



Discoveries and Adventures

Sakari Oramo's 2023-24 season includes BBC Proms performances of monumental symphonies by Dora Pejačević and Mahler and the world premiere of Judith Weir's *Begin Afresh*, the UK premiere of Tebogo Monnagotla's *Globe Skimmer Surfing the Somali Jet*, a centenary celebration of Sibelius' Seventh Symphony with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, a welcome return to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and tours to Switzerland and Japan

Imaginative programming and an innate feeling for music that shines light on what it is to be human stand high among the compelling attributes of Sakari Oramo's work. The Finnish conductor is set to reinforce the point throughout the 2023-24 season with concerts rich in repertoire diversity and thought-provoking connections, correlations and contrasts. Those qualities are clearly present in his three appearances at the BBC Proms and range across his forthcoming concerts in the UK, Europe and Japan.

Oramo's first Proms outing this summer as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, on 14 August 2023, presents the fascinating combination of Brahms's Second Piano Concerto, with Martin Helmchen as soloist, and the Symphony in F sharp minor by Dora Pejačević. The latter, given to mark the centenary of her death, is scored for large orchestra and displays the range and refinement of its composer's invention and craft. The work received its world premiere in Vienna at the Musikverein in 1918 and was extensively revised two years later.

"I was due to conduct the Pejačević Symphony in Stockholm in the autumn of 2020, but the concert was cancelled because of Covid," the conductor recalls. "The Stockholm Philharmonic's programme director recognised that it was an outstanding work while he was surveying hundreds of scores by forgotten female composers. I took the idea to the BBC Symphony Orchestra and we performed and recorded it at the end of 2021. It's a really strong piece, with clear influences from Richard Strauss, Mahler, Dvořák, Smetana and others but very much expressed in her own voice."

Mahler's monumental Third Symphony takes centre stage at the Royal Albert Hall on 19 August, with mezzo-soprano Jenny Carlstedt as soloist and the ladies of the BBC Symphony Chorus and Trinity Boys Choir joining the BBC SO and Oramo. "I never stop marvelling at the way Mahler stepped out of the Second Symphony into this incredible pluralistic soundworld," he notes.

Robert Schumann's Symphony No.1 'Spring', the world premiere of Judith Weir's *Begin Afresh*, inspired by the intersection of nature, the seasons and literature, and Elgar's Violin Concerto with Christian Tetzlaff as soloist occupy the conductor's third visit to the Proms on 24 August. "Christian and I have performed the Elgar in Hamburg together with the Schumann opening the first half of the programme," he recalls. "The combination of both works fantastically well. So for the Proms we will have this coupling of music by two hypersensitive Romantic voices with a new piece by one of the unique voices of our time."

Sakari Oramo returns to the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra on 28 & 30 September as its Conductor Emeritus. Their programme opens with Andrew Norman's explosive *Unstuck* and Kaija Saariaho's *Saarikoski Songs* in their new orchestral arrangement, with Anu Komsa as soprano soloist. The second half comprises Grace Williams' *Fairest of Stars* for soprano and orchestra, a setting of words from Milton's *Paradise Lost* originally commissioned by BBC Wales in 1973, and Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*. "The Saariaho is a stunning song cycle. Although Pentti Saarikoski wrote these poems over fifty years ago, they talk about the problems we have today of the natural catastrophe that's happening around us. This is prophetic poetry set to music of a hyper-poetic and completely gripping kind. *Fairest of Stars* was Grace Williams' last finished piece and an astonishing, expressive composition. She deserves to reach the widest possible audience."

Oramo argues for the paramount importance of enlivening the orchestral repertoire with new work and fine pieces, such as those of Dora Pejačević and Grace Williams, that have long been neglected. “It makes it so much more interesting for audiences and for us as performers,” he observes. “The value of discovery is something that the classical music genre almost forgot. But that is changing fast now.” He opens his season with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre on 6 October with a programme formed from a rarity, a rediscovery and a staple of the symphonic repertoire: it opens with the pairing of György Ligeti’s early *Concert Românesc* and Pejačević’s dramatic *Phantasie Concertante* for piano and orchestra Op.48 with Alexandra Dariescu as soloist, and closes with Mahler’s Symphony No.5.

“It’s great after the pandemic time to be able to programme Mahler symphonies again,” comments Sakari Oramo. “The Fifth is a real conductor’s piece. If you treat it with the total seriousness it deserves and really dig beneath the surface, then every performance will bring out new things. And of course there are always people in the audience who are experiencing the music live for the first time. Compared to pre-Covid times, we’re seeing a noticeably new audience at our Barbican concerts. I’m astonished now by how many young people I see there and the rock concert feel they create. It’s really exciting and makes it so worthwhile performing there, even more so than before the pandemic.”

