



## City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra launches centenary celebrations with ambitious 2019-2020 season

- CBSO launches first season in two-year-long centenary celebrations, with special events, commissions and initiatives inspired by its history and shaping its future.
- 40 centenary commissions announced – 20 from established composers and 20 encores from composers under the age of 30.
- A focus on choral masterpieces associated with Birmingham includes Britten's *War Requiem*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Handel's *Messiah*.
- The orchestra offers 12 Youth Ambassadors the opportunity to curate and programme the first main evening concert of its centenary year.
- The Friday Night Classics series includes the world premieres of three new symphonic suites by Andrew Lloyd Webber arranged by Andrew Cottee.
- The CBSO performs Elgar's *Cello Concerto* with Sheku Kanneh-Mason in Symphony Hall Birmingham, at the BBC Proms in London and on tour internationally.
- Extensive touring plans include a British music festival at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, residencies at the Musikverein in Vienna and the Dortmund Konzerthaus.
- Guest artists include Alison Balsom, Nicola Benedetti, Leila Josefowicz, Benjamin Grosvenor, Osmo Vänskä and Piotr Anderszewski.
- CBSO's commitment to enriching every life with music is reinforced with over thirty concerts for children and young people, extensive education and community plans and provision of discounted concert tickets from just £6.
- A new book by Richard Bratby on the CBSO's history is published by Elliott & Thompson.

The **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)** is delighted to announce its 2019-20 Concert Season at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. The orchestra celebrates its centenary in 2020, and the 2019-20 season launches the celebrations by taking inspiration from its past and looking forward to the future of classical music with a series of special events, premieres and concerts.

**Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla** returns for her fourth season as the CBSO's Music Director and leads over forty concerts throughout the 2019-20 period. She comments: "*Launching our centenary celebrations with the 2019-2020 season is an honour for me and the CBSO. It is exciting to look back at our proud history but also explore the role of an orchestra for the next 100 years*".

### **Celebrating the past**

The CBSO was founded in 1920, and its diverse history is the starting point for a series of concerts exploring the orchestra's most important moments as well as its connections with composers, conductors, artists and its home city.

- The orchestra has long been at the heart of Birmingham's vibrant choral tradition and throughout the season, the CBSO's choruses present a range of **choral masterpieces** that were born in the West Midlands – including Britten's *War Requiem* (given its world premiere by the CBSO in Coventry Cathedral in 1962), Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (premiered in Birmingham in 1846), Handel's *Messiah* (the bedrock on which Birmingham's famous Triennial Festivals were built), Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* (premiered in Birmingham in 1900) and Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand* (intended to receive its UK premiere by the CBSO in 1921).



- Over its 100 years the CBSO has built long-standing relationships with **the world's greatest composers**, many of whom have performed in or conducted the orchestra in performances of their own works - including Holst, Vaughan Williams, Walton, Sibelius and Knussen. **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla** launches the 2019-20 season with three such works - Elgar's *Cello Concerto* (also marking its centenary in 2019) with soloist **Sheku Kanneh-Mason**, Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, and former CBSO oboist Ruth Gipps' *Symphony No.2*.
- This season sees the orchestra conclude its decade-long **centenary countdown** which has followed - year by year - the musical events of 1910-1920. The 2019-20 season features works composed in 1920 including Vaughan Williams' *A London Symphony*, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, and Fauré's *Masques et Bergamasques*.
- Commissioned specially to celebrate the orchestra's Centenary, **a new book** by classical music writer and *The Spectator* music critic **Richard Bratby** explores the history of the CBSO. Published by Elliott & Thompson November 2019.
- **Pre-concert talks** inspired by the orchestra's long history feature guests including retired players and long-serving audience members.

