

Friday 27 September 2024
7.30pm
Barbican Hall

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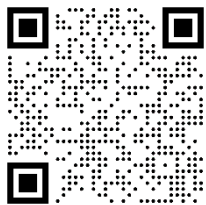
Guildhall Symphony Orchestra & Chorus

Ludovic Morlot conductor
Vicente Chavarría chorus master
Alannah Makoni saxophone
Seohyun Go soprano

Digital Programme

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Barbican

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Programme

Gity Razaz *Mother*

Mozart *Symphony No 41, K551 'Jupiter'*

Interval

Lili Boulanger *D'un matin de printemps*

Debussy *Rhapsody for Saxophone and Orchestra*

Poulenc *Gloria*

The performance duration is approximately 1 hour 55 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

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Welcome

Welcome to Guildhall Symphony Orchestra's season launch. You join us at the start of the academic year, a time when the corridors of Guildhall are abuzz as new friendships are made and new collaborations begin. Students are getting to know their teachers. They are finding out about the music-making that awaits them in the months ahead. And after a whirlwind few days of rehearsal, they are meeting you – our audience – for the first time together.

Our concert tonight captures the excitement, energy and optimism that we feel as the year begins. The opening piece, *Mother*, by Gity Razaz, sets the tone. As the composer herself writes, it celebrates nature and it celebrates life. Later in the programme, the freshness of the new is evoked in Lili Boulanger's *D'un matin de printemps* and with the improvisatory, experimental Rhapsody for Saxophone and Orchestra by Claude Debussy.

At the core of the evening is the symphony that would turn out to be Mozart's last, his 'Jupiter' Symphony, an endlessly inventive, forward-looking work, prophetic of the evolution of symphonic form. Nicknamed after the king of the Roman gods for its grandeur, it is commonly the climax of an orchestral programme, but not so this evening. Instead, we have a choir of new students joining the orchestra onstage for a *grand finale* of a different kind, Francis Poulenc's exultant, celebratory and playful *Gloria*.

We are delighted to welcome conductor Ludovic Morlot to Guildhall School for the first time, and it is a particular pleasure to introduce two student soloists, saxophonist Alannah Makoni and soprano Seohyun Go. I wish you a joyful evening and hope you will be inspired to return for more of our performances throughout the coming year. The events pages on our website list the full, extraordinary range of what is to come.



Armin Zanner
Vice-Principal & Director of Music

Gity Razaz (b. 1986)

Mother (2021)

5 minutes

The ‘Mother’ evoked in this piece by Iranian-born, US-based composer Gity Razaz is Mother Earth. The work, she says, is “an ecstatic tribute to nature’s elegance and eternal resilience”. Aptly, echoes of the ravages of nature were on view at its premiere, at the Last Night of the Proms in 2021, where social distancing was still in place onstage among the orchestral players and audience members had to show proof of vaccination.

At the time of writing Razaz was conscious of the devastating results of climate change – wildfires stretching from Alaska to Australia, drought in California and concerns for water security in the Middle East. Consequently she saw *Mother* as “a salvatory piece about the exquisite majesty of our natural world. I wanted to write something that uplifts our spirits and reminds us of the beauty and preciousness of nature, and hopefully propels us to take more serious and proactive steps in protecting our planet.”

Right from the gently unfurling horn theme and shimmering strings at the start, there’s a sense of nature awakening, even of dawn breaking. This theme merges and develops – along with another spiky, barn-dance-like idea – over a verdant bed of life-giving rhythm.

The music takes a darker turn with nervous, urgent strings joined by the military overtones of the snare drum, and the energy builds, fuelled in part by a clatter of cowbells and sleigh bells. Beauty never leaves the frame and, even though the tension builds, it is dissipated by a delicate oasis of twinkling glockenspiel and rippling harp. The two themes – horn and dance – return entwined before an upbeat conclusion that bears out Razaz’s intention that her piece is “at its essence, a celebration of life”.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)

Symphony No 41, K551 'Jupiter' (1788)

I. Allegro vivace

II. Andante cantabile

III. Menuetto and Trio: Allegretto

IV. Molto allegro

33 minutes

Mozart composed only six symphonies after his move from Salzburg to Vienna. By contrast he produced 16 piano concertos during this last decade of his life and ten operas. (He also worked on his two great sacred works, the Mass in C minor and Requiem, though they remained incomplete at his death.) Of these six Viennese symphonies, the last three – Nos 39–41 – were written within a matter of weeks in the summer of 1788.

