

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 3 September 2026

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS AS THE BSO'S SPECTACULAR FESTIVE CONCERTS SELLING FAST



Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra ©Mark Allan

- Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's festive season tours the South West this winter
- Hunt is on for 4 young singers to join the BSO on stage in music from ***The Snowman***
- Family favourite ***How To Train Your Dragon In Concert*** comes to Lighthouse, Poole in January

It may only be early September, but Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) is already well ahead with preparations for festive concerts – with tickets selling across the region.

The Orchestra – which is the largest performing organisation in the South West of England – hosts a varied series of concerts over the Christmas and New Year period at **Lighthouse, Poole**, and at **Bristol Beacon, Plymouth's Theatre Royal, Portsmouth Guildhall, Taunton Brewhouse** and **Weymouth Pavilion**.

These include firm favourites in the shape of classic concerts such as Handel's *Messiah*, A Celebration of Christmas Carols and New Year's Day Viennese Gala, as well as festive favourites Last Night of the Christmas Proms and *The Snowman*.

Young singers to join the BSO on stage

The hunt is on for 4 young singers, aged between 9 and 13 to be 'walking in the air' and join the BSO for several of its winter performances [**Sun 29 Nov – Southampton; Fri 4 Dec – Bristol Beacon; Tues 22 Dec – Lighthouse, Poole**]. To apply see [bsolive.com](https://www.bsolive.com)

Two performances in Poole will see the Howard Blake-scored animated film based on the book by Raymond Briggs screened and performed by the BSO, under conductor Teresa Barlow. Further performances – ***Christmas at the Movies*** - in Bristol and Southampton also include the famous song from the family film.

Festive Favourites

The BSO's concert of **'Winter Warmers' at Lighthouse, Poole [Wed 9 Dec]** includes Corelli's *Christmas Concerto*, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, music from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Mussorgsky's *A Night on the Bare Mountain*. The event is supported by The Calleva Foundation, in memory of Jack Butt, with Michal Oren conducting and Maria Włoszczowska as violin/director.

Handel's glorious oratorio ***Messiah* [Wed 16 Dec – Poole]**, one of the most celebrated pieces in the canon, begins the festive period. It is conducted by Paul McCreesh and features soloists Anna Dennis, Anna Harvey, Tom Walker and Matthew Brook, plus the massed ranks of Bournemouth Symphony Chorus.

The Orchestra's ever-popular **Last Night of the Christmas Proms [Fri 18 Dec – Exeter; Sat 19 – Poole; Mon 21 – Portsmouth]** features wonderful pianist and singer extraordinaire **Joe Stilgoe**. He will be showcasing his musical talents with a hamper full of Christmas musical goodies alongside festive orchestral favourites – and a first half of classic jazzy treats.

The perfect way to start the holidays is the traditional festive sing-along, **Celebration of Christmas Carols [Thurs 23 Dec - Poole]**. Gavin Carr will be conducting the BSO alongside the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Children's Choir in a joyous evening devoted to the best traditional carols ever written.

New Year's Viennese Galas and How To Train Your Dragon

Spin into the New Year with a flourish with the **New Year's Viennese Gala [Fri 1 Jan - Poole; Sat 2 Jan - Taunton; Sun 3 Jan – Bristol; Thurs 7 Jan - Fareham; Fri 8 Jan - Plymouth; Sat 9 Jan - Weymouth]**. The BSO, conductor Tom Fetherstonhaugh and soprano Claudia Boyle present a programme full of merry waltzes, polkas and marches from Johann Strauss II, his family and contemporaries. Expect *Tik-Tak* polka, *Emperor* waltz and the *Blue Danube* waltz.

Early in 2027 comes the first special event of next year – ***How To Train Your Dragon in Concert* [Lighthouse, Poole – Fri 15 & Sat 16 Jan]**, a live screening performed with full orchestra. Ellie Storch conducts the BSO in John Powell's Academy Award®-nominated score for the DreamWorks movie which combines humour, fire-breathing action and epic adventure.

Dougie Scarfe OBE, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Chief Executive, said:

"There's nothing like music to bring us together and herald in the festive period – and we have something for everyone, throughout the South West, this winter."

*"For many, it just wouldn't be Christmas without a trip to the concert hall to experience the familiar beauty of Handel's *Messiah*, or to smile and sing along at our *Celebration of Christmas Carols* and the*

ever-popular Last Night of the Christmas Proms, which will be complete with cracker jokes of the usual excellent standard.

“It’s clear the appetite to come together and celebrate is very much alive; don’t hesitate to book now to make sure you get a ticket for this remarkably varied series of concerts.”

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.

See bsolive.com for full details.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. To apply for an audition for *The Snowman*:
<https://bsorch.link/snau>
2. **Event listings – full booking at bsolive.com**

Sunday 29 November, 7pm
MAYFLOWER THEATRE, SOUTHAMPTON
Christmas at the Movies

Friday 4 December, 7pm
BRISTOL BEACON
Christmas at the Movies

Wednesday 9 December, 7.30pm
LIGHTHOUSE, POOLE
Winter Warmers

Wednesday 16 December, 7pm
LIGHTHOUSE, POOLE
Handel’s Messiah

Friday 18 December, 7.30pm
EXETER UNIVERSITY GREAT HALL
Last Night of the Christmas Proms – with Joe Stilgoe

Saturday 19 December, 7.30pm
LIGHTHOUSE, POOLE
Last Night of the Christmas Proms – with Joe Stilgoe

Monday 21 December, 7.30pm
PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
Last Night of the Christmas Proms – with Joe Stilgoe

Tuesday 22 December, 11am & 7pm
LIGHTHOUSE POOLE
The Snowman – with BSO Voices

Wednesday 23 December, 7pm
LIGHTHOUSE POOLE
A Celebration of Christmas Carols

Friday 1 January, 3pm
LIGHTHOUSE, POOLE
New Year's Day Viennese Gala

Saturday 2 January, 7.30pm
TAUNTON BREWHOUSE
New Year Viennese Gala

Sunday 3 January, 3pm
BRISTOL BEACON
New Year Viennese Gala

Thursday 7 January, 7.30pm
FAREHAM LIVE
New Year Viennese Gala

Friday 8 January, 7pm
THEATRE ROYAL, PLYMOUTH
New Year Viennese Gala

Saturday 9 January, 7.30pm
WEYMOUTH PAVILION
New Year Viennese Gala

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.

The BSO's Principal Broadcast Partner is **BBC Radio 3**.

The BSO is **Classic FM**'s Orchestra in the South of England.