the intersection of so many musical ideologies and still have so much to say. A spectralist, serialist, surrealist and ardent ethnomusicologist, Claude Vivier left behind just 49 compositions at the time of his death, but his impact and influence cannot be overstated. Gy rgy Ligeti would call him ‘the most important and original composer of his generation’.

Vivier was born in Montr al, Canada, where he grew up in an orphanage until his adoption at the age of three. He was, by his own admission, a desperately lonely child who suffered abuse at the hands of his adoptive family and invented his own languages as a way of ‘drawing a veil’ around himself. These languages would later make their way into his music, appearing for the first time in his earliest known vocal work *Ojikawa* (1968) and later in the seminal *Lonely Child* (1980).

His musical imagination is just as remarkable. Although Vivier borrowed at will from any of the myriad movements that inspired him, much like Alban Berg, he adopted these frameworks to

suit his own ends, never allowing the theory to become a barrier to self-expression. Colour, texture and melody remain paramount, the apparent simplicity and sometimes naivety of his music masking a deep understanding of the harmonic series, of frequency modulation and of individual timbral resonances. In Vivier’s hands, the orchestra becomes a living, breathing organism, one in which Western and Eastern musical traditions meet and meld to form a timeless musical language. ‘A musician should not be creating music,’ Vivier explained, ‘but rather moments of revelation, moments of forces in nature, forces which have existed, exist and will exist, as forces of truth.’

But there is another side to Vivier’s music too, a tantalising sense that we are always on the cusp of disaster and dissolution, as in his anxiety-ridden choral work *Musik f r das Ende* (1971). Like other parts of his oeuvre, it offers a glimpse into a life lived dangerously, and one that ultimately ended in tragedy. Vivier was murdered in his Parisian apartment at the age of 34, apparently by a prospective lover.