### Creating the future

- Continuing the CBSO's commitment to championing the music of living composers, the orchestra launches its most ambitious commissioning programme to date, as it announces a series of **CBSO Centenary Commissions** to be premiered this season and next.
  - **20 commissions from established international composers** are given their world or UK premieres throughout the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons. The 2019-20 season features a new cello concerto by former CBSO Composer in Association **Julian Anderson** and the first symphony by **Thomas Adès**, conducted by **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla**, as well as works by **Gary Carpenter**, **Unsuk Chin**, **Grace-Evangeline Mason**, **Thea Musgrave**, **Jörg Widmann** and **Stef Conner**.
  - The **CBSO Encores Project** will see **20 encores commissioned from young composers** under the age of 30. The composers will be chosen by the CBSO and the new works will be unveiled as encores throughout the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons.
  - The CBSO is committed to a 50:50 gender split across these Centenary Commissions.
- For the first time ever the orchestra hands control to twelve **Youth Ambassadors**, as they are given the opportunity to curate, programme and promote the first CBSO main evening concert of the orchestra's 2020 centenary year at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. The '*Youth Takeover*' concert is conducted by CBSO Assistant Conductor **Jaume Santonja Espinós**.
- A concert designed to dispel myths around contemporary music and explore how to listen to new music features works by John Adams, Oliver Knussen, Jörg Widmann, Steve Reich and Thomas Adès. ***The Thrill of the New*** is conducted by CBSO Associate conductor **Michael Seal** and presented by **Paul Rissmann**.

The CBSO continues to showcase and nurture the talents of young musicians. The **CBSO Youth Orchestra** - one of Europe's leading Youth Orchestras – celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> birthday with the ensemble's first ever performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, with conductor **Andrew Gourlay**. Joining the orchestra in this concert will be BBC Young Musician 2018 **Lauren Zhang** to perform Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No.2*.



- Later in the season the Youth Orchestra will perform Elgar's *Symphony No.1* under the baton of CBSO Principal Guest Conductor **Kazuki Yamada**, while the **CBSO Youth Orchestra Academy** presents '*A Fist Full of Fives*', a celebration of '5s' in classical music including Beethoven's *Symphony No.5*. The **CBSO Youth Chorus** performs in six concerts throughout the season, in works including Britten's *War Requiem*, Holst's *The Planets* and a new choral work by Gary Carpenter called '*Ghost Songs*' with the **CBSO Children's Chorus**. The **CBSO Children's Chorus** appears in five concerts including Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* and a family concert of classic film music. The CBSO also collaborates with **Royal Birmingham Conservatoire** to provide student musicians with the opportunity to present pre-concert performances at Symphony Hall.
- The CBSO is passionate about bringing music to audiences of all ages; the 2019-20 season features over thirty concerts for children and young people, including a **series of Family Concerts** and **Notelets** designed to bring music alive to audiences young and old and inspire the next generation of musicians. Entertaining and informal, the CBSO Family Concerts are suitable for ages 5-11 and in the 2019-20 season include a presentation of Britten's much-loved *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*; a chance for families to experience the energy of the full CBSO Percussion section; and a concert of Film Classics conducted by **Michael Seal**; while three **Notelets** mini-concerts give toddlers the chance to express themselves through singing and dancing inspired by time-travel, percussion and Christmas!
- The CBSO's Learning and Engagement projects continue to achieve over 70,000 engagements annually with young people and participants across the community. The **CBSO's Schools' Concerts** at Symphony Hall reach over 12,000 young people aged 7-14 every year. This season the Key Stage 2 and 3 concerts are conducted by **Michael Seal** and **Jaume Santonja Espinós**, and presented by **Tom Redmond** and **Catherine Arlidge**. CBSO's successful Key Stage 1 concerts and relaxed concerts for children and young people with special educational needs will also return in Spring 2020.
- The CBSO is committed to ensuring there are opportunities for people to experience great music regardless of financial barriers. The orchestra's **Mystery Seats** scheme continues this season, offering over 3,000 tickets in non-allocated seating priced just £13 each. Children aged 17 and under, school groups and benefit recipients can attend concerts from just £6, and students can also purchase tickets from just £6. Tickets for young professionals aged between 18-30 are £10 for selected concerts and across the season a wide range of discounts and benefits can be unlocked by purchasing concert packages.

### **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla**

Mirga opens the 2019-20 season with a three-concert celebration of British music including Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, Elgar's *Cello Concerto* with **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** and Thea Musgrave's new *Trumpet Concerto* performed by **Alison Balsom**. Further highlights in the season include Mahler's colossal *Symphony of a Thousand* with massed choruses from Birmingham and beyond, a celebration of the music of Varèse and Debussy, Holst's *The Planets* and Britten's *War Requiem*. 250 years since Beethoven's birth, Mirga also leads the CBSO in two performances of his Symphonies No. 2 and 4.

