

SOLOMON

WELCOME TO OUR 2025/26 SEASON AT THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE.

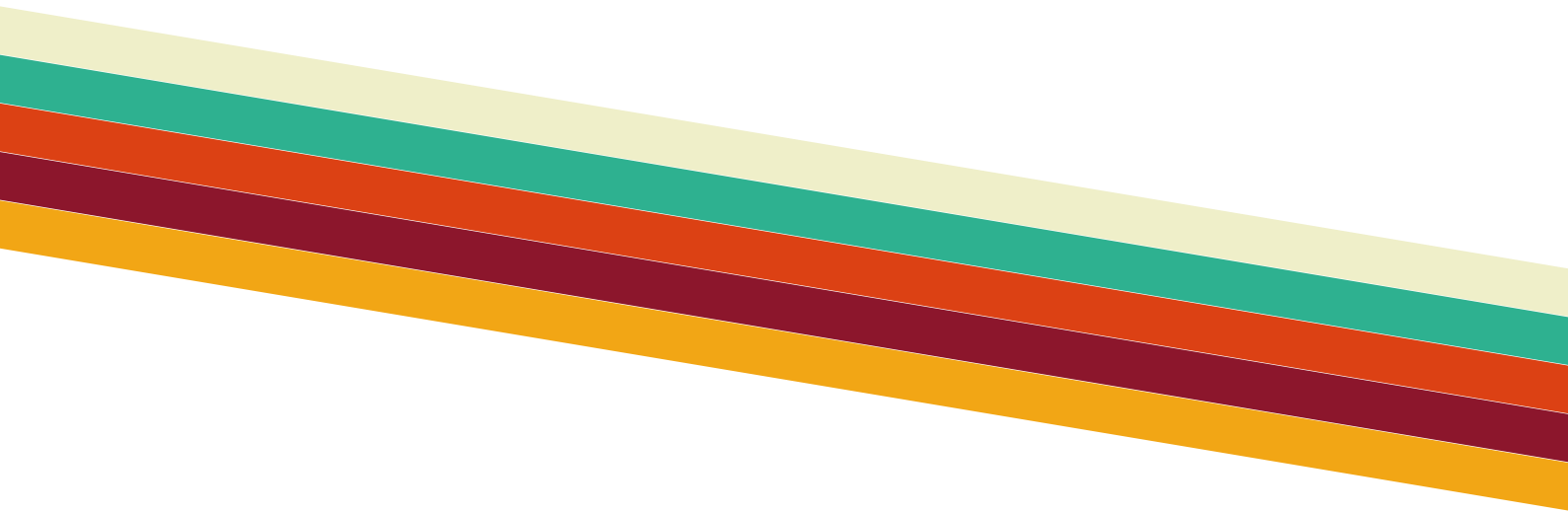
Celebrating 40 fantastic years of making music.

1986. It was the year of the Westland Affair, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the infamous 'Hand of God' goal at the World Cup in Mexico, the premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's opera *The Mask of Orpheus*... and in late June Wham! were at number 1 in the UK charts with *The Edge of Heaven*.

On 26 June, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment first stepped on to a stage.

The first of our two seasons marking this milestone features a kaleidoscope of old favourites and new combinations. It features some of our best loved partnerships and celebrates our shared history. Handel and Bach, Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms and Dvořák are all composers who have been at the heart of our journey.

The challenges faced by the OAE and all our colleagues are varied, but we remain absolutely focused on the mission of sharing the highest quality music with the widest audience possible. What continues to shine after 40 years is the golden thread of a story of friends united by a profound love of the art of music.



SOLOMON

7.00pm
Sunday 12 October
Queen Elizabeth Hall

Programme

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685 – 1759)

Solomon

ACT 1

Overture

Scene 1 – The Consecration of the Temple

Scene 2 – Solomon and his Queen

ACT 2

Scene 1 – Solomon, the priests and Israelites praise God and wisdom

Scene 2 – An attendant arrives with a message for Solomon

Scene 3 – A dispute between two women over an infant

– Interval (15 minutes) –

ACT 3

Sinfonia

The Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon's court

ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Huw Daniel leader

Nardus Williams soprano (Solomon's Queen; First Woman; Nicaule, Queen of Sheba)

Helen Charlston mezzo-soprano (Solomon)

Hugo Hymas tenor (Zadok, the High Priest)

Florian Störtz bass-baritone (A Levite)

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment

John Butt conductor

Keyboards and tuning services provided by Robin Jennings

Free pre-concert talk: Q&A with John Butt at 6.00pm in the Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Violins I

Huw Daniel*
Kinga Ujszaszi
Rebecca Livermore
Silvia Schweinberger
Kati Debretzeni*

Violins II

Margaret Faultless*
Claire Holden
Alice Evans
Sophie Simpson
Kathryn Parry

Violas

Anne Sophie van Riel
Annette Isserlis
Martin Kelly

Cellos

Andrew Skidmore
Catherine Rimer
Ruth Alford

Double basses

Cecelia Bruggemeyer
Kate Brooke

Flutes

Lisa Beznosiuk*
Neil McLaren

Oboes

Alexandra Bellamy
Oonagh Lee

Bassoons

Sally Jackson
Rebecca Hammond

Horns

Peter Moutoussis
Martin Lawrence

Trumpets

David Blackadder*
Phillip Bainbridge

Timpani

Scott Bywater

Harpsichord

Steven Devine*

Organ

Stephen Farr

*OAE Principal Players

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment

Sopranos

Isabelle Haile
Eleanor Garside
Emily Jennings
Aisling Kenny
Sofia Kirwan-Baez
Daisy Livesey
Joanna Songi
Claire Ward

Altos

Judy Louie Brown
Lowri Bufton
David Clegg
Tristram Cooke
Lara Rebekah Harvey
Angharad Rowlands*
Mathilde Sidén-Silfver
Sophie Timms

Tenors

Ilya Aksionov*
William Anderson
John Bowen
Richard Dowling
Sebastian MacLaine
Richard Rowntree
Nicholas Todd
Ben Vonberg-Clark

Basses

Jack Comerford
Michael Craddock
William Drakett
Hugo Herman-Wilson
Thomas Humphreys
Stephen Kennedy
Greg Skidmore
William Townend

* Solo part in Act 2

A tribute to Sir Roger Norrington

Marshall Marcus



In rehearsal with Sir Roger Norrington

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

These words of TS Eliot that occur towards the end of 'Little Gidding', the final poem of Eliot's magisterial *Four Quartets*, appeared in the programme at the recent funeral of the OAE Emeritus Conductor Sir Roger Norrington, who died earlier this year. A more perceptive and prescient description of Sir Roger's work would be hard to find, for he seemed built to navigate the twin – perhaps eternal – pursuits of risk-taking exploration and the concomitant inevitability of return.

Self-confidently patrician but with a wit that was happily gregarious to all comers, Roger always seemed to enjoy a happy confidence in his role in life: comfortable in the complete surety of what he was doing, and also why. As a result, he bestrode a revolution in musical life that echoed, and continues to echo, across the entire classical music globe;

an amused colossus who taught generations of musicians and audiences to both play and listen anew. And to enjoy it!

Yes, he could be irritating, and certainly open to the charge of overconfidence; and some felt that there was more to life than the composer's metronome marks and a lack of what some of us who worked with him used to call 'marzipan', aka the dreaded vibrato. But this is to carp: he changed us, words that can be truly associated only with the very few.

Sir Roger's association with the OAE goes right back to the Orchestra's first concerts in 1986, and he was in fact the first English conductor that the players allowed (sic.) into the fold. But then he was a natural soul mate for OAE, because like the players, he believed that an orchestra should always be more laboratory than career.

Have a listen to Roger's *Tea with Netty* episode from 2020, and you really come away with the flavour of the man, with that rare ability to be both philosopher and magician: to educate but, my goodness, to also smile.

One is drawn inevitably back to the final 'Dantean' words of 'Little Gidding' and the end of the great *Four Quartets*: to the fire that represents divinity, power, purification, mortality and death. And the rose that symbolizes life, beauty, and the cyclical eternal nature of existence. It fell to Roger to be the exception that somehow, almost alchemically, managed to combine these apparent opposites; a quality for which he is already much missed, and for which many of us will never forget him.

Thank you, Roger.



*And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.*

TS Eliot *Four Quartets*

**Sir Roger Norrington,
16 March 1934 – 18 July 2025**

A vision of an ideal nation?

John Butt

Alone among Handel's oratorios drawing on Old Testament stories, *Solomon* presents a perfectly united and peaceful Israel, ruled by an unimpeachable king of unparalleled wisdom. Conflict and war lie in the past (although the harmonious state is armed to the teeth, just in case), and God seems to have answered every prayer and perfected his work. Therefore, *Solomon*, first performed on 17 March 1749 (at Covent Garden), must have seemed eminently satisfactory to the Deists, who were such an obvious target of Charles Jennens's *Messiah* libretto – an unashamedly orthodox exposition of Christianity. Deists were representative of the early Enlightenment faction who believed that God's essential work was in the past and that he did not intervene in contemporary affairs. On the other hand, it is almost too easy to see *Solomon* as a reflection of the contemporary affairs of Britain in 1749: the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had brought some degree of peace in 1748, following on from George II's victory at Dettingen in 1743 (he was the last British monarch to lead troops in battle); closer to home, 1746 brought the ultimate defeat of the Jacobite cause. Of course, there was much more nuance to this seemingly harmonious moment, and George II was clearly no paragon of virtue, nor excessively wise or cultured. But Handel's (and his anonymous librettist's) portrayal of Solomon is clearly something of a caricature: his murderous actions to secure his kingship are briefly covered in a single recitative, and his constancy to his noble Egyptian wife must have seemed absurd to the many biblically-literate listeners who would have been well aware that Solomon's harem numbered around one thousand women.

In short, it is surely simplistic to view Handel's *Solomon* as an honest reflection of the British state and monarchy of 1749. Perhaps it is more Handel's vision of an ideal state and government, an early-Enlightenment model that is ever impossible to attain but worth maintaining as an aim, whatever the messy contingencies involved. We are presented with the notion of a unified nation, a wise ruler, a grounding in God's law (or, for Deists perhaps, something akin to Spinoza's law of 'God or Nature'), the construction of a massive temple to Jehovah and a royal palace, the ruler passionately attached to a single partner, a nation that enjoys cordial relations with other polities

and which becomes wealthy through trade; and, finally, a state in which sound financial management leads to generous support for the arts – music especially – and in which the arts provide for the enrichment of the people. Many of these aims might well strike a particular resonance in today's world.

Already it might seem that *Solomon* is more a succession of idealised states than a dramatic narrative. But Handel finds ample means for giving it a sense of dramatic energy. Act 2 provides a sense of Solomon's wisdom in action by concerning itself with his arbitration between two women (or 'harlots') who both claim to be mother of a young baby. Following the account in 1 Kings 3, Solomon proposes to cut the child in two, thereby revealing the truthful mother. She would rather the other woman took him, in order to preserve his life at any cost. Here, Handel capitalises magnificently on his operatic experience, with a highly vivid dramatic scene. It begins with the two women and Solomon singing in a trio ('Words are weak to paint my fears') that profiles the three different personalities simultaneously. Then we have a further level of detail accruing to each woman in their solo arias. The second woman sings a flighty aria, 'Thy sentence, great king, is prudent and wise', its syncopations seeming to imply that she has no moral grounding. Nothing could be more different than the first woman's response, 'Can I see my infant go'r'd', a musical texture grounded in a sober pulse with noble dotted rhythms and expressive intervals. Solomon could almost have made his judgement just by listening to the music. Going beyond the operatic tradition, a major contribution is made by the chorus, celebrating Solomon's wisdom ('From the East unto the West', and again, closing the act, with 'Swell the full chorus to Solomon's praise'). The high priest Zadok reminds us of how Solomon's greatness is parallel to the tallest of pines standing out from its neighbours ('See the tall palm that lifts the head'), and the first woman responds with another allusion to nature's way in the pastoral aria 'Beneath the vine or fig tree's shade'. This central act, like the others, is framed by large musical numbers, standing rather like the vast monuments of the ancient world. Within this there is an acceleration of narrative drama, which when resolved returns to a more peaceful mode, in which humans and nature seem harmonised anew.



Solomon and the Queen of Sheba by Peter Paul Rubens 1577 – 1640 via wikicommons

The outer acts do not have the bonus of narrative drama, so Handel finds other means to give them energy and direction. He clearly benefited from larger forces than usual, which enabled him to write for double chorus, five-part chorus and single chorus. The orchestra is generously furnished with both horns and trumpets (the brass held in abeyance until Act 2) and the strings allow for a doubled viola line and some detailed differentiation between tutti and smaller forces. The magnificent spatial effects, evident from the very first chorus, must have recalled the coronation anthems that Handel provided for Charles II in 1727, particularly given the prominence given to Zadok as Solomon's chief advisor. The tableau opening Act 1 creates its own world of magnificence, proportioned like the pillars and arches of Solomon's new temple. Then there is the transition to a more intimate, humble, monarch crediting God for his power and fortune ('What though I trace each herb and flower'), and this prepares for the second half of the act, presenting the undiluted love between Solomon and his wife. This complete love scene, liberally alluding to the erotic poetry of the 'Song of Songs' (attributed to Solomon), provides a striking contrast with the pomp of the first scene. The eagerness of the lovers is astonishingly overt, with the queen proclaiming in her very first aria that 'Bless'd be the day when I was led to the nuptial bed', set in gigue-passepied dance rhythms. Nature imagery infuses the lovers' duet, and Solomon's aria refers to his wife as a 'young roe or loving hind'. After they 'haste to the cedar grove' the act concludes with what is often called the 'Nightingale Chorus'. This is perhaps the largest scale of Handel's pastoral movements, with a euphonous five-part chorus and beautiful nightingale impersonations from flutes and violins. There might well be no obvious flow of events in Act 1, but Handel has roundly depicted two contrasting worlds of sound, moving his focus from public to private.

Act 3 is likewise without much narrative content, beyond the fact that the Queen of Sheba visits from afar (heralded by what is now by far the most familiar music from *Solomon*). But Handel has Solomon present to her (and to us) an extensive masque in honour of music, building on the popularity of his earlier tributes to the power of music, *Alexander's Feast*, and *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*. Solomon sets out his agenda in a single recitative 'Sweep, sweep the string to soothe the royal fair and rouse each passion with th' alternate air'. The progress through the passions is clearly Handel's intention too, his affective encyclopaedia opening with a chorus celebrating (and rendering real) the way music spreads far and wide, with sweet flow. Trumpets join for the mood of war ('Now a diff'rent measure try, shake the dome



Painting of Handel around 1749 by John Faber the Younger (1694 – 1756)
via wikicommons

and pierce the sky'), leading to the most spectacular double-choir ricochets in the entire piece. Almost in direct opposition, the chorus moves to abject sorrow with 'Draw the tear from hopeless love', beginning with 'old style' counterpoint and moving to rhetorical recitation where the rests between phrases are almost more important than the chords themselves. Like a conjurer, Solomon proposes to 'restore the mind to peace', and the chorus responds with rising phrases 'Thus rolling surges rise and plough the troubled main'.

After further adulation of Solomon's virtues, the Queen of Sheba sings one of the most musically striking arias (with oboe and flute obligato) that expresses how difficult it would be for her to forget the splendour that she has witnessed in her visit ('Will the sun forget to streak eastern skies with amber ray'). The mood is



The judgement of Solomon by Peter Paul Rubens via wikicommons

intriguing, with an expressive melody and pulsating strings, but also with some virtuoso coloratura passages from the soprano. It is almost as if Handel has designed this music to be similarly unforgettable, resounding in our memory long after the performance we've attended.

There is some ambiguity as to how the oratorio ends. Handel provided a long and monumental chorus 'Praise the Lord with harp and tongue', which now stands in the middle of the closing scene celebrating Solomon's success. The detachability of this chorus in Handel's autograph has suggested that this was the original final chorus. The concluding chorus for the first performance was a much shorter affair, 'The name of the wicked shall quickly be past', which celebrates 'the fame of the just'. It may well be that Handel decided to compose this in order to give the notion of human wisdom the last word (thus associating the oratorio more with a progressive, enlightened perspective). Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that the original conclusion, celebrating God's power, is more in keeping with the overall proportions and trajectory of the oratorio.

Solomon's composition and first performances are intriguing in relation to the role of women. First, Handel's autograph refers to

the women of Act 2 as 'women' rather than the biblical 'harlots'. Secondly, his choices for the main leads were entirely female: the role of Solomon was sung by the popular Italian mezzo-soprano, Caterina Galli, and all three of the virtuous women – i.e. Solomon's Egyptian wife, 1st woman / harlot, Queen of Sheba – were sung by another successful Italian, the soprano Giulia Frasi. Although it's difficult to argue that Handel intended this presentation to bolster the rights and talents of women, that is certainly a sense that can be gained today. Galli was, nonetheless, well known for undertaking trouser roles and swapping of genders had been commonplace in Italian opera for over a century. Using the same soprano for the three female roles elicits no obvious explanation. It certainly gives the three acts a sonic consistency that is remote from opera, but it is likely the actual performative power of Frasi that was the most important thing, perhaps a suggestion that the virtuosity and versatility of a singer is a model for the sorts of varied roles we might all take in social life. Indeed, an inference that can be drawn from the entire oratorio is that learning the skills of performance enhance all our activity and that music enhances our polity, and becomes a model for neighbours near and far. The second chorus exhorts us to resound our maker's name 'till distant nations catch the song'.

We are going to start our own orchestra

Jan Schlapp, a founding player, recalls the OAE's beginning

I find it difficult to untangle the many strands of myth and memory that surround the beginning of the OAE. My personal memory is of my late husband, cellist Timothy Mason, coming home after a day of rehearsals in 1985, fired up with enthusiasm, saying "We are going to start our own orchestra and it is going to be player-led.". Busy as I was with two very young children I was initially less than enthusiastic because it seemed an almost impossible idea – where would the money come from? How would we organise it? Who would be involved?

The seed of the idea had been planted by regular conversations between the bassoonist, Felix Warnock, the violinist Marshall Marcus, and Tim, about how to break free from the status quo of London period orchestras. We had little say in any of these orchestras and we felt a bit under appreciated. But more important was the fact that we couldn't tap into what was going on on the continent. The BBC were broadcasting several of the continental giants of period performance such as Harnancourt, Kjuiken, Bruggen, Leonhardt, Christie and Koopman, but we couldn't access their knowledge and experience. Their way of exploring baroque music was different from our English directors and fascinating to us, because of their intellectual seriousness and their depth of knowledge about

instruments, phrasing, repertoire and style. They had been involved in period instrument performance much longer than us and we wanted to be free to absorb it all. At that time we had no way of inviting them to come to work with us in the UK.

Gradually, in discussion with all interested parties, the idea of a player-led orchestra took shape. Sponsorship was found. Everyone would be paid the same, there would be at least three leaders, and there would be an artistic committee elected by the players who would lead on concerts and repertoire. And out of this "organised chaos" as Marshall put it, came our first London concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in June 1986 with Sigiswald Kjuiken directing a programme moving from Rameau to Haydn. This marked the beginning of OAE's journey. 40 years on that journey continues today, still with the same ethos and the shared excitement of discovery.

Read Jan's full article about how the OAE was founded on our blog at [oae.co.uk/start](https://www.oae.co.uk/start)



In rehearsal with Sir Simon Rattle

A seat with a view

Annette Isserlis (Viola)



I took up the viola very late – I was 16! When I left school I did a two year course at Chiswick Polytechnic, where a very enlightened person in charge of the music course appointed Francis Baines to teach the viol to us. Then, when I went to the Royal College of Music in 1971, it happened that Francis had been appointed head of the Early Music course, and he just assumed that I'd be in his baroque group. So, I started playing baroque viola – almost before modern viola, really.

Back then, we were still very experimental and making some quite weird noises – trying to find the right strings, even trying to find the right pitches, and making the strings and pegs of our instruments behave. Jan Schlapp introduced me to the English Concert, and once I was in that, it was a passport to

being in everything. There was so much recording work going on at that time, because all the labels wanted their own period instrument groups.

But when we launched the OAE, there was very much a sense that it was a players' orchestra. The good players were in demand everywhere, so we had to be flexible. For instance, there were a lot of young mothers in the OAE when it started, so we deliberately didn't go out looking for touring work. But one of the best things about the OAE starting was that it provided a vehicle for continental conductors like Franz Bruggen and Gustav Leonhardt to infuse what they were doing into the British scene.

By then, all the same people were playing in the same British groups and it was actually getting a bit inbred. It was really, really exciting to just be shaken up. And then we got to work with people like Charles Mackerras and Simon Rattle. A lot of us knew Rattle already, and he'd always been up for new sounds and colours. The first chord of the first rehearsal always sounded a bit horrific – he'd look a bit cross-eyed and in agony. But it always got better, very, very quickly!

Annette was talking to Richard Bratby.

Biographies



JOHN BUTT Conductor

John Butt is musical director of Dunedin Consort and a Principal Artist with the OAE. He was Gardiner Professor of Music at the University of Glasgow, 2001 – 24, where he continues as an Honorary Professorial Research Fellow. His career began with his appointment as organ scholar at King's College Cambridge, and this led to various academic and performing posts (at Aberdeen, UC Berkeley and Cambridge). His work, as both musician and scholar, gravitates towards music of the 17th – 18th centuries, but he is also concerned with the implications of the past in our present culture. Author of five monographs centering around Bach, the baroque and the concepts of historical performance practice, his recent work concerns music and modernity, listening cultures, and music and film.

Having made 11 recordings on organ and harpsichord for Harmonia Mundi, he has made 20 recordings for Linn Records. Highlights, directing Dunedin, include the Gramophone award-winning recordings of Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's Requiem, together with recordings of Bach's Passions, Mass, Magnificat, Christmas Oratorio and Brandenburg Concertos and Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers*. A recording of Bach cantatas won a BBC Music Magazine Award in 2021. Further recordings, including Mozart's Mass in C Minor and Handel Cantatas with soprano Nardus Williams, were released 2023 – 24.

With Dunedin and other orchestras he has made multiple appearances at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival. International tours have covered much of Europe, the US, Mexico, Colombia and China. As guest conductor he has worked with many period orchestras, and also symphony orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Stavanger Symphony, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, CBSO, Academy of St Martin's in the Fields, Hallé Orchestra and BBCNOW.

Since winning the W.H.Scheide prize for his first book, he has received the Dent Medal of the RMA together with the RAM / Kohn Foundation's Bach Prize. He has been awarded an OBE, FBA and FRSE, together with the medal of the Royal College of Organists.



HELEN CHARLSTON Mezzo-soprano

Helen Charlston's ability to make each performance completely her own and her depth of connection with audiences has earned her international acclaim as "one of the most exciting voices in the new generation of British singers" (Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone). She was recently a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist (2021 – 23), and was the 2023 Gramophone Award winner for Best Concept Album and also collected the Vocal award at the BBC Music Magazine Awards for her second Delphian album: *Battle Cry*.

This season, Helen makes her debut at Dutch National Opera in the world premiere of Michel van der Aa's *Theory of Flames* in the role of Marianne. On the concert platform she sings Mozart *Requiem* at Casa da Musica under Andreas Spering and also the Czech Philharmonic under Giovanni Antonini, Bach *B minor mass* with De Nederlandse Bachvereniging and Richard Egarr, Bach *St Matthew Passion* with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra under Laurence Cummings, and Dido in *Dido & Aeneas* on tour in Asia and Europe with Les Arts Florissants. In recital she collaborates with the Consone Quartet at the Brighton Early Music Festival and also at Oxford Song, with Sholto Kynoch at the Wimbledon Festival and the National Centre for Early Music amongst other venues, with Roman Rabinovich in Canada, and she performs an ensemble programme at Fundación Juan March in Madrid.

Further appearances on the concert platform include Bach *B minor mass* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at the BBC Proms, Britten's *Phaedra* live in concert with BBC Philharmonic, Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* with the RIAS Kammerchor at the Berlin Philharmonie, and also Bach's *Magnificat* in South Korea, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with WDR Köln.



HUGO HYMAS Tenor

British tenor Hugo Hymas is in much demand for his interpretations of classical, baroque and renaissance repertoire and enjoys collaborations with the foremost practitioners of the genre.

He regularly performs with specialist groups such as Arcangelo, Capella Mediterranea, Le Concert d'Astrée, Collegium Vocale Gent, the Dunedin Consort, English Concert, Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Les Violons du Roy. He is also engaged for baroque and classical repertoire with the Bergen Philharmonic, Sinfonieorchester Basel, Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich, English Chamber Orchestra and Nord Nederlands Orkest.

Hymas counts amongst his musical partners conductors Kristian Bezuidenhout, Ivor Bolton, William Christie, Jonathan Cohen, John Eliot Gardiner, Leonardo García Alarcón, Emanuelle Haïm, Philippe Herrweghe, Václav Luks, Dinis Sousa and Peter Whelan.

His opera engagements include Jove in *Semele* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Eurimaco in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Lucius in the premiere of Georgio Battistelli *Julius Caesar* at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Septimius in *Theodora* and Clotarco in Haydn *Armida* at Potsdam Winteroper and Alessandro in Handel *Porro* for concert performances in Halle, Dortmund and Vienna. He is regularly engaged throughout Europe to sing *Acis* and *Galatea* and returns to Glyndebourne in 2026 for roles in *L'Orfeo*.

He has recorded Handel's sacred oratorio *La Resurrezione* with The English Concert and Harry Bicket and Purcell with Arcangelo under Cohen. Engaging with more recent repertoire he has recorded Stravinsky *Cantata* with The Façade Ensemble under Benedict Collins Rice

Hugo Hymas is a former Britten-Pears Young Artist and Rising Star of the Enlightenment. He grew up in Cambridge where he sang as a chorister in Great St Mary's Church Choir and studied the clarinet after which he joined the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge as a tenor. He holds an honours degree in Music from the University of Durham.



FLORIAN STÖRTZ Bass-baritone

German bass-baritone Florian Störtz announced his arrival on the European concert scene with victories at 2023 International Handel Singing Competition, Helmut Deutsch Song Competition, the Prix de mélodie at the Lili et Nadia Boulanger competition and the Young Artists Platform at the International Song Festival Zeist, Utrecht 2024. He is a Rising Star of the Enlightenment.

Recent engagements include Bach and Charpentier with the Monteverdi Choir under Christophe Rousset; Bach *Weihnachtsoratorium* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Václav Luks and also with the OAE under Masaaki Suzuki; Handel *Esther* at London Handel Festival with Laurence Cummings; Berlioz *L'Enfance du Christ* with the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic under Paul McCreesh; Bach *B Minor Mass* with The English Concert directed by Kristian Bezuidenhout, Bach Cantata with the Constellation Choir and John Eliot Gardiner and a European tour of the *Matthäus-passion* with the OAE under Jonathan Cohen.

Florian has recorded Duruflé's *Requiem* with the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge and Stephen Layton for Hyperion and his début recital album with pianist Aleksandra Myslek for future release on Delphian.

His plans include Bach with Collegium Vocale Gent under Philippe Herrweghe and he gives recitals at the Newbury Festival and Wigmore Hall.

Florian is an alumnus of the Royal Academy of Music and the Britten Pears Young Artist Programme and receives generous support from the City Music Foundation.



NARDUS WILLIAMS Soprano

Praised for her "magnetism" and "inobtrusive intimacy" (*The Arts Desk*), Nardus Williams has "confirmed her place as an outstanding artist" (*Early Music Review*).

In the 2025 / 26 season, Nardus makes her role debut in the title role of Partenope for English National Opera; reprises the role of Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* for Norwegian National Opera; and appears as Asteria in *Tamerlano* for the London Handel Festival.

In concert, Nardus performs *Messiah* with the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, and Dunedin Consort; and joins the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland for Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*. Nardus also returns to ENO for *Mozart's Women*, a concert celebrating the women in Mozart's life.

Building on the success of her recitals at the BBC Proms and Snape Maltings, Nardus returns to Wigmore Hall on International Women's Day with a new programme in collaboration with Elizabeth Kenny and Dame Mary Beard. She also gives further recitals with Elizabeth Kenny at Leeds Song, Brighton Early Music Festival, Banbury Early Music Festival, and again at the Wigmore Hall.

Recent operatic highlights include Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) for Opéra de Rouen Normandie; Poppea (*The Comet / Poppea*); Belinda (*Dido's Ghost*); Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) for ENO and Opera Australia; and Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*) for Glyndebourne, Opera Holland Park, and ENO.

Nardus has appeared in concert at the BBC Proms, Grafenegg Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, and with orchestras including the London Philharmonic, Toronto Symphony, and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

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LEADERS

Huw Daniel

Kati Debretzeni

Margaret Faultless

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The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward Gallery, National Poetry Library and Arts Council Collection. We're one of London's favourite meeting spots, with lots of free events and places to relax, eat and shop next to the Thames.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you need any information or help, please ask a member of staff. You can also write to us at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX, or email hello@southbankcentre.co.uk

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Why we need to put creativity back at the heart of education...

There is overwhelming public support for arts in schools. We know – we’ve been doing the research over the summer. Over 80% of UK adults believe all children should have routine access to high-quality creative activities in school. 64% agree cutting arts in schools harms children’s confidence and communication, whilst nearly 70% of Gen Z and Millennials (people born after 1982) say that access to arts in school built their confidence and resilience.

Despite a modest increase in students studying the performing arts the long-term trend remains in decline; since 2010, the proportion of GCSE entries in arts subjects (such as music, dance and drama) has almost halved.

In our view, one of the best solutions is to facilitate more initiatives that follow the blueprint of our radical residency at Acland Burghley School with the support of the UK Government, councils, charities and foundations.

Crispin Woodhead, our CEO, notes that:

“It’s encouraging to see more young people taking up music and performing arts in GCSEs this year – especially as we know creativity is one of the top skills employers are looking for. But we can’t afford to see this as job done.

“This moderate improvement, together with our new research, shows that the public clearly values the arts just as much as core academic subjects. Working with and at Acland Burghley, we see every day how embedding the arts improves confidence, resilience and opportunity for young people – and those benefits ripple out into the whole community.

