

**PRESS RELEASE**

Wednesday 21 May 2025

## **AMATEUR MUSICIANS INVITED TO LET THEIR CREATIVITY TAKE FLIGHT AS NEW COMPETITION LAUNCHES THIS SPRING**



*Musicians and broadcasters feature on the judging panel*

- Winners of the first **Lark Music-Making Competition** are being offered the chance to catapult their creativity, thanks to a **£3,000 cash prize pot\*** and Digital Concert subscriptions (worth £170) for all finalists.
- Open until **25 June**, entry is **free** for UK-based instrumentalists (18+) across **all genres**. Simply upload a solo performance of up to 3 minutes inspired by birds or **birdsong**. Winners and finalists will be announced in mid-July.
- The panel of expert judges features musicians, broadcasters and producers from across the industry, including presenter **Tom Service**, violinist **Tania Davis**, and conductor **Enyi Okpara**.
- Launched by **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO)** in association with **Lark Music Insurance**, the Competition celebrates the life-empowering impact of making music.

**Birdsong has inspired musicians throughout time, from the trills of Vivaldi's *Goldfinch Concerto* to Beyonce's cover of the Beatles' *Blackbird*. Now, the Lark Music-Making Competition encourages today's amateur instrumentalists to take flight with their own interpretations.**

Open to anyone over 18, this new national competition invites musicians of **any genre, instrument or ability** to submit a solo performance of music that is connected to birds, whether through its title, mood, or theme. Performers can interpret existing pieces or submit original compositions, as long as entries are their own personal performance.

Opportunities to elevate music-making are up for grabs, from investing in a long-dreamed-of instrument, upgrading home recording gear, or simply giving time and space to pursue a musical goal. The prizes, of **£1,000 across each of three age categories**, 18-24, 25-39 and 40 plus, can support amateur musicians in taking their creativity further, whatever that means to them.

All finalists will receive a free subscription to **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's 2025/26 Digital Concert series (RRP £170)**, offering the chance to watch world-class performances online, with 19 broadcasts available live and online for 30 days. The series provides a window into professional music-making for anyone looking to deepen their own practice, try new ideas, or just enjoy great music from home.

A panel of musicians and broadcasters has assembled to hear recordings. They are looking for creativity, expression and musicality. Whether recorded on a smartphone or in a home studio, judges are keen to see originality and personality in the playing.

Presenter **Tom Service** is one of the UK's leading classical music broadcasters and writers, known best for his work on BBC Radio 3 and The Guardian. He joins musician **Tania Davis** from the Electro quartet, *Bond* – the best-selling group with more than 5 million album sales and 70 platinum and gold albums – and renowned sound engineer and producer **Chris Caton** who has shone the spotlight on stars spanning all genres, from the BSO's livestreamed Digital Concert series to the Paris fashion shows of the late Alexander McQueen. Fanatical about all instruments, Lark Music's **Brian Hillstead** and **Gordana Jevic** join the panel along with the BSO's Principal Cello, **Jesper Svedberg**, BSO Calleva Assistant Conductor, **Enyi Okpara**, and Joint Head of BSO Participate, **Lucy Warren**, who connects the Orchestra's community-based music-making with thousands of people each year.

The competition is launched by **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** – one of the UK's leading ensembles – in association with **Lark Music Insurance**, a specialist music insurer committed to supporting musicians at all levels and the generous sponsor of the competition's prizes. The BSO creates a diverse mix of community music initiatives across the South West, from the **BSO Young Associate** programme – which supports aspiring community music leaders traditionally underrepresented in the classical music sector – to **Symphony from Scratch**, an inclusive music-making weekend that unites disabled and non-disabled professional and amateur musicians of all ages. Lark Music is a proud supporter of these two programmes.

**Lark Music-Making Competition Judge and Joint Head of BSO Participate, Lucy Warren**, said: *"We can't wait to hear what you'll do with this brief — the creative possibilities around birds and birdsong are endless. Whether it's a classical work, jazz or world music, or a brand-new creation, this is all about personality, expression and joy in music-making. However you play, we can't wait to hear your music."*

**Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE**, said: *"We're proud to launch the Lark Music-Making Competition with our partners at Lark Music, which will celebrate the millions of people who make music in homes, sheds, churches and community halls across the UK. We see the transformative impact of music every day — this competition is our way of shining a spotlight on that remarkable passion and talent."*

**Lark Music Insurance's Partnership Account Executive, Brian Hillstead**, said: *"At Lark Music, we believe that musicians should be able to focus on what they love – making music. We're delighted to work together with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and launch the Lark Music-Making Competition, giving amateur musicians the platform to showcase their creativity. Whether you're playing for discovery, connection, or joy — this is your moment to be heard and celebrated."*

For full details and to enter, visit [bsolive.com/Lark](https://bsolive.com/Lark) – entries close on Wednesday 25 June, at 11.59pm.