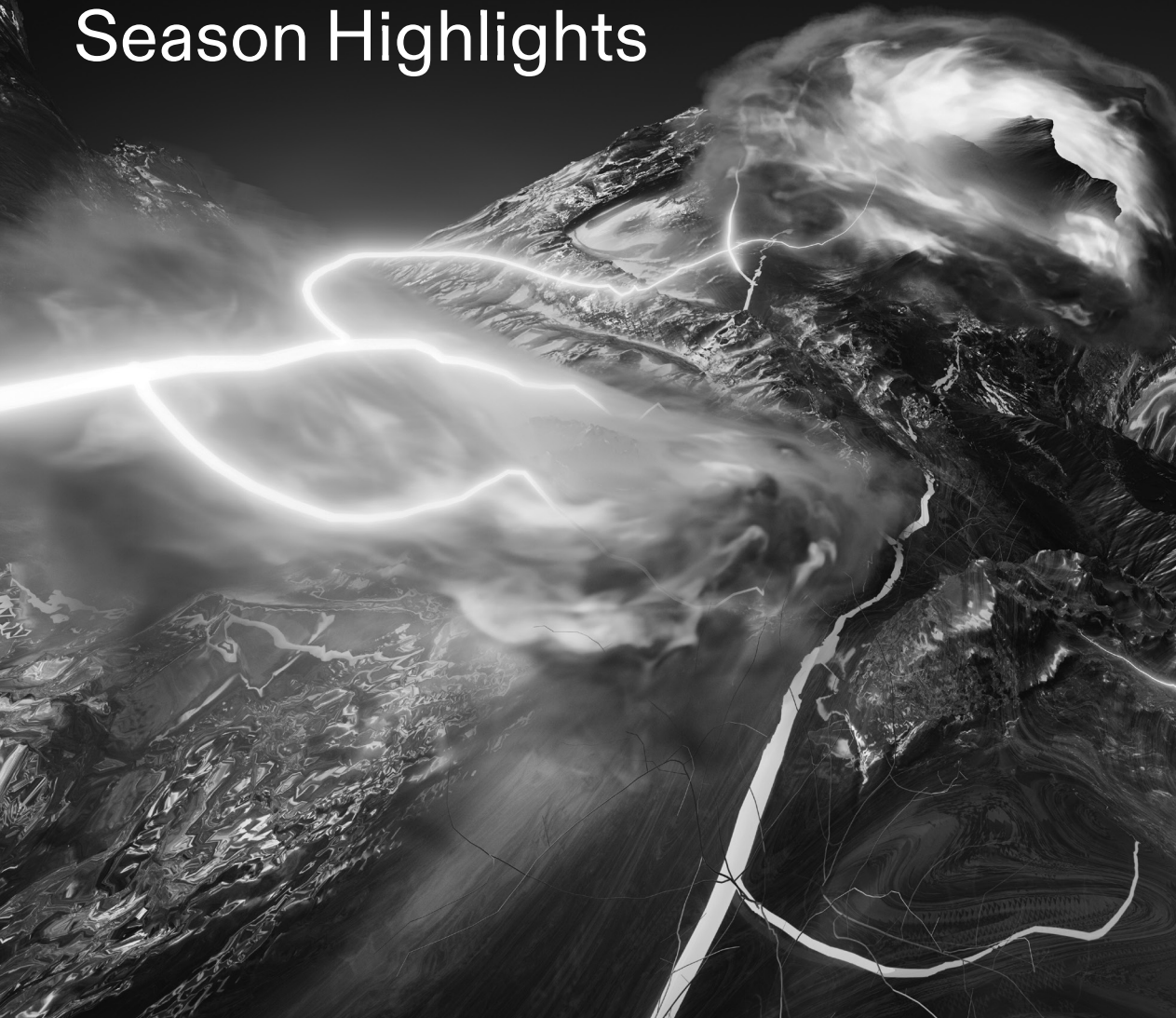
Interval – 20 minutes

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COMING IN 2025

Season Highlights



UP



Shostakovich Symphony No 12
MacMillan Violin Concerto No 2
with Gianandrea Noseda
and Nicola Benedetti
Thursday 3 April 7pm

Janáček The Excursions of Mr Brouček
with Sir Simon Rattle
Sunday 4 & Tuesday 6 May 7pm

Mozart Violin Concerto No 5
Strauss Ein Heldenleben
with Sir Antonio Pappano
and Lisa Batiashvili
Sunday 25 May 7pm

LSO On Film: The French Connection
with Dirk Brossé
Sunday 22 June 7pm

Syrinx for solo flute

Claude Debussy

Gareth Davies flute



Programme note
by **Andrew Mellor**

The painter James McNeill Whistler urged Claude Debussy to pursue the idea of *beauté complète* – ‘total beauty’ – in music. The concept was tied to both men’s vision of nature as the most effective instructor of art, because ‘nature is always right’.

In Debussy’s case, that viewpoint nurtured an ability to turn anything into music: dusk, clouds, wind, gardens, animals, the moon and even mind-stretching concepts. For Debussy, there would be no goal other than the immersive communication of ‘the moment’ – its feeling, colour and atmosphere.

In this, Debussy enacted a potent yet softly spoken musical revolution that quietly junked Western music’s entire dependence on harmonic procedure and thematic argumentation. In their place was a new music of rapidly shifting focal points, of ideas that seemed to evaporate or transfigure no sooner than they had appeared.

In 1913, Debussy’s colleague Gabriel Mourey asked the composer to write incidental music to his play *Psyché*. The script retold the Greek myth in which the nymph Syrinx transforms herself into reeds in order to escape the god Pan’s advances. Pan then hears the natural music made by the wind blowing through the reeds, and forms them into a flute (the eponymous pan flute or panpipes).

Debussy liked the idea of portraying Pan – a hybrid man-goat deity with a libido – and settled on the flute, which he had used so evocatively before (notably in the introduction to his *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*). Mouray asked Debussy to imagine the last melody Pan plays at his death. The flautist Louis Fleury would then play the music offstage while, on it, the nymphs would appear overjoyed at Pan’s music.

