

PRESS RELEASE
Thursday 19 June 2025

PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL SQUARE LIGHTS UP: TWO OPEN-AIR CONCERTS WITH FULL ORCHESTRA THIS AUGUST



Conductor Pete Harrison leads two nights of celebration in the city

- Music fans are preparing to celebrate summer with live music in **Portsmouth Guildhall Square**, in two new events featuring the full **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** and special guests.
- A host of **West End stars** – including Annie Skates, best known for her role on ITV's *The X Factor* – help party the night away in '**Abba: Symphonic Spectacular**' [Sat 2 Aug]. The weekend opens with '**John Williams: The Master**' [Fri 1 Aug], celebrating film favourites *ET*, *Jurassic Park*, *Harry Potter*, and more.
- **Summer offer tickets available for a limited time:** £25 for a one-day pass, £45 for both. Special rates available for families and groups, and hospitality packages on offer.

Stars of the West End and the full Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra are coming to Portsmouth for two open-air concerts in Guildhall Square – *John Williams: The Master* and *Abba Symphonic Spectacular* – this August. The concerts, presented in partnership with The Guildhall Trust, the charity which operates Portsmouth Guildhall, are among the first ticketed events to take place in the Square.

The weekend opens with some of the best-known film music, when conductor Pete Harrison directs '**John Williams: The Master**' [1 Aug]. Fans of *Superman* and *ET* will recognise Williams' ever-popular music, and hits from *Star Wars*, *Jaws* and *Schindler's List* also feature

Dig out the flares and sparkles for '**Abba Symphonic Spectacular**' [2 Aug], a high-energy night that pays tribute to music from the iconic decade. It features a host of West End singers and Pete Harrison who conducts the group's greatest hits, from *Dancing Queen* and *Take a Chance on Me* to *SOS*,

Waterloo and more. Concertgoers are encouraged to embrace the night fully by joining the Orchestra in their favourite '70s inspired outfits.

Gates open at 6pm, ahead of the 7.30pm performance, and audiences are encouraged to bring picnics to enjoy on site.

The series marks a new development in the special and long-standing relationship between **The Guildhall Trust** and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra: the BSO has performed at the historic venue for over 70 years and gave the first concert following its reopening in 1959.

Join the BSO and special guests for 'John Williams: The Master' [1 Aug] and 'Abba: Symphonic Spectacular' [2 Aug] in Portsmouth Guildhall Square. Special ticket offers now available – see bsolive.com for details.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. High-resolution images [available here](#):
 - a) Capital Singers unite with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra this summer ©BSO
 - b) Conductor Pete Harrison on stage with the BSO ©BSO
 - c) Conductor Pete Harrison © Andy Holdsworth
 - d) Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at Meyrick Park, Bournemouth ©Corin Messer
2. **What's On Listings:**

Friday 1 August, 7.30pm
John Williams: The Master
Pete Harrison (conductor)
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Join the full forces of the BSO in celebrating some of the greatest film music written, from *ET* and *Schindler's List* to *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars* and more.

Saturday 2 August, 7.30pm
Abba: Symphonic Spectacular
Pete Harrison (conductor)
Capital Voices
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Join Capital Voices and the BSO in partying the night away to Abba's greatest hits.

Quotes:

CEO of The Guildhall Trust, Andy Grays, said "*These two spectacular concerts featuring the BSO, will be one of the first ticketed events in Guildhall Square, and we're excited about the prospect of making full use of the Square set against the backdrop of our own Guildhall.*"

Chief Executive Officer of the BSO, Dougie Scarfe OBE, said "*The BSO has been playing concerts at Portsmouth Guildhall for over 70 years, but this will be the first time that the Orchestra has performed in Guildhall Square. We are really looking forward to working with the Guildhall team to stage what will be a stupendous weekend of symphonic concerts.*"

3. **ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** | bsolive.com



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Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is a registered charity, No.208520

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.

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 **Plinio 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.

ABOUT PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL & THE GUILDHALL TRUST | portsmouthguildhall.org.uk

Portsmouth Guildhall is the primary Events and Conferencing Centre in the South of England. With a packed entertainment programme of world-class live music, comedy, classical, dance, family shows and a popular public events programme, there is something for everyone to enjoy within the historic and iconic 2000 seat venue in the heart of Portsmouth.



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Portsmouth Guildhall offers a wide range of activities, workshops, groups and courses through its active 'Get Involved' programme for the community and changing programme of exhibitions to inspire, entertain and transform lives.

The Guildhall Trust has been the sole operator of Portsmouth Guildhall since 2011, transforming the business model and sustainability of the venue, making the Trust one of the most efficient and effective managements around.



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