



**London
Sinfonietta**

2017/18 SEASON
londonsinfonietta.org.uk
#UnfinishedBusiness



LANDMARKS

CONCERT PROGRAMME

Welcome to St John's Smith Square. Please do not hesitate to approach our Duty Manager and ushers with any questions you may have. The Footstool Restaurant in the Crypt serves interval and post-concert refreshments. Please note that refreshments are not allowed in the concert hall.

We hope you enjoy the concert this evening. If you wish to get in touch with us following your visit please contact the Visitor Experience Team at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX, by phoning 020 3879 9555 or email customer@southbankcentre.co.uk. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery are closed for essential refurbishment until 2018. During this period, Southbank Centre's resident orchestras are performing in venues including St John's Smith Square.

Find out more at southbankcentre.co.uk/sjss

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LANDMARKS

Saturday 25 November 2017
7.30pm, St John's Smith Square

A programme of London Sinfonietta commissions

Iannis Xenakis Thallein for 14 musicians (1984)

Colin Matthews Contraflow (1992)

Wolfgang Rihm Chiffre ii: Silence to be beaten (1983)

Sir Harrison Birtwistle Silbury Air* (1977/2003)

Martyn Brabbins conductor

London Sinfonietta

*Please see our Silbury Air Music Map by Deborah Pritchard enclosed

The London Sinfonietta is grateful to Arts Council England for their generous support of the ensemble, as well as the many other individuals, trusts and businesses who enable us to realise our ambitions.

Tonight's concert is being recorded by BBC Radio 3 for future broadcasting.



Supported using public funding by
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WELCOME

Welcome to tonight's concert and thanks for coming. It's an interesting fact that the first ever concert by the London Sinfonietta in 1968 was given by a small chamber orchestra – a far larger ensemble than the group has become known for. Whether through artistic choice, programme building, or simply the economic realities of touring, the ensemble soon distilled down to a one-to-a-part group of virtuosi, and it's this format we celebrate tonight with the amazing musicianship of our Principal Players and guests.

Running like a golden thread through the ensemble's past are the commissions for this 'core' ensemble written by the greatest composers of new music of the past 50 years. Some of these works have become known not only as great 'Sinfonietta' pieces, but also some of the most distinct and successful works by each of the composers concerned.

Tonight we can perform only four of them, but there are many others which the group could wear like badges of honour to mark its own past and the relationships it has forged with composers over the past half century.

We are proud to have performed this programme in Huddersfield on Wednesday – in their 40th

anniversary year – as a continuation and extension of our relationship with that festival. We are grateful to a long-time collaborator Martyn Brabbins for leading us through the repertoire. We continue to be grateful to the Arts Council, trusts, foundations, individuals and sponsors for their belief and investment in us.

Please consider helping us with a donation to our work in this, our 50th anniversary year. It begins a close relationship that many people now enjoy – and we can promise you experiences that will live in your memory for a lifetime.

Andrew Burke
Chief Executive



Former London Sinfonietta Artistic Director Michael Vyner with Iannis Xenakis during rehearsals for *Thalain* in 1985 © Malcolm Crowthers

THE ONE-TO-A-PART MODEL

OK, you're a composer. Terrific. First thing you'll want to do is write a piece for the London Sinfonietta.

Oh. Your best friend plays in a bassoon quartet? Right. Second thing you'll want to do is write a piece for the London Sinfonietta. Or a similar band. There are loads of them out there: student groups, ensembles linked to other cities... Why so many? Easy. This kind of line-up rocks. One each of every kind of orchestral instrument, including keyboards and percussion. Maybe a pair here or there. Fourteen, fifteen players.

Yes, there's a balance problem. You have your woodwind soloists and your basic brass trio – seven all together – and maybe just five or six strings. Not easy. But hey, who said composing was supposed to be easy?

Now, a bit of history. Composers have been working with this kind of grouping for over a century. Why? Two reasons. Number one: economics. Big orchestra = big bucks. Scale down, and you have an outfit that can take more risks. Number two: aesthetics. The sound of an orchestra can be awesome, for sure, and yes, you'll want to do that, too. But the orchestra as we know it hasn't changed since the 19th century. The Sinfonietta-style grouping comes with a more modern cool and clarity. That was why it appealed to all the great ancestral modernists. Stravinsky and Schoenberg. Charles Ives. Those guys. Also because it could shake hands with popular music.