Syrinx, as the flute solo came to be known, was given plenty of exposure in Fleury’s subsequent recitals and quickly became a touchstone work for flautists. The piece has the feel of an improvisation, but its music reveals much about Debussy’s wider artistic project. In every sense, it is ambiguous – merging scales more associated with Indonesian than Western-notated music while appearing rhythmically completely free (though as some have observed, the music mimics the rhythmic principles of the French language).

If there’s a musical motif to hold onto, it’s the opening ten notes: a fluid, fluttering descent from B-flat to D-flat. This gesture returns in multiple guises until, at the very end of the piece, Debussy solidifies it – landing his work by journeying from B-natural down to D-flat in robust whole tones, like a tying-down of the work’s hitherto elusive domain.

Claude Debussy

1862 to 1918 (France)



Contemporaries

Richard Strauss,
Gustav Mahler

Key events

1894: Premiere of his orchestral work *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*

1902: Premiere of his only opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*

1905: Completes his major orchestral work *La mer*

1914–18: During World War I, he begins to compose six instrumental sonatas

Listen to

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
and *La mer*

[Isolive.co.uk](https://www.isolive.co.uk)

Composer profile by
Andrew Stewart

Despite an insecure family background (his father was imprisoned as a revolutionary in 1871), Claude Debussy took piano lessons and was accepted as a pupil of the Paris Conservatoire in 1872, but failed to make the grade as a concert pianist. The gifted musician directed his talents towards composition, eventually winning the coveted Prix de Rome in 1884 and spending two years in Italy.

During the 1890s, he lived in poverty with his mistress Gabrielle Dupont, eventually marrying the dressmaker Rosalie (Lily) Texier in 1899. His *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, although regarded as a revolutionary work at the time of its premiere in December 1894, soon found favour with concert-goers and the habitually conservative French press. Late in the summer of the previous year, he had begun work on the only opera he completed, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which was inspired by Maeterlinck's play. It was an immediate success after its first production in April 1902.

In 1904, he met Emma Bardac, the wife of a successful financier, and moved into an apartment with her; his wife Lily attempted suicide following their separation. Debussy and Emma had a daughter and were subsequently married (following Emma's divorce) in January 1908. The composer's volatile domestic life did not affect the quality of his work, with such magnificent scores as *La mer* for large orchestra and the first set of *Images* for piano created during this period. Debussy's ballet *Jeux* was first performed by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in May 1913, a fortnight before the premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Debussy was diagnosed with cancer in 1909, but continued to work, producing some of his best piano compositions between 1909 and 1913, including his two books of *Préludes*. During World War I, he managed to complete the first three of a projected set of six instrumental sonatas. He died at his Paris home in March 1918 and was buried at Passy cemetery.

Luonnotar

Jean Sibelius

Barbara Hannigan
soprano & conductor



1913



10 minutes

Programme note
by **Andrew Mellor**

Like Debussy, Jean Sibelius reimagined music's structure and grammar. In imitating the cyclic, mutating patterns of Finland's musical storytelling tradition, Sibelius moved orchestral music away from the Germanic principle of musical argument and gave the Nordic region a distinctive symphonic voice of its own.

For half of Sibelius' life, Finland was part of the Russian Empire. Then, as now, a political and cultural gulf separated Finland from the gargantuan country over the 830-mile land border. Artists of all disciplines, willing an independent Finland, looked to folk traditions in search of an authentic national identity. A major source was *The Kalevala*: a collection of folk stories passed down by Finns for generations, but compiled in print only in 1829.

Sibelius dipped into *The Kalevala* for countless works. In 1913, in response to a commission from Britain's Three Choirs Festival, he acted on a long-standing ambition to write music based on its creation myth: Luonnotar, 'the daughter of the air'. The work became a symphonic poem with soprano solo, first performed in Gloucester

Cathedral on 10 September 1913 under Herbert Brewer. According to the myth, Luonnotar forms the heavens, the stars and the moon when seven eggs resting on her knee are cracked (the sung text tells Sibelius' own version of the story). Sibelius referred to the music as being written 'in my own very personal style, for which I received very little recognition'. Hearing it in concert, writes the Sibelius expert Glenda Dawn Goss, is 'like witnessing a human soul stripped bare'.