[ENDS]

## NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. \*Note: £3,000 prize pot is split between three age categories. There is a £1,000 prize for winners in each age group: 18-24, 25-39 and 40 plus.
2. Judging panel:  
Sound engineer **Chris Caton**  
Musician **Tania Davis**  
Lark Music's **Brian Hillstead**  
Lark Music's **Gordana Jevic**  
BSO Calleva Assistant Conductor, **Enyi Okpara**  
Broadcaster and writer **Tom Service**  
BSO's Principal Cello, **Jesper Svedberg**  
Joint Head of BSO Participate, **Lucy Warren**
3. High-resolution images [available here](#)
  - a) Sound engineer Chris Caton ©BSO
  - b) Musician Tania Davis
  - c) Lark Music's Brian Hillstead
  - d) Lark Music's Gordana Jevic
  - e) Broadcaster Tom Service ©BSO
  - f) BSO Principal Cello Jesper Svedberg ©BSO
  - g) BSO Joint Head of BSO Participate Lucy Warren ©BSO
  - h) BSO's Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE ©Corin Messer
  - i) The BSO performing at Bournemouth's Meyrick Park ©BSO
4. The Lark Music-Making Competition is grateful to the **Ralph Vaughan Williams Foundation** and **Oxford University Press** for use of *The Lark Ascending* in its promotional material.
5. **ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** | [bsolive.com](https://bsolive.com)

Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth | 2025/26 Artist-in-Residence – Roderick Williams OBE  
Principal Guest Conductor – Chloé Van Soeterstède | Associate Guest Conductor – David Hill MBE  
Conductor Laureate & Artistic Director, Voices from the East – Kirill Karabits OBE  
Conductor Emeritus – Marin Alsop | Conductor Laureate – Andrew Litton  
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.



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*Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is a registered charity, No.208520*

The Daily Telegraph described Mark Wigglesworth's opening performance as Chief Conductor in 2024 as "*a fine, fierce debut*". Celebrated globally for his outstanding musicianship, extraordinary interpretations, and breadth of repertoire, Wigglesworth's first season has magnified 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.

In 2025/26, the BSO welcomes baritone **Roderick Williams OBE** as Artist-in-Residence: Williams performs five times across the season, including Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony*, Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, and a 24-song cycle, *An English Winterreise*. The Orchestra also introduces **Dani Howard** as its Celebrated Composer, a series that shines a spotlight on new British music. It shares seven performances of Howard's music, including the UK premiere of her *Saxophone Concerto* with **Jess Gillam**. Further highlights of the season include debut performances from organist **Anna Lapwood**, cellist **Hugo Svedberg**, guitarist **Plínio Fernandes**, viola player **Timothy Ridout**, among more. The Orchestra's celebrated **Digital Concert series** continues into its sixth year, with 19 live performances broadcast globally from Poole.

The Orchestra is celebrated for its pioneering community-based **BSO Participate** work, spanning partnerships with health and care providers to inclusive events in schools and with music education hubs. In the 2025/26 season, highlights include the expansion of its creative health programme with **Dorset County Hospital and Arts in Hospital** into further **Dorset HealthCare** sites, and an extension of its support for **Community and Wellbeing Orchestras** supporting a range of needs across the region from Bodmin, Boscombe and Bristol to Chard and Wincanton.

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. The group unites with Calleva Assistant Conductor Enyi Okpara and members of the **National Open Youth Orchestra** to share its live music in schools in 2025/26.

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.

The BSO's Principal Broadcast Partner is **BBC Radio 3**.  
The BSO is **Classic FM's** Orchestra in the South of England.

## 6. **ABOUT LARK MUSIC INSURANCE** | [larkmusic.com](https://larkmusic.com)

Music brings people together like nothing else can – bridging cultures, languages, ages, and genders. For over 25 years, Lark Music has been protecting musicians to keep their treasured instruments and equipment safe.

By offering specialist, flexible and easy cover, we leave our customers free to focus on what is most important to them: making music happen, however they choose. Our passion for music inspires everything we do, not only from every policy that we place or our tailored service and personal touch but also through our support of the musical community with our partnerships, sponsorships, and belief in improving access to services and education for all music lovers.

Through our collaboration with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, we're continuing our commitment to supporting initiatives that nurture emerging talent, champion inclusivity, and create meaningful opportunities for musicians at all levels. We're helping to ensure that musicians don't just have the protection they need, but also the resources and opportunities to flourish, perform, and inspire. Like our customers, everything we do is for the love of music.

For more information about Lark Music, our musical insurance policies, and the support we give to the music industry, visit [larkmusic.com](https://larkmusic.com)