Sakari Oramo offers two equally fascinating programmes when he and the BBC Symphony Orchestra return to the Barbican Centre in December. The first concert, scheduled for 1 December, opens with the Overture *Jason, or the Argonauts and the Sirens* by Alice Mary Smith (1839-84), a prolific English composer best known today for her two symphonies. “She was highly appreciated, even by her male colleagues! *Jason, or the Argonauts and the Sirens*, one of her two concert overtures, is influenced by Wagner’s *Flying Dutchman* but is completely in her own voice. I’m really keen to bring it to light in London.” After the overture, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnston will be the soloist in Ravel’s *Shéhérazade*. “She’s such a charismatic singer and has just the right voice for this beautiful cycle of songs.” The concert closes with Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’ Symphony, a work that captures the uncertainty of the times in which it was written while projecting the timeless spirit of hope triumphing over despair.

The BBC SO and Oramo perform Sibelius’ Sixth and Seventh Symphonies on 8 December, the composer’s birthday. They preface both with a first half comprising Nielsen’s Rhapsodie Overture *An Imaginary Trip to the Faroe Islands* and *Globe Skimmer Surfing the Somali Jet*, a dashing concerto for violin and orchestra by Swedish composer Tebogo Monnakgotla. Johan Dalene, who gave the latter’s first performance in Stockholm in April, will join conductor and orchestra for its UK premiere. “Monnakgotla’s concerto is a wonderful new piece. Its title refers to the migration of the globe skimmer dragonfly across the Indian Ocean to and from East Africa. But there’s also a metaphor for the migration of people, too. And I’m delighted to be playing Carl Nielsen, whose music is still far too seldom performed by British and German orchestras, for instance. It’s amazing music but also difficult music, which leaves conductor with little room but to do what is in the score. He was such an incredibly strong composer.”

Sakari Oramo and the BBC SO will take the complete cycle of Sibelius’ seven symphonies on tour to Switzerland for concerts at Victoria Hall Geneva, Tonhalle Zurich and Casino Bern (14, 15 & 17 January 2024) and return to the Barbican on 20 January for a programme built from Andrew Norman’s *Unstuck*, Stravinsky’s Violin Concerto with Vilde Frang as soloist, and Sibelius’ First Symphony. Details of the second half of the BBC SO’s season, in which Oramo is set to conduct two programmes, will be announced later this year.

The conductor gives his first concerts with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra since 2012 on 28 & 29 February, with the Suite No.1 from Sibelius’ incidental music to *The Tempest* and Seventh Symphony, Richard Strauss’s *Four Last Songs* with Anu Komsu as soloist and *Ekho* by Finnish composer Aarre Merikanto (1893-1958). “There are still members of the CBSO who were there when I was the orchestra’s principal conductor,” he notes. “I’m really looking forward to working with them and their colleagues again.”

On 21 & 23 March, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and Oramo will mark the centenary of the first performance of Sibelius’ Seventh Symphony. “The Stockholm Philharmonic, conducted by the composer, gave its premiere on 24 March 1924, so performing it again exactly a hundred years later is an important moment in their history. The Seventh’s originality still strikes home today.”

Sibelius accompanies Sakari Oramo to Japan for two concerts with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra at Tokyo’s Suntory Hall and Muza Kawasaki Symphony Hall (20 & 21 April). He will open the second half of their programme with the composer’s tone poem *Luonnotar* as the preface to Dvořák’s Eighth Symphony. The first

half trains the spotlight on Rautavaara's *Cantus Arcticus* and Saariaho's *Saarikoski Songs* with Anu Komsu as soloist. "*Cantus Arcticus* is a real Finnish classic," says the conductor. "And then we have a superb work by one of the great voices of contemporary Finnish music. There is so much good music that has vanished from view but deserves to be performed today. This is why it's vital to keep an open mind about programming and introduce audiences to wonderful things they've never heard before."

www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/sakari-oramo - [Twitter](#)

The information in this press release was correct at the time of sending. Please check the organisations' websites and social media for the latest updates.