Much of that is connected to a distillation in Sibelius' structural thinking and his musical imitation of the way the stories of *The Kalevala* were chanted by Finland's rune singers. The orchestra looks in on itself – apparently uninterested, obsessing over crosshatching patterns – until the work's climax. The vocal line traces the idiosyncrasies of the Finnish language, ritualistically plain and circular apart from the two outcries of 'Ei!' on a high C-flat – one loud, the other very soft. Sublimated into both is the essence of Luonnotar's femininity: her 700-year pregnancy and the shock of her sudden release from it.

Jean Sibelius

1865 to 1957 (Finland)



Contemporaries

Carl Nielsen,
Claude Debussy

Key events

1889–91: Studies in Berlin and Vienna

1902: Hugely successful premiere of the Second Symphony

1917: Finland declares its independence

1924: Premiere of his Seventh (and final) Symphony

Listen to

Complete Symphonies, *Kullervo*, *The Oceanides* and *Pohjola's Daughter*, conducted by Sir Colin Davis
Isolive.co.uk

Composer profile
by **Andrew Mellor**

The landscape, language and culture of Finland continue to set the country apart from prevailing European norms. The same is true of music by Jean Sibelius.

In the faraway Finland of the late 1800s, it was possible to learn the basics of musical composition without having Austro-German methods baked in to your psyche. That suited Sibelius, who reimagined the structure of orchestral music by imitating the hypnotic, circular repetitions of Finland's storytelling tradition, rune singing.

Sibelius was born into a middle-class family outside Helsinki but quickly forced his way into the city's cultural elite. He studied at the city's Music Institute and became a competent violinist, rounding off his self-directed education in Berlin and Vienna.

Sibelius' orchestral scores sound as unusual to the ear as they look unusual to the eye. Tunes emerge from streams of identical notes. Motifs are moulded gradually through repetition. Foreground

and background are merged. Rhythmic shifts at the bottom of the orchestra tease out transformations above. The music can appear beyond human control.

Sibelius perfected those techniques in his symphonies while his tone poems formed testing grounds for them. He anticipated American minimalism and French spectralism, while his role in creating an independent Finland put orchestral music at the centre of the country's legislative agenda.

Finland took Sibelius to its heart, but the precious and pugnacious composer had an ambivalent relationship with his homeland and his place in the world. Nevertheless, he completed a considerable body of work: alongside seven symphonies, his oeuvre includes more than a dozen symphonic (tone) poems, much incidental music for the theatre, a string quartet and many ravishing songs.

Luonnotar

Text & Translation

Original Text

*Olipa impi Ilman tyttö,
kave, Luonnotar korea.*

*Ouostui elämätään
aina yksin ollessansa
avaroilla autioilla.*

*Laskeusi lainehille,
aalto imeä ajeli,
vuotta seitsemänsataa.*

*Vieri impi, veen emona.
Uipi luotehet, etelät.
Uipi kaikki ilman rannat.*

*Tuli suuri tuulen puuska.
Meren kuohuille kohotti.*

*'Voi poloinen päiviäni.
Parempi olisi ollut
Ilman impenä elää.
Oi, Ukko Ylijumala,
käy tänne kutsuttaissa.'*

*Tuli Sotka suora lintu,
lenti kaikki ilman rannat,
lenti luotehet etelät.
Ei löyä pesän sioa.*

*'Ei, ei, ei.
Teenkö tuulehen tupani,
aalloille asuinsijani.
Tuuli kaatavi,
aalto viepi asuinsijani.'*

*Niin silloin veen emonen
nosti polvea lainehesta.
Siihen sorsa laativi pesänsä.
Alkoi hautoa.*

*Impi tuntevi tulistuvaksi.
Järkytti jäsenensä.
Pesä vierähti vetehen.
Katkieli kappaleiksi.*

Translated Text

Once a beauteous maid,
virgin Daughter of the Ether.

Forlorn and burdened,
dwelling ever alone
in the vastness of space.

