



London Sinfonietta & Marius Neset

Thursday 20 November 2025, 7:30pm | Queen Elizabeth Hall

Welcome to this concert produced by the London Sinfonietta. We have a long tradition of working with musicians who come from the world of jazz or are inspired by it. The experimentations in both contemporary jazz and contemporary classical music bring the sound worlds of both genres ever closer. Our work with Marius Neset over the past 10 years has led to joyful performances of virtuosic and exciting music which, for us, is a natural extension of our passion for new music. So we are grateful to Marius for working with us again to produce a new work which we have commissioned. We are also happy to report that the work will have three more performances at the end of January in Oslo, Harstad and Tromsø, and we hope many more to follow.

It's also good to be showcasing a new work by Ashkan Layegh whose work is the final piece in this latest round of our Writing the Future project. Four composers were asked to create new works which expanded their practice and stretched the London Sinfonietta too. Many of the composers from past rounds of Writing the Future have gone on to make new work for us and other ensembles, and we hope they have all benefitted from a close working relationship with us.

We are hugely grateful to EFG London Jazz Festival for including us in their programme this year which brings us such exposure to new audiences. And to Southbank Centre for our ongoing Residency and the Arts Council for their ongoing support. Our work is supported by a range of trusts, foundations and individuals and we thank them for that. If you want to join us – and support the next set of commissions that we are announcing tonight through our Sound Ignited Campaign – please do be in touch.

Andrew Burke, Chief Executive & Artistic Director, London Sinfonietta

Programme

Ashkan Layegh *Ephemerality and Recurrence* (30')

Interval

Marius Neset *Changes* (50')

Tonight's Players

Marius Neset *saxophones*

Anton Eger *drums*

Sam Norris *alto saxophone*

Gonçalo Maia Caetano *electric bass*

Harry Ling *drums*

Ashkan Layegh *piano*

London Sinfonietta

Jonathan Morton* *violin*

Freya Goldmark *violin 2 (Ephemerality and Recurrence)*

Fiona Winning *viola (Ephemerality and Recurrence)*

Tim Gill* *cello*

Mark van de Wiel* *clarinet (Changes)*

Richard Blake *trumpet (Changes)*

Clíodna Shanahan *piano (Changes)*

Harvey Cullis *director of photography*

Amirhossein Asadi *illustrator*

* London Sinfonietta Principal Players

Ephemerality and Recurrence (World Premiere)

Ephemerality and Recurrence is a multi-media piece for three quartets:

1. A String Quartet from the London Sinfonietta
2. The Phemo Quartet, consisting of Alto Saxophone, Piano, Electric Bass, and Drums
3. A "Screen" Quartet, comprising Visuals, Illustrations, Anecdotes, and Process Notes

The piece is essentially three different pieces in one, where each medium has its own independent space of exploration while remaining in constant interplay with the others. However, none of mediums follow one another— neither visualising the music nor musicalising the visuals— but instead share the same underlying structural principles.

Ephemerality and Recurrence explores the notions of cataloguing: more specifically how power structures use made-up systems to catalogue our subjective and collective morality— whether it is sexuality, gender, race, etc— but also how these systems inevitably fail. So, there is a way that these systems are ephemeral, but because of human beings' endless desire to catalogue, they recur in different ways. And it is through this constant patterns of ephemerality and recurrence that some level of artificiality within these systems is revealed.

The piece is my first radical examination of “Transparent Juxtaposition”, where I simultaneously employ two separate made-up systems to create a unified self-reflexive structure:

1. There are 7 different instruments on the stage; thus there are 7 main blocks, juxtaposed 7 times through a cyclical cut-up algorithm, till we get back to the primary configuration. (49 sections in total)
2. There are 8 performers on the stage; thus every 7 blocks, the Octet is split into 2 Quartets, 4 Duos, 8 Soloists, and then in reverse. The piece finishes exactly where it started.