At the end of the previous year Mozart had been appointed by Joseph II to the modest court position of Kammermusik (Imperial Chamber Composer) but all the same his financial situation was precarious, and he continued his succession of moves into ever cheaper accommodation. In June 1788 he moved out to the suburb of Alsergrund and around this time he wrote a series of increasingly desperate begging letters, including to the textile merchant and fellow Freemason Michael Puchberg. On 17 June 1788 Mozart wrote to Puchberg asking him “to assist me for a year or two with one or two thousand gulden”, partly to alleviate the burden of everyday expenses and partly to enable him to “work with a mind more free from care and with a lighter heart”.

Mozart’s final symphony, No 41, gives no hint of his unstable position at the time. The nickname ‘Jupiter’, evoking the Roman king of the gods, first appeared in the 1820s and may arise from the military pomp of the first movement. But the elemental, stormy expression here is countered by moments of sweetness, lyricism and good humour.

The Andante opens with a song-like theme on muted violins, later passed to cellos and basses, though this alternates with darker outbursts underpinned by unsettling off-beat syncopations.

The Minuet is a typically elegant dance in triple time but makes a feature of unusual downward-sliding chromatic woodwind lines. The Trio section sets up a flirtatious question-and-answer between a harmonic cadence (two-chord sequence) and a chirpy melodic extension of it.

Mozart’s inventiveness and ingenuity is proudly showcased in the finale. The fund of thematic ideas is unusually profuse, beginning with a four-note motif (do–re–fa–mi) borrowed from a medieval plainchant, which Mozart (and other composers) quoted in other works. In the breathtaking concluding coda, Mozart weaves together five of these ideas with awe-inspiring skill in a fugal section. Whether or not he knew that this symphony would be his last, there could be no greater display to mark the end of his symphonic odyssey.

Interval (20 minutes)

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)

D'un matin de printemps (1917–18, orch. 1918)

5 minutes

There's no doubt that, had Lili Boulanger lived beyond her tragically short years, she would have become one of France's most prominent 20th-century composers, joining Debussy, Satie, Ravel, Poulenc and others. Sick as a child, she died aged only 24 from intestinal tuberculosis, but not before becoming the first female winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome and producing a number of important works – including settings of Psalms 24 and 140, and a haunting *Pie Jesu*. An opera based on Maeterlinck's play *Le princesse Maleine* was left tantalisingly unfinished at her death.

Written in the last year of her life, *D'un matin de printemps* ('Of a Spring Morning') was initially written in 1917 for violin and piano, but she later made arrangements for piano trio as well as for orchestra. It was composed alongside a companion piece, the more sombre *D'un soir triste* ('Of a Sad Evening').

The overall mood is set by the perky opening flute theme, accompanied by sleigh-bell-like chords in the strings. A masterstroke revealing the depth of Boulanger's aural imagination, the following dark, elastic transition – marked by slinking woodwind (including a bass clarinet) – leads to a new, more lyrical theme. Beginning in the violins and soon answered by a solo cello, this blossoms effusively, sweeping over the entire orchestra before a sharp return of the playful first theme (oboe, answered by bassoon). After the delicate balletic interplay of two solo violins, the first theme returns briefly again before warm-toned violas slide in with a new, smoother, more expressive cousin of it. A lively ebullience, and Boulanger's skilful orchestral colouring, shine through the remainder of the piece, completely masking the terminal illness endured by the composer at the time of composition.

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Rhapsody for Saxophone and Orchestra (1903)

Alannah Makoni saxophone

10 minutes

“The saxophone is an animal with a reed about which I know very little,” wrote Debussy to a friend as he worked on his Rhapsody for Saxophone and Orchestra. The composer did little to hide his disdain for the “ridiculous” instrument – or indeed for the commissioner, Boston-based Elise Hall, the widow of a successful physician and herself an amateur saxophone player, whom he called “the Saxophone Lady”.

It’s hardly surprising that Debussy struggled with the composition. He completed it two years late – admitting that the piece had been “ordered, paid for and [its proceeds] eaten more than a year ago” – and left it in short score. Hall never played or heard it, and it was published only in 1919, the year after Debussy’s death, after the composer’s widow entrusted his friend Jean Roger-Ducasse to prepare a full score.

Thankfully Debussy’s indifference seems absent in the final work. Indeed, he took care in his scoring to avoid the saxophone being obscured by the orchestra.