Descending on the swell,
waves bore the virgin onward,
seven hundred years.

Being mother of the waters.
Swam nor'west, south.
Swam the air's every shore.

Came mighty gusts,
Foaming the sea.

'Oh my wretched days.
Better had I been
maid of the Ether.
Oh Ukko, God on high,
hasten here I call.'

A seabird beauteous flew,
straight o'er all air's shores,
flew nor'west, south.
No nest she found.

'No, no, no.
Shall I nest upon the wind,
dwelling on the waves.
The wind shall overturn,
The waves taking my dwelling.'

Then the mother of the waters
Did lift her knee from the billows.
The seabird on it set her nest,
her eggs to hatch.

The maid felt burning,
Her limbs were quaking.
The nest slipped waterward,
and fell splintered.

*Muuttuivat munat kaunoisiksi.
Munasen yläinen puoli
ylhäiseksi taivahaksi.
Yläpuoli valkeaista
kuuksi kuumottamahan.
Mi kirjajaista tähiksi taivaalle.
Ne tähiksi taivaalle.*

Wondrous things the egg became.
The shell's top dome
became the vault of heaven.
The upper albumen,
the bright shining Moon.
The motley parts, the firmament.
Heavenly starlight.

Lyrics by Jean Sibelius based on the first poem
of *The Kalevala* by Elias Lönnrot, 1849.
English translation by Pietari Tamminen
& Richard Stanley © Kroma 2010

The Miraculous Mandarin – Suite

Béla Bartók

- 1 Introduction (Street Noises): the commands of the Hoodlums directed to the Girl**
- 2 The Girl's first inviting gestures, in response to which the Old Gentleman appears, who gets thrown out in the end by the Hoodlums**
- 3 The Girl's second inviting gestures, upon which appears the Young Lad, who is also thrown out**
- 4 The Girl's third inviting gestures; the Mandarin appears**
- 5 The Girl's seductive dance before the Mandarin**
- 6 The Mandarin catches up with the Girl after an ever wilder chase**

Béla Bartók's last work for the stage originated in a 'grotesque pantomime' by the Hungarian playwright Menyhért (Melchior) Lengyel (1890–1974), which he came across in 1917. This story of violence was as remote from the fairy-tale world of his second stage work, *The Wooden Prince*, as the graphic action of that ballet had been from the dark intensity of his only opera, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. A clear connection between the three works, however, is the composer's close attention to orchestral sonority; although Bartók completed the piano score of *The Miraculous Mandarin* by the spring of 1919, the orchestration was not finished until the autumn of 1924.

Bartók's music plots the course of Lengyel's bizarre, expressionistic tale in compelling detail, and from its premiere in Cologne in 1926, a whiff of scandal shadowed the work – a staging in Budapest planned to honour Bartók's 50th birthday in 1931 did not survive the dress rehearsal. The presentation of the story is far from conventionally balletic. Indeed, the action is propelled as much by mime as by dance. Nevertheless, Bartók's control of the dramatic structure is superbly assured.

The opening of the work evokes the sounds of the city outside the tawdry room in which the action takes place. Three hoodlums force a girl to lure men from the street,

whom they intend to beat up and rob. There are three victims lured by the girl, depicted in sinuous clarinet solos: a penniless roué, an attractive young man and finally a strange Mandarin with an intense stare. He pursues and captures the girl, at which point the robbers emerge. The last part of the ballet moves from the brutally physical to the eerily metaphysical. Despite the hoodlums' attempts to smother and stab the Mandarin, he refuses to expire. After they hang him, he begins to glow with a greenish-blue light; the girl accepts his embrace and at last his wounds begin to bleed and he dies.

The musical style of the piece is perceptibly harder-edged than in the composer's earlier stage works, and the expression more succinct. Moments of stillness alternate with frantic activity in a score which has more than a hint of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. As contemporary reactions showed, the accompaniment to this bizarre scenario is appallingly vivid, but it makes for compulsive listening.

