

A man with a beard and a patterned scarf is playing a saxophone. He is wearing a brown coat and a blue shirt. The background is dark.

LSO

SOWETO KINCH

Soundtrack to the Apocalypse

Thursday 13 November 2025

Free Concert Programme

London Symphony Orchestra



ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

barbican
Resident Orchestra

TONIGHT'S CONCERT

Soweto Kinch: Soundtrack to the Apocalypse

Thursday 13 November 2025
Barbican

8pm

Soweto Kinch

Soundtrack to the Apocalypse
(orchestral premiere)

Soweto Kinch saxophone & vocals

Ben Palmer conductor

Louis Hamilton-Foad kit

Francis Mott vocals

Rick Simpson piano

Josh Vadiveloo bass

London Symphony Orchestra

Concert finishes at approximately 9.25pm

Welcome



Welcome to this evening's London Symphony Orchestra concert. Tonight, on the eve of the EFG London Jazz Festival, we are delighted to present the orchestral premiere of *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse*, the final instalment in Soweto Kinch's trilogy with the LSO, following *The Black Peril* (2019) and *White Juju* (2021), both performed as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival in previous years. Developed through collaboration and improvisation, this hard-hitting work brings together a distinctive fusion of jazz, classical and hip-hop influences. Ahead of the concert, members of the Create Perform ensemble give their first all-jazz set, created with students from Guildhall's Orchestral Artistry and Jazz courses, LSO musicians and creative leader Mark Withers.

Over the past six years, the LSO's partnership with Soweto Kinch has been a source of genuine artistic discovery. Each project has challenged us to explore new musical ground, and this latest work carries a powerful and pertinent message for our time. It has been a pleasure to see this collaboration evolve, and we are delighted to share the final stage of this journey with you tonight.

We hope you enjoy this evening's concert. Next week, Maxime Pascal conducts *LSO Futures* featuring works by Helen Hamlyn Panufnik Composers' Scheme members Sasha Scott and Omri Kochavi, alongside the world premiere of a piano concerto by Donghoon Shin, written for Seong-Jin Cho as the centre point of his LSO Artist Portrait. Alexandre Bloch conducts a programme of Debussy, Ravel and Lutosławski the following week, joined by pianist Alice Sara Ott for Ravel's Piano Concerto in G. We hope to see you there.

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

Dame Kathryn McDowell DBE DL
Managing Director

Coming Up

Thursday 20 November 7pm
Barbican

LSO Futures

An evening celebrating music at the forefront of composition, as we hear three world premieres, alongside Pierre Boulez's magnetic memorial to fellow composer Bruno Maderna. Maxime Pascal conducts.

Wednesday 17 December 7pm
Thursday 18 December
Barbican

Golden Age Hollywood and Beyond

From *Ben Hur* and *Gone with the Wind* to *The Godfather* and *Cinema Paradiso*, Sir Antonio Pappano conducts music from the 'golden age' of Hollywood and beyond, with works by some of cinema's most brilliant and influential composers.

Before the Performance

Members of the Create Perform ensemble present their first exclusively jazz set, devised alongside students from Guildhall's Orchestral Artistry and Jazz courses, LSO musicians and creative leader Mark Withers.

The group used a range of stimuli to make the pieces, some of which were initiated by the jazz students. The pieces feature strong rhythmic patterns, riffs experimenting with open and closed sounds, extreme pitch restriction as well as an improvisation on *Wild, Wild Mountain Thyme* and exploration of a riff from Soweto Kinch himself.

LSO Create Pre-Concert Set

Rain
Day and Night
Sunshine
B
Wild, Wild Mountain Thyme
Groove for Natasha

With thanks to EFG London Jazz Festival for helping to promote this concert.

**Please switch off all phones.
Photography and audio/video recording
are not permitted during the performance.**

Details correct at time of going to print.

Editorial Photography John Davis,
Arturs Kondrats, Iza Korsak
Print John Good 024 7692 0059
Advertising Cabbells Ltd 020 3603 7937

Share Your Thoughts
Visit iso.co.uk/survey or scan the QR code to complete a short survey about tonight's concert.



