



## The Power of Programming

**Sakari Oramo celebrates the extension of his contract as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra with captivating Barbican Centre series**

**Oramo's 2024-25 season includes the UK premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *HUSH*, a focus on works by Grażyna Bacewicz, Britta Byström, and Dora Pejačević, and Busoni's Piano Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker, and Orchestre national de France.**

'It's official: if you want to be guaranteed an infallible musical adrenalin boost in London, you can always be sure to find it with Finnish conductor Sakari Oramo and his BBC Symphony Orchestra,' *Artsdesk*

Britain's musical life has been greatly enriched over the past three decades by the artistry, dedication and leadership of Sakari Oramo. Those qualities are set to bear fine fruit throughout the 2024-25 season thanks not least to his compelling programmes as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The wide scope of the Finnish conductor's interests is reflected in his carefully curated concerts at the Barbican Centre, hallmarked by their diversity of repertoire, imaginative connections between compositions and wholehearted promotion of new work. His latest London series follows the announcement of the extension of his contract with the BBC Symphony Orchestra until 2030, the centenary year of its foundation.

Sakari Oramo's Barbican season embraces monumental compositions by Mahler and Busoni; the eagerly awaited UK premiere of Kaija Saariaho's final work, her trumpet concerto *HUSH*; Vaughan Williams' *Toward the Unknown Region*; and works by Grażyna Bacewicz, Dora Pejačević and Karol Szymanowski. His international conducting schedule, meanwhile, includes guest dates with the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Gürzenich Orchestra, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the NDR Elbphilharmonieorchester, the Orchestre national de France and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

News of the extension of Sakari Oramo's contract with the BBC Symphony Orchestra was announced on September 11th, ahead of his performance at the Last Night of the BBC Proms on September 14th. It represents the conductor's clear commitment to his orchestra's future development. "I am delighted to renew my contract with the BBC Symphony Orchestra," he comments. "There's an aspiration, shared by all parties at the BBC, to take the orchestra forward to its centenary in 2030. Big things are planned for the hundredth anniversary and around the orchestra's move to what will be its purpose-built home at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. We will work hard to establish our presence in that part of London and attract a local audience to the new BBC Music Studios. It's a great opportunity to take what the BBC Symphony Orchestra is about to a diverse community, especially as we enter prepare to our second century. I am genuinely excited by the potential and the possibilities."

Oramo and the BBC Symphony Orchestra open their season at the Barbican Centre on 26 September with Mahler's Symphony No. 6 '*Tragic*'. They meet again later this autumn to explore the tantalising coupling of Bacewicz's Symphony No.2 and Busoni's Piano Concerto, with Kirill Gerstein as soloist (1 November). Oramo and Gerstein will perform Busoni's titanic work with the Orchestre national de France at the Auditorium du Louvre (10 October) and the Berliner Philharmoniker at the Philharmonie Berlin (17, 18 & 19 October), where the programme will also include Debussy's *Trois Nocturnes*. Details of the second half of Oramo's BBC Symphony Orchestra season will be announced on 9 October.

"It will be a treat to perform Mahler Six with the BBC Symphony," he notes. "We will follow the order of the movements as it appears in the work's first edition, with the *Scherzo* coming before the *Andante*, and I intend to have three hammer blows in the finale rather than two. I'm going for what works dramatically. And then we'll mark the centenary of Busoni's death with his Piano Concerto in Paris, Berlin and London. I've paired it with Debussy's *Trois Nocturnes* in Berlin, which I think makes a good match. There's always so much interest in the Busoni concerto because of its vast scale and also because of its musical depth. Kirill and I recorded it with the

Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2017, and we're delighted to be able to revisit it for the Busoni centenary. I will have the male chorus on stage, since it's very impractical to have an offstage chorus and it can sound so diffuse and unclear that way. It works perfectly with the chorus and orchestra together and does justice to Busoni's music."

The conductor's wholehearted advocacy of work by female composers registers clearly in his programmes this season. He continues to champion the music of Croatian composer Dora Pejačević, opening his Barbican concert on 8 November with her Overture in D minor Op.49 and coupling it with Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No.1, with Ilya Gringolts as soloist; the music of Grażyna Bacewicz, likewise, figures prominently in his schedule. "As well as performing her Second Symphony at the Barbican, we'll also record it as part of our Bacewicz series for Chandos, together with her more modern-sounding Concerto for Orchestra and Piano Concerto, with Peter Donohoe as soloist. I like how she never rattles around on one idea for long, so her pieces are concise and very effective."

Oramo's affinity for the music of Kaija Saariaho is mirrored in three projects this season. He will make the first recording of the Finnish composer's ethereal orchestral work *Vista* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in November for the record label that he co-founded with the soprano Anu Komi. This will be paired with two other world premiere recordings of Saariaho's works: *Saarikoski Songs* in the orchestral arrangement and *Three Preludes* for soprano and organ. Saariaho's *Saarikoski Songs* feature in Oramo's two concerts with the Gürzenich Orchestra at the Cologne Philharmonie on 11 & 12 January. Finnish jazz trumpeter and composer Verner Pohjola will join Oramo and the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre for the UK premiere of her Trumpet Concerto *HUSH* (24 January 2025). The work, written for Pohjola and with his mastery of extended techniques in mind, was completed shortly before Saariaho's death in June 2023. It has been programmed together with Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, the *Adagio* from Mahler's Symphony No.10 and Vaughan Williams' early setting of words by Walt Whitman, *Toward the Unknown Region*.