Bartók prepared a concert version of the ballet almost as soon as it was completed; he intended it to be based on the scenes up to and including the Mandarin catching the girl. Rather than calling it a Suite, which would imply a conventional collection of dances, he preferred the title *Music from The Miraculous Mandarin*.

 1918–24

 20 minutes

Programme note
by **Jan Smaczny**

Béla Bartók

1881 (Hungary) to 1945 (United States)



Contemporaries

Zoltán Kodály,
Igor Stravinsky

Key events

1905: With Zoltán Kodály, begins a major study of Central European folk music

1917: Successful premiere of his ballet *The Wooden Prince*

1920s: Several European tours as a pianist. Writes String Quartets Nos 3 and 4

1940: Leaves Hungary for the US

1944: World premiere of the *Concerto for Orchestra*

Listen to

Violin Concerto No 2
[Isolive.co.uk](https://www.isolive.co.uk)

Composer profile by
Andrew Stewart

Born in 1881 in Hungary, Béla Bartók began piano lessons with his mother at the age of five. He studied piano and composition at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest, where he created a number of works that echoed the style of Brahms and Richard Strauss.

After graduating, he discovered Austro-Hungarian and Slavic folk music, travelling extensively with his friend Zoltán Kodály and recording countless ethnic songs and dances, which began to influence his own compositions. Kodály also introduced him to the works of Debussy in 1907, the year in which he became Professor of Piano at the Budapest Conservatory.

Bartók established his mature style with such scores as the ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* and his opera, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. He revived his career as a concert pianist in 1927 when he gave the premiere of his First Piano Concerto in Mannheim. During the late 1920s and the 1930s, he

produced a series of masterpieces, including String Quartets Nos 3 to 6, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste*, the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, the Second Piano Concerto and the Second Violin Concerto.

Bartók detested the rise of fascism and in October 1940, he quit Budapest and travelled to the US. At first he concentrated on ethnomusicological researches, but eventually returned to composition and created a significant group of 'American' works, including the *Concerto for Orchestra* and his Third Piano Concerto.

His character was distinguished by a firm, almost stubborn refusal to compromise or be diverted from his musical instincts by money or position. Throughout his working life, Bartók collected, transcribed and annotated the folk songs of many countries, a commitment that brought him little financial return or recognition but one which he regarded as his most important contribution to music.

Barbara Hannigan

conductor & soprano



Embodying music with an unparalleled dramatic sensibility, soprano and conductor Barbara Hannigan is an artist at the forefront of creation. More than 30 years since her professional debut, Hannigan has created magical working relationships with world-class musicians, directors and choreographers, for audiences worldwide. Her artistic colleagues include John Zorn, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Simon Rattle, Sasha Waltz, Kent Nagano, Vladimir Jurowski, Andreas Kriegenburg, Andris Nelsons, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Christoph Marthaler, Antonio Pappano, Katie Mitchell and Kirill Petrenko. The late conductor and pianist Reinbert de Leeuw has been an extraordinary influence and inspiration on her development.

The Grammy Award-winning Canadian musician has shown a profound commitment to the music of our time and has given the world premiere performances of nearly 100 new creations, with extensive collaborations with composers including Pierre Boulez, John Zorn, Henri Dutilleux, György Ligeti, Zosha di Castri, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Golfam Khayam, Salvatore Sciarrino, Gerald Barry, Pascal Dusapin, Brett Dean, George Benjamin and Hans Abrahamsen.

A passionate musician of unique and courageous choices, Hannigan is renowned for creating innovative orchestral programmes, combining new and older repertoire in a highly dramatic and authentic manner. Having begun her career as a soprano, tackling some of the most difficult and virtuoso roles in the repertoire, she then turned her hand to conducting, making her debut in 2011 at age 40 at the Châtelet in Paris, and now balances her engagements as singer or conductor on a free and original path. She has held the position of Principal Guest Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra since 2019, and in 2026 she will begin her tenure as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

In recent years she has conducted world-class orchestras including the Concertgebouw and Cleveland Orchestras, the London Symphony Orchestra and Rome's Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, has ongoing relationships with festivals including Aix-en-Provence and Spoleto, and has had starring soprano roles on opera stages including London's Covent Garden, Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Paris Opéra's Palais Garnier, and the opera houses of Berlin, Hamburg and Munich.