After a brief airy introduction, the saxophone enters with a languorous preamble, echoing the suppleness of the flute solo at the start of the earlier *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* (1894), before finding its feet in a new melody. Debussy referred to the piece as a *Rhapsodie mauresque* (“Moorish Rhapsody”) and later *Rhapsode arabe*, and two Spanish dances are prominent. The first is introduced by tambourine and triangle, tripping along with a dotted rhythm. The other, more extrovert dance, alternates triplet and duplet figures. A *plus vite* (“faster”) section pushes the pace on, introducing a sense of urgency. The writing for saxophone is not especially showy – perhaps Debussy kept in mind that he was writing for an amateur – though the instrument receives a gratifying flourish at the end.

It seems that Debussy was in the end satisfied with the result. “Finally, I have made [the saxophone] murmur some melancholy phrases,” he said. If nothing else, he elicited two fees for the work, one from Elise Hall and one from his publisher, and something of the piece’s atmosphere and solo writing appears to have served him for his more famous *Première rhapsodie* for clarinet and orchestra, written seven years later.

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Gloria (1959–60)

I. *Gloria*

II. *Laudamus te*

III. *Domine Deus*

IV. *Dominus Fili unigenite*

V. *Domine Deus, Agnus Dei*

VI. *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris*

Seohyun Go soprano

22 minutes

In a letter to his friend and musical collaborator Pierre Bernac, Poulenc reported that, on arriving late to the first chorus rehearsal, in Boston, ahead of the premiere of his *Gloria*, he “heard something so unlike my work that my legs collapsed under me”. He went on: “*Excellent* chorus, but ... these good Protestants sing on tiptoe (especially the women) like in London with an ‘Oh my Lord!’ perspective. *All* [conductor Charles] Munch’s tempos were *wrong*. A volunteer sang [soprano soloist Adele] Addison’s part (she hadn’t yet arrived) like an out-of-tune goat. A paleface pianist ticked away at the wrong notes.” Poulenc kept quiet until the rehearsal break. Then, after explaining himself and demonstrating by singing, the choir-master, Alfred Nash Patterson, summarised: “So, you want it sung like [French crooner Maurice] Chevalier?” “Exactly,” replied Poulenc.

Poulenc was famously characterised by the music critic Claude Rostand as “half monk, half rascal” and he presented both faces in his *Gloria*, his penultimate choral work (followed only by the *Sept répons de ténèbres*) and his last setting in Latin.

There’s a sense of mock pomp in the orchestral introduction to the first-movement ‘Gloria’ but, even though the sprung rhythms of the choir suggest jubilant celebration (‘Glory be to God in the highest’), there remains a tinge of austerity.

A pair of trombones trade circus-clown laughter to open the ‘Laudamus te’, tartly answered by a trio of clarinets. This, along with breathless ‘oom-pah’ accompaniment when the choir enters, along with the deliberately misplaced accents on certain syllables (‘Laudamus TE’, ‘benedicimus TE’) lend this movement a sense of the absurd. A sudden contrast comes with the altos’ deeply prayerful ‘Gratias agimus tibi’ (‘We give thee thanks’) and some wondrous string harmonies, but the pause for reflection is only momentary.

We’re back to Poulenc the monk with the ‘Domine Deus’, one of three movements to feature the soprano soloist. Adele Addison, who sang at the premiere, was “to die for”, Poulenc said, also noting the “warm purity” of her voice. The mood here is mournful, processional. There may even be a touch of Gothic angst, yet all this appears sincere and untouched by irony. (Or do the horns, at the very last opportunity, gently beg to differ?)

The brief ‘Domine Fili unigenite’ is straightforwardly ebullient but the following ‘Domine Deus, Agnus Dei’ introduces other-worldly harmonies as well as an ominous underlying tick-tocking movement. The solo soprano’s phrases contrast strange, unsettling mystery (‘Domine Deus’) with angelic calm (‘Qui tolis peccata mundi’).

After a powerful declamatory opening, ‘Qui sedes ad dexteram patris’ continues with contrasting sections of the choir answering each other. Eventually the soprano’s radiant ‘Amen’ prompts a dreamlike heavenly vision, interrupted only by a brief final plea of ‘Miserere nobis’ (‘Have mercy upon us’) before the final, calming Amens.

Ludovic Morlot

conductor

Ludovic Morlot is Music Director of the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra. He was Music Director of Seattle Symphony from 2011–2019, where he earned the orchestra five Grammy Awards, and now conducts several weeks every season as Conductor Emeritus. He was Associate Artist of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra 2019–2024. He was Artistic Director and a founding member of the National Youth Orchestra of China 2017–2021 and Chief Conductor of La Monnaie from 2012–2014.