### **Kazuki Yamada**

In his second season as Principal Guest Conductor of the CBSO, **Kazuki Yamada** leads the orchestra in six concerts during 2019-20, including Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Schumann's *Symphony No.2*, Shostakovich's *Violin Concerto No.1* with **Vilde Frang**, the first CBSO performance of Respighi's *Roman Trilogy*, Elgar's *Symphony No.1* and the UK premiere of Julian Anderson's *Cello Concerto* performed by **Alban Gerhardt**.



**The CBSO Chorus**

The CBSO Chorus appear in no fewer than thirteen concerts in the 2019-20 season, providing the backbone for the season's wealth of choral masterpieces, including Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*, Brahms' *A German Requiem*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Britten's *War Requiem*. They also lead a special singalong performance of Verdi's famous *Requiem*, with the CBSO's acclaimed chorus director **Simon Halsey CBE**. In October the CBSO Chorus joins the CBSO on tour to Hamburg and Dortmund for concerts of Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* conducted by **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla** and in November they travel to Monte Carlo to perform Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, conducted by **Kazuki Yamada**.

**Guest artists**

Internationally-renowned artists making their CBSO debuts this season include pianist **Sunwook Kim**, mezzo-soprano **Hannah Hipp**, baritone **Thomas Bauer**, viola players **Lise Berthaud** and **Sarah McElravy**, conductor **Klaus Mäkelä** and violinist/conductor **Julian Rachlin**. Returning guest soloists include **Alison Balsom**, **Nicola Benedetti**, **Benjamin Grosvenor**, **Leila Josefowicz**, **Alban Gerhardt** and **Piotr Anderszewski**. Debut conductors include **Ricardo Minasi**, **Juanjo Mena** and **Anja Bihlmaier**, while returning conductors include **Edward Gardner**, **Osmo Vänskä**, **Richard Egarr**, **Gustavo Gimeno**, **François Leleux** and **Alpesh Chauhan**.

**CBSO beyond Birmingham**

The CBSO marks its centenary with extensive touring to Europe's most prestigious concert venues and festivals. Plans include a British music festival at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, a mini-residency at the Musikverein in Vienna, and a series of concerts in Dortmund's Konzerthaus as part of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla's three year artistic residency with the hall.

The CBSO gives its annual **BBC Proms** performance at the Royal Albert Hall on 22 August, with cellist **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** performing Elgar's *Cello Concerto* alongside Weinberg's *Symphony No.3* and *Lamia* by Birmingham-born composer Dorothy Howell. Conductor **Edward Gardner** joins the CBSO at the **Aldeburgh Festival** for music by Tippett, Beethoven, Larcher, Knussen and Bartók on 23 June and the orchestra returns to **Sutton Park** for an open-air concert conducted by **Michael Seal** on 29 June, before **Alison Balsom** appears with the orchestra for the world premiere of Musgrave's *Trumpet Concerto* conducted by **Mirga** at the **Cheltenham Festival** on 6 July.

**Friday Night Classics**

The hugely popular *Friday Night Classics* concerts series see the CBSO's musicians showcasing their versatility in performing orchestral music from a variety of genres. The orchestra's 100th birthday provides the inspiration for a number of Friday Night Classics concerts this season - including a focus on a century of film music, a concert dedicated to the eight **Star Wars** scores, and a concert showcasing songs from the **Roaring Twenties** conducted by **Gavin Sutherland**. Audiences have the opportunity to hear the world premieres of lush symphonic suites from three of Andrew Lloyd Webber's greatest shows - *Phantom of the Opera*, *Evita* and *Sunset Boulevard*, arranged for the full-size CBSO and conducted by **Andrew Cottee**. A celebration of popular music by **Elton John** marks 50 years since the release of 'Your Song'. Two concerts in association with **Classic FM** present the orchestra at its most soothing – an evening of relaxing classics with the **CBSO's Ultimate Playlist** and an **English Serenade** featuring works by Arnold, Elgar, Coleridge-Taylor and Vaughan Williams.

Actor **Hugh Dennis** presents the CBSO's annual **Christmas** celebration featuring the massed family of CBSO choruses and showcasing festive tunes, carols and readings for the whole family.

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### **BBC Radio 3 in Concert**

The CBSO's long-standing association with **BBC Radio 3** continues throughout the 2019-20 season, with selected concerts being broadcast on *Radio 3 in Concert*. Further details to be announced.

