

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 17 December 2025

BSO CALLEVA CONDUCTING COMPETITION OPENS TO NEXT GENERATION MUSICIANS



Tom Fetherstonhaugh, Marta Gardolińska and Enyi Okpara

- Next generation conductors are being offered the opportunity to catapult their professional career as **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Calleva Conducting Competition** opens today [**17 December**].
- The bursary-supported training position provides a broad mix of performance opportunities and mentoring, including from the Orchestra's world-leading guest conductors and musicians.
- Finalists will be selected to compete in the two-day competition at **Lighthouse, Poole** next April. The winner becomes the BSO's next **Calleva Assistant Conductor**. They follow **Marta Gardolińska, Tom Fetherstonhaugh** and current post holder, **Enyi Okpara**.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) opens its Calleva Conducting Competition this week, offering those aged 35 or below the platform to catapult their professional career.

The winner will conduct performances and assist the BSO's conductors – including **Chief Conductor Mark Wigglesworth**, Chloé Van Soeterstède, Kirill Karabits and David Hill – and visiting guest conductors across the concert year.

The Calleva Assistant Conductor will also get involved in the Orchestra's **pioneering community-based BSO Participate work**. They will conduct a broad mix of events, from high-energy schools' concerts to smaller-scale performances across the South West.

The **two-day competition takes place at Lighthouse, Poole from 27-28 April 2026**, with the winner announced following a vote from the Orchestra's musicians and several performance rounds.

Enyi Okpara was announced as the Competition's previous winner in 2024. This season, alongside his BSO performances, he conducts the Multi-Story Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain, and London Schools' Symphony Orchestra. Enyi was announced as one of Classic FM's Rising Stars earlier this year. He studied an MA in Orchestral Conducting with Sian Edwards at the Royal Academy of Music, where he held the Derek Butler Award.

Former post holders include **Tom Fetherstonhaugh**, who made his BBC Proms debut in 2024 as Artistic Director of Fantasia Orchestra and **Marta Gardolińska** (Music Director – Opera National de Lorraine, former Dudamel Fellow – LA Philharmonic), who was announced as the BSO's Young Conductor in Association in 2018.

Dougie Scarfe OBE, Chief Executive of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra said:

"The BSO's Calleva Conducting Competition is always an exciting moment, which provides us a snapshot into the extraordinary talent of the next generation of conductors. The role provides a platform to elevate their craft, as they juggle the demands of a busy professional schedule with work beyond the stage too, working with all ages across communities in the South West. Enyi, Tom and Marta are fantastic examples of musicians who have taken the baton and run with it, each in their own brilliant way. We look forward to welcoming the next cohort to Poole, in April."

The 12-month role, which runs from September 2026 and holds the possibility of a second-year extension, is funded in 2024-30 by The Calleva Foundation, in memory of Jack Butt.

Stephen and Caroline Butt, Trustees of The Calleva Foundation, said: *"Supporting the Calleva Assistant Conductor programme is our investment in the next generation of outstanding artists. Having greatly enjoyed our association with Tom and Enyi, we're looking forward to following the career of another star performer."*

Find out more about the BSO's Calleva Conducting Competition at bsolive.com.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. High-resolution images available [here](#):

- a) Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra ©Mark Allan
- b) Marta Gardolinska ©Bart Barczyk
- c) Tom Fetherstonhaugh ©Kaupo Kikkas
- d) Enyi Okpara ©Frances Marshall
- e) Dougie Scarfe OBE, BSO Chief Executive © Corin Messer

2. The Calleva Assistant Conductor programme is funded in 2024-30 by The Calleva Foundation, in memory of Jack Butt.

3. **About Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** | bsolive.com

Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth | 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 performing organisation 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.