In 2024/25 Morlot takes the Barcelona Symphony to the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Aix Easter Festival and to l'Auditorium in his home city of Lyon, on the back of their successes together last season at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and Konserthuset Stockholm. They continue their acclaimed Ravel CD cycle and champion the best of the Catalan composers on the orchestra's own label, and repeat their hugely popular *Clàssica a la Platja* ('Classics on the Beach') series. Guest highlights include a return to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boulez celebrations at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall with the BBC Philharmonic, and two opera productions – *Pelléas et Mélisande* at Dallas Opera and Part 2 of *Les Troyens* at Seattle Opera, where in the past three seasons he has had great success with *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre* and *Samson et Dalila*.

Morlot has guested with the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Czech Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, London Philharmonic and Budapest Festival orchestras, and with many leading North American orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago and Philadelphia Symphony Orchestras. He also appears extensively in Asia and Australasia, notably with the Seoul Philharmonic, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras. Festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Wien Modern, Edinburgh, Aspen, and Grant Park festivals.

Ludovic Morlot is represented by Intermusica.

Vicente Chavarría

chorus master

Conductor, composer and scholar Vicente Chavarría studied in the USA and Belgium before settling in London. He currently serves as Principal Conductor/Musical Director of Manchester Chamber Choir, The Handful Chamber Choir (Bath), Bowes Park Community Choir and Director of the early music ensemble Liliun Convallium. He has prepared choirs for John Wilson and BBC Philharmonic, Stéphane Denève and the BBC Symphony Chorus (as deputy), Constanza Chorus, and makes his Guildhall School debut this evening, preparing the Chorus for Ludovic Morlot.

Vicente was most recently the Sir Charles Mackerras Conducting Fellow at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance and Co-Musical Director of Trinity Laban Opera. He studied Orchestral Conducting with Peter Stark, Howard Williams and Martyn Brabbins at the Royal College of Music, assisting Vladimir Ashkenazy, Bernard Haitink, Holly Mathieson and Andrew Gourlay, among others. He was the Assistant Conductor of the RCM Opera Studio under Michael Rosewell, whom he also assisted at English Touring Opera. He has worked with the Lavenham Sinfonia, Oxford University Orchestra, Colne Philharmonic, Wimbledon Symphony Orchestra, Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra and Croydon Youth Orchestra, and participated in masterclasses with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Salomon Orchestra.

A versatile musician, Vicente maintains an active freelance performing schedule. He sings with Dowland Works (with Dame Emma Kirkby), Mosaic Voices, St Martin's Voices and the BBC Symphony Chorus, and is a Deputy Vicar Choral at St Paul's Cathedral. He has previously performed with LASchola, Bach Collegium San Diego, Boston Camerata and Park Collegium in Belgium, among many others. A pupil of Morten Lauridsen and Haris Kittos, his compositions and arrangements have been performed around the world and are published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing, Alliance Music, Oxford University Press and Augsburg Fortress.

Chavarría holds previous degrees in Musicology, Early Music and Spanish from the Universities of Miami and Southern California in the USA, and a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Leuven in Belgium. In his spare time, he enjoys relaxing hobbies such as cooking and plane-spotting, and is a budding podcaster.

Alannah Makoni

saxophone

Alannah Makoni is in her final year on the Bachelor of Music course at Guildhall School of Music & Drama. As a chamber and orchestral musician, she has performed at Cadogan Hall, The London Palladium and Theatre Royal Drury Lane with the Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST) Orchestra. She has also performed in venues such as Ely Cathedral, Southwark Cathedral and Temple Church with the Guildhall School Saxophone Ensemble.

Initially playing flute, Alannah started saxophone studies aged 13 and quickly became enamoured with the instrument. She has studied with Felicity Gorst and Sarah James, and is currently studying with Naomi Sullivan, Nick Moss and Mick Foster.

In 2024, Alannah gave the UK premiere of Joel Love's *The Manitou Incline*, and performed in new saxophone ensemble works by Christian Forshaw. Alannah has a strong interest in music for saxophone and electronics, as well as composing and arranging, and plans to continue exploring the saxophone's potential in new music, innovative arrangements and collaborations.

Alannah has participated in masterclasses by internationally renowned artists such as Claude Delange, Trish Clowes, Clare Loveday, Christoph Enzel, João Pedro Silva, Henrique Portovedo, Richard Ingham and Huw Wiggin.