### **Classic FM's Orchestra in the Midlands**

The CBSO is proud to continue its partnership with Classic FM, the UK's most popular classical music station, as its Orchestra in the Midlands. Classic FM recommends a series of concerts throughout the season, including the Viennese New Year concert and Mirga's celebration of Beethoven's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and present two concerts in partnership with the orchestra – the CBSO Ultimate Playlist and English Serenade.

### **Lunchtime Chamber Music at CBSO Centre and CBSO+ free pre-concert events**

The Osborn Chamber Music Programme *Centre Stage* concerts at CBSO Centre present an opportunity to see CBSO musicians in an informal setting across 17 concerts, featuring works ranging from the baroque to the 21<sup>st</sup> century with links to the main CBSO programme. The concerts are programmed by the CBSO musicians themselves and the 2019-20 series includes **François Leleux** leading Mozart's *Serenade* for 13 wind instruments (Gran Partita), a new commission by Grace Evangeline Mason for eight piece mixed ensemble, and performances from the CBSO Cellos and Baroque Ensemble as well as appearances from international soloists including BBC Young Musician 2018 **Lauren Zhang**. CBSO+ free pre-concert events form an integral part of the season, making concerts a whole-evening experience. Events include free pre-concert talks and Q&As with conductors and soloists, and pre-concert performances by talented musicians from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Full season details can be found at [www.cbso.co.uk](http://www.cbso.co.uk)

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **About the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)**

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras, and the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the Midlands.

Based at Birmingham's spectacular Symphony Hall, the orchestra and its ensembles give over 150 concerts each year in the UK and worldwide, playing a wide range of music including everything from Wagner operas to world premieres, film music and family concerts. With a far-reaching education and community programme, four choruses and a Youth Orchestra, it is involved with every aspect of music-making in the Midlands. But at its heart is a team of 90 superb professional musicians, and a 99-year tradition of making the world's greatest music.

The orchestra was founded by future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1920, and Elgar conducted its inaugural concert. But it was when it discovered the young British conductor Simon Rattle in 1980 that the CBSO became internationally famous, and showed how the arts can help give a new sense of direction to a whole city. Rattle's successors Sakari Oramo and Andris Nelsons cemented that global reputation, and continued to build on the CBSO's distinguished tradition as one of the UK's leading musical ambassadors.

Under the artistic leadership of Osborn Music Director\* Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla the CBSO continues to do what it does best – playing great music for people in Birmingham and beyond. As

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it approaches its centenary in 2020, the CBSO remains one of the most vibrant cultural organisations in the UK.

\*The position of Music Director is generously supported by John Osborn.

### **BBC Radio 3**

Since it launched in 1946, the Third Programme/ BBC Radio 3 has been a bold pioneer in the cultural world. It is one of the world's foremost presenters, creators, commissioners and curators across classical, folk, world, jazz and contemporary music as well as drama, philosophy and ideas. The station has always nurtured extraordinary artistic talents, provided a platform for important scientific and political debates/announcements, and broadcast ground-breaking experimental drama – always while delivering its core aim of connecting audiences with pioneering music and culture. The station is also the most significant commissioner of new and contemporary music in the UK, with 35 new works commissioned annually and broadcasts over 600 concerts a year, including live broadcasts from the greatest classical music festival in the world (BBC Proms). Radio 3's In Concert programme alone reaches the equivalent of 250 packed concert halls a week, and the BBC Orchestras and Choirs give around 400 concerts a year in over 60 UK locations.

### **Classic FM**

Classic FM is the UK's most popular classical music brand, reaching 5.3 million listeners every week. Classic FM's programmes are hosted by a mix of classical music experts and household names including John Suchet, Alexander Armstrong, Myleene Klass, Bill Turnbull, Alan Titchmarsh, Moira Stuart, Charlotte Hawkins, Aled Jones, Margherita Taylor and Nicholas Owen. Since its launch in 1992, Classic FM has aimed to make classical music accessible and relevant to everyone and in doing so, introduce an entirely new audience to the genre. ClassicFM.com is the UK's biggest classical music website and has 2.6 million unique monthly web and app users. Classic FM is owned by Global. It is available across the UK on 100-102 FM, DAB digital radio and TV, the Classic FM app, at ClassicFM.com and on the Global Player. Source: RAJAR / Ipsos-MORI / RSMB, period ending 16th December 2018.