

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Jansen's Dubugnon Premiere, and Vaughan Williams's Antartica

Sunday, November 29, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican

Antonio Pappano, conductor · Janine Jansen, violin · London Symphony Chorus, choir

	TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME	MIN
1	SIBELIUS 1865–1957 <i>The Swan of Tuonela, from 'Lemminkäinen Suite', Op. 22</i>	9'
2	DUBUGNON b. 1968 <i>Sonnenring for violin and orchestra (world premiere)</i>	30'
3	VAUGHAN WILLIAMS 1872–1958 <i>Sinfonia antartica (Symphony No. 7)</i>	40'
	TOTAL MUSIC	79'

Jean Sibelius

1865–1957

The Swan of Tuonela, from 'Lemminkäinen Suite', Op. 22

9 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The Swan of Tuonela is the most famous of the four tone poems that make up Sibelius's Lemminkäinen Suite (1893–95), drawn from Finland's national epic, the Kalevala. In the myth, the hero Lemminkäinen is sent to kill the sacred swan that glides on the black river encircling Tuonela, the land of the dead; instead he is struck down by a poisoned arrow and dies. But the music is not about the hero. It is a hushed, transfixing portrait of the swan itself, floating serenely on the dark waters of the underworld.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen, above all, for the cor anglais: its long, plaintive, song-like melody is the voice of the swan, and it threads through almost the entire piece. Around it, listen for the dark, muted strings that create the still, glassy surface of the river of the dead, for the soft tolling of harp and timpani, and for a brief swell of more impassioned feeling at the centre before the swan glides on. The whole piece moves slowly, in a hushed 9/4, conjuring an atmosphere of solemn, otherworldly calm. It is a few minutes of pure, dark enchantment.

Richard Dubugnon

b. 1968

Sonnenring for violin and orchestra (world premiere)

30 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

This concert features a world premiere: *Sonnenring*, a new work for violin and orchestra by Richard Dubugnon, co-commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra and given here for the first time, with Janine Jansen as soloist. The pairing is significant. Dubugnon and Jansen have a long creative partnership, and he has written several works for her, including his Violin Concerto, so this new piece comes from a composer writing intimately for a soloist he knows well.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Come to this premiere with open ears: there is no recording to anticipate. Listen for the relationship between the solo violin and the orchestra, how Jansen's line sings, soars and is coloured by the instrumental halo around it (the 'sun ring' of the title may well be reflected in shimmering, radiant orchestral textures). Dubugnon is a colourful, dramatic orchestrator, so listen for vivid instrumental effects and a strong sense of atmosphere and momentum. Above all, let Janine Jansen, one of the most

charismatic and intense violinists before the public, guide you through this new music written to display exactly her kind of artistry.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

1872–1958

Sinfonia antartica (Symphony No. 7)

40 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Vaughan Williams's Seventh Symphony, the *Sinfonia antartica*, grew out of one of the most evocative film scores ever written. In 1947–48 the composer, then in his mid-seventies, wrote the music for the Ealing Studios film *Scott of the Antarctic*, about Captain Scott's doomed 1912 expedition to the South Pole. He was so gripped by the subject (the vast, indifferent grandeur of the ice, and the human courage and tragedy played out against it) that he reworked the material into a full symphony, completed in 1952 and premiered by Barbirolli and the Hallé in 1953.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen, from the very opening, for the great striding theme that represents heroic human endeavour, and then for the chilling sounds of the Antarctic itself: the wordless soprano and women's chorus (here the women of the

London Symphony Chorus) keening over the orchestra, the eerie whistle of the wind machine, the glitter of celesta, harp, piano and tuned percussion evoking ice and snow. This blend of the human and the elemental is the symphony's whole world.

Follow the five movements as a journey: a grand, struggling Prelude; a Scherzo evoking the wildlife and the floes (listen for suggestions of penguins and whales); a vast, bleak central Landscape, its climax crowned by a terrifying organ entry depicting the immensity and menace of the ice; an Intermezzo of tenderness and human warmth; and a final Epilogue, in which the heroic theme returns and the explorers march bravely on. At the very end the music dissolves into the wind machine and the wordless voices alone, the indifferent landscape outlasting the men who dared it. It is one of the most atmospheric and moving of all twentieth-century symphonies.

Tonight's artists

Janine Jansen *violin*

There could be no better advocate for Richard Dubugnon's new *Sonnenring* than Janine Jansen: she and the composer have a long collaborative history, and he has written several works with her playing in mind. One of the most intense and communicative violinists before the public, she brings to a brand-new concerto exactly the charisma, commitment and tonal richness needed to make a first performance compelling, championing the new work as she has championed Dubugnon's music before.

Janine Jansen, born in Soest in 1978, is one of the most charismatic and admired violinists in the world. From a musical Dutch family, she studied with Coosje Wijzenbeek, Philippe Hirschhorn and Boris Belkin, and has built a career of the highest distinction as soloist and chamber musician, recording widely and founding the International Chamber Music Festival in Utrecht. She is the LSO's Portrait Artist this season. Renowned for the intensity, communicative warmth and fearless commitment of her playing, she also has a long creative partnership with the composer Richard Dubugnon, who has written several works for her, which makes her the natural soloist for tonight's premiere.

London Symphony Chorus *choir*

Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia antartica* calls for a wordless soprano soloist and women's chorus, whose textless voices drift over the orchestra to conjure the eerie desolation of the polar landscape: wind, ice and the siren pull of the wilderness. The women of the London Symphony Chorus supply these haunting, otherworldly voices, one of the symphony's most unforgettable effects.

The London Symphony Chorus was founded in 1966 as the chorus of the London Symphony Orchestra. Now an independent, self-governing choir, it keeps a close association with the LSO, performing and recording the great choral-orchestral repertoire with the orchestra at the Barbican and elsewhere, and also working with other orchestras.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-11-29-pappano>

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