

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 6 February 2025

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER AND BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CELEBRATE 60 YEARS OF WORLD-CLASS MUSIC

Plus, the anniversary of a decade-long partnership that has empowered lives through creative wellbeing opportunities.



Musicians from the BSO return to Exeter throughout the month ©Mark Allan

- **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO)** and the **University of Exeter** celebrate **six decades** of live music at the University's Great Hall, as the Orchestra returns this month.
- The Orchestra has introduced many of the greatest musicians from the last century and beyond to Exeter audiences, violinist **Ida Haendel**, pianist **Radu Lupu**, jazz musician **Humphrey Lyttelton**, horn player **Felix Klieser**, and conductors **Constantin Silvestri** and **Paavo Berglund** among them.
- The University and Orchestra are also marking the **10th anniversary of a partnership** that has seen thousands of people engage in impactful **health and wellbeing programmes** and **music education** work across Devon.
- This month, the BSO will reach thousands of pupils through **Schools' Concerts** and **GCSE Music** events in Devon, before returning to the Great Hall with conductor Alexander Soddy and celebrated cellist Laura van der Heijden [13 Feb].

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra returns to the University of Exeter's Great Hall with leading lights from the world stage, as it celebrates a six-decade-long residency in Devon.

The University of Exeter is the Orchestra's home in Devon: in addition to its world-class symphonic performances, the BSO is loved for its **free Schools' Concerts** in the county and for supporting the **Exeter Community Family Orchestra**.

Since its first performance at the University of Exeter's Great Hall, on **22 January 1965**, the BSO's archive of Exeter concert programmes read like a 'Who's Who' in the greatest names of classical music in the twentieth century and beyond.

One of the biggest stars of the last century – former BSO Principal Conductor, **Constantin Silvestri** – made his historic last performance at the Great Hall [29 November 1968]. Another guest – the conductor **Maxim Shostakovich** – gave a performance of his father's Fifth Symphony, in 1972, as Dmitri Shostakovich's Soviet-era works began reaching wider audiences in the West. In more recent decades, conductors **Marin Alsop**, **Kirill Karabits**, and **Andrew Litton** became regular visitors – and many of today's greatest soloists from the world stage, including **Emmanuel Ax**, **James Ehnes** and **Hilary Hahn**, have given memorable performances. In 2021, horn player **Felix Klieser** performed to audiences in Exeter as part of his UK concerto debut, before making headlines around the world.

The University and Orchestra share a vision to create a fairer, socially just and inclusive society – and, this winter, mark the **10th anniversary of a strategic partnership** that has seen a **commitment to creative opportunities in and around Devon**, with particular focus on access and inclusion and health and wellbeing.

The Orchestra recently shared two popular **Schools' Concerts, reaching over 2,300 pupils** and their teachers, in partnership with the **Devon and Torbay Music Education Hub**. The events were supported with resource packs to prepare for the interactive concert, plus CPD training sessions were offered to enable all teachers to feel confident in delivering the classroom sessions.

Musicians from the BSO continue to reach out to young people: they'll perform **GCSE Set Works concerts** [10 Feb - Plymouth; 11 Feb - Cullompton]; and continue to support the intergenerational **Exeter Community Family Orchestra**, which rehearses weekly to bring all ages together through live music.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE DL, said:

"We're deeply proud of our Devon story, of sixty continuous years of musical memories made in and beyond the University of Exeter's wonderful Great Hall. It's extraordinary to reflect on the list of famous names that have travelled with us over the years – and we're thrilled to continue that tradition today, of bringing the world's greatest stars to you.

"Today's challenges are different from those of 1965, and our decade-long partnership with the University – in bringing creative health and wellbeing opportunities to people in and around Devon – matters more than ever. We are immensely proud of what has been achieved to date and look forward to continuing our work to impact lives through music both on and off the stage for generations to come."

Professor Lisa Roberts, Vice Chancellor and President of the University of Exeter, said:

“We are extremely proud that the University of Exeter is the Orchestra’s home in Devon and are honoured to support the BSO’s work to boost creative health and wellbeing opportunities in the county.

