

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Pappano's Tchaikovsky Fifth, with a Kendall Premiere

Thursday, October 29, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican

Antonio Pappano, conductor · Fleur Barron, mezzo-soprano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	LIADOV 1855–1914 <i>The Enchanted Lake, Op. 62</i>	8'
2	KENDALL b. 1984 <i>I have discovered the secret of death (world premiere)</i>	15'
3	TCHAIKOVSKY 1840–1893 <i>Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64</i>	48'
TOTAL MUSIC		71'

Anatoly Liadov

1855–1914

The Enchanted Lake, Op. 62

8 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The Enchanted Lake is Liadov's most beloved orchestral miniature: a few minutes of pure atmosphere, subtitled a 'fairy-tale scene'. First performed in St Petersburg in 1909, it is unusual among Russian fairy-tale pieces in having no story and no real melody. There is no Baba-Yaga flying past, no hero, no narrative event. Instead Liadov paints a kind of musical still life: a mysterious, motionless lake in an enchanted forest, its surface shimmering, stars reflected in the water. "How beautiful the lake is," he wrote, "how pure and with stars and mysteries in its depths!" What mattered most to him was the absence of people and their joys and sorrows.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Don't wait for a tune. There isn't really one, and that's the point. Instead, listen for texture and colour: the shimmering, undulating strings that suggest the surface of the water, and the delicate touches of flute, harp and celesta that sparkle like starlight or moonlight on the lake. Listen for the slowly changing harmonies that drift and shift without ever arriving anywhere definite, sustaining a mood of stillness and enchantment.

The piece is quiet almost throughout, building only to a gentle swell before subsiding again into mystery. Let it cast its spell: it is a few minutes of orchestral magic, a window onto a silent, bewitched landscape, and a reminder of what a master of orchestration can conjure from the gentlest means.

Hannah Kendall

b. 1984

I have discovered the secret of death (world premiere)

15 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

This concert includes a world premiere: a new work for mezzo-soprano and orchestra by Hannah Kendall, commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra and given here for the very first time with Fleur Barron as soloist. Its arresting title, ‘I have discovered the secret of death’, signals the kind of poetic, history-haunted subject matter that runs through Kendall’s work, which often meditates on memory, identity and the legacies of the past.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Come to this premiere with open ears: there is no recording, no familiar shape to anticipate. Listen for how Kendall sets the solo mezzo-soprano voice against the orches-

tra, the relationship between words and instruments, and the way the text (and that haunting title) shapes the music's mood and pacing. Kendall's textures tend to be finely layered and atmospheric rather than grand and declamatory, so listen for detail and colour, for unexpected sonorities and the play of light and shadow in the orchestration. Above all, let Fleur Barron's voice be your guide through the new terrain, and listen as a distinctive composer adds a new piece to the repertoire before your ears.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1840–1893

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

48 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, composed in the summer of 1888, is one of his greatest and best-loved works: a gripping drama of Fate that travels from brooding darkness to blazing triumph. The Fourth had its Fate fanfare too, but here Tchaikovsky goes further. A recurring 'motto' theme returns in all four movements, transformed each time, binding the whole work into a single psychological narrative. In a notebook jotting he described the symphony's subject as 'total submission before Fate, or, what is the same thing, the inscrutable designs of Providence.'

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Fix the Fate motto in your ear at the very start: a solemn, dark melody low in the clarinets over funereal strings. This theme is the key to the whole symphony, so listen for its return, transformed, in every movement.

The second movement (*Andante cantabile*) contains one of the most famous melodies Tchaikovsky ever wrote: a long, yearning solo for the horn, of heart-melting beauty, which grows into an impassioned love song until, twice, the Fate motto bursts in violently to shatter the mood. The third movement is not a scherzo but an elegant, slightly melancholy waltz (Tchaikovsky the ballet composer at work), with the Fate theme stealing in quietly at the very end as a reminder. Then the finale: the motto returns, now grand and in the major, in a slow introduction, before a tempestuous *Allegro* breaks out. Listen for how the music battles through to a blazing restatement of the Fate theme as a victorious march, Fate not defeated but embraced and transformed. Whether you find that ending overwhelming or, as Tchaikovsky feared, a touch excessive, it is unfailingly exciting in performance.

Tonight's artists

Fleur Barron *mezzo-soprano*

Giving the world premiere of a new orchestral song-work demands a singer of intelligence, flexibility and fearlessness: someone equally comfortable with unfamiliar contemporary idioms and with projecting text and meaning to an audience hearing the music for the first time. Fleur Barron, a Grammy-winning mezzo deeply committed to new music (and a noted Saariaho and Mahler interpreter), is perfectly suited to bring Hannah Kendall's new piece to life.

Fleur Barron is a Singaporean-British mezzo-soprano, born in Northern Ireland to a Singaporean mother and a British father, who grew up in Hong Kong and later New York. She shared the 2025 Grammy for Best Opera Recording for Saariaho's *Adriana Mater* with the San Francisco Symphony under Esa-Pekka Salonen, in which she sang the title role. She has become one of the most sought-after mezzos of her generation, equally at home in opera, concert and recital. She is particularly associated with Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and *Kindertotenlieder*, which she has performed with conductors including Daniel Harding and Semyon Bychkov, and she is a committed performer of new music, which makes her an ideal interpreter for a world premiere such as this.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-10-29-pappano>

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