Fast forward to fifty years ago. By then there was a good bit of music about for this kind of ensemble. But nobody was playing it. That was why the London Sinfonietta was founded, and after them other similar bands; Ensemble InterContemporain in Paris, Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt and so on. It didn't take long for them all to settle on this core formation. And, hey presto, it worked.

There was a repertory ready and waiting and when it came to commissioning new works, composers rapidly found out there were infinite ways of rolling these particular dice.

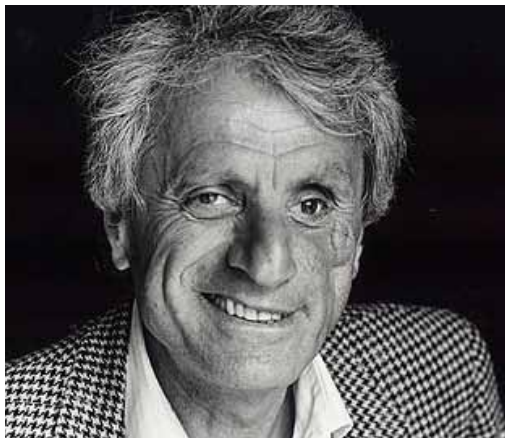
Listen to the four pieces in tonight's programme. Hardly a thing they have in common. Except they're all written for pretty much exactly the same musicians. (Only difference is Birtwistle adds a harp.) And you could multiply the examples. The London Sinfonietta alone has commissioned nearly four hundred pieces.

So: economics, aesthetics, and it works. There just seem to be no limits to what you can do. Add electronics? Be my guest. Highlight one of the players as a soloist? Sure. Dot them round the stage in new groupings? Whatever. How long can it go on? Another fifty years, easy – more. After all, people are still writing string quartets 250 years after Haydn and Mozart. Now here's something else that has legs.

Pencil? Borrow mine.

© Paul Griffiths

IANNIS XENAKIS (1922-2001)



Iannis Xenakis was one of the leaders of modernism in music, a hugely influential composer, particularly in the later 1950s and 1960s, when he was experimenting with compositional techniques that soon entered the basic vocabulary of the 20th century avant-garde. He was born in Braïla, Romania, to Greek parents. His initial training, in Athens, was as a civil engineer. In 1947, after three years fighting in the Greek resistance against the Nazi occupation, during which time he lost the sight of an eye, he escaped a death sentence and fled to France, where he settled.

Xenakis was first active as an architect, collaborating with Le Corbusier on a number of projects, not least the Philips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Fair. In 1952 he attended composition classes with Olivier Messiaen, who suggested that Xenakis apply his scientific training to music.

The resulting style, based on procedures derived from mathematics, architectural principles and game theory, catapulted Xenakis to the front ranks of the avant-garde. He never embraced total serialism, and also avoided more traditional devices of harmony and counterpoint. Instead, he developed other ways of organising the dense masses of sound that are characteristic of his first compositions. These stochastic, or random, procedures were based on mathematical principles and were later entrusted to computers for their realisation.

But for all the formal control in their composition, Xenakis' scores retain an elemental energy, a life-force that gives the music an impact of visceral effectiveness. Works like *Bohor* for electronics (1962), *Eonta* for piano and brass quintet (1963–64), *Persephassa* for six percussionists, placed around the audience (1969), and the ballet *Kraanerg*, for 23 instrumentalists and tape (1969) all exhibit a primitive power that belies the complexity of their origins. The *Sydney Morning Herald* said of *Kraanerg*, that it “remains staggeringly powerful and clamorous, an essay in constantly renewed energy that shows not the least sign of faltering”.

Iannis Xenakis is published by Boosey & Hawkes.

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THALLEÏN FOR 14 MUSICIANS

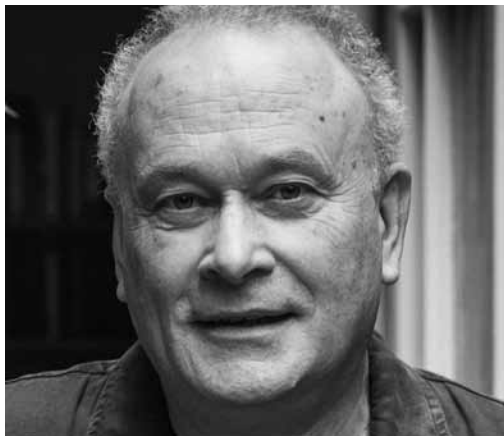
Xenakis wrote his first piece for the London Sinfonietta, *Phlegra*, in 1975. Ten years later, he returned to London with a new score, *Thalleïn* (1984). *Thalleïn* means ‘to sprout’ and it is certainly a work of profusion and abundance.

