

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 15 July 2026

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra names Eleanor Blakeney as new Principal Horn



BSO Principal Horn Eleanor Blakeney

- **One of the most exciting new generation French horn players, Eleanor joins the BSO from Vancouver Symphony Orchestra**
- **Originally from London, she has performed as guest principal with many of the UK's major ensembles**
- **Eleanor performs with the BSO this summer ahead of the Orchestra's upcoming concert season – which returns to Lighthouse, Poole from Wednesday 30 September**

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) welcomes Eleanor Blakeney to the role of Principal Horn ahead of its 2026/27 concert season.

Eleanor comes to the BSO directly from the prestigious Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in Canada, where she worked for a year alongside Alex Wide, former BSO Principal Horn. She has performed as guest principal in many of the UK's major ensembles, including the BBC Symphony, Philharmonia, Britten Sinfonia and RTÉ National Symphony orchestras.

Eleanor graduated with distinction for her master's degree from the Royal Academy of Music in 2023, where she studied with Kira Doherty, Martin Owen, David Pyatt, Michael Thompson and Richard Watkins, and was a recipient of a Countess of Munster Musical Trust Award.

Eleanor said: *“It still feels totally surreal to be named BSO Principal Horn. It was my first professional trial, and I’m so grateful to the Orchestra for trusting me and giving me endless opportunities to play challenging repertoire and take risks.*

“The BSO is one of the most supportive and friendly groups that I’ve worked with, and I’m honoured to be joining such a wonderful group of people and musicians.”

Eleanor, originally from London, has been living in Vancouver for the last 10 months and says relocating to Poole will enable her to travel to the concert hall by bike rather than by underground train.

She said there had been many highlights during her trial with the BSO that led to the job offer, including leading the horn section in Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, with its famous horn obligato part, which was described as *“magnificently delivered”* by Seen & Heard International.

Eleanor added: *“During the trial, I loved playing Walton’s First Symphony in the BSO’s televised BBC Proms performance last year at the Royal Albert Hall. I’d grown up going to Proms throughout my teens so that one really meant a lot to me.*

“I’m looking forward to our BBC Proms performance at Bristol Beacon in August, and of course our season opener at Lighthouse, Poole in September – a symphonic arrangement of Wagner’s Ring Cycle, which is going to be amazing.”

Dougie Scarfe OBE, Chief Executive of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, said: *“We’re thrilled to welcome Eleanor to the role of Principal Horn at the BSO. She is an exceptional talent and has wowed both audiences and musicians alike throughout her trial, most notably with an impressive performance of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony last season.*

“The BSO is a world-class orchestra and touring ensemble, which shares music with audiences throughout the South West of England. We can’t wait to welcome you to our upcoming performances with Eleanor in the role – you’re in for a treat.”

The ever-popular BSO Pops series returns to Meyrick Park, Bournemouth from Friday 7 August. Sponsored by **Lester Aldridge Solicitors** and supported by **BCP Council**, the al fresco events feature two distinctly different themes – symphonic and movie classics followed by smash hits of the 1990s.

Details of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s 2026/27 season are now available. Highlights include the launch of a **two-year Beethoven series**, the arrival of Grammy-award winning **Thomas Adès** as ‘Celebrated Composer’ and Gramophone award-winning pianist **Boris Giltburg** as Artist-in-Residence – plus, the arrival of new Calleva Assistant Conductor, **Michal Oren**.

See bsolive.com for full details.

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1. Event listings – full booking at bsolive.com
2. [About Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra](#) | bsolive.com

Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth

Celebrated Composer – Thomas Adès | Artist-in-Residence – Boris Giltburg

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 – Michal Oren

One of the UK's best-loved orchestras, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) 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 registered 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.

Mark Wigglesworth became the Orchestra's Chief Conductor in 2024, and his opening seasons have 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** alongside **Marin Alsop**, **David Hill MBE**, **Kirill Karabits**, **Andrew Litton** and new Calleva Assistant Conductor, **Michal Oren**.

In 2026/27, the BSO welcomes **Thomas Adès** as its *Celebrated Composer*, in a series that shines a spotlight on new British music. The Orchestra shares eight performances, including one that Adès conducts – and local pupils will interact with his music through further events.

The Orchestra's **two-year Beethoven celebration: *Road to Joy*** runs from October 2026. Alongside symphonic performances, the series provides three immersive *Beethoven Now* weekends, delving deeper into the enduring legacy of the composer's music and humanity.

The BSO welcomes pianist **Boris Giltburg** as *Artist-in-Residence*, with five performances across the season. Further highlights include debut performances from conductor **Charlotte Corderoy**, pianists **Junyan Chen**, **Eva Gevorgyan**, **Isata Kanneh-Mason**, and violinist **Johan Delane**. The BSO's celebrated **Digital Concert** series continues into its seventh year, with 18 live performances broadcast globally from Poole – this year, supported by **Digital Concert Sponsor, Lark Music**.

Celebrated for its pioneering community-based **BSO Participate** work, the Orchestra brings music into people's lives beyond the concert hall thanks to a network of partnerships spanning health, care and music education; with a unique team of dynamic **BSO Associate** and **Young Associate Musicians** living in the heart of communities across the South West, it delivered more than 58,000 experiences last year. Its creative health programme continues to expand, with regular sessions at **Dorset County Hospital**, **Dorset HealthCare** sites, and **University Hospital Southampton**. Several **Community and Wellbeing Orchestras**

support a range of needs across the region from Bodmin, Boscombe and Bristol to Chard, Exeter, Newquay 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, continues to challenge perceptions. The group joins conductors **Tom Fetherstonhaugh** and **Enyi Okpara** in 2026/27.

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.