Gareth Davies

flute



Gareth Davies is one of the flautists of his generation. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and, shortly after graduating, was appointed Principal Flute in the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at the age of 23. In 2000, he was invited to become Principal Flute with the London Symphony Orchestra. He has recorded concerti by Carl Nielsen, Karl Jenkins and Douglas Knehans and can be heard with the LSO on many recordings, film soundtracks (including *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*), video games and TV series.

As well as performing, Davies is in demand as a teacher. He is a visiting professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and regularly coaches woodwind students on the Orchestral Artistry postgraduate course. He teaches and performs every summer at the James Galway Flute Festival in Lucerne and is one of the team of international coaches for YMCG in Hong Kong and Guanzhou, with director Daniel Harding.

Davies also works as a writer and presenter. He has written for the LSO and *BBC Music Magazine*, has written and presented programmes on Radio 3 as well as a documentary for Classic FM. His first book, *The Show Must Go On*, published by Elliott and Thompson, was chosen as a book of the year in the *Financial Times* and *Classical Music* magazine.

Davies is passionate about sharing great music and has written several concerts for children with his collaborator, Victor Craven, which have been performed by the LSO in London and on tour in the US. They feature a wide variety of challenging repertoire which children take in their stride. During the pandemic, they wrote an online guide to the orchestra, *Where's Simon?*, featuring Sir Simon Rattle and the whole LSO performing at home on their mobile phones. The film has recently been included in the British Film Institute Archive for posterity.

Gareth is a Wm S Haynes Artist.

London Symphony Orchestra

On Stage

Leader

Roman Simovic

First Violins

Ginette Decuyper
Laura Dixon
Maxine Kwok
William Melvin
Elizabeth Pigram
Laurent Quénelle
Harriet Rayfield
Sylvain Vasseur
Caroline Frenkel
Mitzi Gardner
Olatz Ruiz de
Gordejuela
Julia Rumley

Second Violins

Harry Bennetts
Sarah Quinn
Miya Väisänen
Matthew Gardner
Naoko Keatley
Alix Lagasse
Belinda McFarlane
Iwona Muszynska
Csilla Pogány
Andrew Pollock
Helena Buckie
Paul Robson

Violas

Santa Vižine
Gillianne Hadow
Malcolm Johnston
Anna Bastow
Thomas Beer
Germán Clavijo
Steve Doman
Julia O'Riordan
Sofia Silva Sousa
Robert Turner
Mizuho Ueyama
Emily Clark*

Cellos

David Cohen
Laure Le Dantec
Salvador Bolón
Alastair Blayden
Daniel Gardner
Judith Fleet
Silvestrs Kalniņš
Young In Na

Double Basses

Rodrigo Moro Martín
Patrick Laurence
Chaemun Im
Thomas Goodman
Joe Melvin
Gonzalo Jimenez
Daniel Schultz*

Flutes

Gareth Davies
Imogen Royce

Piccolo

Robert Looman

Oboes

Olivier Stankiewicz
Rosie Jenkins

Cor Anglais

Aurelién Laizé

Clarinets

Sérgio Pires
Chi-Yu Mo

Bass Clarinet

Ferran Garcerà Perelló

Bassoons

Rachel Gough
Joost Bosdijk

Contra Bassoon

Martin Field

Horns

Timothy Jones
Angela Barnes
Amadea Dazeley-Gaist
Finlay Bain
Zachary Hayward

Trumpets

James Fountain
Adam Wright
James Nash

Trombones

Byron Fulcher
Jonathan Hollick

Bass Trombone

Paul Milner

Tuba

Ben Thomson

Timpani

Nigel Thomas

Percussion

Neil Percy
David Jackson
Sam Walton
Patrick King
Helen Edordu

Harp

Bryn Lewis
Helen Tunstall

Piano

Catherine Edwards

Celeste

Caroline Jaya-Ratnam

* 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.