



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA TO PERFORM CENTENARY CONCERT IN WAREHOUSE

Saturday 5 September, 7pm

Streamed on the CBSO's YouTube and Facebook channels
#cbso100

The **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra** (CBSO) has today announced that it will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its first ever concert with a landmark performance featuring the full orchestra and filmed at a production warehouse in Birmingham.

The varied programme will be conducted by former Music Director **Sir Simon Rattle**, who is handed the baton for this special event by the orchestra's current Music Director, **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla**, while she is on maternity leave. They are joined by cellist **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** and sitar player **Roopa Panesar**, and the performance will be presented by Birmingham-born actor **Adrian Lester**.

The orchestra will be playing at *PRG's Live Stage Studio*, a warehouse and temporary production facility in Longbridge, Birmingham, which is large enough to house the full symphony orchestra adhering to social distancing measures. The performance will take place without a live audience present.

It will celebrate the CBSO's long history and look to the future through a mixture of live music, pre-filmed interviews and projected imagery. The performance will take place on **Saturday 5 September** and will be broadcast internationally on the **CBSO's Facebook** and **YouTube** channels on the same day at 7pm, where it will be available to stream free of charge until the end of September.

The performance takes place 100 years to the day of the orchestra's first concert, when the then City of Birmingham Orchestra (CBO) took to the stage at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, on Sunday 5 September 1920, under the baton of their Principal Conductor, Appleby Matthews. Two months later, on 10 November 1920, the orchestra's first full symphonic performance was given at Birmingham Town Hall, with Edward Elgar conducting a concert of his own works.

Osborn Music Director, **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla**, said: *'This is a very special moment for the orchestra. These are extraordinary circumstances, but it has been a wonderful task and challenge to devise this programme for both the orchestra and our audiences. When we were thinking about our centenary season, we chose works that have a special connection with the CBSO story, both past and present. It has felt like an intense conversation with the past and an opportunity to look ahead to the next chapter in the Orchestra's story. One of the CBSO's core values has always been innovation, and one of our tasks for the next 100 years is to make sure that continues. As we approached the centenary, we all agreed it was important to celebrate, but maybe even more important is to use this moment for re-thinking, re-questioning and re-discussing: 'Who are we? Who do we want to be? What future do we imagine for the orchestra in this city?'. I think the founding conductor, Appleby Matthews, would be incredibly proud of his orchestra today!'*

The performance will explore the work, history and future of the CBSO, the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the West Midlands and one of the world's most renowned orchestras. The

performance includes Schumann's *Genoveva Overture*, Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*, which was performed in that first concert a century earlier, and Saint-Saëns *Cello Concerto No. 1*, performed by close friend of the orchestra, Sheku Kanneh-Mason who made his debut recording with them. Igor Stravinsky's 1919 Suite from *The Firebird* is almost exactly as old as the orchestra and was the first music heard in Birmingham's Symphony Hall with Sir Simon Rattle in April 1991. The orchestra's ongoing commitment to new music and nurturing exciting new talent is represented by Hannah Kendall's *The Spark Catchers*, and the programme will also include AR Rahman's *Slumdog Millionaire Suite* featuring Roopa Panesar on sitar, celebrating the breadth and vibrancy of the CBSO's musical programming.

Pre-filmed video interviews with past and present music directors will explore what it means to be part of the CBSO Family, as will interviews with musicians, supporters, young people involved in the orchestra's Learning and Engagement programme, and other special guests who have helped contribute to the CBSO's great history.

Joanna Patton, Player Chair and Principal Second Clarinet, CBSO, said: *'The musicians of the CBSO never cease to amaze me with their courage, determination, motivation, imagination and indefatigable spirit. We are so looking forward to a time when we can share live music together again with our audiences in our city and beyond. There is huge excitement and anticipation about the opportunity to play together again- for the first time in six months-to celebrate our 100th birthday! This celebration may not be what was originally intended but we all know it will be something incredibly special; emotional, connective, distinctive and uniquely CBSO.'*

CBSO Chief Executive, **Stephen Maddock**, said: *'For 100 years the CBSO has been a source of joy, education and entertainment to audiences across the West Midlands, the UK and internationally, and we are hugely excited and proud to be presenting this ground-breaking performance to mark our centenary and showcase our vision for the future. We hope our audiences enjoy this much-needed dose of music, joined by our close friends and special guests, as a reminder of why the CBSO is such a remarkable and special orchestra.'*

The celebratory performance is part of the West Midlands Culture Response Unit's (WMCRU) **West Midlands Weekenders**, as the region's arts and culture sector joins together for three weekends of innovative events showcasing the diversity and innovation of the West Midlands' arts and culture scene. Prior to the CBSO's own streamed broadcast, arts organisations across the Midlands have collaborated to put together digital content that celebrates the orchestra's centenary as an Orchestra of Firsts. As part of an afternoon of events representing 'firsts', the WMCRU will stream content from 4pm-6pm on the [makeitwm.com](https://www.makeitwm.com) website, prior to the CBSO broadcast.

The CBSO centenary performance on 5 September marks the public launch of an ambitious £12.5m fundraising campaign, *The Sound of the Future*, designed to ensure the orchestra's recovery post-Covid and drive its longer-term renewal for a second century.

For 100 years the CBSO family, including the **CBSO Chorus, Youth Orchestra and Youth Chorus**, have served communities across the West Midlands, bringing them the widest possible range of music; from the world's greatest symphonic music to Friday Night Classics concert featuring the best movie sound-tracks and show tunes, to fun-filled family concerts and learning and participation activities. The CBSO launched its centenary celebrations in September 2019, with a host of special programming, events, commissions and community initiatives, all drawing inspiration from its past and looking forward to the future of classical music. Centenary highlights in its 2019-20 season included special commissions by Thea Musgrave and Unsuk Chin, a concert programmed and curated by 13 Youth Ambassadors and a new book, **Forward: 100 Years of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra**, about the orchestra's history written by Richard Bratby.

For further press information about the CBSO please contact:

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Notes to Editors

Repertoire

Robert Schumann *Genoveva - Overture*

Edward Elgar *Serenade for Strings*

Camille Saint-Saëns *Cello Concerto No.1 in A minor*

Hannah Kendall *The Spark Catchers*

A.R. Rahman *Slumdog Millionaire Suite*

Igor Stravinsky *The Firebird - 1919 Suite*

How to watch the performance

Watch live on **Saturday 5 September, 7pm** on the CBSO's [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). Following the broadcast the performance will be available to stream free of charge until the end of September.

About the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is one of the world's most renowned 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 100-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. In its centenary year, the CBSO remains one of the most vibrant cultural organisations in the UK.

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

About the PRG warehouse in Longbridge, Birmingham

PRG is a leading international full-service provider of technical expertise and equipment for corporate and special events, music touring and festivals, theatre and the arts, exhibitions, brand activations, and film and television productions.