The tone is set right from the start with an enormous tutti chord heightened by a stroke from the gong. Instead of merely sustaining the notes, the instruments are required to bend them, sliding up, down, and around the pitch, creating an unstable sonority that contrasts with savage chordal punches from the rest of the ensemble. Out of this rather tense passage comes fast scalar runs that eventually sweep through the entire group, ending on a low chord that brings the section to a close. Nine episodes of contrasting textures follow, employing varying degrees of overlap. The burgeoning connotations of the title are evident throughout the whole work. Characteristic of much of Xenakis' music, there is abundant use of glissando, dense clouds of notes, thick chords, and layered rhythms.

Thalleïn's ending is rather sustained and focused on timbre; first, the brass are highlighted, then the woodwinds, and finally, the strings. Xenakis creates a musical voyage through time, embarking at one point and arriving at another, without attempting any sort of resolution in the classical sense. Instead, the listener is left with a sense of exhilaration, pondering the force of the energy that sustained such a fascinating sonic adventure.

© James Harley, *All Music*

COLIN MATTHEWS (b.1946)



Colin Matthews was born in London in 1946. He studied with Arnold Whittall and Nicholas Maw; in the 1970s he was assistant to Benjamin Britten, and worked for many years with Imogen Holst. His collaboration with Deryck Cooke on the performing version of Mahler's Tenth Symphony lasted from 1963 until its publication in 1975.

Over four decades his music has ranged from solo piano music through five string quartets and many ensemble and orchestral works. From 1992–99 he was Associate Composer with the LSO, writing amongst other works a Cello Concerto for Rostropovich. In 1997 his choral/orchestral *Renewal*, commissioned for the 50th anniversary of BBC Radio 3, was given a Royal Philharmonic Society Award.

Orchestral works since 2000 include *Reflected Images* for the San Francisco SO, *Berceuse for Dresden* for the New York Philharmonic, *Turning Point* for the Concertgebouw Orchestra and *Traces Remain* for the BBC SO.

Matthews was Composer-in-Association with the Hallé from 2001–10, for whom he completed his orchestrations of Debussy's 24 Preludes in 2007. He is now the orchestra's Composer Emeritus.

His violin concerto for Leila Josefowicz and the CBSO was premiered in 2009. In 2011 he completed works for the London Sinfonietta, City of London Sinfonia and Leipzig Gewandhaus. He wrote his 4th String Quartet, for the Elias Quartet, in 2012, and his 5th, for the Tanglewood Music Center, in 2015; *Spiralling* was written for Spira Mirabilis in 2014; *The Pied Piper*, a collaboration with Michael Morpurgo, was performed by the LPO in 2015.

Matthews is Founder and Executive Producer of NMC Recordings, Executive Administrator of the Holst Foundation and Music Director of the Britten-Pears Foundation. He has been co-director with Oliver Knussen of the Aldeburgh Composition Course since 1992, and composition director of the LSO's Panufnik Scheme since 2005. He holds honorary posts with several universities and is Prince Consort Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music.

Colin Matthews' music is published by Faber Music.

CONTRAFLOW

Colin Matthews' *Contraflow* might be compared to a journey in which the return half is seen in a different perspective. Formally the work consists of a scherzo and trio, where the expected reprise turns into a slow movement in which the scherzo is recapitulated in reverse, with seemingly little resemblance to the original.

Within this overall framework there is another process at work – a sequence of tiny concertinos for each member of the ensemble, beginning halfway through the scherzo with second violin, trombone and oboe; then flute, trumpet and viola; in the trio, clarinet, horn and cello; and in the slow movement, contrabassoon, percussion and bass, with finally a duo for first violin and piano.

Contraflow lasts around 12 minutes: it was commissioned by Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and the London Sinfonietta with funds made available by the Arts Council of Great Britain, and is dedicated to 'my friends in the London Sinfonietta, especially Rosemary, and to Diego Masson.'

