

LSO Futures: Elim Chan Conducts Adams and Three New Works

Thursday, June 17, 2027 · 19:00 · Barbican
Elim Chan, conductor · James Fountain, trumpet

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	ADAMS b. 1947 <i>The Chairman Dances</i>	12'
2	ARAFAH <i>MISWIRED</i>	5'
3	JÄRVENTAUSTA b. 1995 <i>Trumpet Concerto</i>	25'
4	JEONG <i>Apparition from a World Grown Alien</i>	10'
5	ADAMS b. 1947 <i>Doctor Atomic Symphony</i>	25'
TOTAL MUSIC		77'

John Adams

b. 1947

The Chairman Dances

12 minutes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Adams describes the form as three parts, A-B-A, with ‘a persistent, chugging pulse in the basses’ in the outer sections. That pulse drives the opening, and the tunes ride above it. The percussion section is large for a piece of this length. The score lists, among much else, sandpaper blocks, castanets, a hi-hat and a pedal bass drum, with harp and piano besides: something of the kit of a dance band has been added to the symphony orchestra.

The middle section slows down and, in Adams’s words, romance makes an appearance. Here the foxtrot arrives in earnest. Adams calls his themes ‘sometimes slinky and sentimental, at other times bravura and bounding’, and both kinds are on show.

Then the motor starts again. The piece ends not with a climax but by running out of power: the sound, as descriptions of the score have it, of a gramophone winding down.

Laila Arafah

5 minutes

MISWIRED

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Nothing has yet been published about the music itself, and the title, printed in capitals, comes without explanation. What can be said is what Arafah's own descriptions of her work point to. The LSO's announcement speaks of her interest in temporality, in in-between states, and in resonance and decay: how a sound hangs in the air and dies. The Grafenegg biography adds fragile systems and forms that arise from interruption and unstable time. Five minutes is not long, and a composer with those concerns is likely to make every gesture count. It may be worth listening less for themes than for what happens to a sound after it has been made.

Joel Järventausta

25 minutes

b. 1995

Trumpet Concerto

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

No description of the concerto had been published when this guide was written, so it would be wrong to promise particular events. Some things can be expected on general grounds. Järventausta's publisher describes his music in terms of vivid colours, distinctive sound-worlds and a delicate lyricism, and Music Finland notes how often his pieces take their cue from nature, paintings, books and poems. A trumpet concerto has to decide early what kind of instrument its soloist is to be: the bright, martial voice of tradition, or the quieter, singing one that players of Fountain's schooling, which began with the cornet in brass bands, know just as well. A span of 25 minutes leaves room for both.

Yunho Jeong

10 minutes

Apparition from a World Grown Alien

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The orchestra has not yet said anything about how the piece goes. The title is the only clue, and it suggests a scene more than an abstract design: something seen, or half seen, in surroundings that have become strange. That would fit what Jeong has said about earlier music. Of the Clarinet Concerto he explained that the soloist stood for the ego and the orchestra for ‘another unconscious world’, an idea he took from psychology. Whether this piece works in a similar way remains to be heard. With no soloist this time, any such drama has to be played out inside the orchestra itself, and ten minutes gives it room for more than one change of scene.

John Adams

25 minutes

b. 1947

Doctor Atomic Symphony

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

‘The Laboratory’ opens explosively, in the word of one review of the first performance, with surging brass, driving strings and thundering percussion. The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra’s note on the piece hears in its timpani and brass a violent force that recalls Edgard Varèse. Another listener found this first section portentous and brooding: it sets a mood of menace before anything has happened.

‘Panic’ is the longest part. The strings scurry, in one critic’s phrase, as if out of control, while wind interjections cut across them. This is the Adams of fast, driving pulse, turned to the purposes of anxiety and not of exhilaration. Listen for how seldom the music is allowed to settle.

The music passes without a pause into ‘Trinity’, which takes its name from the test. Here the solo trumpet takes over the melody of ‘Batter my heart’. The Concertgebouw note hears an almost Renaissance character in the sound of the lament on this instrument, and speaks of Purcell-like music in the score. A reviewer of the Saint Louis recording called the solo bleakly serene and observed that it never quite calms the agitation around

it. In a concert that has already put a trumpet concerto at its centre, this second long solo for the instrument gives the evening a shape of its own.



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