Soundtrack to the Apocalypse

Soweto Kinch

Soweto Kinch

saxophone & vocals

Louis

Hamilton-Foad kit

Francis Mott vocals

Rick Simpson piano

Josh Vadiveloo bass

- 1 **Coming Together**
- 2 **The Day After Tomorrow**
- 3 **Justice**
- 4 **Apocalypse**
- 5 **Journeying**
- 6 **Apocalypse Coda**
- 7 **Metronomes**
- 8 **Climbing**
- 9 **The End of the World (trio)**
- 10 **The End of the World (orchestral)**
- 11 **Core Sicker**
- 12 **Kalimba**
- 13 **Grand Finale**
- 14 **Epilogue**
- 15 **World Peace**



2025



75 minutes

Programme note
by **Soweto Kinch**

Soweto Kinch introduces the ideas and inspirations behind *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse*, a work about truth, revelation and the world we now live in.

The Title

'The title *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse* came from a lot of reflection and conversation with my mum and friends – some of whom know a great deal about theology. Most people assume that 'apocalypse' means catastrophe or the end of the world, but its Greek root actually means to unveil or to uncover. That completely changes the perspective. Rather than being about destruction, the apocalypse becomes a moment of truth – a lifting of the veil.

Looking at the world through that meaning, it feels as though we are living in a time of unveiling. Even when it is difficult or uncomfortable, there is a certain clarity in seeing things as they really are, not as we might prefer them to be. I find something cathartic in sharing that honesty with other people – speaking plainly about the world we are experiencing. That spirit is fundamental to this work.

A Trilogy About Time

Soundtrack to the Apocalypse is the final part of a trilogy that began with *The Black Peril* in 2019 and continued with *White Juju* in 2021. I did not originally plan these pieces as a trilogy. *The Black Peril* looked to the past, drawing on the history of the 1919 race riots. *White Juju* was rooted in the

present, written during lockdown and reflecting the psychological, social and cultural fractures of that moment. *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse* looks towards the future – not in a science-fiction sense, but by asking where we are heading as a society, spiritually, technologically and artistically. Together, the trilogy has allowed me to explore what I feel has been an exceptional period for artists.

A Work of Collaboration and Improvisation

This piece, like all my large-scale projects, has been developed through collaboration. Working with the LSO over the last six years has been an evolving conversation – one rooted in mutual respect and curiosity. When we first worked together, there was perhaps a healthy sense of mystery on both sides – the worlds of improvised music and symphonic music can seem very different. But as we have continued to collaborate, much of that mystery has dissolved. What has replaced it is a shared language built through rehearsal, experimentation and a willingness to take risks together.

Improvisation lies at the heart of my music, even within a composed structure. I am interested in spontaneity – in music that breathes and responds in the moment. Working with the LSO has allowed me to explore this on a different scale, shaping improvisation not just within a small ensemble but across large forces. Composition and improvisation are not opposites for me – they are two sides of the same creative impulse.

Soundtrack to the Apocalypse

Soweto Kinch

Sound and Technology

There are several recurring musical ideas in *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse*. One of them is a meditation on technology – particularly artificial intelligence and the increasing presence of machine-made or machine-augmented music. During this project, I've been working with sounds and tools I wouldn't normally bring to an orchestral collaboration – drum machines, digital processing and, for the first time in my work with the LSO, the aerophone, a digital saxophone.

This isn't about technology for its own sake – synthesisers and electronics are nothing new – but AI introduces a different kind of question. How does our interaction with machines affect us as musicians and as people? When we offload certain decisions to a machine, what do we gain – and what do we risk losing? These ideas surface throughout the work not as dystopian panic, but as an honest reflection of the world we already inhabit.

The Emotional Shape of the Work

This piece moves through contrasts. At times it's reflective – almost inward-looking – and at others it's loud, physical and direct. I want the music to create space for people to think and feel, but I also want it to move bodies.

Dance and groove are not trivial elements – they are powerful forms of connection. They cut across social boundaries that sometimes keep people apart inside concert halls. I don't believe thought and movement are opposites.