WOLFGANG RIHM (b.1952)



© Bearb

Wolfgang Rihm was born on 13 March 1952 in Karlsruhe, a city near the French and Swiss borders. Rihm is a composer, Professor of Composition at the Music Academy of his native city (where his students have included Vyckintas Baltakas and Jörg Widmann) and a remarkable writer on music with several books to his name, including collections of articles and interviews. He also sits on a number of influential committees in Germany.

His knowledge of music is vast. So too is his knowledge of literature, painting, architecture and philosophy from which he draws inspiration. A look at the texts he has set to music is an indication of the breadth of interests: from Homer through Hölderlin and Goethe to Rilke, Botho Strauss and Durs Grünbein.

At 25, Rihm composed *Jakob Lenz*, a chamber opera that has since proved itself as probably the most often produced piece of contemporary music theatre in Germany and has been followed by a series of large-scale operas: *Die Hamletmaschine*, *Die Eroberung von Mexico*, *Das Gehege* and *Dionysos*.

His compositions, which now outnumber 400 works, cannot be pigeon-holed. To paraphrase the title of a well-known British film on Thomas Moore, he is a composer for all seasons. Soloists, chamber groups and orchestras programme his works as a matter of course, as they have become an integral part of the repertoire.

Of similar significance are the compositions which take their cue from music of past centuries: oratorios with JS Bach as his point of reference (*Deus Passus*), orchestral pieces of Brahmsian sound and gesture (*Ernster Gesang, Nähe fern 1–4*) and chamber music in the wake of Robert Schumann (*Fremde Szenen*).

Wolfgang Rihm is one of the foremost song composers of our time and his string quartets are often presented in cycles by a wide range of groups. Each new work is an answer to the question he has raised by his previous work. Everything is in permanent growth, work never stops, new compositions are produced, brought into intriguing relationships with other works, revised and supplemented.

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CHIFFRE II: SILENCE TO BE BEATEN

The subtitle of this piece could be a nod in the direction of Varèse's *Arcana* (where it appears as an agogic); it seems to be a continuation of the thought-process of *Chiffre I*. The furioso piano returns, although it is now juxtaposed with an ensemble twice as large which (in contrast to *Chiffre I*) is not suppressible; in fact, it occasionally manages to subdue the raging.

Chiffre II is highly dramatic music: eruptive, with sudden, short cries and long, very still passages when, from nowhere, the bass drums burst forth into *ffff* and the music's continuity is repeatedly interrupted by silences.

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Translation: Grant Chorley

SIR HARRISON BIRTWISTLE (b.1934)



© Hanya Chlala

Sir Harrison Birtwistle was born in Accrington in the north of England in 1934 and studied clarinet and composition at the Royal Manchester College of Music. In 1965 he sold his clarinets to devote all his efforts to composition, and travelled to Princeton as a Harkness Fellow where he completed the opera *Punch and Judy*. This work, together with *Verses for Ensembles* and *The Triumph of Time*, firmly established Birtwistle as a leading voice in British music.

The decade from 1973 to 1984 was dominated by his monumental lyric tragedy *The Mask of Orpheus*, staged by ENO in 1986. Large-scale works in the following decade included the operas *Gawain* and *The Second Mrs Kong*, the concertos *Endless Parade* for trumpet and *Antiphonies* for piano, and the orchestral score *Earth Dances*.

Birtwistle's orchestral works since 1995 include *Exody*, premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Daniel Barenboim, *Panic* which received a high profile premiere at the Last Night of the 1995 BBC Proms, and *The Shadow of Night* commissioned by the Cleveland Orchestra. *The Last Supper* received its first performances at the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin and at Glyndebourne in 2000. *Pulse Shadows*, a meditation for soprano, string quartet and chamber ensemble on poetry by Paul Celan, was released on disc by Teldec and won the 2002 Gramophone Award for best contemporary recording.

Works in the past decade include his music theatre work *The Corridor* which opened the Aldeburgh Festival, with further performances in New York and Amsterdam. Birtwistle's 80th birthday year in 2014 saw the

premiere of *Responses* for piano and orchestra, touring internationally with Pierre-Laurent Aimard as soloist, and 2015 brought a new music theatre work *The Cure* performed in a double-bill with *The Corridor* at the Aldeburgh Festival and the Royal Opera House with the London Sinfonietta. *Deep Time* for orchestra, commissioned by the Berlin Staatsoper and BBC Radio 3 received its first performance in 2017 conducted by Daniel Barenboim.