"Kaija had to dictate much of the concerto from her sickbed," notes Sakari Oramo. "This whole programme reflects the sense of loss of such an important, inspirational composer. Each piece in the concert represents a voyage into the unknown. Kaija was really inspired with what Verner can do with his instrument and has captured his artistry in the piece. It's her last work and I think it's quite mind-blowing. That's why it's at the centre of this programme and everything else is organised around it."

Other highlights of Oramo's season comprise dates in Cologne in January and March and a seven-concert tour to Japan in February with the Gürzenich Orchestra. Their tour programmes include Mahler's Symphony No.5, which received its world premiere from the Gürzenich Orchestra in 1904 under the composer's direction, Beethoven's Symphony No.7, and concertos by Bruch, Mozart and Robert Schumann. Britta Byström's Violin Concerto *Shortening Days* and Elgar's Symphony No.1 are on the bill for the conductor's concerts with the NDR Elbphilharmonieorchester (21 & 22 November), while Bacewicz's Symphony No.4 and Debussy's *Trois Nocturnes* feature in his programmes with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (28, 29 & 30 November).

"Programming is a great passion of mine," Sakari Oramo observes. "One must always think about the listener, of course, and consider putting pieces together that create aesthetically interesting 'stories'. And it's also important to enlighten and educate the audience. That is fundamental to what we do at the BBC, but I feel that every orchestra should do the same. This is why my repertoire is wide and the reason I'm constantly absorbing new pieces and revising my knowledge of those I've done before. It's one of the great joys of the job."

[www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/sakari-oramo](http://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.**

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**Thursday 26 September 2024, 7:30pm**  
**Barbican, London**

Mahler Symphony No. 6

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

**Thursday 10 October 2024, 8:00pm**  
**Auditorium du Louvre, Paris**

Busoni Piano Concerto

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Kirill Gerstein** piano | **Chœur de Radio France** | **Orchestre National de France**

**Thursday 17 October 2024, 8:00pm**  
**Friday 18 October 2024, 7:00pm**  
**Saturday 19 October 2024, 7:00pm**  
**Berliner Philharmoniker, Berlin**

Busoni Piano Concerto

Debussy *Trois Nocturnes* (17 & 19 October)

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Kirill Gerstein** piano | **Rundfunkchor Berlin** | **Berliner Philharmoniker**

**Friday 1 November 2024, 7:30pm**  
**Barbican, London**

Bacewicz Symphony No.2

Busoni Piano Concerto

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Kirill Gerstein** piano | **BBC Symphony Chorus** | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

**Friday 8 November 2024, 7:30pm**  
**Barbican, London**

Pejačević Overture in D minor

Szymanowski Violin Concerto No.1

Wagner *Siegfried Idyll*

Strauss *Death and Transfiguration*

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Ilya Gringolts** violin | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

**Thursday, 21 Nov 2024, 20:00pm**  
**Sunday, 24 Nov 2024, 11:00am**  
**Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg**

Verdi Overture *La forza del destino*

Byström Violin Concerto *Shortening Days* (World Premiere)

Elgar Symphony No.2

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Janine Jansen** violin | **NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester**

**Thursday 28 November 2024, 7:30pm**

**Friday 29 November 2024, 7:30pm**

**Saturday 30 November 2024,**

**Gewandhaus, Leipzig**

**Beethoven** Piano Concerto No.5

**Bacewicz** Symphony No.4

**Debussy** *Trois Nocturnes*

**Schumann** Symphony No.1 *Spring* (30 November)

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Leif Ove Andsnes** piano | **GewandhausChores** | **Gewandhausorchester**

**Saturday 11 January 2025, 8:00pm**

**Sunday 12 January 2025, 11:00am**

**Cologne Philharmonie, Cologne**

**Sibelius** *En saga*

**Saariaho** *Saarikoski-laulut*

**Dvořák** Symphony No. 8

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Anu Komsu** soprano | **Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne**

**Friday 24 January 2025, 7:30pm**

**Barbican, London**

**Mahler** Symphony No.10 *Adagio*

**Saariaho** Trumpet Concerto *HUSH* (UK Premiere)

**Vaughan Williams** *Toward the Unknown Region*

**Vaughan Williams** *The Lark Ascending*

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Verner Pohjola** trumpet | **Igor Yuzefovich** violin | **BBC Symphony Chorus** | **BBC Symphony Orchestra**

**JAPAN TOUR (9 – 16 February 2025)**

**Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne**

**Mahler** Symphony No.5

**Bruch** Violin Concerto No.1

**Beethoven** Symphony No.7

**Weber** Overture *Oberon*

**Mozart** Piano Concerto No.23

**Schumann** Piano Concerto in A minor

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Akiko Suwanai** violin | **Mao Fujita** piano | **Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne**

**Wednesday 26 February 2025, 7:00pm**

**The Helsinki Music Centre, Helsinki**

**Pingoud** *The Faces of the Big City*

**Prokofiev** Violin Concerto No. 1

**Vaughan Williams** *Job: A Masque for Dancing*

**Sakari Oramo** conductor | **Julia Fischer** violin | **Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra**