

WESTMINSTER PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



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Bantock: Russian Scenes
Gipps: Oboe Concerto
Boulanger: D'un Matin de Printemps
Elgar: Symphony No. 1

Jonathan Butcher: Conductor
Ewan Millar: Oboe
Christian Halstead: Leader

7:30 pm – Saturday 9th May 2026
St Giles Cripplegate

Ewan Millar is kindly supported by Making Music's Philip & Dorothy Green Young Artists scheme

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The Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra is affiliated to Making Music, which represents and supports amateur performing and promoting societies throughout the UK. We are always interested in welcoming new players.
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Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra

www.wpo.org.uk

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Chair: Adrian Wheeler

Granville Bantock (1868 – 1946)

Russian Scenes (1899)

At the Fair

Mazurka

Polka

Valse

Cossack Dance

Granville Bantock was one of the leading figures in English music in the early Twentieth Century, a man of prodigious energy whose enthusiasms encompassed a phenomenal range of activity in a multitude of fields, during which he composed a huge range of music, often in response to his many enthusiasms, in a variety of fields.

Bantock's father was an eminent Scottish gynaecologist, and Scottish folk-lore would become a later interest from which much music flowed. As a child Granville showed little interest in music, and in his teens was intended by his father for a career in the Indian Civil Service, which maybe gave rise to another later enthusiasm, although illness, real or otherwise kept him from the required examinations. Bantock senior then decided on a career in Chemical Engineering for his son, who was sent to the London City and Guilds Institute in South Kensington. Music had taken hold in a great rush by this point and Bantock spent hours in the library studying scores. Eventually his father gave in and supported his son at the Royal Academy of Music, where in addition to the usual studies in harmony and counterpoint he began composing. An early tone poem *Satan in Hell* was played a number of times.

Having graduated, and found that there was nowhere near sufficient work for a fledgling composer, Bantock found a post as a conductor of a light musical theatre touring company, which led to another post with a larger company, and then to a world tour with the Gaiety Company lasting fifteen months running to the UK in December 1895. The passage through the Suez Canal gave Bantock the chance to absorb more Eastern sounds and sights.

Bantock promoted an orchestral concert at Queen's Hall on 15th December 1896, including music by five of his contemporaries at the RAM: William Wallace, Arthur Hinton, Stanley Hawley, Reginald Steggall and Erskine Allon of whom only William Wallace and Arthur Hinton are remembered at all today. The concert included three of Bantock's *Overtures: Eugene Aram, Songs of Arabia* and the first performance of *The Funeral* from *The Curse of Kehama*. Bantock prefaced the programme with a strongly worded manifesto on the future of English music. Although he had a small audience, significant critical coverage had a major impetus in establishing his name.

Bantock was appointed Musical Director of the Tower Orchestra, New Brighton, then a fashionable resort across the Mersey from Liverpool. Like Dan Godfrey at Bournemouth, Bantock soon expanded his modest resort orchestra and its repertoire, and made New Brighton a noted centre for new music and British music in particular.

His reputation at New Brighton, coupled with Elgar's recommendation – the two families were friendly over many years – led to his appointment as Principal of the new Midland Institute School of Music in Birmingham in 1900. Bantock threw himself into creating a vibrant musical centre in the Midlands. The Annual Report of 1900

were much impressed: “*He has entered upon his work with enthusiasm ... and is transforming ... a number of unconnected classes into an organised School*”. In 1907, Bantock succeeded Elgar as Peyton Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham, going on to hold the appointment for twenty-seven years, and Birmingham remained the centre of his impressive academic work. He played a major role in the formation of the City of Birmingham Orchestra, the immediate precursor of the CBSO; the first work played by the CBO in September 1920 was Bantock’s Overture: *Saul*.

The *Russian Scenes* were written in 1899, pictures of Russia by an Englishman with a highly orientalist imagination. Bantock’s son Angus noted that his father kept a well-thumbed copy of Rimsky-Korsakov’s treatise on orchestration and the skill of this small piece reflects the composer’s devotion, and the five movements combine this with a strong flavour of Tchaikovsky at his most extravert, ending with a lively *Cossack Dance*.

Ruth Gipps (1921 – 1999)

Oboe Concerto in D minor Op. 20 (1941)

Allegro Moderato

Andante

Allegro Vivace

Ruth Gipps was one of the most talented all-round British musicians of the twentieth century and if she had not faced very considerable prejudice, perhaps exacerbated by her robust personality, would have been far better known in and beyond her lifetime. As it is, her reputation had already begun to fade by the time of her death and her music is only now being rediscovered and appreciated as highly individual and expressive. Among her many talents, Gipps was a composer, oboist, pianist, conductor, and educator. In one concert in March 1945, she was piano soloist in Glazunov’s Piano Concerto No. 1 with the City of Birmingham Orchestra, returning after the interval to play cor anglais in her own Symphony No. 1 on under the baton of George Weldon. Ruth Gipps founded both the London Repertoire Orchestra and the Chanticleer Orchestra and served as conductor and music director for the City of Birmingham Choir.

Both of Gipps’ parents were musicians; although he had gone against his family’s wishes by studying in Germany, her father Bryan kept his violin playing as an amateur pursuit to enable his wife Hélène to maintain her career as a pianist and teacher. Ruth had two siblings, Ernest and Laura, both of whom were musicians, but Ruth, who was universally known as “Wid”, clearly inherited most of the talent and began winning performance competitions in which she was considerably younger than the rest of the field. She performed her first composition at the age of 8 in one of the many music festivals she entered, after which the work was bought by a publishing house. A concert poster from 1931 shows her holding a cat almost as large as herself – early signs of a lifelong enthusiasm for cats and eye-catching publicity images.

A competition-winning performance of Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto, at the 1936 Hastings Festival, set her on her career in earnest and in 1937 (aged 15) she entered

the Royal College of Music, studying oboe with Leon Goossens, piano with Arthur Alexander and composition with Gordon Jacob, and later with Ralph Vaughan Williams. Several of her works were first performed there. During further studies at Durham University Gipps met her future husband, clarinettist Robert Baker.

Gipps developed as an accomplished all-round musician, as a soloist on both oboe and piano as well as a prolific composer, until a shoulder injury in 1954 cut short her performance career; she then decided to focus her energies on conducting and composition. Well before this, Sir Henry Wood conducted her tone poem *Knight in Armour* at the Last Night of the Proms in 1942.

Finding herself faced with considerable prejudice as a woman conductor, Gipps founded the London Repertoire Orchestra in 1955 as an opportunity for young professional musicians to become exposed to a wide range of music (some current and former members of the WPO played under Ruth Gipps in the LRO). In 1957, she conducted the Pro Arte Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, in her own cantata *The Cat* (which in 1948 had secured her doctorate), and to the great astonishment of her reviewers, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. "A woman is no more expected to conduct it" wrote one, "than build a Great Boulder Dam." – ouch!

Gipps later founded the Chanticleer Orchestra in 1961, a professional ensemble which included a work by a living composer in each of its programs, often a premiere performance. Among these was the first London performance in September 1972 of the Cello Concerto by Sir Arthur Bliss in which the cellist Julian Lloyd Webber made his professional debut at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Although Gipps disliked teaching, she accepted faculty posts at Trinity College London (1959 to 1966), the Royal College of Music (1967 to 1977), and then Kingston Polytechnic at Gypsy Hill.

In 1982 Gipps and her husband retired to Tickerage Castle in East Sussex, writing to Malcom Arnold she described the new home:

"The old part of the house is huge oak beams and an inglenook and twisty stairs and pointed ceilings, 1600-ish ... my study is only the boiler room but looks out onto rolling fields. It's so quiet here and there are no neighbours to play Radio 2 or slam car doors. If it's as beautiful as this in a wet December it will be heaven in the Spring ... and there is peace to write some music even if nobody wants my sort of stuff now."

The last sentence aptly summarised the frustration Gipps felt and had felt for a long time about the neglect from the musical establishment. Gipps' music is unashamedly Romantic and tonal. She asserted that her music was "*obviously and incurably English*", a quality that to her was extremely important, and meant a pastoral style, drawing on English folk tunes and historical English composers such as Byrd, and taking inspiration from the English countryside. By the 1940s many composers were embracing modernism, and atonality was largely considered to be a natural progression for contemporary music. Gipps was not the only composer side-lined by this, but her vociferous response wasn't one to bring round many potential supporters. Gipps declaring that she viewed "*all so-called 12 tone music, so-called serial music, so-called electronic music and so-called avant-garde music as utter rubbish and indeed a deliberate conning of the public*".

Even in 1937 when she arrived at the Royal College of Music, the Director Sir Hugh Allen declared that she "*will go far because she is obstinate. She is damned obstinate!*" Allen's assessment proved correct.

Ruth Gipps composed a considerable body of music in almost all forms, frequently for musicians she knew and liked; her Horn Concerto was for her son Lance Baker, and her Violin Concerto for her brother Ernest. The woodwind writing in many of her works reflects her family's multiple talents, while a substantial Piano Concerto (1948) reflects her own early ambitions and achievement. Many orchestral works have evocative titles including *Flax and Charlock* (1941), *Cringlemire Garden* (1952) and *Ambarvalia* (1988). Ruth Gipps wrote a great deal of chamber music in many combinations, notably Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Piano (1940), Quintet for Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Viola and Cello (1941), Violin Sonata (1954), Clarinet Sonata (1955), Lyric Fantasy for Viola and Piano (1955), one String Quartet (1956), culminating in a Sonata for Double-Bass and Piano (1986).

As an oboist herself it might have been obvious that Ruth Gipps would write a concerto for her instrument, although in fact the concerto was written for her friend and fellow oboist Marion Brough. Brough gave the work's the world premiere in June 1942 with the Modern Symphony Orchestra, founded by conductor Arthur Dennington in 1931 to perform new and unfamiliar works.

Gipps wrote for a classical ensemble of pairs of flutes, clarinets, bassoons and horns plus a single trumpet, discrete percussion, timpani and strings, and Gipps' deep understanding of her own instrument is effortlessly displayed in the solo writing. The urgent rhythmic insistence of the opening *Allegro moderato* might be the outcome of wartime composition and the more lyrical music when the soloist enters equally a look back to a soft age, or perhaps a look forward in hope. The composer contrasts the pungent timbre of the oboe with gentle string textures, and includes short solos for the woodwinds, trumpet, timpani and the orchestral leader. This first movement balances the lively Finale, and these frame a meltingly sensitive slow movement opened by the solo oboe which shares along duet with solo clarinet, maybe Gipps in conversation with her husband?

The closing movement is deft and nimble and the soloist is given an expressive cadenza, followed by reprise of the movement's opening theme.

Lili Boulanger (1893 – 1918)

D'un Matin du Printemps

Of all the women composers of earlier generations now being rediscovered, Lili Boulanger is perhaps the most intriguing. Whereas say Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann wrote graceful, sometimes very beautiful, music, they composed within the parameters of their time. Lili Boulanger's music, written in one of the most explosively imaginative periods of musical history, is none the less distinctive in a way which promised a completely unique voice. That voice was cut short in 1918, having created a brief handful of works.

Lili Boulanger was destined for a career in music from the outset. Her elder (by five years) sister Nadia, who lived until 1979, was also a composer and became one of the great teachers of the twentieth century. Their father Ernest Boulanger (1815 – 1900) was a professor at the Paris Conservatoire and had won the celebrated Prix de Rome

in 1835. Gabriel Fauré was the first to notice that Lili had perfect pitch (when she was just two years old); Lili subsequently sight-read many of Fauré's songs for the composer as he completed them. At the same age Lili suffered a bout of bronchial pneumonia which seriously weakened her health and thereby shaped the course of her life.

When Nadia entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1898, Lili accompanied her sister to classes as often as she was able to, becoming a student herself four years later, studying violin, cello, piano, harp and singing as well as composition. Although she had been composing from an early age, the earliest works which Lili Boulanger allowed to survive were from 1911: *Nocturne* for Violin & Piano, *Renouveau* (vocal quartet and piano) and *Les Sirènes* (mezzo-soprano, chorus and piano). After *Les Sirènes* was premiered at one of her mother's musical gatherings. Auguste Mangeot, of Le Monde Musicale, reported that everyone liked the piece so well it had to be repeated.

Nadia Boulanger made several attempts to win the Prix de Rome and in 1908 was awarded second prize, but the death of Ernest Boulanger in 1900 had already caused her to restrict her composition and focus on teaching as a less uncertain career, feeling that she had no future as a composer. She later told Fauré, *"if there is one thing of which I am certain, it is that I wrote useless music."* He disagreed.

Ernest's death also had the impetus of focussing Lili on her creative work, and Lili focussed her energy on her work in harmony, counterpoint and composition. In his biography of Lili Boulanger, Léonie Rosenstiel wrote that this *"provided Lili with the means to decide her own future as much as possible, and to show her family, her friends, and, above all, herself, that she was capable of being considered a contributing member of the artistic and intellectual community in which she lived ... It gave Lili the chance to develop a positive self-image ... Lili's physical dependence on others, especially her immediate family, was often total, but she enjoyed complete intellectual and artistic autonomy."*

Lili first submitted an entry for the Prix de Rome in 1912, but was taken ill during rehearsals and obliged to withdraw. The following year, the set text was *Faust et Héléne*, by Eugene Adenis based on Goethe's Faust. Lili Boulanger was awarded the Prix de Rome, the first woman to do so, and on the strength of the prize was given a contract with the most important music publishers at the time, Ricordi, providing a regular income, a place to publish her works and a platform for publicity.

The normal three years of residence at the Villa Medici in Rome which were the reward, and condition, of the Prix de Rome, were truncated by the outbreak of war and when Lili Boulanger was suffering from increasing ill-health, she made it her duty to support Nadia in organising morale-boosting letters and parcels to Conservatoire students on military service. Lili wrote in a letter to her friend Miki Piré while she was bedridden with bronchitis, *"I feel discouraged ... not because of the suffering, not because of boredom, but because I understand that I would never be able to have in me the feeling that I have done what I would like to do, but what I have to do, since I cannot follow whatever it is with being interrupted for a long time so that my efforts cannot be sustained!"*

Despite everything she continued to compose, and much of her music is shaped by an awareness of having little time remaining. The longing for life is most apparent in the

striking harmonic language of the final (of three) of her Psalm settings – Psalm 130 *Du fond de l'abîme* (Out of the depths), dedicated to the memory of her father.

The final two works which Lili Boulanger was able to complete unaided were *D'un soir triste* and *D'un matin de printemps*, originally written in 1917 for violin and piano; the orchestral version dates from January 1918. *D'un matin de printemps* is almost alone among her works being un-tinged by awareness of fragility, although Harry Halbreich wrote “*D'un matin de printemps is a Scherzo with airy and transparent orchestration, but there arises in the middle a streak of vehemence which reveals the pain underlying this precarious serenity.*”

After this, Lili had strength only to dictate her final work *Pie Jesu*, to her Sister and died on 15th March 1918

Interval of Twenty Minutes

Please support the bar in the interval. All profit goes to the WPO.

Members of the orchestra's Friends scheme enjoy a free drink.

Thank you.

Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934)

Symphony No. 1 in A flat Op. 66

Andante nobilmente e semplice - Allegro

Allegro molto -

Adagio

Lento Allegro

Elgar's First Symphony appeared at the very peak of his popularity with the public. The first performances of the symphony in 1908 and the *Violin Concerto* in 1910 were the greatest triumphs of Elgar's experience. Yet when the symphony was premiered Elgar was already 51 and had served a long apprenticeship, much of it in regional obscurity. For the highly-strung composer, success had come too late and seemed too ephemeral; the early years of drudgery and disparagement from academic musicians had left him wary, defensive and prone to melancholy.

In June 1907 Elgar was 50, an anniversary he regarded ambivalently, writing to A. J. Jaeger (Nimrod) “*I shall be fifty next week, so they tell me, but I don't know it. I have my pipe and the bicycle and a heavenly county to ride in - so an end. I take no interest whatever in music now and just “edit” a few boyish MSS - music is off...*” The boyish manuscripts were sketches from Elgar's teens and he turned them into the *Wand of Youth Suites*. Something about this activity seemed to recharge Elgar's creative spirit and on 27th June his wife Alice noted in her diary “*E. playing great beautiful tune*”. Yet after the *Wand of Youth* was complete in September, Elgar seemed to dry up again.

The Elgars decided to spend the winter of 1907 – 08 in Rome, it being cheaper to rent a villa than remain in England. Rome evidently revived Elgar's spirits, as he wrote to

Frank Schuster "... I love the pinnocchi and the food and the wine ... Yet I am trying to write music, but the bitterness is that it pays not at all ...". During December Elgar sketched the first movement of a symphony, using the "great beautiful tune". He then came down with 'flu and couldn't return to Hereford until May.

After this something must have clicked in Elgar's mind and he began to work at a furious pace, his letters giving hints of his progress. To Jaeger, 13th June, "I can't answer your letter at this moment, I can't say I have anything more important to do, but it must be done now. Oh! such a tune..." (two days later Alice wrote to Jaeger "E. sends his love and wants to say to you sym. is A1, it is gorgeous and steeped in beauty"). Elgar writing to Walford Davies on 15th July "...I am trying to work and covering sheets of paper to no good end ...", four days later "Do come over: I am writing heavenly music (!) and it will do you good to hear it."

The *Adagio* was completed on 23rd August, seeking some distraction Elgar then turned aside and lost himself briefly in chemistry; one of his concoctions exploded and demolished a water-butt, but the music called with an irresistible voice. On 25th September the Symphony was complete, dedicated as promised to "Hans Richter, Mus. Doc. True artist & true friend". Richter had premiered the *Enigma* Variations in 1899.

The premiere was given by the Hallé orchestra on 3rd December 1908 in Manchester under Richter. Samuel Longford observed in the Manchester Guardian. "...that the work is the noblest ever penned for instruments by an English composer, we are quite certain", while the Daily Telegraph reported "After the extremely beautiful & poignantly expressive slow movement, the composer was called onto the platform several times to take a bow by a crowd that was almost beside itself with enthusiasm. Again this scene was repeated at the close and from none was the applause more hearty than from the orchestral players themselves".

Four days later Richter gave the London premiere with the LSO. At the first rehearsal he greeted the players with the words "Gentlemen, let us now rehearse the greatest symphony of modern times, & not only in this country" and of the *Adagio* he observed "This is a real *Adagio*, such as Beethoven would have written". Jaeger, who had been too ill to travel to Manchester, attended and described the event. "I never in all my experience saw the like. The Hall was packed; any amount of musicians ... the atmosphere was electric. After the first movement E.E. was called out; again several times after the third and then came the great moment. After that superb Coda (Finale) the audience seemed to rise to E. when he appeared. I never heard such frantic applause after any novelty nor such shouting. Five times he had to appear before they were pacified. People stood up & even on their seats to get a view."

The symphony opens with Elgar's "great beautiful tune" moving slowly and gently through clarinets, flutes and violas over a tread of basses and cellos. This is marked *nobilmente*, Elgar's most characteristic direction, which meant pure, noble and uplifting, and not at all pompous. After the first statement, this theme, which will underpin the whole symphony, is taken up by the full orchestra. The intrusion of the *Allegro* is an abrupt shock; the key switches to D minor, the most distant key possible from A flat major and the mood is restless and volatile. The music ebbs and flows, to be crowned ultimately by horns, marked *tutta forza*, before fading away leaving the *nobilmente* theme singing gently on those same horns, now muted. After the climax, the *nobilmente* returns, heard on the back desks of violins, reflecting Elgar's sympathy

(as a player himself) for other players. The movement fades in a magical haze, harps, solo clarinet and muted horns.

Scampering strings, short scurrying woodwind phrases and jabbing trumpets open the second movement - the second subject is an urgent march. By contrast the central trio section is a gentle reminiscence on strings and woodwind, something light and airy dancing in the breeze. This fragile mood is overwhelmed by the return of the march, more sinister and heavily scored. The trio manages a last brief entrance as the movement gradually winds down, losing all tension, until the violins' and violas' long held F# turns into the opening note of the slow movement.

The beautiful *Adagio* melody is note for note the same as the opening of the second movement, but transformed into a theme of unlimited tenderness and peace. This mood of tranquillity is continued by a second theme and Elgar encapsulates and intensifies all that has gone before in a rapt third theme marked *espressivo e sostenuto*. In a letter to Elgar, Jaeger said of this, "... At 104, we are close to heaven". This magical line carries the movement to its hushed close.

So intense is this precious mood of tranquillity that Elgar cannot bear to break it and the finale opens with a march whose soft short notes steal in over a hushed accompaniment. Only when this is established does Elgar unleash the orchestra. The *Adagio* has not banished all anxiety; this movement is as restless as the *Allegro* of the first. In Elgar's kaleidoscopic scoring, the horns are frequently prominent, while woodwinds dart in and out to add flecks of colour. The music gradually propels itself towards a great resolution, and at the summit, the *nobilmente* theme, the "great beautiful tune", reappears binding the symphony together.

Programme Notes by Dominic Nudd

Funding the WPO

In the present climate, funding for any arts organisation becomes increasingly difficult. The WPO is keen to maintain its adventurous approach and to provide players and audiences an opportunity to perform and hear music not often programmed elsewhere.

This adventurousness needs support however: ticket sales cover barely a quarter of the cost of putting on a concert; we need to cover the funding gap and this is where our Friends can help.

The Friends of the Westminster Philharmonic gives our supporters the opportunity to contribute a little more to the continuing support and development of the orchestra and allows us to maintain our enterprising programmes, matching rare, unusual and less-frequently played works with familiar pieces from the repertoire.

Current Friends of the WPO include:-

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If you are interested in supporting us further, or for any form of corporate support, please contact our Friends Administrator: friends@wpo.org.uk. Thank you.

Ewan Millar is one of the most prominent young oboists in the UK. In 2020 Ewan won the woodwind final of BBC Young Musician, advancing to the Grand Final, and giving an “exemplary, richly shaded account” (*The Guardian*), of Navarro’s “Legacy” concerto with the BBC Philharmonic. In 2025 he won the coveted Gold Medal at the Royal Over-Seas League competition at Wigmore Hall. He is supported by both the Tillett Debut Scheme and Countess of Munster Recital Scheme, helping him secure recital opportunities around the UK; he has performed at the Windsor, Cheltenham, and Lake District Summer Music Festivals amongst others. He has played as a soloist in Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall, King’s Place, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and The Salle Cortot, and has given masterclasses in France and The Netherlands. Ewan’s long-time collaborative pianist is the exciting young soloist Tomos Boyles. In their duo recitals they pride themselves on creative programming, performing niche repertoire and creating novel arrangements. Recently Ewan performed the world premiere of a half-hour work, “Eau de Cologne”, for oboe and piano by distinguished composer and Oxford professor Martyn Harry.



As a freelancer, he has performed as principal oboe with the LPO, RPO, CBSO, SCO, BSO, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Aurora Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Ulster Orchestra, and Birmingham Royal Ballet. In 2024 Ewan joined the award-winning wind quintet Lumas Winds, spending a year performing across the country with them.

Ewan gained first class degrees from St. Hilda’s College, Oxford, and his subsequent postgraduate at RAM, where he was awarded the Bicentennial Prize and Janet Craxton Memorial Prize, as well as winning the departmental Oboe Prize. He studied primarily with Melanie Ragge, while also receiving lessons from Christopher Cowie, Tom Blomfield, and Patrick Flanagan for cor anglais. Growing up in Reading he was taught by Nicky Fairbairn.

Beyond oboe he is also a jazz pianist, and has gigged professionally in bars and restaurants around Oxford and London.

Ewan is a Howarth Artist, and plays on a Howarth XM oboe, which he was kindly aided in buying by the Gerald Finzi Trust.

Ewan Millar is kindly supported by Making Music’s Philip & Dorothy Green Young Artists scheme. Making Music is the UK’s leading organisation for leisure-time music, with over 3,500 music groups in membership. Since its creation in 1961 its Philip and Dorothy Green Young Artists scheme (PDGYA) has helped to launch the careers of dozens of young musicians, including those of Steven Isserlis, Elizabeth Watts and Craig Ogden. It is made possible by the Philip and Dorothy Green Music Trust, which promotes young artists and composers. www.makingmusic.org.uk/pdgya

Jonathan Butcher has appeared at all the major London concert venues, including the Royal Albert Hall, Barbican, South Bank and St. John's Smith Square and has conducted orchestras including the London Mozart Players, Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, English Symphony Orchestra, New London Orchestra, Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Bach Orchestra, working with international soloists including Dame Moira Lympny, Steven Isserlis, Marisa Robles, Julian Lloyd Webber and Peter Katin.

Abroad he has worked with the Promenade Orchestra of Radio Hilversum, Holland, the National Orchestra of Malta and the Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz. He has conducted two Hoffnung Concerts in Munich, as well as six New Year Concerts in and around Ludvigshaven, Germany, where he has also conducted a concert of film music with the renowned jazz singer Jocelyn B. Smith.

Equally at home with the symphonic, operatic, choral and music theatre repertoire, Jonathan has conducted and presented the Family Concerts at Polesden Lacey since their inception and regularly conducts their open-air Promenade Concerts. He was for many years Conductor and Musical Director of both the National Symphony and National Chamber Orchestras of the IAPS – the former giving their concerts in the celebrated Snape Maltings in Suffolk.

Jonathan is Musical Director of the Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra and the Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra. He has been Artistic Director of Surrey Opera for some thirty-five years, is co-founder and Artistic Director of The North Downs Music Group, and directs two choirs at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Jonathan is an established Director in his own right, a role he has fulfilled numerous times for Surrey Opera.

The journalist and music critic Simon Heffer recently described the **Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra** as “a first-class amateur orchestra” and responding to our performance of George Lloyd’s fourth symphony and Korngold’s violin concerto, praised the WPO for “a superb orchestral concert”, highlighting that orchestras such as the WPO can be, and frequently are, adventurous in repertoire. In the more than fifty years since we were founded the WPO has built an impressive reputation as one of London’s leading community orchestras, bringing together players of the highest standard from a wide geographical area for top quality music-making.

The WPO’s bold repertoire has pushed the boundaries in all directions. In May 1998 we celebrated our Silver Anniversary with Bartók’s *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle*, with soloists Sue Bickley and Peter Sidhom, for which we also commissioned Howard Jones’ *Thameside Variations*, and for our Thirtieth Anniversary in November 2002 we performed Leonard Bernstein’s extravagant *SongFest*, for six soloists and large orchestra. Our fiftieth anniversary season 2022-2023 included Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, the London premiere of Philip White’s Cello Concerto and, astonishingly, only the third performance (the second in London) of the 5th Symphony by Ruth Gipps, neglected since 1983.

The WPO has maintained a strong thread of promoting less well known British music; we’ve played Granville Bantock’s *Fifine at the Fair*, Arthur Bliss’s *Checkmate* and *Things to Come*, George Lloyd’s Cello Concerto, Bax’s Sixth Symphony, both of Gerald Finzi’s concertos (for Clarinet and Cello), the London premiere of David Hackbridge Johnson’s acclaimed Ninth Symphony and at the instigation of our conductor Jonathan Butcher, much music of Samuel Coleridge Taylor. Our current season (2025-2026) includes Edward Gregson’s Tuba Concerto and Ruth Gipps’ Oboe Concerto.

We don’t neglect the central repertoire and have covered Shostakovich’s Symphonies nos. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, Tippett’s *Ritual Dances*, all three of Elgar’s Symphonies, Mahler’s Symphonies nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 and Vaughan Williams’ *Job – a masque for dancing*.

With the Islington Choral Society we presented a rare performance of Elgar’s *The Kingdom*, and with the Combined Hertfordshire Choirs, we have appeared four times at the Royal Albert Hall in aid of the British Council for the Prevention of Blindness, performing Britten’s *War Requiem* in 1994, Mahler’s *Symphony of a Thousand* in 1999, the Verdi *Requiem* in 2003, and Berlioz’ *Grande Messe des Morts* in 2007.

Looking to the future we have plans for *The Miraculous Mandarin* and *The Alpine Symphony*, but not on the same evening!

The Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra 2026-27 Season

Saturday 17th October 2026, 7.30 pm, St. John's Waterloo

Edward Elgar	Overture " <i>Cockaigne</i> "
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Piano Concerto No. 21
Béla Bartók	The Miraculous Mandarin

Saturday 12th December 2026, 7.30 pm, St. John's Waterloo

Britten	Five Courtly Dances from " <i>Gloriana</i> "
R. Strauss	Alpine Symphony

Saturday 27th February 2027, 7.30 pm, St. John's Waterloo

Korngold	Suite " <i>The Sea Hawk</i> "
Dvořák	Violin Concerto
Rimsky-Korsakov	Scheherazade

Saturday 17th April 2027, 7.30 pm, St. Mildred's, Addiscombe, Croydon ***New Organ Celebration Concert***

Handel/Elgar	Overture in D minor
Parry	Blest Pair of Sirens
Hackbridge Johnson	Organ Concerto (World premiere)
Saint-Saëns	Symphony No. 3 (" <i>Organ</i> ")

Saturday 22nd May 2027, 7.30 pm, St. John's Waterloo

Glinka	Overture " <i>Ruslan & Ludmilla</i> "
Saint-Saëns	Cello Concerto
Shostakovich	Symphony No.11

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The Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra

Violin 1

Christian Halstead (leader)
Orla Ralston
Claire King
Jonathan Smith
Tony Burrage
Janet Davies
Jess Prew
Michael Malone
Li-Hsin Chang
David Hackbridge Johnson
Orla Ralston
Claire King

Violin 2

Siobhan Gee *
Deborah Elliott
Anna Saprykina
Grace Chen
Teresa Oscar
Amanda Frost
Kate Bailey
Maggie Johnson
Tim Cattermole

Viola

Janet Davies *
Fran Andrews
Dug Warn
Belinda Kembery
Alex Hewett
Louis Clarkson
James Taylor
Peter Rees
Christopher Burr

Cello

Fran Freer *
Eleanor Davidson
Jemma Clamp
Francesca Carver
Jill Mintz
Shannon Do
Gabbie Tewson
Daniel Kellett
Fran Freer
Eleanor Davidson

Double Bass

Arthur Stouf #
Dominic Nudd
Karter Williams
Alex Shaper

Flute

Kieran Hughes *
Geraldine Marshall
Meg Storer

Piccolo

Meg Storer

Oboe

Tony Freer *
Jim Simpson

Cor Anglais

Anna Westrop *

Clarinet

Alison Downie *
Hannah Stephens

Bass Clarinet

Sue Moss

Eb Clarinet

Gary Clarke

Bassoon

Stephen Greengrass *
Izzy Monnickendam

Contra-bassoon

Fiona Butterworth

Horn

Adrian Wheeler *
Derek Holland
Phil Maguire
Dwight Pile-Gray
Simon Ashdown

Trumpet

Kieran Booker #
Chris Marquand
Andy Bickerdyke

Trombone

Mark Horton #
Steve Freeman

Bass Trombone

Wilfred Driscoll

Bass Tuba

Martin Oxenham

Harp

Heather Brooks
Christopher Clarke

Celeste

Derek Holland

Timpani

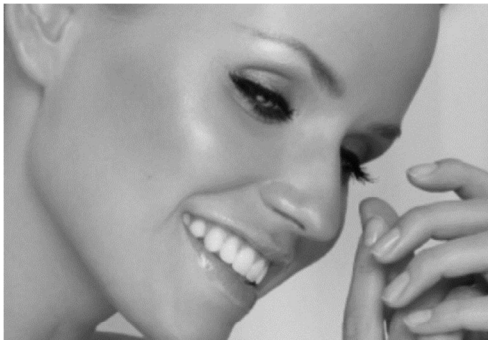
Richard Souper *

Percussion

Dan Johnstone
Craig Lutton
Tobias Engelbrektsson

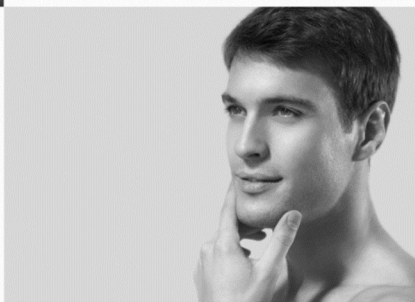
* Section Principal

Guest Principal



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