The same structural principles apply to the screen material: there are 7 distinct blocks (2 Visuals, 2 Illustrations, 2 Anecdotes and 1 Process Notes) in 7 different permutations with 8 frames in each block, where through varying groupings and transparencies, different levels of disassociation is revealed.

Ephemerality and Recurrence is never a complete piece. It aims to be encyclopaedic while only representing a very small fraction of possibilities—a fake encyclopaedia; it exists in a state of denial, constantly contradicting itself; it interprets and reinterprets itself to the point of self-destruction. If the piece is about anything, it is the relentless failure of its maker—and, hopefully, its spectators—in finding a singular structural strategy.

Ashkan Layegh, 2025

***Changes* (World Premiere)**

Changes is a piece about life — about how everything, and everyone, is constantly in motion. Nothing stays the same for long: not in nature, not in our inner worlds, and certainly not in music. I wanted to explore how we experience change — how it can be both unsettling and liberating, surprising and predictable, painful and beautiful, destructive and full of hope.

The piece draws much of its energy and excitement from the interplay between the composed and arranged sections and the moments of openness, where the music can unfold freely in real time. Especially the saxophone and percussion have more space to shape their expression in the moment, blurring the line between composition and improvisation — between what is planned and what is created in the moment.

Changes is a musical journey consisting of eight connected movements:

Part 1 – Awakening: Everything begins in silence. Something new starts to take shape, and a melody gradually emerges. It slowly develops and grows into the next part.

Part 2 – Heartbeat: The pulse of life begins to move. This part was originally written for solo violin, built around a constant G note in a recurring seven-bar cycle. The seven-bar period is quite unusual for me and has been fascinating to explore throughout the entire piece. It has become one of the signature elements of *Changes*.

Part 3 – Rhythm of Life: The pulse continues, but its meaning evolves as the subdivisions transform the rhythm into a 7/4 groove. The music moves from dark to light, becoming brighter and more joyful. The melody feels almost childlike and naïve — a reflection on the simplicity and wonder of life itself.

Part 4 – Distraction: A simple melody is constantly diverted by other musical lines and elements. It ends up in a groove where the

bass clarinet takes on the bass role, giving the saxophone space to play freely above it.

Part 5 – Losing It: Almost like an intermezzo, this section begins as a dark waltz where control gradually slips away.

Part 6 – Anchoring: The music comes together again. This theme is built around a funky groove that started as a playful experiment on rototoms, later joined by bass clarinet and cello. Together they create a foundation where the music can flow and dance freely.

Part 7 – Excited: A long build-up in a 6/8 groove, growing more and more intense. The energy increases continuously, and once again the seven-bar period becomes a key rhythmic feature. It culminates in a burst of pure joy and euphoria before gently returning to earth.

Part 8 – Delivery: Not an ending, but a release — the music opens toward a new beginning, emerging out of change itself.

In *Changes*, rhythm, harmony, colour, and emotion are in constant motion — just like life. Some changes come suddenly; others unfold slowly. But they all share one truth: every ending carries within it the beginning of something new.

Life is full of changes. Nothing ever stays the same. From the tiniest and nearly unseen, to the huge and overwhelming. There's the deliberating, the good, and the scary and intimidating ones. To me music is a form of communication, and when I am composing, the music follows the lie and the world that we live in. These times are weird, big global changes are happening, and lots of people are feeling insecure and confused. *Changes* is a musical piece that is inspired by all these changes that happen in life. How things look today, might change tomorrow.

Marius Neset, 2025

You might also like...

Gérard Grisey: *Quatre Chants*

Friday 28 November 2025, 7:30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

A rare opportunity to experience French composer Gérard Grisey's stunningly dark *Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil*. One of the most significant concert works of the late 20th-century, this masterpiece offers a journey through intricate collisions of fragmented melody and harmony.

Tōru Takemitsu: *Between Sound and Silence*

Saturday 28 February 2026, 7:00pm, Purcell Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall

Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu is one of the most important voices of the postwar era. Drawing inspiration from nature, his music feels both intimate and expansive, rooted in stillness and mystery.