I think audiences today are used to processing information quickly – scrolling, selecting, reacting – and this work mirrors that fractured rhythm. That is why it uses shorter, high-impact sequences. It's not an opera in the traditional symphonic form – it's a mirror of the speed of contemporary life.

Working with the LSO

This is my third major project with the LSO, and over time the collaboration has deepened. When we began with *The Black Peril*, I think both the orchestra and I were discovering how our musical worlds might meet. Now there is a familiarity, a shared trust, and an understanding that when we come together, we are creating something none of us could make alone.

I have always respected orchestral musicianship – the precision, the discipline, the ability to realise complex notated music with clarity. But I have also enjoyed demystifying some of the false hierarchies people carry about orchestral music – the idea that it belongs to one social group, or that it demands specialist knowledge to enjoy. These ideas exist in the jazz world too. Good music is not an academic subject – it's a human one. With this trilogy, I've been interested in breaking down those imagined barriers. Music is not there to intimidate – it's there to speak.

A Message for the Present

I have always believed that art has a role to play in speaking to the times we live in. I'm not interested in music as background noise – not

given its history. From spirituals to the blues to jazz and hip-hop, music has always been bound up with liberation, testimony and truth-telling. When I see art reduced to a decorative soundtrack – noise to consume while ignoring the world – I think something vital gets lost.

We are living through a period where truth is contested and voices are often silenced. Algorithms shape our world views. Social media turns politics into spectacle.

Sound and Spirit

There are also spiritual layers in this piece. In my travels, I've been drawn to ancient vocal traditions – polyphonic singing from Eastern Europe, but also from many other parts of the world. These forms use layered voices to reach altered states – to connect the physical and the metaphysical. I've found those resonances powerful. In *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse*, there are moments built around drones and frequencies that are designed to work on more than one level; music that speaks to the chest cavity as much as the intellect.

Courage and Catharsis

If there is one thing I hope listeners take from *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse*, it's courage. Not a theatrical or costume version of courage, but real courage – the kind that makes it possible to tell the truth even when it's uncomfortable. I hope people feel less alone in whatever they may be wrestling with. I hope they feel energised. And I hope the music offers some form of catharsis – not escape from reality, but a way of processing it together.

A Mirror and a Threshold

At its heart, *Soundtrack to the Apocalypse* is not about doom. It's about revelation. It's about seeing clearly. It's about what becomes possible when illusions fall away. We are living in a time of fracture and noise, but also a time of awakening. The question is not whether we are comfortable with the truth – it is whether we are willing to face it and act on it.

This piece is a mirror, but it is also a threshold. It asks where we go from here – artistically, socially, spiritually. And like all journeys worth taking, it does not offer a packaged conclusion. It asks the audience to participate, to think, feel and move.

Looking Forward

Although this work completes a trilogy that began with *The Black Peril* and *White Juju*, I don't see it as an ending. For me, it's a continuation of a deeper enquiry – into history, power, technology, culture and the human spirit. Every piece of music is a conversation with the future. What we choose to express today shapes what becomes possible tomorrow. That is why truth matters. That is why art matters.'

Soweto Kinch

composer, saxophone & vocals



Award-winning alto-saxophonist and MC Soweto Kinch is one of the most exciting and versatile musicians in both the British jazz and hip-hop scenes. Undoubtedly one of the few artists in either genre with a degree in Modern History from the University of Oxford, he has amassed an impressive list of accolades and awards on both sides of the Atlantic, including two MOBO Awards for Best Jazz Act (2003, 2007) and a Mercury Prize nomination for Album of the Year (2003). More recently, Kinch extended his work in music media, becoming the main presenter for BBC Radio 3's *Jazz Now*, and fronting BBC Four documentary *Jazzology* (2018). He was further awarded an Honorary Associateship at Hertford College, Oxford (2018) and by the Royal Academy of Music (2020).

With an impressive discography that has covered a wide range of themes from the Seven Deadly Sins to slavery/emancipation, Kinch's music has seen him tour extensively with his own ensembles as well as forging lasting collaborations with musicians from the US, India, Australia, Sudan, Brazil and beyond.