The music of Birtwistle has attracted international conductors including Pierre Boulez, Daniel Barenboim, Elgar Howarth, Oliver Knussen and Sir Simon Rattle. He has received many honours, including the Grawemeyer Award in 1968 and the Siemens Prize in 1995; he was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1986, awarded a British knighthood in 1988 and made a Companion of Honour in 2001. He was Henry Purcell Professor of Music at King's College, University of London (1995-2001) and is currently a Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Birtwistle's music is recorded on the Decca, Philips, Deutsche Grammophon, Teldec, Black Box, NMC, CPO and Soundcircus labels and he is published by Boosey & Hawkes.

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SILBURY AIR

Silbury Air is named after the prehistoric mound in Wiltshire, the biggest artificial mound in Europe, being 125 feet high and covering more than five acres. Its use and purpose, after centuries of speculation, still remain a mystery. The music of the Air is not in any way meant to be a romantic reflection of the hill's enigmatic location – nor a parallel with any of its evident geometry. Seen from a distance the hill presents itself as an artificial but organic intruder on the landscape. I have often alluded to my music of landscape presenting musical ideas through the juxtaposition and repetition of 'static blocks' of, preferable for my terminology, objects. These objects themselves being subjected to a vigorous invented logic via modes of juxtaposition, modes of repetition, modes of change. The sum total of these processes is a compound artificial landscape or 'imaginary' landscape, to use Paul Klee's title.

© Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Universal Edition

TONIGHT'S PERFORMERS



© Ben Ealovega

MARTYN BRABBINS CONDUCTOR

Martyn Brabbins is Music Director of the English National Opera. An inspirational force in British music, Brabbins has had a busy opera career since his early days at the Kirov and more recently at La Scala, the Bayerische Staatsoper, and regularly in Lyon, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Antwerp. He is a popular figure at the BBC Proms and with most of the leading British orchestras, and regularly visits top international orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw, DSO Berlin and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony (all of whom he conducted last season).

Known for his advocacy of British composers, he has also conducted hundreds of world premieres across the globe. He has recorded over 120 CDs to date, including prize-winning discs of operas by Korngold, Birtwistle and Harvey. He was Associate Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra 1994-2005, Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic 2009-2015, Chief Conductor of the Nagoya Philharmonic 2012-2016, and Artistic Director of the Cheltenham International Festival of Music 2005-2007.

He is currently Visiting Professor at the Royal College of Music and Music Director to the Huddersfield Choral Society alongside his duties at ENO, and has for many years supported professional, student and amateur music-making at the highest level in the UK. In 2017/18 at English National Opera, Brabbins conducts the world premiere of Nico Muhly's *Marnie* and a revival of *Marriage of Figaro* – his first productions as Music Director. He launched a Vaughan Williams symphonic cycle with the BBC Symphony at the Barbican (and recorded for Hyperion) and tours Holland with the BBC Scottish Symphony, with whom he continues his Tippett symphony cycle at the Glasgow City Halls and also for Hyperion.

He conducts the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic at the Holland Festival 2018 and in Summer 2017 he conducted Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with the Philharmonia at Three Choirs. He also conducted the final concert of the Edinburgh International Festival with the BBC Scottish Symphony.

Brabbins' extensive discography ranges from Romantic to contemporary repertoire. He won the Gramophone Award for Birtwistle's *Mask of Orpheus* with the BBC Symphony (NMC), the Cannes Opera Award for Korngold's *Die Kathrin* with the BBC Concert Orchestra (CPO), and the Grand Prix du Disque in the 2013 opera category for his recording of Jonathan Harvey's *Wagner Dream*.

He studied composition in London and conducting with Ilya Musin in Leningrad, subsequently winning first prize at the 1988 Leeds Conductors' Competition, launching his international career.

