

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# Sheku's Finnis Concerto and Bruckner's Ninth

Sunday, October 25, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican

Antonio Pappano, conductor · Sheku Kanneh-Mason, cello

| TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME |                                                                                    | MIN |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1                   | <b>FINNIS</b> b. 1984<br><i>Cello Concerto</i>                                     | 25' |
| 2                   | <b>BRUCKNER</b> 1824–1896<br><i>Symphony No. 9 in D minor, WAB 109 (ed. Cohrs)</i> | 60' |
| TOTAL MUSIC         |                                                                                    | 85' |

## Edmund Finnis

b. 1984

*Cello Concerto*

25 minutes

### ABOUT THE WORK

This Cello Concerto is a new work written for Sheku Kanneh-Mason and jointly commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Dresden Philharmonic and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Kanneh-Ma-

son gave the world premiere with the LA Phil at Walt Disney Concert Hall on 21 November 2025. Tonight the LSO plays its share of that commission: a chance to hear a significant new concerto by a living British composer, played by the cellist it was written for.

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

As a very new work, come to it with fresh ears and no expectations of famous tunes. With *Finnis*, the rewards lie in colour, texture and line. Listen for the way the solo cello sings long, expressive melodies (*Finnis* writes beautifully for the voice-like quality of the instrument), and for the finely detailed orchestral textures that surround it, often delicate and luminous rather than heavy.

Listen for the relationship between soloist and orchestra: how the cello emerges from the ensemble, is echoed and coloured by it, and how *Finnis* builds atmosphere and momentum through shifting harmony and instrumental light rather than through conventional display. Above all, listen to Sheku Kanneh-Mason's tone, warm, lyrical and deeply communicative, in music written to show it off. It is a rare opportunity to hear a new concerto near the very start of its life, in the hands of the cellist it was written for.

# Anton Bruckner

1824–1896

*Symphony No. 9 in D minor, WAB 109 (ed. Cohrs)*

60 minutes

## ABOUT THE WORK

Bruckner's Ninth Symphony is his last word, and one of the most profound farewells in all of music. He began it in 1887 and was still working on it when he died in 1896, leaving it unfinished: the first three movements are complete, but the finale survives only in extensive sketches. Bruckner, a deeply devout Catholic, dedicated the symphony 'to the dear God' (dem lieben Gott). The three completed movements form a coherent and overwhelming whole, so the work is almost always performed, as tonight, in three movements. Tonight's performance uses the scholarly Urtext edition by Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement (Feierlich, misterioso: 'solemn, mysterious') grows, as so often in Bruckner, from a hushed string tremor, with horn calls emerging out of the mist. Listen for how it builds through vast paragraphs to a tremendous, dissonant climax and a hammering D minor unison of overwhelming power.

The Scherzo is one of Bruckner's most extraordinary. It is not a genial dance but something demonic and obsessive: stamping, dissonant chords and a relentless, almost mechanical drive, framing a strangely fleet, ghostly trio. It is among the most modern-sounding music Bruckner ever wrote.

The Adagio is the heart of the work and Bruckner's farewell. Listen for the great leaping theme that opens it (a yearning rise in the violins), for the noble, chorale-like passages on the Wagner tubas, and for the shattering, grinding dissonance at its climax, perhaps the most anguished moment in all Bruckner. Then the music subsides into a long, glowing, peaceful coda, quoting earlier works and dying away into acceptance. With no triumphant finale to follow, this quiet, transcendent close becomes the final word of the symphony and of the composer.

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## Tonight's artists

## **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** *cello*

Edmund Finnis's Cello Concerto was written for Sheku Kanneh-Mason, who gave its world premiere in Los Angeles in November 2025, and tonight he plays it as part of the international co-commission that brought it into being. There is no better advocate for a new concerto than the artist it was tailored to. Finnis has written for Kanneh-Mason's celebrated warmth, lyricism and communicative directness, and hearing him play it is the ideal way to encounter this new work.

Sheku Kanneh-Mason, born in 1999, is one of the most celebrated cellists of his generation and among the best-known classical musicians in Britain. Raised in Nottingham, the third of seven extraordinarily musical siblings, he shot to national fame in 2016 when he won the BBC Young Musician competition (the first Black musician to do so) and to worldwide attention in 2018 when he performed at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, watched by an audience of millions. An exclusive Decca Classics artist, he made history in 2020 when his album Elgar made him the first cellist to reach the Top 10 of the UK album chart. Admired for the warmth, lyricism and unaffected sincerity of his playing, and a passionate advocate for music education and access, he has become a genuine ambassador for classical music, appearing with major orchestras around the world.

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## CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-10-25-pappano>

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