Alannah's debut at Barbican Hall this evening is the culmination of her exploration into the Impressionist movement, which evolved just as the saxophone was finding its voice as a solo instrument, and she is excited to perform a piece which celebrates a strong legacy of female saxophonists. Debussy's *Rhapsody* was commissioned in 1901 by Elise Hall, a pioneering figure in expanding the repertoire for saxophone and orchestra at the turn of the 20th-century.

Seohyun Go

soprano

Soprano Seohyun Go, originally from South Korea, is an accomplished young artist known for her versatility and expressiveness. She earned her Bachelor of Music from Seoul National University and went on to pursue advanced studies in Europe. In 2023/24, she began her Master's degree in Vocal Studies at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and is now continuing in Opera Studies, studying with Samantha Malk. Seohyun's studies at Guildhall School are supported by the Margaret Easton Scholarship and the Fishmongers Colyers-Edwards Bequest.

In 2024, Seohyun's talent was recognised with Guildhall School's Franz-Schubert-Institut Lieder Prize, for which she received a scholarship to study at the Franz-Schubert-Institut in Baden, Austria. Her operatic achievements include being selected as an Opera Studio Member at the Korean National Opera (KNO) in both 2021 and 2023. With KNO, she performed in productions including their Spring Gala Festival and *Don Giovanni*.

Seohyun was chosen as a Summer Young Artist at the Daejeon Art Centre, where she gave a recital and performed in the Daejeon International Music Festival and Opera Gala Concert. Her international performances have also taken her to notable venues and festivals, including concerts in Vienna, Zürich and Gloggnitz, Austria.

Thanks

We are grateful to Chorus Master **Vicente Chavarria**, Deputy Chorus Master and rehearsal pianist **Richard Pearce**, and rehearsal pianist **Gavin Roberts** for all their work in preparing the Chorus. We also thank **Linnhe Robertson** for her preparatory work towards the project, vocal coach **Elizabeth Marcus** for supporting the preparations of the Poulenc soloist and **Georgie Malcolm** and **Reuben Dakin** for acting as cover soloists for Poulenc and Debussy respectively.

Special thanks to conductor **Toby Thatcher** for helping to prepare the orchestra and to each of the following sectional tutors provided by the **London Symphony Orchestra**:

Harriet Rayfield violin I

Miya Väisänen violin II

Germán Clavijo viola

Alastair Blayden cello

Tom Goodman double bass

Helen Tunstall harp

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David Jackson wind, brass, percussion & harp

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Guildhall Symphony Orchestra

Orchestra for Razaz & Mozart

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Laia Francés Pont

Elena Toledo

Rowan Dymott

Kate Simpson

Isabelle Allan

Niko Peake

Clemmy Germain

Gwyneth Nelmes^

Paula Guerra^

Violin II

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Rebekah Dickinson

Sean Lee

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Cello

Theo Bently Curtin*

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Anoukia Nistor

Eryna Kisumba

Lottie Gorrie

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Aaron Aguayo Juarez

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Justyna Szykarczyk*

Rachel Howie (piccolo)

Oboe

Elly Barlow*

Lidia Moscoso

Clarinet

Sofia Mekhonoshina*

Margot Maurel (bass clarinet)

Bassoon

Aidan Campbell*

Maria O'Dea

Horn

Henry Ward*

Niamh Rodgers

Trumpet

Seb Carpenter*

Parker Bruce

Timpani

Bryony Che

Percussion

Ava Kinninmonth*

Cláudia Gonçalves

Harp

Eleanor Medcalf*

Emily Hopper

Guildhall Symphony Orchestra

Orchestra for Boulanger, Debussy & Poulenc

Violin I

Ola Lenkiewicz*
Laia Francés Pont
Lewis Lee
Sophia Kannathasan
Teresa Wiczowska
Lichen Cai
Grace Powell
Tanya Perez Jovetic
Malena Benavent
Dominic Drutac
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Anson Kwong

Violin II

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Pak Ho Hong
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Rowan Dymott
Kate Simpson
Isabelle Allan
Niko Peake
Clemmy Germain
Paula Guerra^
Argyro Meleniou
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Selina Li

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Jake Montgomery-Smith*
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Theo Bently Curtin*
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Stanley Aitken

Timpani

Bryony Che

Percussion

Cláudia Gonçalves*
Lauren Bye

Harp

Boulanger & Debussy:
Emily Hopper
Poulenc:
Eleanor Medcalf

Celeste

Natalia Medina

** section principal*

^ guest Alumni player

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