“We would like to pay tribute to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s work to break down barriers in classical music and build a more inclusive musical world through its work with communities, schools and young people. This has brought incredible music into so many lives and driven industry change.”

The Orchestra returns in full to Exeter throughout late-winter and spring. Star cellist Laura van der Heijden performs Elgar’s ever-popular Cello Concerto [13 Feb], before the Orchestra returns for a celebration of film music [13 March]. Celebrated conductor Kirill Karabits unites with accordion player Ksenija Sidorova for a performance of music inspired by folklore [27 March], ahead of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* with conductor Alexandre Bloch [10 April].

See bsolive.com for details of all upcoming Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra events in Exeter and Devon

[ENDS]

NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. High-resolution images available [here](#)
 - a) Musicians from the BSO return to Exeter this month ©Mark Allan
 - b) The BSO’s popular Schools’ Concerts at Exeter’s Great Hall ©BSO
 - c) BSO Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE ©Corin Messer

2. ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA | bsolive.com

*Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth | Artist-in-Residence — Alena Baeva
Principal Guest Conductor — Chloé Van Soeterstède | Associate Guest Conductor – David Hill MBE
Conductor Laureate & Artistic Director, Voices from the East – Kirill Karabits
Conductor Laureate – Andrew Litton | Conductor Emeritus – Marin Alsop
Calleva Assistant Conductor – Enyi Okpara*

One of the UK’s best-loved orchestras, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is known for championing the role of culture in people’s lives. Based at Lighthouse, Poole, the Orchestra is resident in Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth, Southampton, and Yeovil, and performs in towns and villages across the region. A leading arts charity, it is the largest cultural provider in the South West of England, serving one of the biggest and most diverse regions in the UK.

Celebrated globally for his outstanding musicianship, extraordinary interpretations, and breadth of repertoire, **Mark Wigglesworth’s** appointment as Chief Conductor builds on the BSO’s reputation for the highest quality music-

making. The Orchestra boasts an enviable list of named conductors, including Principal Guest Conductor **Chloé Van Soeterstède**, **Marin Alsop**, **David Hill MBE**, **Kirill Karabits**, and **Andrew Litton**.

Highlights of the season include concerto and chamber performances from **Artist-in-Residence**, the violinist **Alena Baeva**, and collaborations with **Calleva Assistant Conductor**, **Enyi Okpara**, who performs a broad mix of repertoire across the year. Guest artists include conductors Adam Hickox and Kevin John Edusei; pianist Nicholas McCarthy; and accordionist Ksenija Sidorova — and the **Orchestra's celebrated Digital Concert series continues into its fifth year**, with 17 live performances broadcast globally from Poole.

Committed to new music, the BSO has presented premiere performances of works by Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, Jonathan Dove, Magnus Lindberg, Anna Korsun, Elizabeth Ogonek, Shirley J. Thompson OBE, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Kate Whitley in recent years — and its Voices from the East series has been recognised for unearthing lost symphonic works from eastern Europe and central Asia.

The BSO is known for championing access to high-quality music for all and leads hundreds of community-based events each year through its BSO Participate programme: from its award-winning work in health and care settings to partnerships with schools and music education hubs. In the 2024/25 season, it deepens its reach into local communities, including: a new residency in partnership with **Dorset County Hospital** and **Arts in Hospital**; an expansion of its creative health work; and the extension of the **BSO Young Associates** community music training scheme. Following international attention for igniting change, **BSO Resound** — the world's first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major orchestra, and winner of the 2019 Royal Philharmonic Society's Impact Award — continues to challenge perceptions.

A **National Portfolio of Arts Council England**, the BSO is a registered charity and relies on generous philanthropic support from individual donors, gifts in wills, corporate partners, and charitable trusts and foundations. In 2024, the Orchestra was delighted to receive its largest ever funding pledge from a charitable trust: a grant award of £300,000 over three years (2025-27) from the **Garfield Weston Foundation** towards BSO Participate.