In 2013, Kinch presented a stage performance of his concept album *The Legend of the Mike Smith* at Birmingham Repertory Theatre. *Nonagram*, his 2016 release, explored sacred geometry and the healing properties of sound in an age of increasing division.

Kinch returned with a brand-new studio album and live tour in 2019. *The Black Peril* debuted at a sold-out Earth, Hackney during the EFG London Jazz Festival 2019. A politically and racially engaged body of work, the record has historical inspiration that can be traced to the episodes of civil unrest that erupted across the Western world throughout 1919. Despite the restrictions of quarantine, Kinch continued this work by staging an online festival, #BlackPeril2020. It combined bespoke artistic collaborations with exciting black British musicians, choreographers and dancers such as Jade Hackett, Nathaniel Cross, Hanna Mbuya and Tyrone Isaac-Stuart as well as lively discussions with established artists such as Lowkey, Jason Moran and Nicholas Payton.

Ben Palmer

conductor



Ben Palmer is Artistic Director of Covent Garden Sinfonia and Chief Conductor of the Orchestra da Camera di Pordenone and Babylon Orchester Berlin. From 2017 to 2024, he was Chief Conductor of the Deutsche Philharmonie Merck, ending his tenure with three performances of Mahler's Symphony No 8.

He is a regular visitor to the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, Arctic Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and to the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (including at the BBC Proms) and BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Debuts this season include the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Munich Symphony Orchestra, Oakland Symphony, Odense Symphony Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony. He will also conduct the BBC SSO in Seoul at BBC Proms Korea. As a guest conductor, he has worked with Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Singers, City of Prague Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra (Dublin), NDR Radiophilharmonie, the Philharmonia, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

Personally authorised by John Williams to conduct his film scores in concert, and acclaimed as 'a masterclass in conducting' by Hans Zimmer, Palmer is one of the world's most sought-after specialists in conducting live to picture. With a repertoire of more than 50 films, ranging from fiendishly difficult silent movies such as *Metropolis* and *Modern Times* to *Star Wars* and *Top Gun: Maverick*, he appears regularly at venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, KKL Luzern and Concertgebouw Amsterdam. He is regularly invited to conduct recording sessions for leading film and television productions, with clients including Hans Zimmer's Bleeding Fingers Music, 20th Century Fox and Studiocanal.

A composer and trumpeter by training, he studied at the University of Birmingham and the Royal Academy of Music, which elected him an Associate in 2017. He twice worked as rehearsal conductor for Bernard Haitink, and from 2011 to 2016 was Assistant Conductor to Sir Roger Norrington. He continues to be in great demand as a composer, arranger and orchestrator, most notably for Sony Classical, for whom he also regularly conducts.

London Symphony Orchestra

Patron

His Majesty The King

Chief Conductor

Sir Antonio Pappano

Conductor Emeritus

Sir Simon Rattle

OM CBE

Principal Guest

Conductors

Gianandrea Nosedà

François-Xavier Roth

Conductor Laureate

Michael Tilson Thomas

Associate Artists

Barbara Hannigan

André J Thomas

At the London Symphony Orchestra, we believe that extraordinary music should be available to everyone, everywhere – from orchestral fans in the concert hall to first-time listeners all over the world.

The LSO was established in 1904 as one of the first orchestras shaped by its musicians. Since then, generations of remarkable talents have built our reputation for quality, ambition and a commitment to sharing the joy of music with everyone. We perform some 70 concerts every year as Resident Orchestra at the Barbican, with our family of artists: Chief Conductor Sir Antonio Pappano, Conductor Emeritus Sir Simon Rattle, Principal Guest Conductors Gianandrea Nosedà and François-Xavier Roth, Conductor Laureate Michael Tilson Thomas, and Associate Artists Barbara Hannigan and André J Thomas. We have major artistic residencies in Paris, Tokyo and at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and a growing presence across Asia and Australia.

