

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Pappano Conducts Chausson, a Foccroulle Premiere and Scriabin's Poem of Ecstasy

Thursday, May 6, 2027 · 19:00 · Barbican

Antonio Pappano, conductor · Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano · Stéphane
Degout, baritone

	TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME	MIN
1	CHAUSSON 1855–1899 <i>Poème de l'amour et de la mer, Op. 19</i>	26'
2	FOCCROULLE b. 1953 <i>UIESH</i>	22'
3	SCRIABIN 1872–1915 <i>The Poem of Ecstasy (Le Poème de l'extase), Op. 54</i>	24'
	TOTAL MUSIC	72'

Ernest Chausson

1855–1899

Poème de l'amour et de la mer, Op. 19

26 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Ernest Chausson began the *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* in 1882, while he was still taking lessons from César Franck, and it stayed on his desk for the best part of a decade: the usual dating is 1882 to 1892. That was also the year he travelled to Bayreuth for the first production of *Parsifal*, and the two facts belong together. The *Poème* is what a French composer of fine, rather private sensibility made of Wagner: long spans of orchestral song, harmony that keeps shifting underfoot, and a handful of themes that return changed, all at the scale of a salon rather than a festival theatre.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The piece lasts a little under half an hour and is closer to a symphony with a voice in it than to a set of songs.

Listen for the caressing theme the orchestra plays at the very start. It becomes the work's main idea, takes a firmer shape when the beloved is first named, and comes back throughout as an image of her and of the singer's feeling for her.

The interlude, which opens with solos for bassoon and violin, turns that theme over quietly before the second part begins in a brighter, more open mood that does not last. The emotional hinge is the word ‘l’oubli’ (being forgotten): the orchestra brings the main theme forward again, a solo cello takes it up, and then, for the first time, so does the voice. From there the music moves into ‘Le Temps des lilas’ and its refrain, ‘the time of lilacs and the time of roses will not return this spring’, set to a melody of plain, folk-like sadness after so much chromatic richness.

Bernard Foccroulle

b. 1953

UIESH

22 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

UIESH is new: this is its first performance. The title is a word in Innu-aimun, the language of the Innu people of eastern Quebec and Labrador, and means ‘somewhere’. Bernard Foccroulle has set poems by Joséphine Bacon, an Innu poet born in 1947 at Pessamit on the north shore of the St Lawrence, who writes in both Innu-aimun and French. ‘Uiesh / Quelque part’ is also the title of a collection she published in Montreal in 2018. The concert uses English translations by Jessica Moore.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Nobody outside the rehearsal room has heard this music yet, so there is little that can honestly be promised. What is known is the scale, about 22 minutes, the forces, solo voices with full orchestra, and the source: short, spare poems by an elder who spent her earliest years on the land with her family and has written much of her life in a city. Bacon's verse deals in few words and wide spaces, a long way from the perfumed abundance of Bouchor's lilacs in the Chausson. It will be worth noticing how a composer steeped in the organ repertoire, and in decades of running opera houses, handles that plainness, and how the words carry in English.

Alexander Scriabin

1872–1915

The Poem of Ecstasy (Le Poème de l'extase), Op. 54

24 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Alexander Scriabin worked on *The Poem of Ecstasy* between 1905 and early 1908, years he spent mostly outside Russia, and he sometimes referred to it as his fourth symphony. The name has stuck as a subtitle, though the piece is a single movement

of about twenty minutes with no breaks. It was first performed in New York on 10 December 1908 by the Russian Symphony Orchestra under Modest Altschuler, a friend of the composer.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The opening is slow and languid. A flute has the first idea, which the composer associated with longing, and a clarinet answers over hazy strings with what he called a dream. Then a trumpet enters with a figure of short rising phrases. That trumpet theme is the one to hold on to: it stands for the will asserting itself, and it returns again and again, each time more insistent, against faster music full of trills and darting leaps.

The piece builds twice. The first climax, around the middle, collapses back into the languor of the opening. The second does not. The trumpets take over, the horns join them, bells and the organ are added underneath, and after pages of harmony that refuses to resolve the whole orchestra finally arrives on a blazing chord of C major. The LSO's own guide to the composer quotes markings from the score such as 'ever-increasing drunkenness' and 'almost deliriously'. Whether the ending sounds like transcendence or like a very loud chord is each listener's own business, but in the hall it is physically overwhelming.

Tonight's artists

Sasha Cooke *mezzo-soprano*

Sasha Cooke sings the Chausson, which the LSO's season announcement gives to her, and her own published schedule lists the Foccroulle premiere as well. The Poème is more often heard from a soprano; a mezzo brings a darker middle register to music that spends much of its time there. This is a single Barbican concert on 6 May 2027. The evening before, Pappano and the orchestra play the Scriabin alone in a Half Six Fix concert.

Sasha Cooke is an American mezzo-soprano. Born in Riverside, California, and raised in College Station, Texas, she studied at Rice University and the Juilliard School. She has sung at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera and English National Opera, and appears widely in concert, particularly in the music of Mahler. She has given many first performances of new works and has won two Grammy Awards for opera recordings, John Adams's Doctor Atomic and Mason Bates's The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs. Since 2022 she has been co-director of the Lehrer Vocal Institute at the Music Academy of the West.

Stéphane Degout *baritone*

Stéphane Degout is billed alongside Sasha Cooke for this concert. Since the Chausson is hers and the Scriabin has no voices, he is here for the first performance of Bernard Foccroulle's UIESH. He returns to the Barbican at the end of the month as Giorgio Germont in Pappano's concert performances of *La traviata*.

Stéphane Degout, born in Bourg-en-Bresse in 1975, is one of the foremost French baritones of his generation. A graduate of the Lyon Conservatoire, he came to international attention as Papageno at the Aix-en-Provence Festival and has since sung at the world's leading houses, admired for the beauty of his voice, his refined musicianship and his command of the French repertoire in particular. He has recorded with Raphaël Pichon and Pygmalion, which makes him an ideal partner in this French Baroque and Classical programme.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2027-05-06-pappano>

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