

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday 13 January 2026

MORE THAN 10,700 KIDS AND TEACHERS TO EXPERIENCE LIVE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC FOR FREE FROM THIS MONTH



Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra ©Mark Allan

- Primary-aged children in **Bristol, Exeter, Poole** and **Portsmouth** to experience live music as Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra tours '**Explore the Orchestra**'.
- Almost all tickets in **8 concert hall performances** have been snapped up – with just a few seats remaining at Portsmouth Guildhall (22 Jan), where the tour begins.
- Thousands more children from around the world will access a later performance – as a Digital Concert – when it is **broadcast live from Lighthouse, Poole**, in May.
- The events feature a mix of live music – including two **interactive songs featuring body percussion and Makaton signs**, created in partnership with schools. **Classroom teachers across the region have benefitted from the BSO's specialist training** and resources ahead of the events.

Teachers and pupils are busy preparing for the first of eight live concert hall performances as Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra begins its 'Explore the Orchestra' tour to Bristol, Exeter, Poole and Portsmouth, from this month.

All seats are available FREE – and more than 10,700 tickets have already been snapped up ahead of the performances at **Portsmouth Guildhall** (22 Jan), **University of Exeter** (30 Jan), **Bristol Beacon** (27 Mar), and **Lighthouse, Poole** (19-20 May).

The annual event is a highlight in the calendar for primary schools and home schoolers across the South West – with many groups returning each time with a new cohort of pupils. The Orchestra leads **continuing professional development sessions for teachers** in advance of the interactive events, along with resource materials to prepare pupils to get the most from the concerts.

Pupils in Bristol, supported by Bristol Beacon, have worked with **composer James Redwood** – who hosts the concerts from the stage – on this year's participatory songs, which are based on the four elements of the natural world.

The Orchestra's performances in May – at Lighthouse, Poole – unveil new participatory songs, one of which explores the power of the human voice and has been created in partnership with pupils from the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) region, supported by SoundStorm Music Education Agency. Charismatic **mezzo soprano Felicity Buckland** joins James on stage for these four performances.

Music by **composer Dani Howard** – who is the BSO's Celebrated Composer throughout the 2025/26 concert season – features in Bristol, Exeter and Portsmouth. The Orchestra's **Calleva Assistant Conductor, Enyi Okpara**, conducts all eight performances: Okpara was announced as one of Classic FM's Rising Stars in 2025 and is known for his passion for bringing orchestral music to life for pupils.

Lucy Warren, Head of BSO Participate, said: “*At Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, we believe that witnessing a symphony orchestra in full flight can be awe-inspiring and exhilarating – watching thousands of primary-aged pupils and teachers have this collective experience that is relevant to them is truly thrilling and affirms why we exist to bring music into people's lives. We're excited to embark on this tour of eight performances at our resident venues of Bristol Beacon, the University of Exeter, Portsmouth Guildhall and Lighthouse, Poole – and are grateful to our partners in schools, music education hubs and local councils for continuing to share in these events with us.*”

Last year, the Orchestra delivered more than **58,800 engagements in 396 learning and participatory experiences across 102 venues in the South West**. Its pioneering BSO Participate work reaches children and young people beyond the concert hall throughout the year, with workshops and performances tailored for all ages, from infants and primary schools to the most advanced students. It also runs a popular tour for SEND schools and runs Bournemouth's National Open Youth Orchestra [NOYO] ensemble.

The BSO's 'Explore the Orchestra' Schools' Concerts are generously supported by the **Skyrme Hart Charitable Trust, Dave & Jan Pointer, the University of Exeter, Christine & Jim Dipple, the VEC Acorn Charitable Trust**, and one anonymous supporter.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's 'Explore the Orchestra' tour visits Portsmouth Guildhall [22 Jan], University of Exeter [30 Jan], Bristol Beacon [27 Mar], and Lighthouse, Poole [19-20 May]. See bsolive.com for full details.

For Portsmouth Schools wishing to book 22 Jan, contact the team directly:
schools@bsorchestra.co.uk

[ENDS]

NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. Event listings – full booking at bsolive.com

Thursday 22 January

Portsmouth Guildhall

Explore the Orchestra: Four Elements

James Redwood (presenter)

Enyi Okpara (conductor)

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Friday 30 January

University of Exeter

Explore the Orchestra: Four Elements

James Redwood (presenter)

Enyi Okpara (conductor)

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Friday 27 March

Bristol Beacon

Explore the Orchestra: Four Elements

James Redwood (presenter)

Enyi Okpara (conductor)

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Tuesday 19 & Wednesday 20 May

Lighthouse, Poole

Explore the Orchestra: Sing Out!

James Redwood (presenter)

Felicity Buckland (mezzo soprano)

Enyi Okpara (conductor)

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

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

- a) Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra ©Mark Allan
- b) Conductor Enyi Okpara ©Frances Marshall
- c) Composer James Redwood ©BSO
- d) The BSO works with schools throughout the year ©Corin Messer
- e) Composer Dani Howard ©Emma Fenton
- f) Head of BSO Participate, Lucy Warren ©BSO

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

Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth | Artist-in-Residence – Roderick Williams OBE

Principal Guest Conductor – Chloé Van Soeterstede | 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 Soeterstede, 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 **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.