“Our story is not just about one school or one orchestra: it’s about how cultural groups can rethink their role in society and bring the arts to the wider community.”



The Magic Flute and the Bird That Would Be Free, Southbank Centre, June 2025



Breaking Bach, Edinburgh International Festival, August 2025

...(and how to do it)

Our recent collaboration, *Breaking Bach*, which premiered to a sold-out audience at the Edinburgh International Festival in August, is compelling proof of this model in action. *Breaking Bach* was not an extracurricular showcase but a professional commission that gave a group of students from Acland Burghley the opportunity to create alongside OAE musicians, professional dancers, and a leading international artist in choreographer Kim Brandstrup. It shows how given the chance, our young people really are five star performers!

Other projects such as the recent *The Magic Flute* and *the Bird That Would Be Free* (our Southbank Centre season finale in June), our 'touring'

community opera *The Fairy Queen: Three Wishes*, Dreamchasing Young Producers and Musical Connections programmes, all give students at Acland Burghley and schools around England the chance to create, perform and deliver as part of their day-to-day education.

Embedding the arts in everyday school life does more than inspire – it connects communities and creates real-world opportunities. Crucially, it raises aspirations at all levels of experience.

Our research makes clear that the public wants change. We are calling for reform and for a bold rethink of how culture and society can work together.



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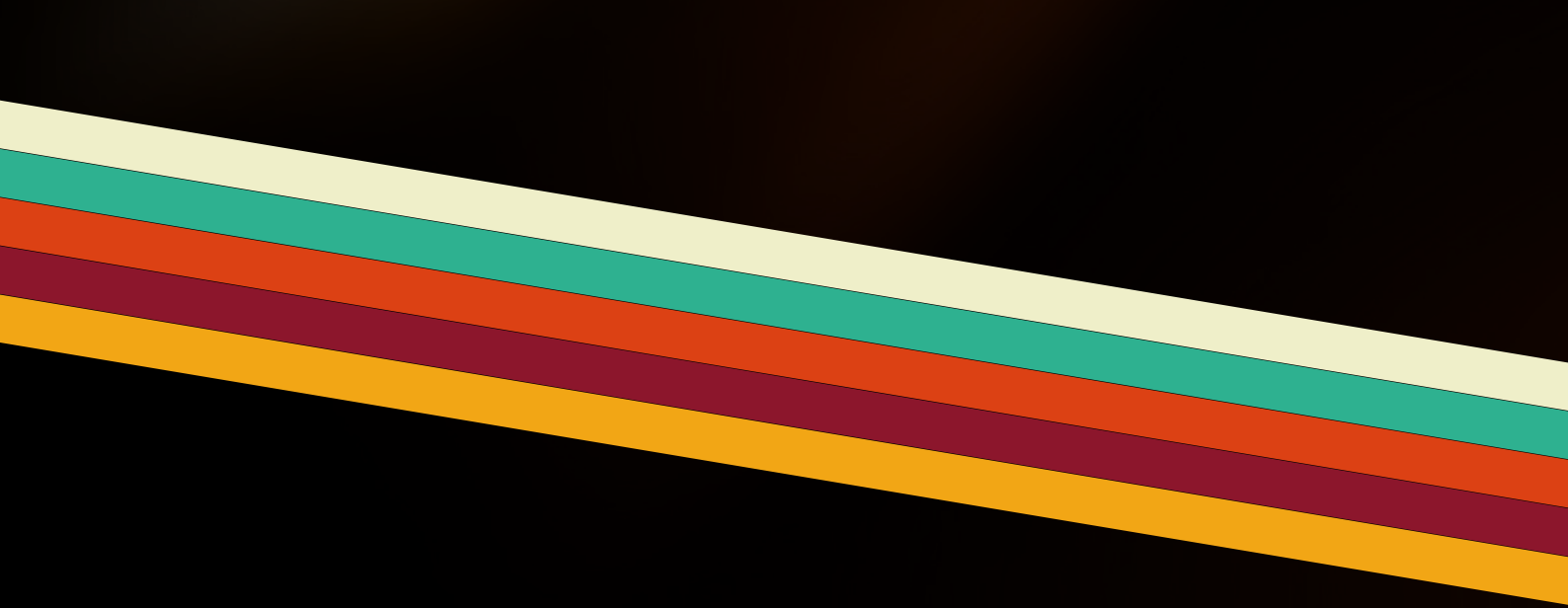
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