Through LSO Discovery, our learning and community programme, 60,000 people each year experience the transformative power of music. Our musicians are at the heart of this unique programme, leading workshops, mentoring bright young talent, and visiting schools, hospitals and community spaces. The home of much of this work is LSO St Luke's, our venue on Old Street. Last month, following a programme of works, the LSO opened up the venue's facilities to more people than ever before,

with new state-of-the-art recording facilities and dedicated spaces for LSO Discovery.

Our record label, LSO Live, is a leader among orchestra-owned labels, bringing to life the excitement of a live performance. The catalogue of over 200 acclaimed recordings reflects the artistic priorities of the Orchestra – from popular new releases, such as Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* with Sir Simon Rattle, to favourites like Vaughan Williams' symphonies with Sir Antonio Pappano and Verdi's *Requiem* with Gianandrea Nosedà.

The LSO has been prolific in the studio since the infancy of orchestral recording, making more recordings than any other orchestra – over 2,500 projects to date – across film, video games and bespoke audio collaborations. Recent highlights include soundtrack recordings for the video game *Genshin Impact*, a Mercury Music Prize-nominated collaboration with Floating Points and Pharoah Sanders, and appearing on screen and on the Grammy-winning soundtrack for the film *Maestro*, which was also nominated for multiple BAFTA and Oscar awards.

Through inspiring music, learning programmes and digital innovations, our reach extends far beyond the concert hall. And thanks to the generous support of The City of London Corporation, Arts Council England, corporate supporters, trusts and foundations and individual donors, the LSO is able to continue sharing extraordinary music with as many people as possible, across London and the world.

London Symphony Orchestra

On Stage

Saxophone & Vocals

Soweto Kinch

Leader

Benjamin Marquise
Gilmore

First Violins

Clare Duckworth
Stefano Mengoli
Ginette Decuyper
Maxine Kwok
Helena Buckie
Claire Parfitt
Elizabeth Pigram
Laurent Quénelle
Harriet Rayfield

Second Violins

Thomas Norris
Miya Väisänen
Matthew Gardner
Alix Lagasse
Belinda McFarlane
Iwona Muszynska
Csilla Pogány
Paul Robson

Violas

Gillianne Haddow
Malcolm Johnston
Anna Bastow
Mizuho Ueyama
Julia O'Riordan
Robert Turner

Cellos

David Cohen
Laure Le Dantec
Salvador Bolón
Daniel Gardner
Peteris Sokolovskis
Amanda Truelove

Double Basses

Rodrigo Moro Martín
Joe Melvin
Charles
Campbell-Peek
Evangeline Tang
Josh Vadiveloo

Flutes

Gareth Davies
Imogen Royce

Oboes

Olivier Stankiewicz
Rosie Jenkins

Clarinets

Chris Richards
Chi-Yu Mo

Bass Clarinet

Ferran Garcerà Perelló

Bassoon

Rachel Gough

Contrabassoon

Martin Field

Horns

Timothy Jones
Angela Barnes
Alex Willett
Jonathan Maloney

Trumpets

James Fountain
Adam Wright
Katie Smith

Trombone

Simon Johnson

Bass Trombone

Paul Milner

Tuba

Ben Thomson

Timpani

Nigel Thomas

Percussion

Neil Percy
Sam Walton

Harp

Bryn Lewis

Vocals

Francis Mott

Piano

Rick Simpson

Bass

Josh Vadiveloo

Kit

Louis
Hamilton-Foad

London Symphony Orchestra

WHITE JUJU

Recorded live with the LSO in 2021, *White Juju* is Soweto Kinch's powerful work for jazz quartet and symphony orchestra



Written in response to lockdown, BLM, British history and the culture wars, *White Juju* melds Kinch's distinct approach to jazz and hip hop with classical music, drawing broad inspiration from European folklore, the African Diaspora and divisive national myths to create a uniquely contemporary tone poem.

'It received a loud, prolonged, vociferous and very enthusiastic reception in a nearly-full Barbican Hall.'

The Arts Desk



Listen now

LSO

Purchase vinyl
or download at
isolive.lso.co.uk