For press enquiries, please contact:

Elena Dante at Valerie Barber PR

elena@vbpr.co.uk / +44 (0) 207 586 8560 / www.vbpr.co.uk

We at Valerie Barber PR are committed to protecting your personal information and so we are letting you know that we are storing your email address, work telephone numbers and work postal address on our database so that we can keep you up to date with news on our clients. You can ask us to stop using your information at any time by emailing us at info@vbpr.co.uk. You may also request access to the personal data we have about you, request that any incorrect personal data we have about you be rectified, or request that we erase your personal data. If you have any questions about how we care for and use your personal information please let us know us at info@vbpr.co.uk.

BBC PROMS

Monday 14 August 2023, 7.30pm

Royal Albert Hall, London

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Martin Helmchen** piano | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Brahms Piano Concerto No.2 in B flat major

Pejačević Symphony in F sharp minor

Saturday 19 August 2023, 7pm

Royal Albert Hall, London

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Jenny Carlstedt** mezzo-soprano | **Trinity Boys Choir** | **BBC Symphony Chorus**
| **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Mahler Symphony No.3

Thursday 24 August 2023, 7.30pm

Royal Albert Hall, London

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Christian Tetzlaff** violin | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Weir *Begin Afresh* (world premiere)

Schumann Symphony No.1 in B flat major, 'Spring'

Elgar Violin Concerto in B minor

DVOŘÁK PRAGUE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Thursday 14 September 2023, 8pm

Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Anu Komsu** soprano | **Christian Senn** baritone | **Czech Philharmonic**

Brahms *Ein deutsches Requiem*

Thursday 28 September 2023, 6pm & Saturday 30 September 2023, 3pm
Konserthuset Stockholm

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Anu Komsi** soprano | **Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra**

Norman Unstuck
Saariaho *Saarikoski Songs*
Williams *Fairest of Stars*
Britten *Sinfonia da Requiem*

Friday 6 October 2023, 7.30pm
Barbican Centre, London

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Alexandra Dariescu** piano | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Ligeti *Concert Românesc*
Pejačević *Phantasie Concertante*
Mahler *Symphony No.5*

Friday 10 November 2023, 8pm
Maison de la Radio et de la Musique, Paris

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Anu Komsi** soprano | **Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France**

Sibelius *En Saga*
Saariaho *Saarikoski Songs*
Dvořák *Symphony No.8*

Friday 1 December 2023, 7.30pm
Barbican Centre, London

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Jennifer Johnston** mezzo-soprano | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Smith *Overture Jason, or The Argonauts and the Sirens*
Ravel *Shéhérazade*
Beethoven *Symphony No.3, 'Eroica'*

Friday 8 December 2023, 7.30pm
Barbican Centre, London

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Johan Dalene** violin | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Nielsen *An Imaginary Journey to the Faroe Islands*
Monnagotla *Globe Skimmer Surfing the Somali Jet* (UK premiere)
Sibelius *Symphony No.6*
Sibelius *Symphony No.7*

BBC SO TOUR JANUARY 2024
Sunday 14 January Geneva, Monday 15 January Zurich, Wednesday 17 January 2024 Bern

Saturday 20 January 2024, 7.30pm
Barbican Centre, London

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Vilde Frang** violin | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Norman Unstuck
Stravinsky Violin Concerto
Sibelius Symphony No.1

Wednesday 28 February 2024, 7.30pm
Symphony Hall Birmingham

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Anu Komsi** soprano | **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra**

Sibelius *The Tempest* (Suite No.1)
Strauss *Four Last Songs*
Merikanto *Ekho*
Sibelius Symphony No.7

Thursday 29 February 2024, 7.30pm

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Daishin Kashimoto** violin | **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra**

Elgar *Cockaigne*
Mozart Violin Concerto No.5
Sibelius Symphony No.5

Thursday 21 March 2024, 6pm & Saturday 23 March 2024, 3pm
Konserthuset Stockholm

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Johan Dalene** violin | **Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra**

Nielsen Violin Concerto
Ravel *Valses nobles et sentimentales*
Sibelius Symphony No.7

Saturday 20 April 2024 Suntory Hall, Tokyo
Sunday 21 April 2024 Muza Kawasaki Symphony Hall, Kawasaki-City

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Anu Komsi** soprano | **Tokyo Symphony Orchestra**

Rautavaara *Cantus Arcticus*
Saariaho *Saarikoski Songs*
Sibelius *Luonnotar*
Dvořák Symphony No.8

Thursday 9 & Friday 10 May 2024, 7.30pm
DR Koncerthuset, Copenhagen

Sakari Oramo conductor | **Anu Komsi** soprano | **Danish National Symphony Orchestra**

Sibelius *En Saga*
Saariaho *Saarikoski Songs*
Dvořák Symphony No.8