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LONDON SINFONIETTA

Michael Cox flute/piccolo/alto*

Melinda Maxwell oboe/cor anglais

Mark van de Wiel clarinet/Eb/bass*

John Orford bassoon/contrabassoon*

Michael Thompson horn*

Alistair Mackie trumpet/piccolo*

Byron Fulcher trombone*

David Alberman violin

Joan Atherton violin*

Fiona Winning viola

Tim Gill cello*

Markus van Horn double bass

Manon Morris harp

David Hockings percussion*

Rolf Hind piano

*London Sinfonietta Principal Player



The London Sinfonietta is one of the world's leading contemporary music ensembles. Formed in 1968, the group's commitment to making new music has seen it commission over 350 works and premiere many hundreds more. Our ethos today is to constantly experiment with the art form, working with the best composers, conductors and players whilst collaborating with musicians from alternative genres and artists from different disciplines. We are committed to challenging perceptions, provoking new possibilities and stretching our audiences' imaginations, often working closely with them as creators, performers and curators of the events we stage.

Resident at Southbank Centre and Artistic Associate at Kings Place, with a busy touring schedule across the UK and abroad, London Sinfonietta's core is 18 Principal Players, representing some of the best musicians in the world.

Holding a leading position in education work, the London Sinfonietta believes that arts participation is transformational to individuals and communities, and new music is relevant to people's lives. This belief is enacted through primary and secondary school concerts across the UK and interactive family events, as well as the annual London Sinfonietta Academy, an unparalleled opportunity for young performers and conductors to train with our Principal Players.

The London Sinfonietta has also broken new ground by creating Steve Reich's Clapping Music app for iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch, a participatory rhythm game that has been downloaded over 200,000 times worldwide. The ensemble's latest recordings include George Benjamin's opera *Into the Little Hill* (Nimbus; 2017), a collaboration with Norwegian saxophonist Marius Neset on *Snowmelt* (ACT; 2016), a limited edition run of LPs with the artist Christian Marclay as part of his White Cube exhibition in 2015, and a disc of Sir Harrison Birtwistle's music which topped the classical music chart in 2015.

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Mark van de Wiel clarinet
(supported by Régis Cochefert)
John Orford bassoon
Simon Haram saxophone
Michael Thompson horn
(supported by Belinda Matthews)
Byron Fulcher trombone
Alistair Mackie trumpet
Jonathan Morton violin 1
(supported by Paul & Sybella Zisman)
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(supported by Robert Clark & Susan Costello)
Paul Silverthorne viola
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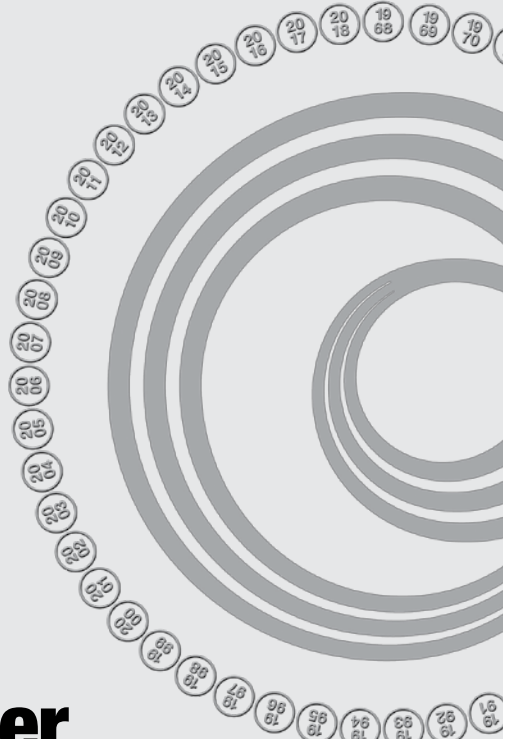
Join us in celebrating this milestone and invest in the ensemble's future, so that together we can continue to discover the greatest new music.

Find out more at
londonsinfonietta.org.uk/sinfonietta-circle

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Through a range of benefits, our Pioneers form a close association with the ensemble and become part of our creative journey.

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Saturday 24 March 2018,
Kings Place

londonsinfonietta.org.uk

REPOSE: ANDREAS GURSKY

March 2018,
Hayward Gallery

PHILIP VENABLES: THE GENDER AGENDA

Thursday 12 April 2018,
Queen Elizabeth Hall

BEACONS

Wednesday 16 May 2018,
Queen Elizabeth Hall

MIX: LONDON SINFONIETTA & TOM JENKINSON

Friday 8 June 2018, Purcell Room

TANSY DAVIES/NICK DRAKE: CAVE

June 2018, Printworks

Images clockwise from left: 50th Anniversary Concert (24 January), The Gender Agenda (12 April), Beacons (16 May), Cave (June)